

Language translation

Amongst the Kichwa community, male elders and young male and female members usually speak both Kichwa (native language) and Spanish. The reason for this as it was explained to me during my visit, was that missionaries – who would only educate male children in the past – introduced Spanish to the Kichwa people. Younger generations are bilingual because of the current government policies and educational programmes that are based on universalist principles and that have been lately introduced to remote populations (SENPLADES, 2013). Although most of the people I met and interacted with spoke Spanish, I required the assistance of a translator for particular occasions such as conversations where I was indirectly participating and for one of the interviews that was undertaken. The interviews, with the exception of one requiring the translation from Kichwa, were carried out in Spanish. While I usually had the company of Kichwa people who informally assisted me with minor language barriers, Marcos's eldest son was the translator for the interview and the person I requested clarifications regarding language. He had an outstanding knowledge of both languages, based on his interest to stay connected with his roots. Although many young Kichwa people understand the Kichwa language effortlessly, only a few speak in Kichwa. The general interactions between elder and younger generations were based on the usage of both languages, where commonly, the elders spoke in Kichwa and the youth answered in Spanish. This language interaction was also evident in my relations; unlike me, the Kichwa people who did not speak Spanish would rarely require assistance on the translation of what I was saying. Although not speaking Kichwa was a limitation – particularly evident in the analysis of the one interview that was undertaken with the assistance of the translator – the way Kichwa people in present-day use the combination of both languages was a great insight to this research. As I will discuss in the following chapters, the way that younger and elder Kichwa generations interacted with each other reflects the changes that Kichwa culture is experiencing and supports one of the main findings of this research.

Regarding the interview with the participant that only spoke Kichwa, I was able to identify how the fluidity of the narrative got lost with the use of a translator. While the transcription captured the essence of the interview and the data matched the themes that were observed from the other interviews, the wholeness of the narrative and my interaction with the participant were clearly affected by the translator. Fortunately, it was only one interview where I needed assistance in the language translation, which has given me the chance to compare the interactions in both scenarios. Although the translator was a person I trusted, through the analysis of the interview transcript I could detect a few questions that were not answered because of the way that the translator

understood the question or expressed the response. However, the assistance of the translator, as I have noted before, was fundamental in the access of participants. Furthermore, his company also gave me the opportunity to record my own interactions with the participants of the interviews through the photographic material, which he insisted to help with. Having a visual record of my interaction with the participants was useful in the analysis of how the knowledge for this research has been produced.

Language was also a concern in the analysis process. While I had planned to translate all the data recorded to English before analysis, translating the data into one language was not ideal because of the language complexities. Not only translating the data to English was unnecessary – considering I was the person that collected, transcribed and analysed the data – but also, the essence of much of the dialogues and material that the data in its original form held, lost relevance when translated to a different language. To start with, the data collected through fieldnotes was a combination of English, Spanish and Kichwa terminology. As I explained earlier in this chapter, the reason for this was that sometimes I would take notes of things as they were spoken – in either Spanish or Kichwa – and the annotation of thoughts and insights were expressed in the language – either English or Spanish – in which I processed the thoughts. While this process of note taking was spontaneous and unsystematic, it also recorded expressions and idioms that were imperative for the analysis. Particularly in the analysis of how Kichwa people express when speaking in Spanish. The use of Spanish language amongst Kichwa people involves slang terms – many of which I was able to comprehend because I am Ecuadorian, rather than because I speak Spanish – and the particular dialect that without an explanation, lost meaning when translated. The complexities around language were challenging since it made it problematic to use any mechanised system for coding and for these reasons, I decided to analyse the data in the original language and translate to English the quotes and parts that were used as examples for this thesis.

Ethical Concerns

This research has the ethics approval of the University of Sheffield (Appendix 1) and of the Universidad San Francisco de Quito's – USFQ (Appendix 2), in accordance with the regulations regarding health-related research in Ecuador. The Ecuadorian Ministry of Public Health is the responsible entity for the ethical approval of health-related research that is carried out in the country (MSP, 2014a) and the Research Ethics Committee in Human Beings of the USFQ was one of

the committees certified by the Ministry of Public Health to grant or validate the ethical approval for this research.

Informed consent in Ethnography

Given the characteristics of this observational ethnographic study, the process to obtain informed consent was verbal and when required, witnessed by the community. The verbal witnessed consent takes into consideration the different cultural perspective that indigenous populations – such as the Kichwa – have in relation to individual autonomy and the literacy levels of different people within the community. Since in most indigenous cultures the TH is also the community leader, the request for permission to undertake this study was initially addressed to Marcos – the TH who hosted me – and after, imparted to the community. However, after his instruction, I additionally presented my research and asked consent from the *Kuraka*, the leader of the Kichwa community of Rukullacta. Although I was not able to audio-record his verbal consent, the two persons who accompanied me and introduced me to the *Kuraka* were witnesses to his consent. The process of informing the community was recurrent and with cautious consideration of the details of the research as it developed (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007). In the process of asking for consent, I made sure to detail what the research intended; this was to learn about and understand the healing practices of Kichwa culture, the beliefs, opinions and aspects that were important to the Kichwa people in relation to health and wellbeing. Likewise, I explained how I anticipated learning about the Kichwa culture, community and health-related practices. In asking for consent from Marcos and the *Kuraka*, my explanation was comprehensive, including how I intended to learn from my participation in the activities that took place regularly, by observing, taking notes and photographs of the practices related to health and through conversations and interviews with different people. In asking consent for the interviews and photographs, I explained in more detail what the interview or photographic material would be comprised of. The participants were aware that the results would be collected in a written report thesis and as I will discuss later, one of the participants requested a summary of the results upon the completion of this research.

The process of asking for verbal consent required moral decisions in relation to the context and purpose of this research (Mason, 2002). Considering that not all the observations took place in public settings or regarded situations of public domain, I made sure to repeatedly inform the people in the community of Rukullacta about the research and when necessary, explained the details related to confidentiality of the gathered data. With the exception of the photographic material

taken in public events, such as the Yachak gathering on the 25th of November of 2017, the photographic material – that includes images of the participants – used for this study and presented in this thesis have been verbally consented by each participant (Rose, 2012). Likewise, before each interview took place, I asked each participant for his or her consent to audio-record the conversation. I also confirmed whether participants preferred that I use their real name and made sure they knew that they did not have to participate in the interview. While I usually had no problem with obtaining the consent from Kichwa people, there was only one occasion where the participant did not agree to have the interview audio-recorded. As I have explained before, there were particular motives for that decision; however, the participant had no objection to the recording of fragments of our conversation in my fieldnotes. Apart from that one interview, the Kichwa people were naturally willing to share their knowledge and stories with me and rather eager to be included in the photographs that I have used for this research.

The Kichwa lifestyle is based on communal activity and thus, I was regularly in the company of bilingual Kichwa people who helped me articulate the verbal consent when someone in the group did not speak Spanish. Nonetheless and as discussed earlier in this chapter, communication between Kichwa people – particularly between elder and younger generations – occurred in both languages and people who did not speak Spanish, did generally understand it. However, I took the process of explaining my work and obtaining consent with meticulous care. While the language barrier was rather a limitation for me than for the Kichwa people I interacted with, at the beginning of my fieldwork I experienced minor communicational strains. The communicational gap was in part due to my lack of understanding of the meanings in Kichwa practices, but also because of the interchangeable adaptations and uses of Spanish and Kichwa languages. In spite of the detailed content in the verbal consent, I was concerned when Marcos introduced me as a “volunteer” when I accompanied him to the first healings sessions. The confusion arose in part from the different understandings Marcos and I had about what learning meant. While I will discuss this topic in later chapters, Marcos had understood my interest to study Kichwa healing practices as an interest to become a healer myself. Furthermore, the reason Marcos used the word “volunteer” to introduce me to people was because the Ramirez family had hosted a few students in the past as part of an exchange volunteer program and his description of my work as a “volunteer” was only in reference to my student status. While the slight confusion at the early stages of my fieldwork was clarified with the recurrent explanation of what I was doing, the example demonstrates the complexities of ethnographic research and validates why the standard ethical regulations applied to many methods

of research - such as informed consent forms - are not always appropriate in ethnographic studies (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007).

The content presented to the community and the individual participants of the study, was based on the information contained in the information sheet and aide memoire for the interviews that were approved by the ethic committees of the University of Sheffield and the USFQ in Ecuador. Regarding literacy levels among the community, while I knew the level of education of some of the participants, this was not an aspect I enquired into in order to ask if they would agree to participate in this research. As mentioned previously, I presented the study in a verbal manner and while I had to find different ways of explaining my work, I ensured that the participants understood what I was doing and that they verbally consent to take part in this research. Topics related to confidentiality and anonymity were not an issue, except for the interview were the participant did not agree to be audio-recorded. Although most participants preferred I use their names, after re-evaluation I have decided to keep all identifiable data anonymous; names, personal details and photographs used in this thesis have been anonymised in order to protect the privacy of the participants. However, I must acknowledge the trust that Kichwa people had in me, which was the reason they agreed to share their personal details, knowledge and memoirs for the purpose of this study. The collected data was carefully handled and securely protected, during and after the fieldwork. Physical and digital data were stored in a suitcase secured with a lock during the fieldwork, with codes and keys only under my handling and control. During travel, all the equipment containing data was transported in locked carry-on luggage that was at all times under my supervision. As described earlier, audio-recordings and photographic material were transferred to an encrypted laptop and deleted from the audio recorder and camera. I have undertaken a continuous assessment, specifically of photographic data to include and while certain images are not presented, they were regarded for purposes of analysis. I acknowledge that the exclusion of data could influence the conclusions since there is no verifiable sources to them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). However, I have endeavoured to include the data that reflects comprehensively the narratives and knowledge of the Kichwa people. While I am not exempted of the risks once the research results are published, since I have no control on how the published material is taken (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007), this study reflects essentially my perspective towards the topic of research and every stage of this study has been assumed with responsibility and respect.

Intricacies of field relations

The most illustrative ethical concerns, characteristic to ethnographic research, are related to the level of integration and how the researcher manages the relationships with the participants in the field, which tends to be more complicated than other methods because of the extended periods of time that the researcher participates in the setting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Gosovic and Kirkebæk, 2019). Although the details that define the social interactions in the fieldwork are inadvertent, these generally deal with what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behaviour within the community; Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) refer to these conditions as ethical relativism. It is natural to understand how the infringement of the social rules of the studied group can affect the relations within the study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Gosovic and Kirkebæk, 2019). Throughout the fieldwork it was fundamental to be aware of the situations that required moral action or maybe no action at all, in which case the decisions were focussed on preference of the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). However, in some situations the resolutions were more ambiguous than others.

Since living with the Kichwa people for a three-month period was an essential part of this research (Coffey, 1999), there were various instances where I experienced ethical relativism. One of the instances I recall that is a clear example of ethical relativity was during a celebration I attended accompanying my host family. As a student undertaking this research I thought that the appropriate thing to do was to participate in the gathering, but not to accept any alcoholic beverage that was offered. After I had declined a few rounds of alcoholic beverages that were offered to me, Marcos' wife sat next to me and accepted the drink for me. She then drank and gave me the pot while she told me whispering, to moist my lips and give the pot back to the event's host. In that moment, I decided to follow her instructions with little knowledge of her motives, though she later told me that not accepting something that was offered to me was considered offensive. While it was all right not to drink the beverage, it was important that I accepted it. This conduct within the Kichwa culture applied to anything that was offered, including alcohol, which I had considered inappropriate from the position of a research student. Although my behaviour in that instance was corrected and forgivingly taken, for a moment it was a situation that put a strain in my relationship with my hosts and their relationship with the people hosting the gathering (Heins, Unrau and Avram, 2018; Gosovic and Kirkebæk, 2019).

Although “... the ethical problems surrounding ethnographic research are, in fact, very similar to those surrounding other human activities” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 pg.285), this incident reflects another aspect that I had underestimated in what the role of a participant observer entails. The moment I began to immerse myself in the research setting, I was placed in a position between the protocols of the University and the Kichwa culture. Throughout the fieldwork I felt that I stood in the middle of two worlds, constantly in the balance with every action and behaviour that I assumed. This has been one of the toughest parts in the development of this research and also an incessant job. Nonetheless, I recognise that finding a common ground in understanding was a fundamental purpose of this research work.

My Relationship with Marcos and his family

During the three months of fieldwork, I lived in Marcos and his wife Carmen’s home together with their two youngest and unmarried children. The elders in a Kichwa family were typically addressed as “Mama and Papa²” and I was encouraged to call Marcos and Carmen, “Papa” and “Mamita” respectively. However, my relationship with Marcos originated from the stance of a researcher in contact with the gatekeeper and thus, our previous interactions interfered with the customariness of calling him Papa. Furthermore, I felt that in my role as researcher it was important to have a sense of detachment (Coffey, 1999; Gosovic and Kirkebak, 2019). Marcos and Carmen on the contrary, received me with great familiarity and introduced me – in a good-naturedly manner – as their adopted child. Although I must acknowledge that it was comforting as an outsider to be treated in a familiar way, the idea of assuming a position such as that of the gatekeeper’s daughter seemed troublesome in my role of participant as observer. Firstly, because this research required me to speak to many elders and I was not entirely sure of how complying with the role of Marcos’ adoptive child would affect that. Secondly, because being treated as their child also meant that there was an expected ‘daughter-like’ behaviour from me. This was evident, especially during the first weeks of my fieldwork where I was recurrently identified with Marcos’ youngest daughter. In spite of our age difference – I was thirty-two years old when I carried out my fieldwork and Marcos’ daughter had recently graduated high school – the association between us was related to two factors. The first was that just as Marcos’ daughter, I was a woman with no children to rear and my role within the community was similar to hers. As I will discuss with greater detail in the following chapter, the

² Mama means mother and Papa father, although these are Spanish words, it is very common that Kichwa people refer to the elder grandparents in this way. While the word mama is the same in Kichwa language as it is in Spanish, the Kichwa word for father is taita. Moreover, in Spanish language when added either “ita” or “ito” at the end of a word, it turns the word into a diminutive usually used to express affection.

distinction of roles is a significant aspect of Kichwa traditional life. The second factor was that like me and unlike most Kichwa women, she aspired to continue her studies and go to University.

While following Marcos' daughter in her daily activities gave me insight on how Kichwa people live and the type of chores that I was expected to do on a daily basis, Marcos' interest in his daughter learning from me how to achieve her desire of going to university was an expectation that I did not know how to fulfil. The unknowingness of how to react to certain situations or requests was usually what caused tensions in the way I related to the Kichwa people (Coffey, 1999). Another similar instance occurred when I was asked to be godmother to one of Marcos' grandchildren. As I will also discuss in Chapter Five, Kichwa people have adopted practices from Christianity, but there are practices – such as the process of becoming a godparent – that have been adjusted to their own understandings. Following the actual Christian baptism, Kichwa people in Rukullacta embrace the concept of godparents as a way to express affection, where a child can have as many godparents as desired. Though there is an informal ceremony that involves sprinkling water, the procedure has nothing to do with Christianity and it is rather a rite that symbolises affection for the person who as a godparent is now considered part of the family. When I was asked to become a godmother, I misunderstood the request supposing a responsibility that I was not sure I was prepared to take. However, I also thought about how not accepting the request could be taken as offensive when I had been treated as a part of the family all along. Once I understood that the request was actually a manifestation of fondness, I became a godmother. While these issues may seem insignificant, their resolution is what defines the course of field relations which establish the most common ethical concerns related to ethnographic fieldwork (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Heins, Unrau and Avram, 2018). Just as the previous examples, my distresses were regularly related to semantic misunderstandings that were particular to the context. Considering the challenge of managing relations in a context that was foreign to me, I underwent several related situations. However, Marcos and his family opened their home to me and in our mutual attempt to understand, they provided the tools to navigate my way through the knowledge of Kichwa culture.

Reciprocity and compensation

The importance in maintaining good relationships should consider attentiveness to aspects that sustain reciprocity, mutual respect and equality within the relationships (Mason, 2002; Heins, Unrau and Avram, 2018; Gosovic and Kirkebak, 2019). Related to the characteristics of reciprocity, there

have been situations where the studied group feels that the relationship with the researcher is unfair, and this poses the question of what the researcher gives in return (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Heins, Unrau and Avram, 2018; Gosovic and Kirkebæk, 2019). As I will reveal in subsequent chapters, reciprocity is a main component in the way that Kichwa people relate not only to others, but also to nature and their medicine practices. Although I did not experience any issues with compensation, I was told stories of how investigators in the past had not recognised the knowledge that was shared with them. The subject of recognition in the stories I was told had two aspects of relevance; in first place, there was again a semantic misunderstanding, where 'recognition' for the researcher meant that the people involved were acknowledged by including their names in the publications, but for the Kichwa people 'recognition' meant a financial compensation in exchange for the knowledge that was shared. The second aspect, although also related to the fault in understanding reciprocity, was more complicated. In fact, the issue is a topic of political debate to regulate Indigenous knowledge in Ecuador. The problem, which many of the Kichwa people I spoke with and particularly Yachak Angel were aware of, was about the injustices regarding knowledge that had been shared with people and used by industries without giving any credit, acknowledgement or recognition of where that information came from. This was an issue related with the knowledge of medicinal plants that have been converted into medicines, producing revenue and completely disregarding its sources and the social responsibility that it holds. For these reasons, I was very careful with details of reciprocity and compensation that were arranged and given to the people who participated in this research (Gosovic and Kirkebæk, 2019).

Before starting my fieldwork, I negotiated with Marcos a monthly payment for the room and board he offered me during the three-month fieldwork period. The details were based on the amount I received for living expenses as part of my scholarship and on the calculation of living costs for the region. Additional contributions in the form of acquisition of supplies, food and other essentials that the people in the community required, were also offered. In addition, I taught English to some of the children and parents who were interested in learning the language, since contact with English-speaking foreigners was common for Kichwa people. I also provided help in designing and printing stationery for some of the people to help them promote their work, such as presentation cards and handbills containing their contact information to be used in different community gatherings. While these actions may not necessarily be considered forms of compensation, they were forms of exchange of knowledge, skills and in some cases they incurred in monetary costs that I assumed. Apart from the exchanges with the general community, I offered specific compensation to each participant I interviewed. In the case of the interviews with patients, I offered a 3 US dollar mobile-

phone credit voucher to each participant in compensation for the time and information that they shared with me. This value was based on the amount that Kichwa people utilised to top-up mobile phones, which was usually of 1 US dollar. For the interviews with TH, the compensation was specific to each participant and based on their individual demands. The participants for the interviews were renowned THs and with the exception of Yachak Angel who requested a summary of this research upon the completion of my PhD, the compensation was generally in the form of monetary payment comparable to the amount stipulated for a healing session; which ranged from 5 to 10 US dollars, and 20 US dollars that was the standard fee for the Association of Kichwa Women Midwives from the High Napo – AMUPAKIN. All the compensations and living expenses that I used in this research were based on a total monthly budget of 300 US dollars, which is the currency used in Ecuador.

Safety and hazards

In regards to personal safety, a risk assessment form was submitted prior to the fieldwork and potential difficulties, such as access to the field, access to data, stresses of fieldwork, language barriers and the use of electronic devices were examined. Although some areas in the Ecuadorian Amazon have little or no connectivity (telephone or internet), I carried a personal mobile phone to maintain constant communication with supervisors and family. Considering the time difference, a weekly call was scheduled with my supervisors. Contact details between my supervisors and my family in Ecuador were also exchanged in case of emergencies. However, during the three months there were no incidents requiring emergency action. I also made sure all necessary vaccination requirements were completed prior to travel. Nonetheless, there were circumstances that could have not been expected before the fieldwork took place. Regarding access to the field – apart from the lengthy journey to the community of Rukullacta – the language barriers, use of electronic devices and stresses of fieldwork that I have presented, there were no complications. While the access to data was essentially unproblematic, I realised over time that being a woman was a factor that affected the collection of data (Coffey, 1999). Although Kichwa people were open to me, Kichwa customs – as I have mentioned before and will develop in the next Chapter – have traditionally well defined roles for men and women. This meant that I sometimes overstepped the boundaries of what women did. The people I frequently interacted with, who usually made jokes and let me stay with the men regardless of what the women were doing, took this lightly. However, there were some people who began making up stories and waywardly joking about me being Marcos son's mistress. Nevertheless, the family was fond of me and did not take any of those rumours and jokes seriously,

knowing from a more realistic perspective that undertaking my research required spending long hours with Marcos and his son.

Out of all of the time I followed Marcos around, only once he told me that he was going to stay with his friends to have a drink and that it was better that I went home. Considering my safety, I avoided situations that would put me in vulnerable positions and went home that day. While I avoided being around drunken people in general, being a woman automatically placed me in a more vulnerable position than a man. The moment I realised this was a morning where after accompanying my hosts to church we came across one of their acquaintances, a man who was noticeably drunk. As their conversation ended and the meeting came to a close, the man held my hand, pulled himself closer and grabbed my buttocks. This was an occurrence that defined the course of this research, not only because it made me extremely aware of my safety – which instinctively kept me away from certain situations – but also because it made me question my position and perspective with regards to this research. Discussable beyond safety measures, it made me question if the results of this research and the experience would have been different if I were a man or had a different sexual identity. The considerations are rather complex and the questions that from that instant on have occupied my mind have been overwhelming. However, for better or worse, the fact that an incident like that had happened in environments which are more familiar to me – such as any other night out in the UK – made me realise that as a woman, I do experience the world in a different way. The relevance of that particular experience with this research is that it reaffirmed my philosophical stance. The observations of this ethnography are limited to my perspective. While the discussions around this subject are many, the incident cannot be associated particularly to Kichwa culture or men; as a woman, I know as a fact that it is not. This is the answer I have to those questions that regard this research. I acknowledge the limitations that affected the access to certain data, but in my perspective and since I am a woman, I also had access to specific observations, experiences and reflexions that would surely be different if I were not a woman.

Adjustments to the plan of investigation

Ethnography required my involvement in the daily activities of Kichwa lifestyle and I was prepared for the undertakings. However, I underestimated the incessant work that was required in dealing with the differences between my habitual lifestyle and the customary habits of Kichwa people. Although I have no doubt that ethnography was the most appropriate method for this study; I also found ethnographic work to be different from the type of work that I had been used to. One of the

unforeseen aspects of this ethnography concerned my sense of individualism (Coffey, 1999). As I will discuss in the next chapter, Kichwa culture is centred on collective life and as a result, I encountered much more reliant interactions than what I had been used to. Moreover, as a participant observer there was not a moment during the fieldwork where I was not 'on duty'. There were numerous moments where I had to remind myself that I was there to learn about the Kichwa practices and withhold my reaction to correct things that according to my perspective, were correctable. For instance, lecturing about cleanliness when clearly Kichwa people had better practices regarding the use of water resources. Not only managing some of the habitual and sometimes cultural differences was a demanding task at times, but also as I wrote in my reflexive notes, it was "a 24/7 job" (*Reflective diary, 10th October 2017*). As a result, I became exhausted within a few weeks. While I had planned a continued period of exploration, after agreeing with my supervisor, I took three weekend breaks during the three-month period of this ethnographic fieldwork.

On account of learning about Kichwa culture and understanding their ways of interaction, I began to notice how some of the initial considerations for this research were not entirely compatible with their practices. An instance of this was the use of my laptop. As it had been stated in my ethics approval forms, the use of my laptop was restricted to me. However, I started to see that all the family was sharing a computer that Marcos' daughter had – that was given by a traveller that stayed with them in the past – and the children asking their parents for money to use the computer services in town for their homework. Since the use of my laptop was restricted and because I became aware of Kichwa people's concept of sharing, I had to keep my laptop hidden in my room. During my fieldwork I used the laptop minimally, only to transfer and save the audio-recordings and photographs taken. While my process of analysis in the field was also restricted by the limited use of my laptop, I used the weekend breaks to continually analyse the data and develop the interview questions that I had initially planned to do in the field.

Entering and leaving the field

The entrance and the moment where the researcher leaves the field, are periods that need to be addressed with greater attention (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Similar to the time that I needed to adapt to the changes of context, it was important to create situations that allowed the community to adapt to the changes that were implied with my involvement. The initial contact with the Kichwa community of Rukullacta was a factor that advantaged my entrance and welcoming to

the community. As I have accentuated throughout this thesis, the development of relationships firstly with the family that hosted me and later with the other people I interacted with, was crucial to this ethnography (Coffey, 1999). Getting acquainted with the people and the setting was essentially the task I undertook during the first weeks of fieldwork. I acknowledge the relationships that were developed to have been appreciated and considered favourable for the purpose of this research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Coffey, 1999). Likewise, my departure after the three-month stay was a matter of mediation with the entire community (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). For this reason and considering that I left the field near Christmas – and that many Kichwa people also celebrated the holiday – with the help of the family that hosted me, we organised a gathering before I left. Using the remaining budget, we bought food and small toys for the children. The Ramirez family assisted me with the large quantities of cooking and welcomed the people who wanted to join the farewell gathering. Many people in the community expressed their feelings about seeing me leave. One of the things I was told that made me realise that I had accomplished what I intended, was that from the outsiders they had welcomed, only two people felt as part of their culture. The other person – who I had the chance to meet while I was there – was also a researcher that had worked with the Kichwa people for almost ten years. The next morning some of the people joined us for the *guaysa* tea ritual at Marcos' home and later that morning, with many handcrafted gifts, I left (Heins, Unrau and Avram, 2018; Gosovic and Kirkebæk, 2019).

Methods of Analysis

Ethnography goes beyond the methods of reporting. The focus of ethnographic methods rely on the interpretation of what has been observed, the meanings that are culturally constructed about the conditions observed (Geertz, 1973; Mason, 2002; Hoey, 2014). In the analysis, the ethnographer tries to understand how the participants see and interrelate with the world around them, the meanings they give to the activities they engage in, the symbols and the significances of the language used in their experience (Mason, 2002). This analytic process develops from an emic perspective, where the researcher adopts an 'insider view' to identify what is meaningful and from where conclusions can be drawn (Mason, 2002; Hoey, 2014). While this is a matter of continuing debate among anthropologists, specially when the study is concentrated in different cultures (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2002); in contrast, etic approaches start from broader and generalisable principles that are applied to observe, analyse and often compare cultures, and for which the researcher maintains an 'outsider view' (Morris, Leung and Ames, 1999). Though largely depending on the epistemological stance, this study follows the argument supporting the questionability of being able to take other's perspective. According to Geertz (1983) and aligned to Kant's (1781) ideas, assuming other's perspectives is not only an impossible task, but it is also unnecessary. Correspondingly, the interpretation of cultural events can be achieved by understanding the meanings of the symbols and signs present in such contexts (Geertz, 1973). Given the interest to understand the health-related practices of Kichwa people, but considering that many indigenous interactions do not rely solely on verbal practices (Waldram, 2015), semiotic analysis was relevant to the interpretation and understanding of Kichwa health-related activities.

Analysing the researcher as a tool of data collection

This ethnographic research required a deep, emotional, physical and intellectual engagement (Coffey, 1999; Mason, 2002) and thus, the awareness of the position and influence I had throughout this research is important. As described previously, the interactionist framework used for this ethnography regards my perspective as researcher with the same importance as the perceptions of the culture in study. Hughes & Sharrock (1997) acknowledge that individuals within a society live in an environment that already has particular meanings for them. In agreement with Geertz's (1973) definition of culture, that based on Max Weber and Gilbert Ryle's ideas understands culture as a system of shared meanings or "webs", I argue that the understanding of Kichwa people's lifestyles and beliefs goes beyond the mere description of events. Following Geertz's (1973) conclusion that

the interpretation of cultural events is attained through the understanding of the symbols and meanings that they have in specific contexts, the understanding of Kichwa people and their culture entailed the exploration of meanings within the observations of their practices. However, in the process of understanding how the Kichwa people lived and as the interpreter of their practices, my own perceptual framework also required consideration. The experiences and context that have influenced the way I understand the world around me, affect the observations that this thesis presents (Coffey, 1999; Mason, 2002; Baszanger and Dodier, 2004; Hoey, 2014). Hence, the importance of recognising and reflecting on my own preconceived meanings of the world as material for the results that are analysed and presented in the following chapters.

On account of Kant's (1781) views on knowledge, I recognise that my observations were limited by my perception; thus, the production of knowledge about the Kichwa people of Rukullacta did not arise solely on my experience in the field. The *a priori* knowledge regarding indigenous peoples, moreover, the concepts of health, illness, nature, etc., with which I started this exploration not only affected my initial observations, but have also been amended by the experience. While the process was a rather personal one, I acknowledge that it was through the assessment of my personal judgments that I have come to a better understanding of the Kichwa practices. As described by Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) the role of the ethnographer fluctuates throughout the fieldwork. This means that the researcher works with the degrees of detachment and engagement of the activities and observations that she partakes in. While this research was based on my role of participant as observer – which means that I openly maintained my role as researcher and observer throughout the study – it was a natural result of participation and interaction with the Kichwa people that subjective accounts were generated. Not without the strain of finding the accurate levels of engagement with the activities and the participants of this study, it was inevitable to build relationships within the community. In alignment with the critical ethnographic stance, this experience has presented the opportunity to realise that trying to understand Kichwa culture from a completely detached stance would have only reaffirmed the biased preconceptions I had about indigenous people and their practices. I have endeavoured to identify all the personal values and beliefs that could interfere with the results of this research. While I acknowledge that some biases might still not be evident to me, I aim to reveal the process of overcoming my own bias through the way that the results of this research are being presented and discussed. This process has entailed the analysis and query of my own observations, attitudes and beliefs. I find no advantage in concealing the difficulty of this process, for it is in this process that the strength of this ethnographic study remains.

The iterative process

The iterative component of ethnographic research, while briefly reviewed in some texts (Geertz, 1973; Thomas, 1993; Madison, 2004; Hoey, 2014), was an element of crucial significance to this study. As reviewed, the iterative nature of ethnographic approaches consists in the recurring reflexive dialogue that occurs in relation to one's accounts and that fosters the conclusive results of the research (Geertz, 1973; Madison, 2004; Hoey, 2014). In short, the iterative process is a continual self-reflexive dialogue in which ideas begin to develop. This frequentative reasoning method, was to me, a natural and inevitable process of making sense of the events that as an ethnographer I was experiencing. To be explicit about what the iterative process was for me, I will expound it in two different moments of my process of investigation: the first, occurring while I undertook my fieldwork and the second, throughout the analysis and development of this thesis.

As described in earlier sections of this chapter, there were various moments during my fieldwork that exposed me to experiences that I was not expecting to be part of research work. Needless to say, most of my experiences during the time I lived with the Kichwa people evoked emotions – some good feeling and others not – that I did not always know how to understand. While I routinely recorded my emotions as a form of chronicling my thoughts, observations and experience, it was not until I was in a position to reflect back on those considerations that they began to make sense. Although my less-subjective observations straightforwardly helped me develop the questions for the interviews, know where to focus my attention during fieldwork and adjust my plans, the emotional responses I collected in my diaries also held valuable information about the process and topic of this research. For instance, reflecting on my accounts, I began to see that most of my emotional reactions came in response to things that were unusual to me and after recurring reflexion, I came to recognise how often these indicated cultural contrasts. Furthermore, as I reflected on some of my subjective annotations I also began to perceive different emotional in-the-moment responses, that in review, elucidated how related the change was to my widened understanding of Kichwa culture. My development of knowledge about the Kichwa people and their health-related practices was the result of repeated reflexive dialogues with my fieldnotes and further insights that I continued to collect in my diaries even after the fieldwork period. Actually, the most concentrated reflexivity occurred while I transcribed and analysed the data; once, as Thomas (1993) describes:

“The ‘scientific logic’, rigor, and – unlike most other sciences – the laying out of the researchers’ own potential intrusions (e.g., biases in the questions we ask, shaping of the research problem, or choice of analytic framing concepts) [were] sufficiently well established...” (Pg.13).

As presented in Chapter Three, this recurring reflexivity was the groundwork for reframing the research process and rectifying the research question. Not only through iterative thought did the issues of importance become visible and led me to the related theoretical literature, but the reason the iterative process was imperative to this research was because of the matters of interpretation and representation. As discussed within the Theoretic Frameworks, representation itself consists on iterative processes that involve portraying the observations and giving them meaning; recurring processes of presenting and re-presenting (Hall, 1997). Through this iterative process and within the theoretical framework, the issues of representation of indigenous cultures and my exploration of Kichwa practices were linked. While I referred to the iterative process in earlier sections and will continue to discuss it throughout the unfolding of this thesis, the development of this research has been more than anything, a continuous process of dialogue and reconsideration.

The process of analysis

As presented earlier, this study used multiple methods of data collection. In awareness of the challenges of analysing different forms of data (Silverman, 2013), this research required a customised process of analysis. Not only was the analysis an iterative process, but also considering the importance in understanding the perceptions of Kichwa people, it was fundamental to analyse the data through an approach that facilitated the examination of Kichwa people’s accounts of their health-related practices and beliefs. For this reason, I used a combination of approaches for the analysis of the gathered data. Considering the iterative process of deriving conclusions in ethnographic research (Hoey, 2014), the analysis of data was based on a recurring analytic process comprising of two phases, each based on a different analytical approach (see figure 10). The first phase of the analysis process focussed on the identification of specific aspects that were relevant to the patient-healer relationship and the Kichwa health-related beliefs. This initial phase of analysis began in parallel with the collection of data during fieldwork (Silverman, 2013; Hoey, 2014) and based on the observations recorded over fieldnotes and photographic material, were the basis for

the development of the themes and subjects explored through the in-depth interviews. The data collected through the interviews was analysed in the second phase of the analysis process.

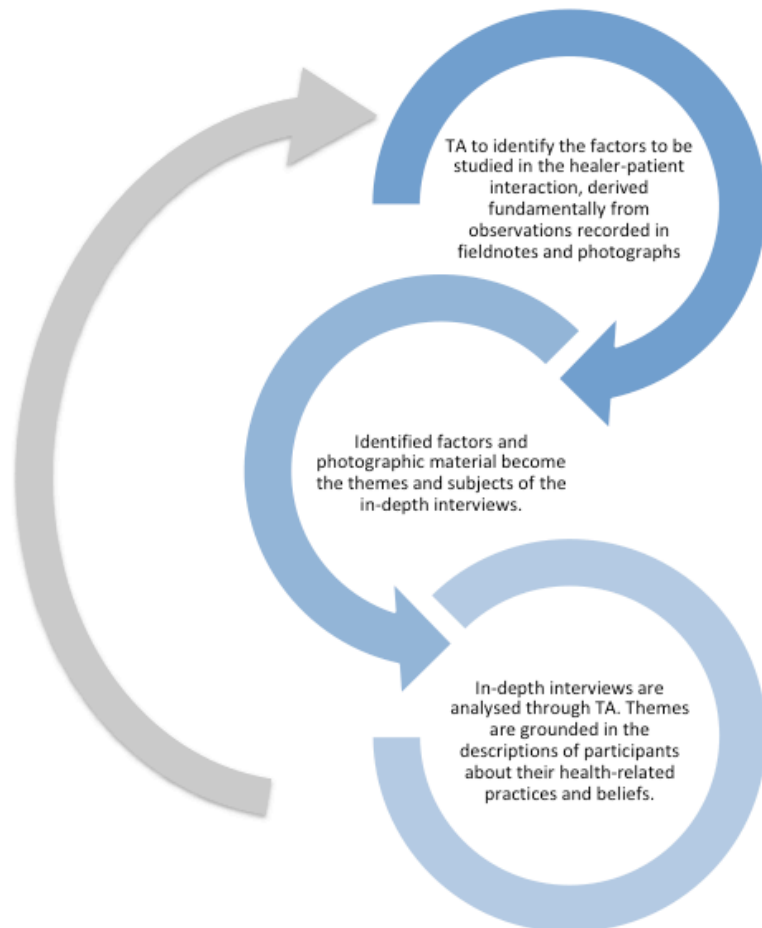


Figure 10 *Process of iterative Analysis*

This first phase of analysis focused on assessing the observed healer-patient interaction through thematic analysis (TA). The themes from this first phase of analysis constituted the topics that were discussed with participants in the in-depth interviews. The themes were evaluated in a continual process for the development of the interviews, but also afterwards for the identification of themes that resulted from my observations. The TA was based on themes grounded in the data collected (Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2013) essentially from the data collected through fieldnotes and photographic material. Moreover, in alignment with my philosophical stance, the TA was based on the coding and analysis principles described in constructionist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014). As Charmaz (2014) observes, *“Entering the participant’s world of implicit meaning is a*

privilege in which you may experience precious shared moments” (pg. 98). As discussed earlier, the results this research presents not only developed from the shared experiences between the Kichwa people and myself, but also reflect the points of common understanding; bearing in mind the limitations of my perception over the knowledge of Kichwa people (Riessman, 1993). Considering that my observations of Kichwa culture were more general than the data discussed in the in-depth interviews, I have maintained the results from this first phase of analysis separate from the results of the second phase; nonetheless, the themes were related. In order to examine and understand the meanings and symbolic representations in the context of Kichwa culture, the analysis was complemented by a second approach that focussed on the way Kichwa people described their practices and beliefs.

The second phase of analysis was focussed on the accounts of the participants in the in-depth interviews. Since the data from the interviews was complementary to the other methods of data collected, this combined analysis approach offered a recurring opportunity to evaluate the themes and meanings that were being derived during the observational process and after. The second stage of analysis was undertaken in the United Kingdom (UK) after my return from the field. TA was also used in the second stage; however, the TA in the second phase was focussed on the themes that appeared in the descriptions of the participants. In order to mirror the process of analysis, the findings resulting from the first phase of analysis are presented in chapter five and the results for the second phase are presented in chapter six. Needless to say, the association between the general values of Kichwa culture and how these were reflected on the specific health-related practices, and the assessment between my observations and the descriptions of Kichwa people, will be discussed throughout the following chapters.

Organising, transcribing and coding

The data was stored manually in folders that were chronologically organised and as the process of analysis developed, the data was stored in folders organised by themes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). As Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) consider:

“The reorganisation of data into categories provides an important infrastructure for later searching and retrieval” (pg. 193)

This form of data organisation was fitting to the recurring process for this analysis and allowed a gradual evaluation and verification of the methods (Silverman, 2013) and developing conclusions. Nonetheless, to carefully ground the themes on the data I paid close attention to the transcription and coding processes (Charmaz, 2014). As considered earlier, the TA was based on the coding processes derived from that described in a constructionist grounded theory approach and as Charmaz (2014) conveys:

“Consistent with a grounded theory emphasis on emergence, the questions I raise about these codes arise [arose] from my reading of the data” pg. 112

This approach to the analysis of the data was also based on Jackson’s (2012) judgment that in order to draw conclusions about the meanings - for instance of health - the elucidation of the cultural differences was needed before patterns between different understandings could be appreciated. Since the ultimate intention was to assess the possibility of accurately understanding indigenous practices, I considered the differences and similarities that appeared naturally through the process.

Considering the combined methods of data collection, the transcription process was only required for the interview’s audio-recordings. The transcription process was carried out in the UK and it began with a rough transcription of the interviews. I later re-transcribed the interviews and included the details needed for analysis. However, I went back to the recordings numerous times since it was in the tone of what things were said that I sometimes was able to identify what the participants meant. As I have discussed, the complexities around language was challenging, this made the use of any system for coding problematic. The interchange of languages and the complexities of Kichwa dialect when speaking Spanish, made it impossible for a mechanised system to capture the insights within the data. For this reason, I coded the data manually using a system of colours and memos to identify and organise the themes within the data. In addition, I took notes throughout the process, which was an strategic part of the analysis (Charmaz, 2014). I began the coding process early, which allowed me throughout the entire process to evaluate the codes and also begin a comparative assessment between the codes generated from the interviews, the fieldnotes and the notes I was taking throughout the analysis process. As Charmaz (2014) explains, coding not only reveal the processes in the participants experience, but can also describe feelings and events of what happened. As described previously, this research was based on the interactionist framework that considers the interaction I had with the participants in the process of constructing meaning. The

transcribing and coding processes proved that the interactions were not limited to the encounters in the field.

As Charmaz (2014) notes, the early coding helped “*identify focussed codes quickly*” (pg. 112) and according to the patterns I began to identify I continued the “*selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesise, integrate, and organize large amounts of data*” (pg. 113). From the comparison between the codes resulting from the fieldnotes and the interviews, I realised that as Holstein and Gubrium (2004) had anticipated, the narratives between me and the interviewees needed to be bridged. The codes generated from the different forms of data were reviewed and resulted in the themes that are presented in Chapters Five and Six.

Reflexivity and positionality

Whilst I contemplate my current position, I cannot help to discern the enculturation process that has taken place within me. Actually, as I reflect upon the issues raised, I realise that the interest of my research question and the account of this thesis, would not be possible outside this experience. As a western educated *Mestizo* woman, I am the embodiment of the racial blend and influence of European beliefs that marked the history of most Latin American countries. In a way and through the evidence of my upbringing, it is clear how the supremacy of western values in modern Ecuadorian society has overshadowed the value of the indigenous knowledge. I am *Mestizo*, which means that in some degree I am indigenous as well. Though I have clarified my critique concerning Smith’s (1999) posture about research methodologies and indigenous people, I acknowledge the problems she exposes and consider that sensible research is an opportunity to renew the relationships between cultures. In a different instance, but alike, as an Ecuadorian native living in Britain, I am presently experiencing a cultural integration within me. Though I have come across some cultural contrasts in my experience in the UK (ranging from food to weather), the strains of this experience have cultivated my understanding, perception and ability to adjust to the contexts of my changing reality. In spite of the cultural encounters that have triggered some conflicting thoughts within me, the enculturation process has been entirely my choice. Certainly, I consider this to be the most imperative factor in any cultural integration and explains the difference between a process of enculturation and one of acculturation; in brief, the difference between my experience and that of many indigenous people.

Though I harmonise with the idea that there are certain parallels between cultures and that the similarities are more important than the differences between them (Lévi-Strauss, 1963); I consider a risk in assuming universalities across different cultures. For instance, while the biomedical meaning of health is positively accepted among western cultures, its applicability is not extensive to all cultural contexts. Therefore, the expanding notion of universal health-care coverage represents a latent problem. Essentially, I believe that the success of an integrated health system requires greater openness and a deeper understanding of other cultures. Approaching health-care through the idea that modern medicine is the civilised way to deal with health entails the judgement that one culture is superior to the other. This is precisely how Said (1978) considers that academic knowledge becomes a justification of western colonisation. Notwithstanding, my intention through this research is far from defining what ways of medicine are truer and righter. In fact, this type of judgement is distant from the objectives of social science (Collin, 1997). Certainly, I am aware that my participant observation has put me in the locus of a tool from which the realities of the particular indigenous group were perceived and through which these arguments surely find resonance; however, these are the type of explanations and arguments that qualitative research is about (Mason, 2002). I consider that though to different extents, no one is exempt from its own contextual reference (Geertz, 1983; Mason, 2002; Baszanger and Dodier, 2004). In many ways my perceptual framework is limited by these factors, but as Hoey (2014) maintains:

"It is undeniably important to question and understand how these factors have bearing on the construction of theory and conduct of scholarly life. Personal and professional experiences, together with historical context, lead individual researchers to their own particular methodological and theoretical approaches. This too is an important, even if unacknowledged, source." (Hoey 2014, pg. 3)

Considering this, what I aimed to generate is a different truth about the realities of indigenous people and their health practices, surely not the right truth nor an absolute one, just the truth of what I see. Nonetheless, a different truth, from where these cultures can begin to be understood in a different way. I think for this reason the consistency between my approach and my personal experience, is essential (Hoey, 2014). Whether my standpoint adheres to the social moralities or whether they have changed along the way, the value I provided to this work, is the value of my authentic perspective.

Summary

This chapter has offered a detailed account of the proposed methodology and methods that were undertaken to answer the research question that emerged from the review of the existing literature. It has been shown that the commonly adopted ethnographic approaches used in research related to the understanding of indigenous cultures are appropriate and of value in the generation of knowledge related to indigenous people. Having set-out the ethnographic methodological approach to the study, this thesis now moves on to present the findings from my research. This is done across two main chapters that present, firstly, the location of values within the Kichwa culture and a detailed description of the setting, and secondly, a more detailed account of the characteristics of traditional medical practices in the Kichwa culture.

Chapter Five: Findings – Part 1 Locating the values of Kichwa culture

Introduction

This chapter presents my observations of the Kichwa people as an introduction, but also with the purpose of revealing my own perceptions and continual process of understanding while I immersed myself in the field and thereafter during analysis. Comparable to the way I became acquainted to the Kichwa ways of living before understanding their health-related practices, this chapter aims to introduce the reader to the context and cultural values of the Kichwa people in particular. A further justification for this format is related to the emerging narrative themes in the literature review, which indicated that to understand traditional medicine requires one to go beyond the essentialist idea of individual embodiment, and recognise *holism* (Turner, 1989; Maher, 1999; Cardona-Arias, 2012; Waldram, 2015; White, 2015), and the location of power beyond the individual. I argue that to understand Kichwa health-related values and practices, it is essential to provide insights *first* into the social world of these people; central to this is the argument that the former cannot be understood accurately without understanding the latter. This will be done partly chronologically, through the next section's description of the setting, my central interactions and then by exploring the Kichwa cultural values from a broader perspective. The core values of Kichwa culture have been arranged in five main themes: i) the importance of collective living, ii) the relationship between people and nature, iii) relationships with ancestors and spirits, iv) enduring strength, and; v) the value of knowledge that comes from experience. The general cultural values identified in this first part will be examined with respect to the health-related practices of the Kichwa people in the next chapter.

The importance of context

To begin to answer the research question and address the gaps that represent the focus of this research, this chapter centres on my experience of living with the Kichwa people of Rukullacta and the exploration of their customs and beliefs. In order to discern the values present in the health-related practices of Kichwa people and explore whether it is possible to understand their health practices, it is important to consider the context where these values comes from. As discussed in the

previous chapter, ethnographic research is characterised by the gathering of data taking place in the actual location of the research's interest (Silverman, 2013) and the ethnographic process aims to explain how things work in that particular place (Mason, 2002). Therefore, introducing the context from which the descriptions of Kichwa traditional healing come from is essential to the understanding of them. The findings of this ethnography have been divided into two parts. The first part introduced in this chapter corresponds to a general exploration of the Kichwa people of Rukullacta, their culture and broad values. In this regard, this chapter opens with a description of the setting and the primary interactions of this ethnography, and it is then followed by the findings corresponding to the general values that underlie Kichwa culture. The cultural values of Kichwa people observed throughout this work have been arranged into five main themes: i) Collective living, ii) Relationships with nature, iii) Ancestors and spirits, iv) Endurance and strength, and v) Experienced knowledge. Chapter 6 will then focus on the findings specific to the characteristics of Kichwa medicine and addresses the values of Kichwa culture that are present in their health-related practices.

The findings covered in this chapter, are centred on my observations in the field. This first description of findings is based primarily on the data recorded through my fieldnotes and supported by photographic material and interview quotes. That is to say that the data presented in this chapter reflects primarily my perspective - as a participant observer - in the interaction with the Kichwa people of Rukullacta. The second part presented in the next chapter will then centre on the descriptions of Kichwa people collected principally through the unstructured interviews also used for this ethnographic investigation.

The research setting

I reached the town of Archidona on the 29th of September of 2017. The Kichwa community of Rukullacta is a 20-minute walk from the entrance to the town of Archidona in the province of Napo in the Ecuadorean Amazon region. This is almost a rough five-hour journey from the capital city of Ecuador, Quito. Rukullacta means old town in Kichwa language, "ruku" is the Kichwa word for old and "llacta" the word for town. Rukullacta is one of seventeen communities that constitute the "Pueblo Kichwa de Rukullacta". The "Pueblo Kichwa de Rukullacta" (PKR) meaning the Kichwa peoples of Rukullacta is a social and community-based organization consisting of 2,262 registered people that constitute it. However, is important to note the distinction between the PKR and the

community of Rukullacta. The first being an association with social and political purposes to protect and promote the Kichwa culture; and the latter, the place where I stayed during the three months that this research took place. Nonetheless, Rukullacta is a very different town than Archidona and it is worth noting that Archidona - and not Rukullacta - is the place that generally Kichwa people, and I, accustomed to call “the town”.

The stories about how the town of Archidona got its name were amongst the first stories I was told when I arrived. It is said that the location of Archidona was initially the settlement of the Kichwa people; it was the original location of Rukullacta. However, when the *colonos* arrived and saw so many people living there, they called the place Archiruna; deriving from the Kichwa words “archi” which means many and “runa” meaning people. With the passage of time, the place was inhabited by the *colonos* and the name eventually changed to Archidona. However, as the other story goes, the name was attributed to the town of Archidona in the southern province of Malaga in Spain. According to what the other storytellers say, the Ecuadorean town of Archidona got its name after the first Spanish missionary priest that arrived and settled the place, who in the longing for his hometown renamed the town after his homeland in Spain. The town of Archidona is the nearest municipality to the Kichwa community of Rukullacta. The population of Archidona is around 4,000 people, most of which are *Mestizos*, but during the three months I lived in the community, I met quite a few Kichwa people that because of various motives decided to live in the town instead. As one would expect, the town has some Spanish colonial characteristics in its architecture, though this has mainly been conserved in the centre where the church is located. The rest of the town is rather a conglomeration of concrete buildings that facilitate principally, the commercial interaction between the Kichwa and *Mestizo* populations. Notwithstanding this, the town of Archidona is also the place where most of the cultural exchange takes place; Kichwa festivals and other sociocultural events, generally occur in the town.

Rukullacta, the settlement of Kichwa people

In contrast, Rukullacta as well as the other sixteen Kichwa communities are visibly less developed. Although there are schools, community stadia and even medical centres near some of the Kichwa communities, it is easy to notice the relative absence of concrete in the roads and houses. After all the town of Archidona still constitutes an important scene for the Kichwa people. It is in the town where most children study and where many Kichwa families acquire much of their needs and meet on Sundays after attending church. Furthermore, there is a correlation regarding the distance –

between the Kichwa communities and Archidona – and the extent of development of each community, with Rukullacta being the closest community to the town. To illustrate the observation, the houses in Kichwa communities that are closer to the town tend to be built of concrete and have steel roof sheets (See picture 1), while the houses in communities that are distant from the town, have more traditional appearances.



Picture 1 (left) shows an average house in Rukullacta constructed with steel roof sheets and concrete. Houses in Rukullacta also have access to electricity.

Picture 2 (right) shows a traditional Kichwa house. The steel roof sheets in the picture were placed to prevent intruders from getting in, since this was not the main home for the family.

Traditional Kichwa houses are built from natural materials collected from the immediate jungle (See picture 2). The typical structure consists of tall tree trunks placed vertically across the middle and connected to smaller trunks in the corners of the house by horizontal wood stems. The roofs are made from two different types of tropical leaves, these are woven together and then arranged one a level above the other (See pictures 3 and 4). The outer walls are usually made out of bamboo stems and on the inside, although there are no structural divisions, the sleeping space is distinguished with a 2 meter squared surface built at approximately half a meter above the ground. Although most commonly the houses have a rectangular shape, I was told that in the past and in further Kichwa settlements in the Amazon region, the houses remain round in shape. The use of natural materials in traditional houses mirrors the importance of nature in Kichwa culture, a topic that will be developed in the following sections of this chapter. On a basic structure, the sleeping surface and the log fire compose the crucial areas of the house (See picture 5). The log fire while not commonly located in the centre, constitutes the very central aspect of the domestic Kichwa life. While most Kichwa families no longer sleep together, the log fire is still regarded as a main part of the house where cooking, rituals and social gatherings take place. In addition, the log fire is kept lit throughout the day, principally for cooking purposes and to keep mosquitoes away, but also because the smoke

helps preserve the natural materials from which the roof is made. I visited several houses and had the opportunity to see how modern construction had influenced the traditional Kichwa homes, with some traditional houses being two or three levels high (See picture 6) and having room divisions within.



Picture 3 (left) shows the weaving technique using fresh tropical leaves to build the roofs of traditional Kichwa houses.



Picture 4 (right) shows in detail the roof of a traditional Kichwa house. The leaves have naturally dried and hardened to provide the necessary shelter.



Picture 5 (left) shows the inside of a basic traditional Kichwa house.



Picture 6 (right) shows a two level house near the riverbank. This is an example of the influence of modern construction in traditional Kichwa homes where a mix of traditional and non-traditional materials was used.

As mentioned before, in the communities closer to Archidona many buildings are made out of modern materials. Although most houses in Rukullacta maintain some traditional aspects, almost every house had some part of the structure made out of concrete blocks and steel. While in Rukullacta there were no asphalted paths other than the road connecting to the main highway, the pathways were ordered and partially covered with cobblestone. Likewise, the plots of land were well

defined. In some cases one plot of land held many houses, this depends on the size and number of male offspring in the family, since the daughters will customarily move out and live with the husband's extended family.

Rukullacta is a community of almost 150 hectares and while nobody could give me an exact number of inhabitants, in rough calculations – assuming an average of 8 people per household – I estimated approximately 160 people living in the community. In addition, it is the oldest Kichwa community in the area and therefore, home to the PKR organisation, the Kichwa people's coliseum and various government-run centres, including information and health centres (See picture 7). Although Kichwa communities in closer proximity to the town – like Rukullacta – appear more crowded with houses in near vicinity to each other, as expected from the environmental features of the region, the jungle is still visible (See picture 8). Needless to say that Kichwa homes are inherently framed by nature, but nature also plays an important part of Kichwa people's lifestyle. For instance, it is quite representative of Kichwa families and particularly of Kichwa healers to have a *chakra* or plot in the grounds of their house where food is grown. The *chakra* is a source of sustenance for the Kichwa household and also a representation of the strong sense of reliance between Kichwa people and nature that will be discussed later in this chapter.



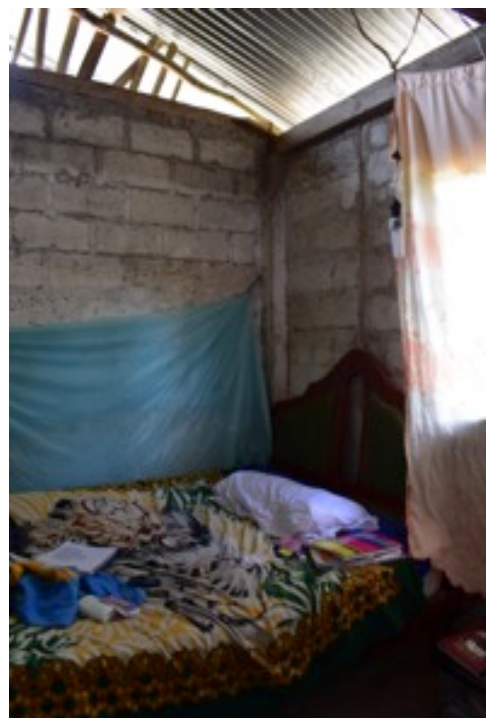
Picture 7 (left) is a sketch map of the community of Rukullacta.

Picture 8 (right) shows the house in Rukullacta where I stayed throughout the fieldwork. While it was a larger house than most in Rukullacta, the natural surroundings are intrinsic to the location.

Place of residence and individual space

The place I stayed throughout the three-month fieldwork period was home to one of the traditional healers that participated in this research, Yachak Marcos Ramirez and his family. Their home was a

four-bedroom house; with a kitchen, a laundry and latrine space, a small *chakra* and the traditionally built round log fire space attached to it (See picture 9). Although the house was not always that spacious – additions have been built over time – at different periods it accommodated all the members of the family. During the fieldwork period, I was assigned a private room (See pictures 10 and 11) where I was able to securely keep my research equipment and seclude myself to either prepare my research work or to relieve my overwhelm. As I will discuss in later sections, Kichwa culture is centred on communal living and since Marcos and his wife were the elder members of the family, their home was usually the place where the family gathered, which meant there was usually company around me.



Picture 9 (Top Left) the traditional log fireplace

Picture 10 (Right) my accommodation in Marcos' home in Rukullacta

Picture 11 (Bottom left) Secured door to my room accommodation

Although being around people's company was the way through my research and an essential aspect of ethnographic work, the level of interaction with others was unusual. In contrast to my accustomed individuality, being frequently in the company of people raised an awareness of my own personal space. As recorded in my diary:

“I would say this is one thing I am having difficulty with and it might be very personal. I sometimes get overwhelmed when there are too many people around me and there’s always lot’s of people here; they come and go, but there is always someone. While I recognise and appreciate the way they live so close to each other – physically and emotionally – I am used to having my space” (Reflective diary, 9th October 2017).

“I’m not used to having people with me all the time. But this is so important in Kichwa life” (Reflective diary, 12th October 2017).

In evaluation, the contrast pointed to an important characteristic of Kichwa culture, which was also the first distinction I identified between the Kichwa culture and my own. The importance of family and the community is a topic that requires greater consideration and therefore, I will discuss it with more detail in the following sections. In spite of the strains of facing and adjusting to the cultural differences, the daily interactions – as anticipated within the method of participant observation – were the way I experienced Kichwa culture, their values and practices. However, as I have also reviewed in the Methods chapter, a great part of my fieldwork was centred on my relationship with the Ramirez family. Considering that Marcos and his family were also my hosts and gatekeepers, the interaction with the family was not only inevitable, but also essential to the overall process of generating data. Considering my philosophical stance and the limits of my perception, I argue that my observations of Kichwa culture and TM were also defined by this interaction. Marcos and his family were key participants in this research, giving me the opportunity to engage with Kichwa traditions, but Marcos particularly, allowed me to follow him closely; this offered me the chance to observe and learn about the medical practices, but also gave me insight into what life for a Kichwa TH was like. For this reason, I present Marcos’ accounts independently in the following section.

Insights to the life of a Kichwa traditional healer

It was in Archidona where I first met Marcos, the elder Kichwa healer who I stayed with during the three-month fieldwork period. I had actually met Marcos before, almost one year prior to the start this research, when I went to make an initial contact with the community. My first impression of Marcos was enthralling. I remember quite clearly seeing him standing a few metres away. He was wearing a black short-sleeved shirt and jean shorts with his long grey hair combed back. Marcos turned seventy years of age shortly after I left. Although one could read his age by looking deeply into his face, he had the physique of a man much younger than him. It was his strength and vitality

that indicated – when I first saw him – that he was a *Yachak*. The word *Yachak* means wise man or woman in Kichwa language and it is the most common term used to describe a Kichwa TH. Actually, both Marcos and his wife, Carmen, were elders with knowledge of Kichwa medicine. However, it was Marcos who carried out the traditional healing ceremonies, essentially because – in the way that Kichwa people described it – he had the “power to see”, which is characteristic of a *Yachak*. In comparison, his wife had great knowledge of female health and medicine, but she did not have the ability to “see”. As it will be presented and discussed with detail in Chapter 6, a *Yachak* can be either male or female, but it was common for the women I encountered to develop the knowledge related to women’s health instead.



Picture 12 (left) *Marcos climbing a tree to grab a fruit*



Picture 13 (top right) *Marcos in one of the visits to a sacred waterfall wearing his traditional outfit*



Picture 14 (bottom right) *shows Marcos in his home fixing a tambour like instrument, a Kichwa drum*

Marcos’ life was a story that he loved telling and he would find any opportune moment to tell me about his early years. He talked about his life experiences with the same enthusiasm as when he climbed trees (see picture 12). The remembrance of his mother’s death at the age of four was an event that marked his life. “*After that I lost my vision of what I remember about being with my mother and father*” he said once as he was telling me about his mother (Notes, 26th October 2017).

Marcos's recall and detailed memory was impressive. As a child, his father left looking for work and he was left to the care of his uncles. While it was through his uncles that he was introduced to the knowledge of healing, he remembered his childhood with a sort of poetic hardship that I find reflective of his present-day character. In reminiscence of his youth, he said:

"The only thing was survival, looking for food. Sometimes I had to eat only the leftovers. A piece of cassava that was left, I would wash it and eat it. Other times, I would climb up a sweet-lime tree. That was my greatest wish. I would go very early in the morning to climb up the tree and stay there eating the sweet-limes" (Marcos Ramirez, 27th October 2017).

Marcos was also a musician and very well known for his musical talents within the community. In fact, people commonly addressed him as "Waira Churi", which is the name of his music group. His passion for music was so resounding, he had traditional musical instruments hanging all around his house and when music was not playing, he could easily be found with his Pingullo – a traditional Kichwa wind instrument, similar to a flute - or any of his other musical devices (See picture 14). It was evident to me that Marcos enjoyed his musical popularity and was noticeably proud of his musical accomplishments. Regarding his enthusiasm for music, in my early remarks I wrote:

"In the night he just listens to music. It's easy to see how much he loves music. His whole family is involved in it. They are called the 'Waira Churis', which means 'sons of the wind'. I have not yet seen them play, but they are planning an event in November that I will be able to see. Although I have seen photos of them: One photo that Marcos treasures and a poster where Mamita [Carmen] is posing as she advertises the group. From what I get, the men play and the women dance. They have won lots of awards and are actually quite famous around here" (Reflective diary, 9th October 2017).

In Marcos' account "Waira Churi" meant a son without a father. It was after a dispute with his father and in memory of his mother's death that he came up with the name for the group. *"I have been a maternal orphan. My mother's face, I do not know. It was as if it was gone in the wind. When there is a single mother, that in Kichwa is called waira guagua, it is as if it [the child] came from the wind" (Marcos Ramirez, 27th October 2017).* It was not hard to recognise the link between Marcos' fascination for music and the rooted memories of his life, but when I asked him about what music meant to him, his answer was, *"The music is to maintain, the music of our ancestors" (Notes, 22nd November 2017).* Marcos considered that the reason he founded a group was to promote the roots

of his culture. However, that was not the only time I heard about the ‘maintaining’ of the Kichwa culture and while that is a discussion that I will leave for following chapters, undeniably Marcos’ musicianship facilitated my understanding of the importance of music for the Kichwa people and the particular link to their medicine.

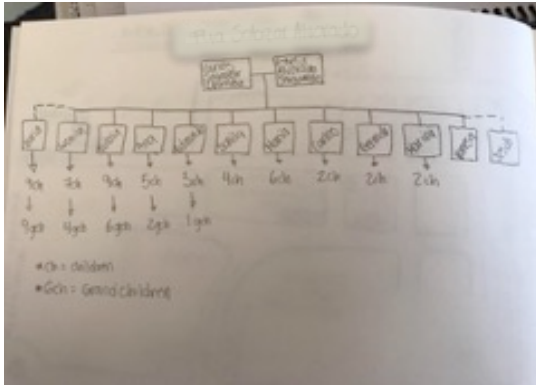
Although Marcos’ aloneness was the essence of the “Waira Churis”, he was in fact the head of a reasonably large family. In Kichwa culture it was customary for men to marry when they reached a certain age and thus, the parents usually arranged their children’s marriage. It was Marcos’ older brother that looked for a wife and advised him to get married. As a result, Marcos and Carmen have been married since 1966. Recalling his marriage and the way he was introduced to his wife, he said:

“In that time, counsel [of the elders] was very serious and sacred. I didn’t even have an idea of what it meant to be in a family. It was all a secret. He [referring to his brother] used to tell me, ‘that woman is going to be your wife’. I was 18 and a half and she was 15 and a half. You had to get married whether you wanted or not, it was obligatory when you reached a certain age. They came here [Rukullacta] only between parents. Only they knew. The elders would reach an agreement and then you would have to get married” (Marcos Ramirez, 27th October 2017).

Their first daughter came when Carmen was seventeen years old. Today Marcos and Carmen are parents to twelve children, ten of which are their biological children and two that were raised as their own. In addition, they are grandparents to forty-nine children and great-grandparents to twenty-two more (See picture 15). After Marcos became a father and with the advice of the elders about the future of his children, he left his family to work with the Italian missionaries where he was trained and worked as a catechist³ for 35 years. The “Mission Josefina” had a notable influence in the lives of many Kichwa people in the province of Napo. Marcos was retired. However, during the three months I lived in Marcos’ home, I accompanied Marcos and Carmen to Church on several Sunday mornings. Furthermore, Marcos’ religious instruction had also influenced his practice of Kichwa medicine. For instance, in a dialogue we had where I asked about his ability to heal, he told me that sometimes he asks patients to pray the Catholic’s “Our Father” prayer, because in the prayer it says: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” and as Marcos explained, it is the will of “God” that heals and not his own. The notion that ‘the power to heal does not belong to the healer’

³ A catechist is a person that imparts the teachings of Christianity. This is the term that Marcos used to describe his work while working for the “Mission Josefina” and thus, the reason I have chosen to use it for this thesis.

is a topic that I will develop in detail in chapter six. However, it was interesting for me to have a direct opportunity to see how Kichwa and Catholic beliefs have synchronised in current Kichwa lifestyles.



Picture 15 (left) is a diagram of Marcos' family.



Picture 16 (Right) shows the "Waira Churi" group before a presentation at the Kichwa People's Coliseum in Rukullacta.

In addition, Marcos had a great admiration of nature. Amongst the stories he told me, he had many about the wildlife and his life in the jungle. Apart from the house in Rukullacta, Marcos owns a few hectares of land – given by his father – in the deeper rainforest, which he calls "el Para". El Para is a site located in the Province of Napo that although it is not recognised as a reserve, it is also known as "El Para Reserve". Regarding how much Marcos cherished that particular land, he remembered his father saying "that was a land that no body can take away from you" (Notes, 27th October 2017). This was a remark that had reference to the Agrarian Reform that took place in Ecuador in 1964 and that had an enormous impact over the lifestyles of Kichwa people in the Amazon region. The effects of the reform and other Agrarian laws on Kichwa people's lives had also implications to their health, which I will discuss with more detail later in this chapter. "El Para" was the place where Marcos grew up and thus; he had numerous stories that took place in there. The few times I went to "el Para", I had a chance to experience how Kichwa people traditionally used to live. Although Marcos liked to maintain his traditions irrespective of where he was, since in "el Para" there was no electricity or roads nearby, the days were lived much like it used to be before the influence of mainstream culture. In recollection of what being in "el Para" was like, I wrote:

"It is a privilege to be here. These are practices that no longer people hold. The house smells like smoke, it's warmer inside. Here, the life revolves around the fire; it is what keeps people

together. They cook and sit around the fire while they talk; they plan their day ahead and tell stories about their elders and their culture. They tell me stories about why they leave the wood burning through the night: it keeps us warm and the bugs away. In the morning the grandfather wakes up early, around 3am and brings the fire back to life. The grandmother wakes up to brew the guaysa and as each person opens their eyes, they come. We come and sit by the fire. The grandmother then takes a cuya [bowl] of guaysa and cools it down. She is in charge of serving it. In the morning everyone sits quietly for a while and drinks the guaysa patiently. The drinking of guaysa is a whole experience and very important to this Kichwa family. Then they serve the chicha and we are all ready and set off to start the day” (Reflective diary, 4th October 2017).

Marcos was one of the Kichwa people that maintained the daily practice of drinking the *guaysa*. Not only Marcos loved his *guaysa*, but also he acknowledged to this drink the strength of his health. Although the *guaysa* tea has gained great popularity over the past decade, for the Kichwa people the *guaysa* is part of a morning ritual where the family shared knowledge through storytelling and as a family, planned their day ahead. Marcos loved the time of the *guaysa*, that was the time were he would converse the most; he would tell me about his hunting experiences, the meaning of dreams and different tales about the Kichwa traditions. That was also a time where Marcos shared his wisdom with me. Like his grandparents shared with him their advice, he would tell me of the importance to get up in the morning and get on with his duties, as laziness was not the reflection of a good Kichwa man. Accordingly, after the *guaysa* we would all get up and do all the things we had planned.

A Traditional Healer’s advice

As I have discussed previously, Marcos’ participation in this research was meaningful not only in the development of this research, but also in my personal experience throughout the fieldwork. Over the three months of fieldwork we developed an affable relationship that in a way recognises Marcos as a mentor. I attributed his involvement in this research in part to a misunderstanding we had regarding the meaning or approach to learning. In spite of my detailed verbalisation of the intensions of my research, Marcos understood that my study of the Kichwa healing practices involved my learning on how to heal. For this reason, during the first weeks of fieldwork Marcos took me as an apprentice of his knowledge of Kichwa traditional healing, which at first sight was in

harmony with what I had set out to explore. However, I realised his different understanding and expectation of my study when I asked him about a dream I had. In my reflexive diary, I wrote:

“ I just asked Marcos that I saw the image of a flower that was growing from my forehead, he said ‘that’s good, it’s a good thing to have a vision’. I asked him, ‘good in what sense? As in good luck?’ but he didn’t let me finish and said it means that ‘I’m chosen to do this’. I thought I knew what he was talking about, maybe I am meant to do this research, but then he said ‘to heal’. He continued by saying that those who see things like that, are chosen, are special ones, chosen to heal. This is not the first time he says something like this to me” (Reflective diary, 15th October 2017).

Although Marcos’ perception and advice were stimulating, I did not embrace the information. I knew the experience of becoming a healer was beyond the scope and plans I had foreseen for this research. I have discussed in the Methods chapter this matter regarding the verbal consent, ethics and other issues around language that were experienced throughout the fieldwork. However, there is a relevant topic regarding meaning that arose from the confusion between Marcos’ understanding of my intentions to ‘learn about Kichwa medicine’ and my understanding of those same words. The processes of learning and gaining knowledge had a different meaning for the Kichwa people, which made Marcos’ approach to my learning reasonably logical. After some time I came to realise that learning and gaining knowledge for Kichwa people, was a process associated to experience. The value of experience preceding knowledge is a topic that will be developed further in this chapter. Nonetheless, considering that my interaction with the Ramirez family was an underlying factor to the development of this research, my observations and learning of Kichwa lifestyle, I find important to reveal the particularities that have made this research experience distinct. Even though Marcos’ expectations and understanding of my work were confusing at first, it was clear through his unconditional participation, that he found value in this research also as a way to document his knowledge.

While the literature on ethnography gave me a basis for preparation, it was only through the day-to-day experience that I was able to adjust the necessary actions for this exploration. Considering that the aim of this research is to contribute to the understanding between the Kichwa and conventional practices in medicine, stumbling across the general cultural and semantic differences was the first necessary step to recognise the depth of exploration that this research required. It took time and reflection to see that the contrasting feelings – in moments such as the described above – pointed

directly to important distinctions between Kichwa culture and the more western-influenced culture that I call my own. However, the opportunity to challenge my ordinariness is what opened my eyes. This ethnographic work has placed me in the middle of two cultures and in my task of understanding – but also to make myself understood – I recognise how the work itself has turned out to be a bridge and a common ground for understanding. Although I might have momentarily disappointed Marcos by not becoming a healer, it is the aim and the objective of this ethnography to document his knowledge and the understandings I gathered through the interactions with the Kichwa people of Rukullacta.

Summary

In this section I have introduced the setting where this ethnography took place. The process of entering the field involved the development of key relationships that became essential to a further exploration of Kichwa culture. Although through this ethnography I intended to capture the entirety of a culture, I have recognised that my immediate interactions defined the ways that I participated and observed the practices of Kichwa people. For this reason, I presented and discussed the relationship with Marcos and his family as the basis of my interactions with the rest of the community and as context to the understandings. While my observations extended into exchanges with other families, living in a Kichwa household with a TH helped me gain insight into the essence of Kichwa lifestyle and health-related practices. In like manner, an overview of Marcos' life allowed me to explore aspects of Kichwa culture without which, this study would not be complete. This section has provided some background into the social world of Kichwa people and the experience of undertaking ethnographic work. In order to further understand the health-related practices and beliefs of Kichwa people, the next section will develop on the values of Kichwa culture from a comprehensive view.

Recognising the Kichwa cultural values

Having provided the context and setting relating to this study, I now move on to present an exploration of the *values* that I consider to exist within this culture and, more specifically, to consider their significance for this population. As was noted earlier, these are not uniquely about health per se but are argued to be of influence in all aspects of Kichwa life and do relate to – as the next chapter considers in more detail – different aspects of health. The values present in daily Kichwa practices and interactions can be summarised in terms of five main themes: i) Collective life, ii) Relationship with nature, iii) Ancestors and spirits, iv) Endurance and strength, and v) Experiential knowledge. This section introduces the general values of Kichwa culture that will be explored in detail with relation to the traditional medicine and health-related practices of Kichwa people in Chapter Six.

I. Collective life

The importance of communal cooperation was a key aspect of Kichwa culture. The notion of community was present in various practices and activities that were experienced during my time in Rukullacta. In this section, I present and discuss the principal contexts in which the value of collective life was present. This section provides a contextual background for the value of collectiveness that is also one of the values found in the interaction between Kichwa healers and their patients.

Minga, collective effort and work

The ‘minga’ is a term that represents communal labour. Kichwa people customarily worked together and even the smallest developments were built in cooperation. As I have described, the houses and cobblestone pathways that have been built in Rukullacta were the result of this cooperative work. Mingas were carried out as shared labour between family members, but depending on the scale of the work needed, the participation of people could extend to include the entire Kichwa community. For instance, the Kichwa community would be asked to join larger mingas that benefited the community as a whole. As part of the PKR organisation Marcos was asked to participate or send a family representative to a minga that was organised to fix the pipes for water distribution when due to the constant rains, these got blocked. Similarly, the schools arranged mingas with the parents

when they needed to do repairs on the school buildings. Mingas were organised to carry out work, but the recognition of the work acknowledged that mingas were also spaces for social gathering. Traditionally, the organisers of the minga – and main beneficiaries of the work – provided to the people food and refreshments during the day. Not uncommonly, *chicha* or alcoholic beverages were included. In addition, if a family was called to participate in a minga and for any reason could not attend; the family was expected to give compensation for not joining or in a customary way, to show their support. Demonstrating the importance of mingas for Kichwa families, on one of the interviews after asking if the family had any influence on the participant’s healing process, he said:

“Only my mother and father, only they cared about me. They spend all their time with me. Almost... let's say for example, before they had a lot of support for the minga and when I got sick, they would only stay here with me, so that I would recover quickly” (Miguel Ramirez, 9th November 2017).



Picture 17 Men building the roof of a traditional house

While commonly larger constructions required the participation of men, women also participated in the communal work. Depending on the work to be done, women contributed with the preparation of food and refreshments for the minga or by undertaking activities that were physically less demanding. I had a chance to participate in a minga almost as soon as I arrived to Rukullacta. The extended family of my hosts were planning to build a shared traditional space that could be used to welcome tourist and where the family could meet. The process of building a traditional house was much more than the application of good skills and methods; it was actually a ritualised art. While women helped in the gathering of materials and the weaving of the roofs, the construction was the men’s labour (See figure 17). Specially the building of the roofs, where the men involved had to follow a strict type of “diet” that in addition to the restriction of certain foods, included the restraint

of activities such as hunting or any action that entailed the touching of dead animals. According to tradition, the “diet” ensured that the building lasted longer: a good built roof, it was said, could last for more than twelve years. Although I was not asked to join the minga, I was interested in participating and therefore, I asked if I could join. In spite of less physical demanding work that I was given, my body was stiff over the succeeding days. This was my first experience with how Kichwa people valued strength – which I will develop in a later section – and with my appreciation of the strength of Kichwa women as well. In my observations, many Kichwa women undertook similar strength demanding work as men, but some of them did it with their children by their side.

The Family Unit

“Here in Rukullacta, I begin to understand how much they value the community and the family. They have adopted a couple of their children and now, as Marcos presents me, I realise they have also ‘adopted’ me. I feel very honoured to be part of this family” (Reflective diary, 30th September 2017)

Family relations are of much importance to the Kichwa people. As I have described earlier in this thesis, my host family had a crucial contribution to development of this research. In addition to the access I had by my identification to the Ramirez family, I also recognised how important it was for my host family to make me – as an outsider – feel at home. This was an observation that was also reflected in the way that Kichwa people talked about the foreigners that had visited them. For instance, in their stories they would say how much they cried when the visitors left or how they were – in a similar way as me – like a daughter or a son to them. The most affectionate way that Kichwa people made a person not directly related become part of the family was by offering the prospect of being a godparent. Although the concept of godparent comes from a Christian religious rite – and in was adopted by the Kichwa people from their involvement with Christianity – the notion of godparents was understood in a slightly different way by Kichwa people. Rather than being strictly associated with Christianity and the religious duty that it entails, Kichwa people associated the concept of godparents with the demonstration of deep affection to somebody and the opportunity to make that person related to the family. However, there was a distinction between a godparent that presented a child to a Christian-Catholic baptism and the other godparents that child could have. Needless to say, for Kichwa people a child could have as many godparents as desired. While baptism-godparents assumed the religious responsibility over a child’s rearing, the subsequent

godparents were only expected to care in a more general way for the child's wellbeing. During my fieldwork, I was asked to be godmother to one of the children. The process replicated the Christian rite of pouring water over the child's head and offering the godparent a chance to give an additional name to the child. Nonetheless, it was a home-based ceremony that did not involve Christian-Catholic clergy. I discussed this topic in the methods chapter, since it was a situation that exemplified some of the complexities of field relations. However, I accepted the request and on the 5th of November of 2017, I became a godmother to one of the Kichwa children in Rukullacta.

In Kichwa culture, the family unit usually consists of the parents and their children. However, in comparison to mainstream culture, the extended families were an integral part of the daily activities of each Kichwa family. The extended family was usually regarded as a whole, with the eldest parents at the head and their children and grandchildren, who commonly lived in the same house or in close vicinity to each other. This was specially the case of the male members of the family who traditionally stayed with their families after they got married. In contrast, the female daughters were usually the ones who moved away after their marriage to live with their husband's family. In fact, it was common that once a married daughter moved in with her husband, the elder of that family became the person she turned to for advice. However, I will explore this topic with more detail in the next chapter, since the elders of a family were usually healers or had some knowledge of medicine. From a conversation with one of Marcos' relatives, I wrote:

"Kichwa people are very united and value family unit. When a child gets married and leaves home, parents suffer so much. It is usually the daughters who leave their home. This is what I was told by the wife of Marcos' grandson. She was telling me that although she doesn't really want more children, with two daughters already, her husband's longing for a son to keep them company made sense to her" (Reflective diary, 12th October 2017).

While it was expected for married members to move out of the house where they grew up, the daughters usually relocated to their in-laws' land and the sons to a new house built on the shared land belonging to his family. However, very often the new spouses lived in the house of the husband's parents until they got the means to build a house of their own, depending on whether either one of them had been given a piece of land. As one of the patients I interviewed told me in our conversation, both sons and daughters were given land when the father owned enough. When that was not the case, the sons inherited the land of their parents. Conditional to the number of progeny, the division of land between descendants was sometimes a problem. While talking about

the tradition of women moving to their husband's family and of the participant's sisters owning land, he said:

"Yes, yes ... there they go [the daughters to their husband's family]. Those [parents] who... have lots of land say, 'you know what, I'll give the child... I'll give him/her something'... and so, those who don't have don't say. For example... my dad, my dad doesn't... doesn't say, 'come daughter, I will give you a little here'. He doesn't tell her because there is no land"
(Raul Huango, 21st November 2017)

Kichwa families commonly shared the space they lived in, regardless of the size of the family. As a result of the common space shared, Kichwa people had the opportunity to share some of the domestic responsibilities with the other family members that lived in the same house or land. For instance, men hunted together and later shared the prey with the whole family. Likewise, women sometimes helped each other with the caring of the children, cooking or tending to their *chakras*. Although the responsibility of raising children was the parents' – and as I will discuss in the following section, often associated with the mother – the presence of the extended family provided a secure space for children not to always need their parent's vigilance.

The support that the Kichwa family as a whole gave to each other was fundamental and often, not fully understood by non-Kichwa people. In my time there I had a chance to experience how important the support of family was in a situation where a Kichwa woman was encouraged to report the alcoholic violent behaviour of her husband. While I assert that domestic violence cannot be condoned and needs to be addressed, the organisations that in Tena worked in the campaigns against domestic violence had very little understanding of the intricacies of family interactions for Kichwa people. Although organisations provided legal aid and psychological support to the Kichwa woman, after her husband was imprisoned, she was left with the care of two children on her own. This scenario represented a whole new problem for a Kichwa person, particularly a woman. Since Kichwa women customarily moved into the husband's family, the incident meant that she turned from being the wife of one of the sons of that family, to the woman who had to send their son to prison. While some Kichwa women had the unconditional support of their parents and in cases like this, could return to their home, some did not. Without the support of her family the woman was practically on her own, with no sustainable way to take care of her children and in an environment that had become hostile for her. In spite of her courage and accomplishment to put her husband in prison, she was also the person who fought diligently to get him out. I left the field before her

situation was resolved, but this occurrence exemplified the reliance and complexity of family relations for Kichwa people.

Comparable to western-influenced cultures, marital relationships in Kichwa culture were also monogamous, except for the *Kuraka* who was allowed to have more than one wife. In my notes I recorded the following:

“The Kuraka as the leader was allowed to have more than one wife. Kichwa people usually maintain monogamous relationships. From what I’ve been told, the Kuraka is the only exception and was allowed more wives, having up to five wives sometimes” (Notes, 10th October 2017)

As described previously, marriages were traditionally arranged. However, this was one of the aspects of Kichwa culture and traditions that have evidently changed with time. Not only were younger couples free to marry the person they chose, but also they had more freedom in their decisions regarding family planning. While family planning was a topic that not all Kichwa people felt comfortable talking about, most of the younger couples I met practiced some sort of birth control. From the few informal conversations I had with different women, they told me that they usually obtained their birth control from the medical centre nearby. In Ecuador, the Ministry of Public Health through its healthcare services provides free birth control methods, although some methods can also be purchased from the pharmacy with no prescription. However, there were also traditional methods of birth control, but the knowledge of the plants used for contraception only came up in my conversations with healers. Through observations, I noticed that younger couples had fewer children than their parents or grandparents, and on average they had about two children. Nonetheless, the changes in practices appeared to have been largely accepted in Kichwa culture, acknowledging within the changes the continuation of parts of their traditional ways. In one of the stories that a participant shared with me, she described the traditions in the preparations for her unarranged marriage. In her interview, she said:

“Kichwa's custom is, on the part of the groom, he has to go meet the part... the relatives of the bride. We left when we were barely together for two... three months, two months I think it was. And we left [to the fiancée's family home]... between 5 or 6 people I think we left. The sisters accompanied us. The mother, the father, the sister, the brothers accompany [the couple], the godfather from baptism [also accompanied]. They arrived, and they accepted

me. As is customary, first thing is the chicha that has to be offered. As it is always our custom, the family members of the bride are given food to eat [that day]. We arrived, we brought with us 15 chickens, the beer, what is the cachigua [an alcoholic drink]... I called my mom who made chicha for me to offer to my husband's relatives. My mom had prepared a very well made chicha and so then she told me, 'make the family members drink'" (Dolores Morales, 21st November 2017)

Her story reflected the changes that Kichwa culture had embraced, in various ways. In the quote she remarks how she went, accompanied by her husband and his family, to her home. Although she also mentions that the tradition was for the groom to go meet her relatives. This was because she met her husband through social media and considering she had children from a previous marriage, she went to meet him personally before he was able to meet her family and children. The story also reflected how the technological advances such as the Internet had changed the way Kichwa people interact. Likewise, many younger Kichwa people adopted lifestyles that resemble manners of mainstream culture. For example, in the accounts of older Kichwa people they talked about how inexperienced they were when they started their families and younger generations talked about how important their self-development was, even in their considerations of planning a family. Raul was Dolores' husband, who I also interviewed and in his interview he told me:

"Even now, is not that I say no, I can't have. I say I can't have children, but of course we will have when we have everything. And I have told everyone, we are proposing to build a little house and to leave. We are, and in the next few years we will have our... our children. We are, but still planning" (Raul Huango, 21st November 2017)

Although Raul and Dolores had a particular story, their opinions were similar to the other younger Kichwa people I talked to, such as Marcos' daughter who wanted to study in University before she got married. Their example showed a congruence of traditional and modern practices, but many people also experienced social pressure to maintain the Kichwa traditions, which I will develop in the Discussion Chapter. The discrepancies of approaches to changing lifestyles were also one of the sources of envy between Kichwa people and their families. Envy, as I will examine with greater detail in the next chapter, was also considered and described as a source of illness.

The family unit had a strategic role within the Kichwa culture. It was through the head elders that traditions and knowledge were passed on in the family. This included the knowledge related to

health and particularly, the uses of medicinal plants. In addition to the knowledge of medicine, knowledge related to farming, harvesting and other practices were customarily transferred from the parents to their children and so on, from generation to generation. As another participant said in her interview when I asked her how she learned about her knowledge of medicinal plants:

“More, my mother has taught me. She is the one who taught me the most, since she knows all that ... As my mother always says, you have to learn the inheritance. She says, ‘Elsa, you have to take a notebook and list all the medicinal plants’. I always ask my mother, because I always forget and so if one day my mother is gone, who is going to give me that? One day I have to get to the house and carry a notebook and I have to write down all the plants and what they are, what are they for! So, I don’t know like my mother... but a little, a little I know.” (Elsa Lanchama, 18th December 2017)

I then asked her how did her mother learned and she replied, *“the grandmother. Grandma gave her the power” (Elsa Lanchama, 18th December 2017)*. The concept of ‘power’ or ‘transference of powers’ – or skills – and its link to knowledge, is a topic that I will discuss in later sections and chapters. However, the processes of transferring knowledge or skills occur essentially within the family and it is commonly the younger generations that learn from the experienced ones. This is the reason why in many Kichwa families the ritual of drinking *guaysa* first thing in the morning was so important. The ritual of drinking of *guaysa* was a practice that not only facilitated knowledge to be imparted through storytelling, but also allowed the family to initiate the day together. However, this as many other customs, was no longer practised by all Kichwa families and the reason for its decline had to do with the changes in lifestyle associated with the influence of mainstream culture.

Gender roles within the family



Picture 18 (left) *Participating in the making of chicha with the women in the family*

Picture 19 (right) Bowls of chicha served to visitors

Another distinctive feature of Kichwa culture was the delineation of male and female roles. As I was told, in the past the male and female roles derived from the upbringing needs; where sons learned hunting skills from the father and daughters learned sowing and cooking from the mother. Although the functions of Kichwa men and women have changed with modernisation, Kichwa women still tend to gather with women and men with men. One of the characteristic roles of women was the preparation of *chicha*. *Chicha* was a traditional drink made out of mashed cassava that was then fermented and later diluted in water to drink. The entire preparation of *chicha*, from the planting of cassava trees to the serving of the drink, was the women's responsibility (see pictures 18 and 19). In general, women were expected to cook and serve food or beverages. However, there was a particular attention to the offering of *chicha* and other drinks such as *guaysa* or water. Although the preparation of *guaysa* involved both men and women – it was the elder father who collected the *guaysa* leaves and lighted up the fire – it was the elder mother who brewed the tea and the person in charge of serving it. The serving of drinks as a role of Kichwa women, was a topic that also had links to some beliefs related to women's health and childbirth, which I will discuss further in chapter six. Regarding the roles of men and women, throughout my fieldnotes I wrote:

"I've been told that in the past the elders would wake up at 2am to prepare guaysa and everybody would be up by 3am. Girls would follow their mothers and boys would follow their fathers, usually to go hunting" (Reflective diary, 6th October 2017)

"Taking care of the chakras is usually the women's job" (Notes, 6th October 2017)

"Then the mother and sometimes followed by the daughters will stand up and start preparing breakfast. In 'El Para' it's fascinating to see how everything happens around the fire and a cooking pot. The woman's life is almost entirely centred on that. Breakfast starts early, but it always starts after drinking the guaysa. Followed the guaysa, the mother offers chicha and then after the chicha everyone stands up to do something. Women usually cook breakfast and men go outside to work or do something, bring food for later and things I am not usually part of" (Reflective diary, 12th October 2017).

Apart from the roles previously described, women were also very skilful in weaving baskets and other utensils made out of strips of cane, and in making traditional jewellery (see pictures 20 and

21). Often, women's sources of income came from selling their jewellery and crafts to the visitors that came by. However, I met a few Kichwa men that were equally skilful with their craftsmanship. In contrast, men usually made tools for fishing, harvesting, hunting or musical instruments, but some of the men I met, weaved very elaborate baskets and jewellery as well. While women were usually in charge of the children – as it can be appreciated in the photographic material – this was only until their children reached a certain age. Traditionally, after a male child was old enough to engage in the activities of men, he accompanied his father. Daughters stayed with the mother, but were expected to work with her. In today's Kichwa lifestyles and with the compulsory education that children in Ecuador required, the interactions in the family and the roles between men and women have started to change. During my time there, I met a few Kichwa families in which the men cooked and collected the children from school, and where the mother was the one working in the town to sustain the household.



Picture 20 (left) *Women weaving baskets*



Picture 21 (right) *Traditional jewelry usually made by women*

As I will discuss in the next chapter, the differentiation of roles between men and women was an aspect that I saw replicated throughout the practices of medicine. While I was constantly told that there were no differences to the opportunities of men and women, the differences were evident and not restricted to the roles in the society. The differentiation of roles was a factor that as a woman, I experienced as well. I discussed this topic in the Methods chapter, along with my experience concerning drunken men. However, as I also reflected in my diary, alcohol intoxication was a behaviour that I noticed predominantly on men. Acknowledging that alcoholism amongst indigenous populations was one of the biggest health issues discussed in the literature review, I wrote:

“Drinking is a relevant health issue in this community. Mostly men are the ones who drink. They’ve told me that in some communities men and women drink and get drunk equally, but up to now I have only seen and sometimes heard outside my window to drunken men” (Reflective diary, 5th October 2017).

While the study of alcoholism in indigenous populations is a topic for an entirely different research – though I will discuss with more detail in the next chapter – during the time I spent in Rukullacta, I saw the aggravation of this behaviour linked to the pressures of mainstream culture over traditional Kichwa lifestyles. Considering that it was usually the men that engaged in trade and other work with *colonos*, the consumption of alcohol was largely related with the activities of men. Although drunkenness was not an attribute of colonisation - chicha can cause a similar intoxication as alcohol when fermented for longer - the introduction of distilled alcohol was. Not only was I told that distilled alcohol was the way *colonos* paid for the work of Kichwa people, particularly men, but I also observed how *chicha* – unlike the other alcoholic drinks – was a beverage that was part of communal activities. Chicha, as the product of women’s work was connected to the community, while distilled alcohol was mainly associated to men and often resulted in its overuse.

Interactions with mainstream culture

“This is a community that has an important and visible influence of western culture. Younger people use smartphones and computers to do their homework. Actually are asked to do so in school” (Reflective diary, 12th October 2017).

“Yes, I met her on the Internet, I met on the Internet... as one would say on social media” (Raul Huango, 21st November 2017).

The Kichwa community of Rukullacta – as described previously – was the closest community to the town of Archidona. Therefore, the interaction Kichwa people had with the *Mestizo* population was extensive. Although the influence of mainstream culture was not limited to the Kichwa community of Rukullacta, being the nearest to the city town meant that the people were more subjected to the fast changes of mainstream culture, which in Ecuador is largely influenced by western standards and developments. Apart from the commercial interactions between Kichwa and *Mestizo* populations, the Kichwa community had a longstanding liaison with the church. The influence the Catholic Church

began with the arrival of missionaries to the region, who in addition to their settlements also began educating the Kichwa populations that they encountered. In Marcos' accounts, although the missionaries forced many of the Kichwa people to work and in some cases *"they punished"* (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 14th October 2017), the missionaries also provided them help, education and opportunities. The use of the word 'punishment' will be discussed later in this chapter, since Kichwa people were emphatic in not associating the word to their own practices. However, as it was evident, many Kichwa people were Christian Catholics. In fact, Sunday Mass at the Church in Archidona was one of the places where Kichwa people from various communities gathered. While not all Kichwa people adopted Catholic beliefs – or even respected them – the people I talked to that did, had incorporated Catholic doctrines and practices to their Kichwa traditions and beliefs. Some of the examples I described earlier were Marcos' adoption of Catholic terminology in his health-related practices and the idea of godparents. Nonetheless, the influence of Catholicism was more intricate and present in day-to-day life. As reflected in my diary:

"They have accepted religion much more naturally, they understand it in parallel to what their ancestors already knew. I have not been to Mass for 15 years or more. I still don't know whether to accept the naturalness with which this family speaks of religion, but my rationality inevitably generates a friction there" (Reflective diary, 1st October 2017).

While this research will focus on the health-related similarities that Kichwa people found in Catholic beliefs and practices – that will be explored in the next chapter – one of the basic correspondences I was told about, was the distinction between male and female roles. Actually, since Catholic schools were divided into a school for girls and another for boys, some of the Kichwa people preferred the Catholic schooling system to the public. Although the adoption of Catholicism influenced many of the Kichwa practices and traditions, the importance was in the way that Kichwa people managed to synchronise beliefs – that in different contexts could seem incompatible – into their day-to-day life.

Needless to say, the complexity of the relationship between Kichwa people and mainstream culture or *Mestizo* populations, was profound. Considering the historical context and the impacts of Colonisation on indigenous peoples in America, in the time I lived with the Kichwa people I experienced – sometimes more than others – how apprehensions of the past, were still present in their lives. In fact, the use of certain expressions such as *colonos* to refer to most non-indigenous Ecuadorians in present day reflected how the impact of Colonisation for Kichwa people was still affecting them. This became clear to me after a conversation I had with a Kichwa man that because

he was drunk, felt no obligation to hold back his opinions and emotions regarding this topic. While our conversation was initially upsetting to me because he was drunk and somewhat sexist in his expressions, he also said *“bluntly things that are [were] true”* (Reflective diary, 5th October 2017). As I noted but deeply reflected upon later in the analysis, the things he said were not to be taken personally, but rather studied as they revealed the *“pain and anger they still hold towards the ‘colonos’”* (Reflective diary, 5th October 2017). My reflections on this occasion and other observations related to the term ‘colonos’ were documented in my fieldnotes, as follows:

“I do feel a bit confronted, as if I were a coloniser. While I am not, they call people from the city – white or ‘whiter’ people – ‘colonos’. I feel I need to correct them when I am called a coloniser or “colona” in Spanish... Although I’m aware he’s drunk, I’ve never had such a conversation. I must admit that while I felt uncomfortable as a woman, as a stranger, as a mixed race with ‘white’, what he’s saying is a genuine reflection of the harm and anger he feels inside” (Reflective diary, 5th October 2017).

“The resentment toward the coloniser is also evident and not in a past remembrance sort of way, the resentment is in present tense. They resent Mestizos, such as me, who have forgotten where they came from and now call them ‘indians’ or ‘natives’”(Reflective diary, 5th October 2017).

“There’s things about western culture, though for us in Ecuador ‘western’ is not the most appropriate term – I’ll stick to colonos, as Kichwa people say – there are things brought by the colonos that now they use as their own” (Reflective diary, 6th October 2017)

Another insight that came from our conversation was that the term ‘native’ was actually offensive to Kichwa people. While the term ‘indian’ or ‘indio’ in Ecuador’s mainstream culture is commonly used in a derogatory way, the reading of the term ‘native’ was not. In this regard, I wrote:

“I had no idea that ‘native’ meant to them such an insult. To the Kichwas being called natives ‘nativos’ means to look down on them, means saying they are savages, uncivilised. I can understand why they are upset, they, unlike most of the Mestizo population in Ecuador, speak at least two languages. They are healers and builders, farmers and hunters; they undertake more than one career at the same time” (Reflective diary, 5th October 2017).

The relation between Kichwa people and the western-influenced culture in Ecuador seemed in a way paradoxical. To a certain extent Kichwa people wanted to be part of the 'modern' mainstream culture and as I observed, they were. In Rukullacta, Kichwa people commonly wore jeans and t-shirts. Moreover, the influence of colonisers was noticeable even in their present-day traditional clothes. The Kichwa traditional outfit consisted on a short-sleeved top and trousers made out of blue fabric for the males and usually a one-shoulder blue dress or a blue skirt with a light-coloured blouse for females. As I was told, Kichwa outfits used to be made from natural materials; but the fact that the western-influenced garments were considered traditional Kichwa clothing, shows the intricacy of the subject. Most of the Kichwa people I met owned smart-phones, some owned tablets, computers and televisions. Considering I took a simple basic phone to the field – in order to minimise disparities (economical and technological) with my involvement – finding high technology was unexpected to me. Kichwa people also listened to modern music on a regular basis and most of the people in Rukullacta, spoke or at least understood Spanish. Furthermore, the *Kuraka* and a few other people had attained University degrees and not only the younger generations, but generally Kichwa people had higher regard for them. Nonetheless, the striving to maintain their culture and traditions was strong and in certain ways controverting.

Collective decisions

According to what has been described and consistent with the findings of the literature review, community relations were imperative for Kichwa people. One of the main roles of the *Kuraka* was to represent the Kichwa people and in this respect, the objectives of the PKR organization – to which the *Kuraka* was head of – were to provide the space to generate consensus over the decisions that involved Kichwa people and their culture. As Marcos told me in numerous occasions, Kichwa people would always attempt to reach a consensus before making a decision. However, this was a practice that was often overseen by the local government and other corporations that operated in the region. He told me how often Kichwa people were called slow, disordered and inefficient because they did not provide immediate decisions; when, it was not a matter of incompetence, but of making sure that the decision reflected the common stance of the Kichwa population. While during the time of my fieldwork in Rukullacta I observed the distinguishing opinions between persons, there was also a strong sense of unity among the Kichwa people. In various occasions, but particularly in two large gatherings – the official visit of the Ecuadorean Vice-president to the community on the 26th of October and the TH's gathering on the 25th of November of 2017 – I experienced the importance of

communal coordination for Kichwa people. The preparations for those two events were carried out with the participation of almost the entire community. Men, women and even children contributed in some way to the organisation, entertainment, cleaning or preparation of food for the events; as part of the Ramirez family, my contribution was also welcomed.

In relation to a previous mention about Marcos' musical motives, the Kichwa people's sense of unity was evident in the notion of 'maintaining' the Kichwa Culture. The expression 'to maintain the Kichwa culture' referred to the prospect of continuing to embrace the Kichwa culture and its traditions in various ways. However, the use of the words 'maintain or maintaining' of the culture was frequently emphasised and even rectified in conversations when a person suggested that Kichwa culture needed to be saved or rescued. The reason the syntax of the expression was noteworthy according to Kichwa people, was because the Kichwa culture was never lost; it was present and therefore, not needed to be recovered. Needless to say, the concern was applicable only in the composition of words in Spanish. Since the Kichwa language was simpler, there was no complexity in the saying. Nonetheless, the 'maintaining' of the culture also denotes an unchanging state, which has been discussed as an issue in the representation of cultures, but this is a topic I will discuss in chapter seven.

In a similar way, the interaction between members within Kichwa families reflected the importance of consensus in their decisions and actions. Just as the *Kuraka*, the elder members – usually the father – were the representatives of the family and the daily coordination of what every person did, was decided early in the day. As I have mentioned, the daily *guaysa* ritual started before dawn and after the whole family gathered by the log fire to drink *guaysa*, they shared stories and planned the day ahead. Apart from the organisation of everyday activities, the Kichwa people also practiced consensus decision-making in the process of correcting behaviour. This was enacted through a ritual where the elders giving advice followed the process of dipping the tip of a stem in chilli and touching with it, the edge of the eye of the person who needed instruction. While the dialogs were somewhat personal, the ritual was carried out with the presence of the whole family and in addition to the advice given by the elders, others could also counsel. Not only was the guidance collectively offered, but also the decision to rectify someone's behaviour was agreed by the whole family. I will discuss this practice with more detail later in this chapter. Nonetheless, these practices and the importance of collective decision-making was also linked to a strong sense of sharing. The concept of sharing for Kichwa people was greater than the level of sharing that was common to me. The first example was revealed over the discomfort of having a computer in the field that because of data security, I was

not allowed to share. Although I discussed this topic in the Methods chapter, the reason the situation presented itself as uncomfortable, was because I noticed how Kichwa people shared everything. In fact, the observation of Kichwa people's sense of sharing came through the reflection of another situation that at first was also uncomfortable for me. During my time in Rukullacta, I procured groceries for my hosts and myself on a weekly basis. In my first weeks, I calculated and bought enough food with the plan that it lasted for the entire week. However, it was not uncommon to find we had run out of groceries before midweek. With time I began to see that the reason the groceries did not last, was because the elder mother shared the groceries with the extended family. As reflected in my diary:

"There's not much sense of saving, when there's food everybody comes to eat, when there isn't they don't. However, I appreciate that sense of sharing. If there is food, they will share it, they will eat it all" (Reflective diary, 18th November 2017).

Furthermore, the notion of sharing extended to the understanding of reciprocity. While I discussed this topic already in the Methods chapter, the understanding of reciprocity and its importance in relationships was related to the value of collective life and the notion of sharing. Reciprocity or in Kichwa language *"randi-randi"* (Notes, 12th October 2017), was also present in health-related practices and I will develop on that in the next chapter.

Collective living placed the community and family in the centre of Kichwa life. For this reason, Kichwa people customarily maintained closeness within their own families. While there are many things to appreciate about strong relational practices, taken to the extreme the guardedness created jealousy and envy between people and families. As I will discuss in the next chapter, Kichwa people described envy as one of the main sources of illness. Nonetheless, the importance of cooperation and collectiveness were key aspects of Kichwa culture and were present in most, if not all of their practices, activities and events.

II. Relationship with nature

In addition to the relationships with the family and community, Kichwa people had an evident connection with the nature that surrounded them. Natural sites were usually considered sacred amongst Kichwa culture and natural objects, were often believed to have power. The relationship

with nature was an imperative aspect of Kichwa health-related practices, although their environmental interaction was also manifested throughout their customs and daily practices. In this section, I will present the value of nature for Kichwa people and discuss the importance of their connection to their natural environment as background for the discussion developed in the next chapter.

Communication with Nature

Amongst my first experiences in Rukullacta, was my participation in a ceremony that the Kichwa people called a 'Limpia', which is the Spanish word for clean or cleanse. The Limpia is the main ritual in Kichwa healing practice and while I will discuss this with detail in chapter six, upon my arrival Marcos prepared a Limpia ceremony for me. The Limpia had the purpose to introduce me to nature and *"ask the energies of nature for wisdom"* for the undertaking I was about to begin. As I described in my reflective diary, *"I am being prepared to be receptive of the wisdom of the earth, of the jungle"* (Reflective diary, 1st October 2017). As I will later examine, during the Limpia the healer communicates with nature. However, the communication with nature did not occur only during Limpia ceremonies and healing practices. As presented in previous sections, Kichwa people not only used nature and its resources in the building of their traditional houses, but also in their sustenance through the cultivation of the *chakras*. The procedures for building homes and cultivating, in fact for any use of natural materials, involved communicative interaction with the objects and the environment. Moreover, in some cases it required weeks of preparation, where the people involved in the construction, for example, had to undertake a special diet. Actually, according to some Kichwa people it was required that a person dieted before entering the jungle. As I was told, the diet prepared the body to be sensitive to the knowledge of nature, or as some other people also described it, to the energy that the jungle holds. As an outsider, meaning non-kichwa visitor, not only I needed preparation to access the knowledge of nature, but also my presence in the jungle required nature's permission. For this reason, I was received in Rukullacta with a 'Limpia' ceremony.

The communication requesting permission from nature was a recurrent practice of Kichwa people and was carried out in different forms. While the Limpia ceremony offered a more recognisable communication with nature through verbalisation or melodic chants – that will be further described in the next chapter – the communication between nature and people, was usually in the form of thoughts. As Marcos once disclosed his thought over a cassava root he took to plant, he said:

"I always [plant] thinking things, like, 'Father God help me. I'm planting a stick like this with nothing, but with your help it's going to load enough for my family, for our food'" (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 16th October 2017).

Likewise, before grabbing a plant, a root or seed Marcos told me that one had to always ask the jungle for permission to take it. Although he reflectively commented, *"sometimes I find it funny to see myself talking to the yuquita [small cassava]" (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 16th October 2017).*

The account of having conversations with nature and asking nature for permission through mental communication was recurrent in my conversations with traditional healers (TH) when they explained the preparation of herbal medicines. Concerning a powerful medicinal plant Yachak Ambi remarked, *"that's why I tell it, take care of me, help me... and nothing [bad] happens" (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).* Nonetheless, communication with nature was present in most of their traditional stories, particularly the stories that explained the uses of plants. While in the stories, the communication with nature was usually represented as communication with the spirits of nature – which I will discuss later in this chapter – the storylines described the exchange of information between nature and people. For instance, while telling me the story of how Kichwa people discovered *guaysa* and its stimulating effects, Marcos retold what the spirits of nature had told the first Kichwa man introduced to the *guaysa* as follows:

"Take this leaf from the tree and take it home, boil it and drink. Take it every morning, it will give you strength, more energy, more courage, it will take away your laziness,' everything had been explained. Then, he grabbed and took, and the next day he began to drink. 'And from there if you want, take it and plant it' he was told. From there is that the drinking of guaysa comes from" (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 16th October 2017).

Moreover, in the stories as in the procedures for cultivation, hunting, uses of land and natural materials – including healing sites and medicinal plants – the concept of reciprocity was also present. Like with people, the interaction with nature was perceived as a process of exchange. As I will describe when discussing this topic in the health-related practices, what was requested when something was taken from nature depended on the particular situation. While commonly the rules and diets people had to follow for hunting, cultivating or constructing, comprised within its restrictions what was given back to nature, in the healing practices nature communicated directly

with the healer for its requests. The rules and diets, for example, forbade the person to eat specific products, touch animals or in some cases, engage in sexual relations; and depending on what the person had asked from nature, the period of dieting was established. Another example was found in the Kichwa practices of cultivation, where only a fraction of the land that people owned was allowed to be cultivated. As it was explained to me, for instance in an area of thirty hectares only five hectares were farmed, the remaining area was kept in its natural conditions. As one of the TH said while he explained the practice, *“you never work the entire field”* (Yachak Angel Parco, 12th October 2017). Owing to the conception of reciprocity, the interaction between people and nature through Kichwa practices was considerate and respectful.

The Kichwa people enjoyed a privilege of having settled in the Amazon region. In Rukullacta I was told many stories that explained how Kichwa people reached the Amazon region and they all fell in either one of two explanations. The first explanation assumed that the Kichwa people in the Amazon descended from the Kichwa cultures of the highlands and reached the Amazon while fleeing from the Colonisers. Although that is the explanation that has been widely accepted in Ecuador, this theory has been disputed not only by scholars, but also by many Kichwa people who live in the Amazon region today. As some Kichwa people told me, the similarities between the different indigenous cultures in the Amazon region were greater than the links to the Kichwa cultures in the highlands; *“with the highlands it’s different, there are other visions”* (Yachak Vinicio Lanchama - notes, 17th October 2017). Although this is a debate that has not been settled and likely to require more research, there was no doubt that the Amazonian Kichwa people had developed their culture and practices on the basis of the Amazon environmental conditions. In this regard, the Kichwa people of Rukullacta had a distinctive perception of abundance and scarcity. Related to the example given for the concept of sharing, it was a common saying between Kichwa people, *“When there is, we eat. When there is not, we don’t”* (Notes, 6th October 2017). As I observed when we went to “el Para” and because there was not an easy access to shops or electricity, the food we ate was gathered from their crops or the jungle; not only the variety of foods, but also the quantity was plentiful. However, it was evident how much Kichwa people struggled because they found themselves not having enough, particularly when referring to money and the things that money allowed them to have. This observation was recorded in my reflective diary on few instances:

“So far I’ve been eating lots of cassava or ‘yucca’ or ‘yuyo’ in Kichwa, and plantain or ‘palanda’. We eat a lot of carbohydrates, little protein, but always some. I can see how this has been affected by the concept of money. They tell me stories about the times when they

fed their dogs one egg a day, but no longer do. They recognise this is one of the problems of city life – they describe mainstream culture and the introduction of modern practices as “city” lifestyle – that in the city everything costs money and that is one thing that Kichwas never have enough” (Reflective diary, 6th October 2017).

“Food is never scarce here. There’s always yucca [cassava] and plantain. It literally grows on trees. But anything and everything that comes from the town is a whole new different thing. These are really the moments where I find Kichwa people feel poor, experience scarcity and feel different from those who find it easier to pull a five dollar note from the wallet” (Reflective diary, 9th October 2017).

Considering the diversity of flora in the Amazon region Marcos and his family were very resourceful when we went to their home in the deeper jungle, called “el Para”. Apart from the food, they playfully provided me with: “*umbrellas from the jungle*” that were very large leaves that shielded the rain, “*toilet paper from the jungle*” that was a special type of leaf that was large and soft enough to be used for the same purpose, “*soap from the jungle*” that was another leaf that produced foam when rubbed and all sorts of things that were found in nature. Nonetheless, when we were in Rukullacta, the situation was completely different. As a result of adjusting to the money-based interactions of mainstream culture’s dealings, many Kichwa people were commonly indebted or lacking sufficient money to sustain their families. The limitation of money in contrast to the abundance of nature was also an observation within the uses of medicine. When asked about the opinions of conventional *western* medicine, one of the participants said:

“Well, western medicine, like I say... is already processed. I think they come processed from the exterior already, but here we use what is natural. And besides, we don't... we don't need a resource to buy [laughs lightly]... because if we want to take a plant and plant it... it doesn't have a cost. On the other hand, if we are going to buy, then it costs so much... and sometimes, in our culture, spending \$10 is like spending \$100. So, you prefer to use natural medicine” (Ismael Quishpe, 18th December 2017).

In spite of the lifestyle changes that resulted from the contact with mainstream culture, Kichwa people had a reverential approach towards nature. While the scenery of the Amazon region was impressive, the reverence was actually linked to the animistic perception that Kichwa people had of their environment. I will expand on this topic throughout this chapter. However, the way that

Kichwa people interacted with nature through their practices, demonstrated the respect they had to it that in some cases was comparable to the way they related to people. As I observed and reflected in my notes:

“The Kichwa people, unlike me, know how to live as part of nature. I must say nature has been good to me. Marcos said I am being well received because of the ceremony he held for me upon my arrival. Just as I am now ‘his daughter’, the jungle has accepted me as hers too” (Reflective diary, 5th October 2017).

Sacred locations

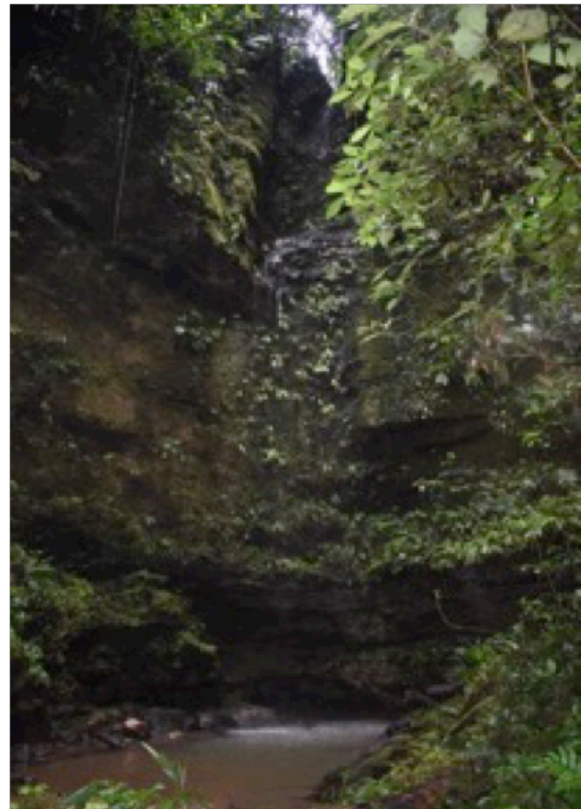
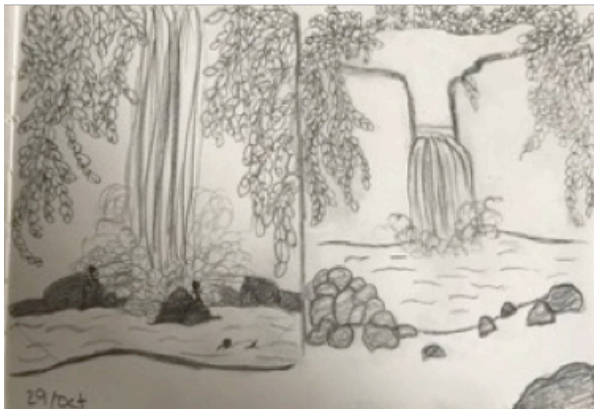
As mentioned in the previous section, not only was it customary for Kichwa people to ask nature for permission for an outsider to enter the jungle, but also it was necessary to ask for permission every time a person – Kichwa and non-Kichwa – intended to visit a sacred site. In general, the Limpia ceremony was carried out before a person had contact with nature because – as Kichwa people said – the jungle was jealous of outsiders. However, the entrance to a particular sacred location was also conditional on nature’s response. Actually, the way the sacred site communicated its decision was through a process that was called “the siren”, as one of the TH described in conversation:

“Nature has positive and negative [responses]. When there is no way to get in, lightning guards it. When it receives you, it sends the siren... The siren is a wind that blows and sometimes reveals a rainbow, and without drinking ayahuasca, it welcomes” (Yachak Vinicio Lanchama - notes, 17th October 2017).

In his explanation, Vinicio mentioned lightning guarding the sacred site. As I will describe later in this section, entering a sacred site required preparation that usually involved undertaking a Limpia ceremony on the eve of the trip to the location, and the lightning referred to the weather conditions of the morning of the trip. If the morning was stormy, it meant that the jungle had not accepted the entrance. Furthermore, when a person entered a sacred site without its permission it was believed that it could harm the person’s body. While in mainstream culture people perceive that abrupt changes of environmental conditions can cause reactions in a person’s body, the Kichwa people saw it as a rejection of the jungle that was expressed as illness. The general signs that one had entered a sacred location with no permission were for instance, feeling nausea or vomiting, strong headaches,

faintness and loss of appetite. Keep in mind that I had witnessed these reactions before while kayaking in a different region of Ecuador, and when this happened people ordinarily said that it was “mal aire” or bad air. For this reason and particularly when dealing with outsiders, Kichwa people carried out a Limpia ceremony before visiting sacred sites with the intention to ask for permission to enter. Therefore, when the jungle, cavern, river, mountain or waterfall granted entrance, there was no affection to the people who visited the site.

The first time I asked for permission to enter a natural site, was for the purpose of this research. Needless to say, I did not experience any of the symptoms after entering the cavern and two waterfalls I visited while I was there. Although I had a Limpia ceremony performed as a general introduction to nature, Marcos undertook a Limpia ceremony for every time we visited sacred locations. However, the process or ceremony when entering a particular site was slightly different. In addition to the Limpia ceremony undertaken on the eve of the visit, a second Limpia was carried out in the presence of the sacred site. Once we reached the sacred location, Marcos customarily made a grateful toast and offered nature a cup of distilled alcohol that Kichwa people called “kachiwa”, which was poured over the water. The reason for this, as I mentioned earlier, was to give nature something in return for allowing us to be there. Then each person was called to step in front of the TH and with leaves that were collected on our way there, the TH started the Limpia ceremony. While I will describe the details of a Limpia ceremony in chapter six, the ritual was essentially a cleansing that prepared the person to receive nature, its wisdom, energy or healing. In contrast to the typical Limpia ceremony, when a Limpia took place in a sacred location the TH replaced the tobacco – which was one of the indispensable elements in the ritual – with water from the caverns or waterfalls.



Picture 22 (top left) Sacred hidden cavern near Rukullacta

Picture 23 (right) Small sacred waterfall near “el Para”

Picture 24 (bottom left) Sketches of the large sacred waterfall

The first sacred location I visited was a hidden cavern located in a currently privatised but untouched territory, near the Rukullacta water tank (see picture 22). In order to reach the cavern, we walked about an hour and a half in the jungle; the visit took place on the 14th of October of 2017. I was taken to this cavern after Marcos sensed me being low in energy, which – as discussed in the Methods chapter – was the result of the stresses of fieldwork and the innumerable mosquito bites that drained my energy. In this regard, I wrote:

“I just realised a moment ago, that all of a sudden all the insect bites dried out. I’ve been here for exactly 16 days and have tons of mosquito bites, especially in my feet. Well, yesterday Marcos took me to a cavern – caverns are one of the sacred and powerful locations in the jungle - and did a Limpia on me, just with plants and in the cavern water. He told me the water of the caverns hold powers. For me it was such a relief, we haven’t had water for the past five days and thus, I haven’t showered in a week. He told me to submerge and wash in the cavern waters, that it is powerful and it will help me receive energy from it.”

So I did. To be honest, I've been feeling great after this. However, it's the dried mosquito bites that surprise me, it doesn't itch. I've been using Germolene, but the ease is nothing compared to this." (Reflective diary, 15th October 2017)

Considering that sacred sites were generally in the deep jungle and required preparation, the visits to sacred locations had a sensation of going on a trip. Not only the slippery jungle paths required complete attentiveness, but also Marcos showed me every plant that had medicinal uses on the way. The second sacred location I visited was one of the three sites located in "el Para", the small waterfall (see figure 23). The visits to the first two locations involved only Marcos, his wife and me. The third and last sacred location I visited, was the large waterfall also located within the reaches of Marcos' property. The third excursion was not only longer and difficult, but also - and for the same reasons - involved almost the entire family including some extended relatives. Since the path involved swimming across a river - that if the conditions were unfavourable, would fence our entrance - I was advised not to bring the camera along with me. However, I sketched the waterfall upon my return to save the imprint of it (See figure 24). The visit was practically a daytrip, but it was taken with utmost carefulness and respect. As revealed in a conversation with one of Marcos relatives on the eve of the visit:

"You do not get here [in reference to the sacred location] for adventure. Obviously, one arrives here to seek the wisdom, the 'cosmovision', the strength and the vitality in which one relates to trees, waterfalls, rivers, and stones. These are places that many times people who do not have that relationship think that it is a common stone. Those stones have life... Papa [in reference to Marcos] has his knowledge, he has arrived at the place, he asks for permission. After a moment it is something so incredible, the breeze, that strength from the waterfall remains still and you can enter to bathe. So, as Papa said, it's not because someone knows how to swim that you get to enter, you have to have a lot, a lot of respect for those sacred places" (Compadre Pepe - notes, 28th October 2017).

After the journeys to sacred locations it was customary to follow a special diet and rest. The Limpia ceremonies held in a sacred location were more revered and were only accessible in close acquaintance. In general, a visit to a sacred location was always mindful and involved a profound relationship with nature's power. The opportunities I had to visit a sacred location offered me clarity about the connection and significance of nature in Kichwa practices.

Parallelisms in nature

One aspect that I recurrently recognised in the way that Kichwa people expressed their views on nature, was the identification of parallelisms between particular characteristics of the wildlife and their behaviours. To develop the concept, Kichwa people understood the effects of nature over people and people over nature, as something that was firstly interconnected and secondly, that replicated its characteristics over the other. For example, part of the reason Kichwa people followed diets before harvesting was because in order to have good crops, the person had to have an energetic synchronisation with nature. As I was told, *“the jungle is energetic, every plant has energy”* (Yachak Angel Parco - Notes, 12th October 2017). Therefore, any dealing with those plants required the person to be purified from any substance that interfered with their naturalness or wholeness as a natural state of being. In a state of wholeness, the person was able to connect with nature and this process was essential for the practice of medicine and healing. While I will discuss this topic in the next chapter, in the Kichwa healing practices this process was known as “compactar” or blending with nature. In contrast, when the person had not followed the diet or was not in a state of wholeness with nature, its interaction had a negative affection. For instance, when a woman was in her menstrual period, she was forbidden to work in the *chakra* because it was believed that menstruation affected the crops in parallel to how it affected the woman. As Marcos explained to me, just as a woman during her menstruation was not fertile, her contact with the crop during her period would make *“the roots dry”*. The blending with nature was also on the basis of the ability to learn from it. Following the reasoning, when a person blended with nature it meant that nature was able to affect her awareness and gain knowledge directly from nature. As mentioned – but described in detail in chapter six – blending with nature was part of the TH’s training.

Furthermore, in what I was taught about the abilities and skills that Kichwa people had for living in the jungle, their knowledge derived essentially from their close observation of nature, especially animal’s behaviour. For instance, they recognised paths towards water sources by following the marks that animals such as jaguars and wild-pigs left on the trees. Similarly, they were able to recognise the fruits that were edible by observing the fruits that birds ate. Moreover, the observation of characteristics in plants in many cases gave them the knowledge of their properties and uses. For example, on one of our excursions to a sacred location Marcos stopped to show me a plant that was red on the tip (see picture 25) and told me how its colour corresponded to its properties to heal menstrual pains and other woman’s health issues. Similarly, the resemblance of

inside fibres of one of the plants to human veins corresponded to its use for varicose relief (see picture 26). Another example was a type of thin and long hanging roots that were used for hair growth and like those, there were numerous examples.



Picture 25 (left) *Plant with red tip that was used for issues related to menstruation*



Picture 26 (right) *Plant's inside fibers used for varicose relief*

The parallelisms were also described in beliefs related to the effects that plants, fruits and vegetables had when consumed. For instance, it was traditionally believed that if a woman ate conjoined plantains or bananas, she would have a twin pregnancy. As one of the THs recalled while telling me about this:

"We used to have a lot of beliefs. A woman, a teenager girl, a girl should not eat or cook conjoined plantain, like this [shows with hands], or plantain, bananas. Nowadays people eat them, but in the past it was thought that those women once they have a husband and get pregnant, they would have two children, twins. It was like that when they ignored... it was totally forbidden. Likewise, when little girls are playing around and sometimes they get tangled up, like this [shows with a rope] that was forbidden because sometimes the umbilical cord gets tangled. When they are grown ups and they have children that is when they get tangled. Also one should never withhold from giving drinking water... No woman should withhold, because if anything you already know that when you grow up, have a husband, have children, if you are a withholder of anything, then when you get pregnant you accumulate water. So, it is forbidden for women to withhold water" (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017).

In relation to the roles of women that I previously discussed, Marta's account also accentuate the prohibitions regarding the withholding of water for women and the implications on their future wellbeing. As I previously described, one of the main roles of women was the serving of drinks, which is linked to the prohibition of withholding water and the belief of its parallelisms to the woman's body. In our conversation, she also described that girls were not allowed to sit on rocks since that would made them lazy. Kichwa people as I will discuss later in this chapter, did not appreciate laziness. As I have presented, the parallelisms with nature not only referred to the characteristics of plants and its uses, but they also had implications on the behaviours and practices of Kichwa people.

Contamination

"I must admit that sometimes I must pretend I don't know what I know. I can't drink chicha if I think too much in its process. I made chicha yesterday and while I can't say it tastes bad – it actually resembles the taste of yogurt – and it is not spitted over as it used to be, as I began to make it, I saw bits that to me where unclean. Yet, I know they don't see it that way. They don't see dirt as dirty and perhaps they are most likely right. I am used to a different type of dirt, one that is really dirty, one that is contaminated by the pollution that I am mostly surrounded with" (Reflective diary, 5th October 2017).

As discussed in the Methods chapter, there were moments throughout my fieldwork where I experienced distinctions in the ways that Kichwa people lived and the lifestyle I was accustomed to. One of the distinctive aspects that I questioned about my own perception was the notion of cleanliness. A common belief among Ecuadorean mainstream culture is the notion that indigenous people and their practices are unclean. This representation of Ecuadorean indigenous people has strong links to Colonialism and the contrast between the indigenous and the 'civilised' – which I introduced in the contextual background and reviewed across the theoretic frameworks – and as this experience revealed to me, corresponds to a stereotype that I had naively also believed. First of all, as mentioned earlier the ritual of the 'Limpia' is in fact a ritual that represents cleanliness and as I continuously observed and reflected on, the Kichwa people and their practices were noticeably concerned with what was considered clean. As recorded in my fieldnotes:

“Kichwa people are very conscious of cleanliness. The house, though made out of dirt floor, is always clean. Bits of food are thrown outside and in the past – they’ve told me – the elders would send the young to take the rubbish far from the house, even the food residues were to be taken away. Likewise, the human residues, the toilet was not only far, but also covered. They were telling me that just as cats – who they consider to be one of the cleanest animals – cover their waste, so should humans” (Reflective diary, 6th October 2017).

In analysis, the contrast I experienced – particularly at the initial stages of my fieldwork – was rather a contrast regarding my perception of what I considered clean or unclean. The Kichwa people, for instance, did not consider soil to be dirty; soil was part of their home, was what nurtured their food and a bit of soil in the chicha or any other food had no reason to be considered unclean. However, soil in my food had a completely different meaning. This observation has corresponding characteristics with Douglas’ (1966) theory, which I discussed in Chapter three. Nonetheless, the different perception of the cleanliness of soil does entail a problem, fundamentally because Kichwa people had been accustomed to an unpolluted jungle where everything is nature and natural. While under those conditions, there would be no need to think of soil in my food or un-boiled water as having any harm, the effects of ‘civilisation’ and the pollution caused by modern industries in the Amazon region has changed that.

While impacts of industrial developments have affected the environment and incidentally the lifestyles of Kichwa people, as I mentioned earlier, the impacts of agrarian laws have also been considerable on the lives – and health – of the Kichwa people in the region. For example, the Agrarian reform of 1964 granted unused lands to farmers for production and in the interpretation that ‘unused lands’ were any land that was not in cultivation; farmers were assigned lands where Kichwa people used to live, along with those considered sacred. As I was told, the Ecuadorean government later allocated lands to indigenous populations, but it was a common practice of the *Colonos* to exchange hectares of land for products that were amusing to the Kichwa people, such as machetes and powder guns. In Marcos reminiscences, he used to say how foolish his grandparents were to think that hectares of land were equivalent to something as trivial as a machete. Nonetheless, recent hunting prohibitions – while in awareness of the conservation of wildlife – also had direct impacts on the lifestyles, eating habits and health of Kichwa people. In relation to this, in my fieldnotes I wrote:

“The Kichwas consume the waters from the rivers and streams and now use ammunition and powder to hunt animals, without knowing the environmental and health consequences of these products” (Reflective diary, 6th October 2017).

“Kichwa people have made the correlation between pesticides and contamination. They know it’s not good for their health or for the wellbeing of the jungle. But they have not yet realised that modern weapons – that some of them use for hunting – are contaminators also. They were actually upset at the current president for limiting the use of weapons” (Reflective diary, 6th October 2017).

Although I personally support hunting regulations, the importance of hunting for the Kichwa people was only evident to me from my experience with them. The prohibition of hunting – in terms of health – affected greatly Kichwa people’s diet. To illustrate the problem, the diets of modern Kichwa people was fundamentally based on plantain and cassava and though I was told that in the past, meat, fish and eggs were an important component of their diet, the meals I ate with them were mainly based on carbohydrates. As I presented in the contextual background chapter, chronic malnourishment is one of the biggest health issues amongst indigenous populations in Ecuador and from my observations, I argue that environmental regulations are associated to this problem. Moreover, the numerous stories I was told of Kichwa people that were in prison for hunting made me realise that while the purpose of forbidding hunting was to protect the regions’ wildlife, it affected the indigenous people – who have traditionally depended on this practice – more than the industries and mass-productions that were mainly responsible for the contamination and detriments of the region. I will discuss the importance of considering indigenous perspectives in the development of policies in Chapter seven. However, these accounts show that while unintended, the impact of laws and regulations, even when apparently unrelated – such as agrarian and environmental policies – had a deep bearing to the life and health of indigenous populations, such as the Kichwa people.

III. Ancestors and Spirits

As discussed in the previous section, the relationship with nature was of noteworthy value to the Kichwa people. However, this was also related to their understanding of the world and the animistic belief that nature had spirit. In this section, I will present and discuss the significance of spirits and

ancestors within Kichwa culture. The spirits of the jungle constitute the foundation of Kichwa healing practices that will be addressed in the next chapter.

Ancestors and the afterlife

During a conversation while walking around the community of Rukullacta with Marcos' youngest son, I was asked whether I was afraid of spirits. I asked if he meant the spirits of nature – which I had already heard about – but he corrected me by saying that what he meant was “ghosts” (Notes, 11th October 2017). I am in fact, not afraid of ghosts and thus, told him that I was not and with a sense of relief, he began to tell me about the ghosts of his ancestors that were present in the house I stayed in. This was not the only time I was told stories about relatives who had died, but whose presence could still be felt around the places where they lived. In one of the interviews, the participant described how his recently dead brother-in-law was felt around the house. In the interview he said:

“He was like, like a son to the family. So he came. He is sometimes in the living room, sometimes in the bedroom, sometimes he even sleeps, or on the Internet, or in laundry, or in the dining room. So... since he died recently, he still moves, he is alive” (Raul Huango, 21st November 2017).

As a matter of fact, the “Limpia” ceremony that was performed for Raul and his family was to clean the bad spirits, particularly related to the recent death of his relative that because of his abrupt death – in a car accident – was disturbing the family. Nonetheless, in his answer he described clearly the state of the spirit as moving and being “alive”. Actually, the word “Samay” in Kichwa language is a word that means both ‘spirit’ and ‘breath’. However, I argue that it is not exactly a double meaning. As Marcos once explained while elucidating this word to me, he said that just as a person stops breathing when she dies, her spirit leaves the body. The word *samay* means spirit, but Kichwa people understand breathing as the process of the body when the spirit inhabits it. In the process of death, the spirit leaves the body but it does not cease to exist. As I will discuss in the next chapter, Kichwa people believed that particularly with the spirits of Yachaks, the soul was able to take form of jaguars and other animals in the jungle. Although the description of human spirits taking the form of animals after death was limited to the spirits of Yachaks, the spirits of other people were also believed to be alive, at least for a period of time after death. Nonetheless, I found a distinction in the way that younger and elder Kichwa people described the existence of spirits. For instance, when Mama Carmen was telling me about her father’s bereavement, she described the event as a joyful

reunion where all the family gathered to eat and drink with her father; Marcos added to her story that they all felt the presence of Carmen's father there. In contrast, the descriptions of spirits by Marcos' son and Raul for example, were associated with somewhat negative emotions, such as the fear of ghosts or 'bad spirits'. This distinction made me think about the demonised concept of spirits, not only supposed evil by the Catholic Church, but also represented by western culture and media that I will explore in the Discussions Chapter.

Nature and the connection to the spirit world

As previously described, in certain cases the spirits of people were able to take form of animals in the jungle after death. However, this was not the only association between spirits and nature. Actually, Kichwa people acknowledged that the jungle and all its components were alive. The spirits of the jungle were not only present in the stories that Kichwa people told about the creation of the world and other mythical explanations of the world around them, but also a key component of their health-related practices that will be explored in the next chapter. Nonetheless, from the different stories Kichwa people told me, there were various spirits in the jungle. There were spirits that guarded and protected specific regions, but also particular features of the Jungle and other natural sites. For instance, there were spirits of rivers, mountains and rocks that were not only guardians, but also the source of the specific knowledge that a Yachak was able to attain. I will develop this topic with detail in the next chapter, but in essence the speciality of a Yachak depended on the type of jungle spirit she had experienced and her connection with it.

In Kichwa traditional stories, the spirits of some ancestral animals were also petrified in large rocks that were later considered sacred sites or regarded as powerful when the rocks were smaller. The way Kichwa people identified the animal spirit that had been turned into a rock was by the shape of the rock (see picture 27). For example, if a rock was shaped in resemblance to a river boa – an Amazonian river snake – or its head, it was said to be very powerful. The river boa was considered a powerful spirit; in the stories of creation, river boas were created from the penis of a god, which was stolen, cut into pieces and thrown into the river. Nonetheless, as I will describe in the next chapter, some healers and practitioners of evil deeds used the power of the rocks for their undertakings. Following the discussion in the previous section of how as an outsider, I had to ask the spirits of the jungle for permission to enter; different regions also had different spirits to guard them. For example, *Ama Sanga* was the name of the spirit of the Pastaza jungle located southeast from

Archidona. *Ibio* was the spirit of Morona Santiago, the southern region of the Ecuadorean Amazon where Kichwa people settled, and the spirit of the jungle in the Napo region was called *Ingaro*. As recorded in my notes, *Ingaro* was described as “a tall man with tiger claws” that “helped with hunting” and “as good he’s really good, but as bad, he’s very bad” (Notes, 17th October 2017). *Ingaro* as I was told, was a spirit that was very protective and caring, but when disturbed he was able to cause great harm on people. As it is seen in the descriptions of the spirit *Ingaro*, the spirits of the jungle had human and animal characteristics, usually a mixture of both. Moreover, they were able to adopt either masculine or feminine characteristics depending on the interaction they had with humans. As I was frequently told, “woman spirits appear to men and men spirits appear to women” (Notes, 5th October 2017). While spirit animals could appear to anyone who was ready to encounter them, as I will describe in the next chapter, the meeting and further relationship with jungle spirits was an essential aspect of the training processes of Yachaks.



Picture 27 Rock resembling an anteater bear

Dreams and communication with the spirit realm

“I had a dream that Marcos interpreted for me. He said I might find a jungle spirit, that I might see one of the jungle spirits. They only appear to those who the jungle wants to meet and share its wisdom with” (Reflective diary, 5th October 2017).

While I did not experience an encounter with the spirits of the jungle, I had various dreams interpreted for me throughout my time in Rukullacta. As my reflective note shows, dreams were usually linked to spiritual messages for the dreamer and as I mentioned in earlier sections, were one of the ways the spirits communicated with the Kichwa people. In the interpretations of dreams and traditional stories, Kichwa people believed dreams conveyed guidance, messages and particular

knowledge; for instance in the story about the first use of the guaysa plant, the discovery and knowledge of the guaysa, including the way to consume it, was delivered through a dream. Dreams not only held important meanings to Kichwa people, but the deciphering of dreams was one of the Kichwa traditions that was continued to be practiced in many homes nowadays.

Dream interpretation occurred habitually in the morning during the daily guaysa ritual; families sat together and among the stories and plans they shared, in some cases they also told their dreams in order to be deciphered. It was usually the elder members of the family that interpreted the dreams. Moreover, the interpretation of dreams as part of the morning ritual was also related to the planning of the day ahead. As it was told to me during one of the interviews:

“Sometimes when you dream, for instance if you dream of walking naked, it’s because something, some tragedy will happen or something, a snake might bite you. If you dream about something serious, you must not go out, instead stay home and calm – if you’re in the jungle – and if you dream of something normal, you may walk around. Anyway, dreams also are or become effective, they can happen, anything [you dream] may happen to you” (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017).

Dreams provided a daily guidance from the spirits that was faithfully followed in order to avoid, as Marta describes, tragedies and difficulties throughout the day. Moreover, dreams were also believed to reveal future events. For instance, in one of the dreams I had where I saw myself carrying a child in my arms, I was told that it meant that I would be a mother someday. Although the ability to have ‘visions’ was generally attributed to the Yachaks, dreams offered the opportunity to receive premonitory knowledge from the spirits. In fact, after one of my interviews, the healer asked me if I would like to have a guaysa ceremony to which I agreed and after the ceremony, he asked me to pay close attention to my dreams. In addition to the ‘Limpia’ ceremony, some healers practiced a ‘guaysa’ ceremony that I will describe in detail in the next chapter, but that was undertaken in the evening and usually with the purpose to help the patient gain clarity over troubles in life. Similarly, after ceremonies where people drank ayahuasca, the Yachak would tell the person that if during the ceremony the ayahuasca did not make any effect, it was possible that the insight came through that night’s dream. As I will discuss in the next chapter, in Kichwa healing ceremonies it was customary only for the Yachak to drink ayahuasca. However, because ayahuasca had gained popularity in recent years, some healers performed ceremonies where the people drank ayahuasca as well; this was usually the case of foreigners, but it was not limited to them. Nonetheless, the difference

between dreams after guaysa or ayahuasca ceremonies and ordinary dreams was that the dreams after a ceremony often did not require interpretation.

The interaction with spirits was significant in Kichwa people's lives; it constituted a connection to the past through the continuity of the ancestors, a link to the future through the guidance that spirits provided and an awareness of the present where for instance, the environment through its spirit was able to interact with the people. As I have introduced – and will develop in the next chapter – the spirits of ancestors and the jungle, play an important part in the understanding of health, illness and the health-related practices of Kichwa people.

IV. Endurance and strength

One of the most prominent values I recognised within the practices and manners of Kichwa people was the significance of strength. Associated with the capacity to endure hardship, strength was usually seen as a desirable trait in different aspects of a person's life. I will present in this section, the different forms in which strength and endurance were demonstrated. The importance of strength was also linked to the way Kichwa people perceived the process of healing and as it will be developed in the next chapter, it was a value present in the health-related practices.

Strength, energy and the hands

On one of the visits to the sacred sites that I previously recounted, the journey to the waterfall was through an arduous path that we had to cross in order to get there. The visit to the sacred waterfall involved almost the entire family, who entertained and helped each other along the way. However, one of Marcos' neighbours, who also joined us, was particularly and insistently helpful to me. As recorded in my accounts of the event:

“The man insisted on helping me and I let him, but when we got half way, crossing the river, we sat to rest for a bit and then one of Marcos' sons came to sit next to me and told me that I am strong enough, that I can get out of there on my own. He told me that this man was not helping me, he was stealing my power” (Reflective diary, 28th October 2017).

While I felt that his help was not needed and actually felt uncomfortable by the insistence, I was also afraid that refusing his help would be considered impolite. Therefore, I held his hand every time he offered assistance to step or pass through a challenging path. To start with, the family knew because of the numerous times we had walked through the jungle together, that I was physically strong and able to walk through difficult paths and for long hours; therefore, they were surprised to see me accepting help when they knew I could do it on my own. However, the reason that Marcos' son came to tell me that the man was not trying to help but rather – as recorded in my diary – ‘steal my power’, was because Kichwa people believed that at the centre of the hands was a point of spiritual strength or power.

Owing to the belief that the hands were sources of power or centres of concentrated energy, Kichwa people customarily shook hands in a very detached and particular way. Shaking someone's hand was customary in greeting and send-off, but the clasp was within the area of the fingers instead of the whole hand. During the first weeks, I found the way to shake hands to be odd and initially perceived it as a sign of weakness. However, as I began to learn about the health-related practices and beliefs, I came to understand that the hands – as well as the tip of the tongue and top of the head – were considered centres of spiritual power or energy in the body. Moreover, I realised how my initial perception was deeply influenced by the opposing western notion that a firm handshake was a sign of strength. For this reason – as I will describe in the next chapter – Yachaks focused on these points of the body for healing and congruently, the reason why the Kichwa people were particularly protective and cautious about holding or shaking hands.

Value of hard work and physical strength

The long treks through the jungle required endurance and strength. The times we went to the house in “el Para” for instance, we usually walked for two to four hours depending on how far a vehicle would take us. As I mentioned before, in “el Para” there were no roads, electricity or shops, thus we carried everything we needed with us through the jungle paths; a few live chickens, oil, matches, kilos of rice, blankets, and sometimes tools that were needed to fix the house, among many other things. During the treks, we crossed streams and hills of slippery mud to which Kichwa people used a technique that made them walk much faster than me. On my first walks, I slipped and fell quite often and the family helped, but teased me – or any other family member who also fell – by saying

that was how you spotted a *Misho* in the jungle. *Misho*⁴ was the term Kichwa people used to refer to non-Kichwa Ecuadoreans; another term they used was “awallacta” that was used particularly for the Ecuadoreans that came from the highlands. In contrast to the physical strength that Kichwa people had to walk through those terrains, the lack of physical strength and ability to walk for long hours was considered a weakness. This was one of the aspects that when compared to the *Misho* population, the Kichwa people felt stronger. As one of the participants told me during our interview when talking about differences in the effects of plant medicine between indigenous and *Mishos*, he said:

“For the most part yes... That can be said even from the food we eat, no? We have other, other type of energy strength. It gives us, sometimes with small doses of plants we heal, but usually we have to drink a lot. On the other hand, with the Mestizo people who live in the city... that person when given just a little dose gets dizzy and heals, and sometimes it also has no effect. But commonly people from the jungle have to be given more concentrated doses because they are stronger. People who live in a city ... excuse me, we call them ‘balanceados’, they are white meat itself, weak in its entirety and because of the food situation itself has made it like that, well I don’t, I don’t know, no...” (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017).

‘Balanceado’ is an Ecuadorean slang word that is used for the packed-food produced to feed animals, particularly chickens; and to clarify the point in our conversation, I asked him if that is what he meant. The participant continued his answer as follows:

“That, yes. That is why we tell people who live in the city centre at least, that they are ‘balanceados’. And they are weak. When you have to walk in the jungle, and believe me, that the people from the jungle don’t even feel the walk. But the people, who come from the city, don’t walk even three steps or one hundred meters and are already tired. One of the biggest differences there is. The only thing people in the jungle are missing is a little more education. They need a little more technique to excel” (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017).

As the conversation revealed, Kichwa people generally took pride in their physical strength and as I also described in previous sections, it was evident by the fitness of elders like Marcos and Carmen (see picture 28), who walked for hours with no complaints.

⁴ *Misho* and *awallacta* were affectionate terms that were used in contrast to *Colonos*, which was also a term used to refer to non-Kichwa people.



Picture 28 (left) Mama Carmen walking through the jungle paths



Picture 29 (right) the entire family contributing and working to build a new traditional house

Kichwa people were also hard workers and as I discussed previously, disliked the idea of laziness. Every morning, after the customary *guaysa* ritual every person was expected to undertake a labour. As recorded in my notes:

“We all stand to do something, wash, clean or cook breakfast, which can be anything. Today we had rice and eggs with smoked yuca or cassava that I was told can last for days and it tastes great. Later on we go and work, we harvest, clean the land. Men build the extension of the house and then we will all come back later to the fire to eat lunch. It is barely 10am and already it feels like a long day” (Reflective diary, 4th October 2017).

A hard workingwoman, for instance, was considered to be a good woman and as I mentioned earlier, women worked in the field with their children on their backs with no problem. Likewise, men whether they worked in construction (see picture 29), in the field or traditionally hunting, were regarded with respect when they demonstrated their hard work. In casual conversations I was told how the strength of indigenous people from the Amazon, whether Kichwa, Shuar or Huaorani, was unmistakable during the military service that men in Ecuador had to undertake. Moreover, men and women were valued for their strength and ability to endure hard situations; this was an aspect that was also related to the way Kichwa people approached their health. The importance of endurance and hard work is evident through one of the participant’s account of the day he was taken to the hospital:

“Oh well, about the operation... because of work, you walk very far. Tiredness caught me since I was walking between 7 or 6 hours in the jungle. But still working one hardly gives up. The climate may change... around there in el Coca [location deeper in the Amazon] it gets very hot. An so I had a fever... and [that time] when I had a fever... I didn't have... it was a working day, and so I didn't ask for permission. Of course you can ask for permission, but there was no chance to prepare. I also wanted to prepare some medicinal plants, but there was no way, and so I fainted. I felt that I fainted, and when I woke up I was already in the hospital... and then when I regained a little consciousness, they told me 'you know that what you have is appendix' and that they had to operate” (Ismael Quishpe, 18th December 2017).

While I will develop the details in the next chapter, Kichwa people saw illness in comparison to a battle where the healing came principally in response to the patient's endurance of it. The power of the patient – as told by all the healers I interviewed – was the principal factor in determining the healing outcomes and congruent with what one of the patients recounted, “I don't let myself be defeated by my illness” (Miguel Ramirez, 9th November 2017). Furthermore, in reference to a remark Marcos once made about what God had said in the Bible, he said, “As you say, with the sweat of your forehead you will pay” (Notes, 16th October 2017); I argue that the value of strength, endurance and hard work for Kichwa people was resonant with the way western culture values those abilities and traits. Comparable to the principle of survival of the fittest, there was a similarity that dictated that the harder someone worked the better.

V. Experienced Knowledge

The last core value of Kichwa culture that I present is the value of experienced knowledge. In this section, I will discuss the importance of experience in the process of learning and how in that context, elders were valued and considered the wisest people. Nonetheless, I will also discuss the generational discrepancies that I found throughout my participant observation. The value of experienced knowledge was also present in the health-related practices of Kichwa people; particularly, the training processes of healers that I will develop in the next chapter.

Experience valued in learning

“Knowledge for Kichwa people is practical. One must do it in order to understand it. When I asked for them to allow me to understand their healing methods, they understood I wanted to learn to heal. The observation method is not so convincing to them” (Reflective diary, 19th October 2017).

As explained earlier in this chapter, the significance of experience in learning for Kichwa people was in fact, an aspect that affected the way this research was initially understood. While eventually Marcos recognised that my methods of learning about the Kichwa health-related practices would not include my becoming of a healer, the experience in the process of learning was of notorious importance in Kichwa culture. Kichwa people recognised the nature of experience in the process of developing knowledge as “practical” knowledge. In contrast to the “theoretical” process – as it was commonly described – that most people from the ‘city town’ would exercise in order to teach and learn. As recorded in my notes from a conversation between my gatekeeper, one of the healers that was interviewed and myself, the gatekeeper said:

“Ambi has a son who is a doctor. He [Ambi] has a lot of experience, you have studies, I don't have studies but the practical is what's important. We always argue with his son, ‘you don't know, you just do theory’” (Eduardo Ramirez – notes, 13th October 2017).

Similarly, on an anecdote that I was told more than once – but captured in the interview following the conversation – I was told how a professional agronomist came to Rukullacta to teach the Kichwa people about new farming techniques. In the interview, Ambi recounted the event as follows:

“An example, I have a schoolmate, we studied together at school, ok... he was a technician, he is an agronomy engineer... and he invites PKR communities, ok. In a training workshop for sowing and pruning cocoa, there was a, a... a bit of a crazy man. And he was always... just because he was crazy he sat at the end, ok. And so the engineer put, put his [presentation]... and begins to explain cocoa, how to prune it, how to harvest it, how to do maintenance... how many things he said, and the man that was behind... ‘accepted’ everything, no. And at the end, he raises his hand, ok [and says], ‘engineer, can I ask a question? Yes, yes, yes ... continue no more. Look engineer, you are prepared, you are a professional, you are a

technician, but out of curiosity... how many hectares of cocoa do you have, how many cocoa plants have you got to come to exhibit here?'... and he didn't have any cocoa plants. He had not experienced. He was, how to say, theoretical that's it... and the practice? He had never sown. From the theoretical, he spoke wonders, no. But when he [the man] said that, the engineer was unable to speak. It's like that... the engineer studied, ok, he is an agronomy engineer, but to present in the workshop, for training, at least he had to have his, his plants, right? But, he didn't have them" (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

In contrast to more conceptual processes of education, Kichwa people believed that true learning could only come from experience and the practice of the subject. The Kichwa comparison between 'practice' and 'theory' was reminiscent to the difference that Aristotle established between the two intellectual virtues, 'Sophia' and 'Phronesis' and also to the distinction between 'a priori' and 'a posteriori' knowledge described by Kant (1781). Although both Aristotle and Kant establish that conceptual knowledge is a higher type of knowledge, Kichwa people considered that experience was more valuable. Nonetheless, I argue that just as Kant establishes the possibility of a synthetic a priori type of knowledge, the knowledge of health-related practices of Kichwa people was possible for me to understand only on the basis of a conceivable experience.

Elders and knowledge

In reference to the previous section, the value of experienced knowledge emanated from an appreciation of the knowledge acquired and developed through years and imparted through generations. As noted in earlier sections, knowledge amongst Kichwa people was traditionally passed from one generation to the next. While there were a few ways to impart knowledge, the most common way in which elders passed their knowledge was through storytelling. As one of the patients I interviewed said regarding her knowledge of how Kichwa people lived before the catholic missionaries arrived:

"Yes, here my husband's father would tell me. When we went to the farm, from morning until the afternoon he would give advice and then he told stories. I've always liked the stories." (Elsa Lanchama, 18th December 2017).

As I have mentioned before, the daily *guaysa* ritual was an important tradition for Kichwa families. Although it was no longer practiced in every Kichwa home, the *guaysa* ritual provided the opportunity for families to gather, plan their undertakings and tell stories. Since the *guaysa* ritual took place before dawn when it was still dark and cold, the warmth of the fire and the *guaysa* brew together with the sounds of nature, provided the perfect environment for storytelling. The variety of stories Kichwa people told varied from myths of creation to stories that explained the uses of specific medicinal plants. In my time with the Kichwa people, I heard numerous stories, many explaining how Kichwa people through time have acquired the knowledge for their survival. Likewise, health-related knowledge, particularly the knowledge of medicinal plants and the spirits of the jungle were told through stories. In health-related practices, knowledge was also imparted through songs and in some cases, through a process that I will describe in the next chapter, but that in essence required cracking the knuckles of the apprentice's hand. However, changes of modern lifestyle – for example, parents adhering to different working hours and children to school hours – affected the practice of drinking *guaysa* in the morning and with that the practice of imparting knowledge through storytelling.

While not all Kichwa people continued the practice of storytelling, the advice and guidance of elders was highly valued and regarded with respect, *"that is how they give us advice to live"* (Dolores Morales, 21st November 2017). As I described in previous sections, the Kichwa people traditionally performed a ritual where the elders gave advice following the application of chilli in the eyes of the person who needed instruction. In spite of the pain that chilli causes when placed in the eye and considering the idea of punishment, the Kichwa people were insistent in not describing this or any other traditional form of disciplinary method with the word. The way the process of disciplining was described, was through the expressions 'to give advice or advising'. Although the semantic distinction was an explanation that was never fully clarified to me, the fact that people used the word for other descriptions, such as the handlings of missionaries in the past, led me to consider that there was abuse in the mistreatment they received. In Marcos' memories and attempts to explain me the difference, he often described punishment in terms of something that had no purpose as to make the person better. In contrast, the tradition of putting chilli in the eyes was essentially with the purpose of improvement and therefore, was also part of the ceremony where the *Kuraka* took over his duties. In my fieldnotes, I wrote:

"The Kuraka is chosen by the Kichwa people. When he is chosen the elders put chilli pepper on his eyes and slap him with nettle leaves. This is a tradition of the Kichwa people and it's

not considered a punishment. It's rather a way to educate or instruct the younger and the way elders would give advice. In the election of the Kuraka, this is the way he receives the advice from the elders to guide and prepare him for his duties" (Reflective diary, 11th October 2017).

The distinction of the word 'punishment' was also reflected in a particular story, the story of 'Killi Pamba'. In summary, the story describes the arrival of the Spaniards to the region; they brought tools, machetes and clothes to the Kichwa people, but required them to pay. The story narrated how Kichwa families got indebted and they were obliged to pay the Spanish back, but since Kichwa people had no money, they were punished. The story also tells how through that system, many Kichwa people were forced to work as 'payment' for the things that they were given. *Killi Pamba* was a Kichwa community and as the story tells, the people, tired of the punishments, undertook a yearlong diet requesting help from the spirits. Upon the completion of the diet, the community was told to celebrate with a traditional drink that began to spill and eventually flooded the entire community; when the Spanish returned, the only thing they found was a big lake where the spirits of the people survived.

Generational differences

Throughout my participant observation, I identified notorious differences between the practices, beliefs and lifestyles between Kichwa people from different generations. As I discussed earlier, the influences of mainstream culture and modern lifestyles have affected greatly the traditions of Kichwa culture. However, a notorious distinction between generations was in the use of language. As reflected in my diary:

"It is surprising to me how children speak to their parents is Spanish and while they understand Kichwa perfectly, they don't speak it. Some of the young people I have spoken to say that they know Kichwa, but don't feel so comfortable speaking it. I would say that all the children here speak Spanish rather than Kichwa" (Reflective diary, 10th October 2017).

As I have discussed in the methods chapter, the complexities of language were relevant to the development of this ethnography. However, the meaningful aspect of language and its use among Kichwa people was the difference it marked between younger and elder generations. While elders were generally respected and valued, many of the traditions and knowledge they shared were not

always appreciated. This was especially the case of the knowledge of medicinal plants, which healers and elders knew about, but frequently said that it was knowledge that would die with them because the younger generations did not want to learn. Although I often heard the elders complaining about how younger generations no longer practiced or believed what they said, I also saw the younger people adopting changes as a response to habits in the traditional way of living that they identified that were not wanted for themselves. Such as domestic violence, poverty and lack of opportunities that technology, education and interaction with mainstream culture made them aware of. Related to this observation, throughout my reflective diary I wrote:

“The youngest daughter wants to go to university, and having contact with me and a few other students that have come as volunteers, have made her realise that she can choose a different way to live. Although, she doesn’t want to live the life that she sees her sisters living, she values femininity in a very Kichwa way” (Reflective diary, 12th October 2017).

“Undoubtedly, some of the principles Kichwa people traditionally live by don’t always work and I see many people realising and changing their ways from what is normal and expected. Of course there’s a down part to it and it is that some traditions and the culture is ‘disappearing’. Nonetheless, I’ve begun to think that it is not disappearing, but rather evolving. Although some Kichwa people evolve their culture, identity and lifestyles in beneficial and positive ways, many don’t” (Reflective diary, 20th November 2017).

As noted in my account, the changes sometimes implied that Kichwa traditional practices were disappearing and as a reaction, there was a contending approach to ‘maintain’ the Kichwa culture. This motive to ‘maintain’ the culture was also explained by one of the participants as follows:

“So today, with modernization, Kichwa dance has been modernised, they move like this [shows steps]... they put on little outfits, like this [shows the length on thigh] they wear the outfits, but that is not... that is, it is not a traditional costume. And all the modernisation, they are about to show everything [referring to the revealing outfit]... so everything has changed. There are people, one or another community that still maintain. Others... sometimes they copy other traditions, other cultures and so ours begins to disappear. As someone said, the Kichwa culture will disappear in a few years, but that is why we are grouped like this, to maintain the knowledge” (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017).

However, as reflected in my notes *“There is latent question that arises from the idea of maintaining the culture” (Reflective diary, 20th November 2017)*; essentially, because from the observations and conversations I had with different Kichwa people, I saw a slightly different culture. I continued the reflection by stating that, *“at some moments I see a big confusion on what the Kichwa culture is” (Reflective diary, 20th November 2017)*. While the ‘maintaining’ of Kichwa culture was in essence desired, it also caused remorse and a battle within younger people; who for one part wanted to “be Kichwa”, but also wanted to be part of the newness that mainstream culture offered. While I argue that not all the opportunities that mainstream culture offered were beneficial, the ‘maintaining’ of the Kichwa culture imposed an enormous responsibility over teenage generations. This concern, as I developed on the power of representation, is a problem – especially for indigenous populations – that goes beyond the differences between generations and rather deals with the power to decide what “being a Kichwa” person means.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the reader to the context and first part of the findings of this ethnographic exploration. This chapter considered the importance of context in the understanding of Kichwa practices and thus, I have discussed the setting and main interactions, followed by the presentation of the Kichwa cultural values from a broader perspective. The core values of Kichwa culture that were identified and discussed were the following: i) Collective living, ii) Relationships with nature, iii) Ancestors and spirits, iv) Enduring strength, and; v) Experienced knowledge. The values I presented in this chapter will now be observed and discussed with reference to the health-related practices of the Kichwa people.

Chapter Six: Findings – Part 2 Characteristics of Kichwa medicine and health-related practices

Introduction

On account of the general views of Kichwa culture that were presented in chapter five, this chapter addresses the findings according to the research question in detail. In this chapter I will explore the health-related practices of the Kichwa people of Rukullacta and discuss the values that are reflected within the practices and health-related behaviours of Kichwa people. Furthermore, this chapter presents the findings according to the themes grounded in the descriptions of the Kichwa people about their health and health-related practice and knowledge. The findings in this chapter have been grouped into the following themes: i) fundamental healing practices, ii) Yachaks and healers, and iii) health and illness. This second part focused principally on the findings from the data collected through the interviews with healers and patients, which were supported with visual data and fieldnotes.

Fundamental healing practices

In this section I describe the principal healing practices of Kichwa people. In this account, I present the principal health-related practices of Kichwa traditional medicine (TM). I describe in detail the Limpia ceremony, which is the principal healing ritual in Kichwa medicine, the birthing procedure and the specific healing abilities or powers called ‘Pajus’. Moreover, in this section I discuss the essential elements of the Limpia ritual – the significance behind each of them – and describe the additional healthcare measures that were applied before and after the health-related rituals.

The Limpia: a traditional Kichwa healing ceremony

The Limpia, as the term in Spanish denotes, was a ‘cleansing’ ritual. Traditionally, the Limpia ceremony involved all the people in the household and it was carried out even when there was no physical evidence of disturbance to the patient’s health. As I observed throughout my fieldwork, many non-Kichwa people also sought the treatment of Kichwa traditional healers. While the Limpia

ceremony for Kichwa and non-Kichwa patients was in essence the same, the main difference was that in the case of Kichwa people, the healer would typically be the one to travel to the patient's home. Unless the Limpia was carried out in a sacred location, the ceremony usually commenced at dusk. According to the conversations I had with few of the healers, dusk as well as dawn, were times where the energy of the jungle changed and became stronger. Moreover, dusk was considered to be the most appropriate time to carry out a Limpia ceremony because in the darkness of dusk the vision of the *Yachak* was stimulated. As two of the participants described:

"Of course, that is why the Yachak, for example... just as an example. You are sick and you tell me 'please help me I am sick, I want you to heal me'. So, I prepare the ayahuasca. I cook it and around 8 or 9 in the evening, our custom, we drink it. From 9 in the evening, in half an hour to 45 minutes it will make an effect. So there you start seeing the person. And then I see and tell you, 'you are like this, you are sick or you have bad luck or your study goes like this or that'... and so, I tell you everything. That is the vision of ayahuasca" (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

"In the moment, of course! In the moment I'm seeing with ayahuasca. That's why we drink it in the evening, not during the day... I see this here, this there, that there... I need to heal this... I see what I need for treatment 'this is the plant needed for this healing'" (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017).

The Limpia as it will be discussed, consisted of a diagnostic procedure where the Yachak through the effects of ayahuasca, was able to determine the malady or situation of the patient. Although ayahuasca was the most traditional method, the diagnosis was also carried out through the use of other methods, such as a white candle or a fertilised egg. Following the diagnostic procedure the Yachak continued to cleanse the patient and afterwards one by one, every single member of the patient's family. The cleansing lasted approximately fifteen minutes per person – although this varied from Yachak to Yachak – and depending on the number of people in the household, the complete ceremony could last through the night. The lengthiest Limpia ceremony I participated in involved the cleansing of nine people.

Of note was that traditionally and considering the Yachak was the person visiting the house, the family treated the Yachak and his company, as the most revered guests. The times I accompanied Marcos to a Limpia session, we arrived to the patient's home at around five in the evening. Together

with Marcos and his wife – who usually accompanied him – we were received with supper and *chicha*, which I was advised in advance to always accept. Once we got there and until the Yachak decided that it was the appropriate time to undertake the Limpia ceremony, the interaction with the patient and the family was completely casual; laughing, remembering anecdotes and in one occasion, we just sat in front of the television until everyone was ready to begin. It is worth noting that not at any point, was the conversation related to the illness or the reason why the Limpia was required. Traditionally the Limpia took place around the fire log, but in many cases it was undertaken in any room that was large enough to sit the entire family. As dusk set in, the family gathered in the assigned room and everyone sat forming a circular outline. The eldest woman in the household was usually the person in charge of organising and assisting the Yachak with any requirements he had. A small bench was placed in the centre for the patient and afterwards, for the people that were also cleansed. The Yachak – if the room was not on the ground – asked for a bucket to spit the bitterness of the ayahuasca beverage. At that point, the healer lighted a cigarette – although customarily it was natural tobacco rolled on a dried piece of plantain - and then he would offer it to anyone who wanted to smoke with him. In the meantime the ayahuasca mixture was given to the woman head of the household. As I presented in the previous chapter, it was a woman's duty to serve drinks, thus it was always the elder woman in the household in charge of pouring the mixture into a small cup and serve. In seldom occasions the Yachak offered the ayahuasca beverage to other people, as I have also discussed, the Yachak was traditionally the only one to drink the ayahuasca. Immediately after, the Yachak and any other person who drank the ayahuasca mixture were offered a drink of liquor that the Kichwa people call *kachiwa*. The *kachiwa* was used to wash the bitterness of the beverage away and after, the remaining taste was spit out into the bucket. During that time, the lights in the room were kept on and the casual conversations continued for other twenty or more minutes. However, once the Yachak began to feel the effects of the ayahuasca, he asked everyone to be silent and the lights to be turned off. Subsequently, he called the principal patient to sit in the bench in the centre with her face towards him. The bench was usually low; therefore, the patient sat facing the Yachak with her head down and at a lower height than the seat of the Yachak. When everything was in place, the Limpia ceremony commenced.

As the silence of people gave way to the sounds of nature, the environment became very calm. For a while, everyone stayed still and the healer began to breathe in a more audible and controlled way. The only visible thing would be the red-orange light of the cigarette that was kept lit throughout the ceremony. The tobacco as I will later describe, was a fundamental element of the Limpia ceremony. For this reason, either the healer, the person that assisted him or the head of the household had to

make sure to light one cigarette after the other. The Yachak started by smoking the tobacco and blowing the smoke around his own body and then to the person that sat in front of him. The Yachak would then take another sip of kachiwa, but instead of drinking it, the kachiwa was blown over the patient in a similar way to the smoke. After that, the Yachak grabbed a cluster of particular leaves called surupanga, and slowly shook them around the patient. At that time, the Yachak also began to whistle intermittently what eventually became a particular melody that was used in all Limpia ceremonies. The melody was initially whistled or mumbled, but after some minutes some Yachaks also sang; Marcos, for instance, went back and forth between whistling and singing to the melody. The melody or rather the lyrics of the song – that I introduced in Chapter Five, but will develop further in this chapter – were the calling of the spirits of the jungle to come and intercede in the healing process. As revealed in later conversations, the motion of the surupanga's shake that enacts the Limpia, began from the head of the patient and then continued from the top of the head, around the person and then outwards several times (See picture 30). The movement exemplified the cleansing, as if with the surupanga the Yachak swept the illness or bad spirits away. Consequently, the Yachak stopped the melody to take a sip of cologne that was blown over the patient. Similarly, the Yachak began blowing the cologne from the patient's head and around the person's body. Finally, the Yachak asked the patient to hold her hands with the palms facing together and held the patient's hands as he blew in between her palms. As presented in the previous chapter, this was done to restore energy or power to the person through the energetic points located in the head and hands.



Picture 30 (left) sketch of the Limpia cleansing motion



Picture 31 (right) sketch of the elements used in the Limpia ceremony

Keeping in mind that the entire ceremony happened in almost complete darkness, at the beginning the blowing sounded as if the Yachak was absorbing something from the patient's head and hands.

However, as it was clarified in the interviews afterwards, the Yachak blew into the patient's top of the head and into the palms to restore her 'power'. The blowing process continued for several times, at least ten times in each place, but after that the patient was cleansed and it was believed the patient received her power back. At the end of each Limpia, the Yachak spitted into the bucket and afterwards, asked the patient to stand and the next person to sit in her place; then, the Yachak repeated the entire process again. The Limpia ceremony was a cleansing ritual that was used with diagnostic and healing purposes; however, it was also used as preventive healthcare. Although Limpia ceremonies usually took place in the evening, I had the opportunity to photograph the practice (see pictures 32, 33, 34) at the Yachak's gathering that took place on the 25th of November of 2017, while I undertook my fieldwork.



Picture 32 (top) traditional positioning of the patient sitting in front of the Yachak for the Limpia

Picture 33 (bottom left) demonstration of the cleansing motion with the surupanga

Picture 34 (bottom right) demonstration with the surupanga

Elements in a Limpia ritual

Having described the Limpia ceremony, I will now discuss the fundamental elements used and required for the ritual. Although in different forms, the elements I will discuss were present in every Limpia ceremony. The elements of the Limpia ritual were the following:

Means to “see”: *“In the dark the Yachak takes ayahuasca and sees the disease” (Notes, 13th October 2017).*



Picture 35 (top left) ayahuasca root and amiruka leaf

Picture 36 (right) yaje preparation being cooked

Picture 37 (bottom left) yaje preparation ready to be used or saved in a plastic bottle

As described and mentioned throughout the previous chapters, a principal component of Kichwa TM was the use of ayahuasca. Ayahuasca – as popularly known – is a psychedelic root that when is mixed with particular leaves, produces a mixture that enables hallucinogenic visions. In Kichwa health-related practices the mixture of ayahuasca was called *yaje* (see pictures 35, 36, 37). The yaje was a cooked preparation made up of the ayahuasca root and a leaf that Kichwa people called ‘amiruka’, which activated the ayahuasca’s hallucinogenic properties. The yaje preparation was a

lengthy process, but it was often prepared and kept in a plastic bottle without losing its effects. Traditionally the patient's family prepared the yaje, but since currently not every family grew the ayahuasca root, it was usually the Yachak who prepared her own yaje. As recorded in one of the interviews:

***Raul:** One likes to work the field... a bit of everything. Now here, from what my father gave me I have... I have cocoa, I have guayusa, uh... chonta planting, uh... the planting of timber, uh... also medicinal plants that I used to sow.*

***Me:** And not any more?*

***Raul:** No, not any longer... one forgets.*

***Me:** Which plants did you use sow?*

***Raul:** Medicinal ones... I sowed the... the ayahuasca. That's what I... we sowed"*

(Raul Huango, 21st November 2017).

Since the ayahuasca root was considered a sacred plant, many Yachaks preferred to be involved throughout its entire process; themselves be involved in the growth, preparation and drinking of the root. The ayahuasca – that in Kichwa language means 'rope of the soul' – was considered sacred because of the power it had to connect the individual with the wisdom of nature through the vision it produced.

The reason the yaje was used in the healing practices was because it enabled the vision of the Yachak. As I have mentioned and will discuss later in this chapter, the distinction between Yachaks and healers was basically the ability to 'see'. It was the vision that the Yachak had, what effectively guided the Yachak through the healing process. Likewise, the Yachak guided step by step the patient into the ceremony, the process of healing and when a person drank yaje, to experience a vision; the Yachak was able to guide the process of the ayahuasca in the person's body as well. As it was described to me, the vision appeared like a screen in front of the person's eyes; often, Kichwa people compared the ayahuasca vision to the beginning of an 'old movie'. The vision, as Marcos and other Kichwa people described, was sometimes like watching a movie and other times the vision took over the entire space of the person, as if the person was part of the movie.

"The first time I took ayahuasca, it was uff... It seemed like I was in another world. I saw things that I had never really seen. Had never seen them, but I did... like dreaming, ok... like that. That was it... that was the vision. I said that I had been dreaming, but it was not that, it

was the effect of the ayahuasca. It is like a screen... like this [shows with hands something opening], pac! You get a screen. There are times when you see many things, your reality, everything. There you see yourself, your enemies, you can see everything” (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

“In the vision, we are watching you. With ayahuasca you see... it is like an X-ray” (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017).

Furthermore, the Yachak or any person drinking the yaje had to be prepared. The preparation consisted of a diet where the person was advised not to eat chilli peppers or salt and nothing solid for at least six hours before the ceremony. The ayahuasca root was considered sacred and thus, the drinking of ayahuasca for Kichwa people was never recreational. As recorded throughout my notes:

“We drink with all the respect. I drink and then if anyone wants to drink, it is provided [referring to the yaje]. With the spirit [meaning intention] of uniting with nature we drink the yaje. If we are consciously with that spirit [intention] of looking for something positive and drink the yaje, we will have the vision. If not, then you can get drunk and even be dumped in the ground [from drinking too much] and get no vision” (Yachak Marcos Ramirez – notes, 28th October 2017).

“If I drink, I experience how my life will turn out in the future, if I will reach or not the desired goal” (Yachak Marcos Ramirez – notes, 28th October 2017).

“The ayahuasca gives visions about the knowledge of plants” (Yachak Angel Parco – notes, 12th October 2017).

The ayahuasca, as Kichwa people believed, had the power to connect the person to the spirits of the root, who through vision offered guidance and knowledge. As Yachaks Angel and Marcos recounted, the ayahuasca was the way that Yachaks were able to identify the illness of the patient and what medicinal plants were required for the particular treatment. For this reason, it was only the Yachaks who traditionally drank the yaje in a healing ceremony.

While healing rituals that involved the drinking of ayahuasca were the most popular, Yachaks practiced several different types of healing rituals. In addition to the ayahuasca rituals, there were guaysa rituals where in contrast to the traditional drinking of guaysa that elders practiced every morning, the procedure took place in the evening and large amounts of guaysa tea was drank to produce a cleansing detoxification of the body. Likewise there were rituals that took place in sacred locations, such as caves, waterfalls and within the jungle; and in addition to the ayahuasca method of diagnosis, some healers also used a white candle or a fertilised egg to identify the health issue. Needless to say, each Yachak had a different way to prepare the yaje or combine the different methods to diagnose and heal.

Tobacco for protection: *“Tobacco gives you more power. One is not afraid of anything in the jungle, it may be boas or tigers, I am not afraid of anything” (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).*



Picture 38 (Top) traditional rolled tobacco leaves that were dried and shredded for use

Picture 39 (bottom left) Dried plantain leaves used to roll a tobacco cigar

Picture 40 (bottom left) shredded tobacco leaves ready to be rolled

The tobacco plant was traditionally used for protection. For this reason, as I described earlier, a cigarette or traditionally a tobacco cigar (See pictures 38, 39 and 40) were lighted and smoked throughout the entire Limpia ceremony. The tobacco plant was believed to scare the evil spirits away, as Marcos' son told me in conversation:

“Like my father said, ‘you must drink tobacco, you must smoke tobacco, you must eat tobacco’. I would always give them [referring to his younger brother and cousin when they were children] whether they wanted or not, they would smoke... antique tobacco [meaning the natural tobacco leaf], even if it got us dizzy or if it send us to sleep. My father always left tobacco prepared for us. Enough for a month or so, that we were left alone in the jungle” (Marcos Ramirez son – notes 28th October 2017).

As noted, the tobacco leaves were either smoked, drank or eaten. Likewise, Kichwa people had the practice to pour extract of the tobacco leaf through the person's nose; this was done in order to gain strength. During a session I was asked to assist as a translator for a group of North American young boys, I had the opportunity to try the tobacco to be poured into my nose. While I was advised beforehand that the tobacco was strong and most likely made me vomit, the experience was terrible. However, the experience was meant to produce that effect since it was also a method of cleansing and since everybody had the same effect, we laughed at the valiant efforts we all held.

The element of nature: the Surupanga

“Yachak Ambi: I took two hands [meaning bundles] of leaves, right. Clean and clean with the two leafs...

Me: With the surupanga?

Yachak Ambi: Also. I apply two things, the surupanga and the natural leaf. There is also a leaf for bad air and all that. So I took both bundles of leaves, I cleaned him...”

(Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017)

As described in the Limpia ceremony, the surupanga was a key element that enabled the 'cleansing' of bad energies. The surupanga was a type of leaf that was tied together in a round clustered shape, similar to the shape of a pom-pom and dried out before it was used (see picture 41). The reason Kichwa people used the surupanga for Limpia rituals, was because it was believed that the leaf had the power to absorb negative energies that interfered with the wellbeing of the individual.

Although there were two different types of tropical leaves that had absorptive qualities, the surupanga was commonly used in Kichwa healing ceremonies.



Picture 41 *surupanga* leaves

With the movement, the surupanga leaves made a sound comparable to the sound that a strong wind produces as it flows through a tree's branches, combined with the sound that a bottle filled with pebbles would make as it is shaken. The natural sounds of the surupanga and the whistled melody during the Limpia rituals, created a soothing and relaxing environment, which I argue was also part of the process of healing.

Head, hands and mouth: *"The tongue stores energy, absorbs and transmits energy" (Yachak Angel Parco – notes, 12th October 2017).*

In reference to the points of strength or spiritual power in the body that I presented in the previous chapter, the healing practices of Kichwa people were based on the transference of energy. The energy was commonly passed through the power points – such as the hands – or through suction or deflation. For this reason, in the Limpia ceremony the Yachak blew the patient's head and hands in order to energise the patient's body and restore her wellbeing. Similarly, the healing of more complex illnesses could be removed from the patient through suction by using the mouth as an element to absorb the malady and then spited into the ground or a bucket with soil. The power to absorb illness from another person was a specific practice or ability that Kichwa people called paju or pajuyo. Pajus were skills and abilities that as I will discuss later in this chapter, could be learned by any person who was willing to learn and in relation to the value of experienced knowledge, was imparted through an experiential process:

“That's the way my mother also, just to plant cassava... she just told me, ‘Elsa, you're already a woman, you have to make the cassava grow’. One day she took me to the chakra and said ‘take this from me [shows with her hands], my power of cassava’, pajuyo I think they call it... ‘that paju’. That is how she passed it to me... And so, she pulled me like that [shows by pulling her fingers] and there, everything one has, the pajus... everything crosses to my hand. That's why sometimes I have pain in my hand, I have to be rubbing it and my mother tells me that yes, that's also how she learned from my grandmother... and how she also learned it from the great-grandmother” (Elsa Lanchama, 18th December 2017).

As described in Elsa's quote, pajus were not limited to healing. Pajus referred to powers, abilities or knowledge in various subjects. Nonetheless, the skill or knowledge was always passed from one person to the other through a process involving a point of energetic power: the head, mouth or hands.

Music: communication with nature, the spirits and the patient

Music was a key component of the Limpia practice. As discussed in Chapter 5, not only was the melody the method of communication between the Yachak and the spirits of the Jungle, but it was also through the melody chanted in the ceremony that the message was transmitted to the patient. As Marcos recounted, the lyrics to the song he sang during the Limpia ceremony were the following:

“There are spirits in the jungle, there are spirits in the lagoon or in the medicinal plants, they are going to help clean, they are going to help remove the disease, that is the song I sing” (Marcos Ramirez – notes, 27th October 2017).

I later asked him if this was a song only he sang and he replied:

“It is the song of all, the people who heal say that. There are different ways of singing. There are others who sing about the water lagoon, about the animals. They talk about the tigers, they talk about the bears, about everything. I only talk about the mountain, the medicinal plants, the waterfalls and finally of the lagoon” (Marcos Ramirez – notes, 27th October 2017).

As I was told, the melody that was used for the Limpia ceremony was not a popular song; it was reserved, as Marcos said for *“only those who have their wisdom, their preparation, their knowledge”* (Marcos Ramirez – notes, 27th October 2017). As described earlier, together with the sound of the surupanga, the music created an environment that enabled the healing, *“with that knowledge, with that song, when you sing and when you do the cleaning, you take away all the disease”* (Marcos Ramirez – notes, 27th October 2017).

Involvement of the patient’s family

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, family relations were of much importance to the Kichwa people and as Noelia, many Kichwa people also defined health as a state of being *“well, well with the family”* (Elsa Lanchama, 18th December 2017). In fact, when I asked one of the participants what did he think was the most important thing for him to heal, he responded:

“Their [his mother and father] affection, to be able to recover. Feeling that they were supporting me and myself as well, to give what I could to get ahead... and not, not let me win by my illness” (Miguel Ramirez, 9th November 2017).

On this account and reflecting the importance of family for the Kichwa people, Limpia ceremonies also involved the presence of the family and other people from the community. During Limpia ceremonies, for instance, people freely entered and left the room. Although the Limpia was rather a communal ritual, the interaction between the healer and the patient was not affected by what happened around them. On the occasions I accompanied Marcos to Limpia ceremonies, the family we visited usually allocated a room for us to sleep after the healing ritual was over. On the next morning, we would wake up before five and the woman head of the house would already have breakfast prepared for us. Generally, the food that we were offered when visiting for a Limpia ceremony - in the evening as well as in the morning – was thoughtfully prepared. For instance, on a regular meal Kichwa people would only have a small portion of animal protein. However, when I accompanied Marcos we were offered either chicken or fish on every occasion. It is worth noting that it was customary for Kichwa people to kill a chicken for special occasions and our healing visits were treated as such. The generosity I observed was also part of the Kichwa people’s understandings of sharing and reciprocity that I discussed in chapter six and in relation to the value of collective living. In addition to the food and hospitality, a payment was also given; this was done very

discretely. As well as the Yachak offered something back to nature for the powers given to her, the patient also gave something as payment for the healing that was received.

The element of Faith

“The yachak knows if he has faith or not, and everything can be cured, unless the person has no faith” (Yachak Angel Parco – notes, 12th October 2017).

“I’ve heard from Marcos and almost every healer I’ve talked to, that you should have faith and as Marcos says, during the ceremony the patient needs to think and ask nature to heal and cleanse you” (Reflective diary, 15th October 2017).

The Limpia ceremony, as I presented earlier, revolved around the patient. As a patient, the experience was rather singular. Observed through my experience, once I sat on the bench it was almost inevitable to close my eyes and let my head lower to rest onto my knees. In fact, whether the patient was sitting or standing - in the case of Limpias that took place in sacred locations – the head was lowered, resembling not only a gesture of reverence, but also a motion that conceded control over what was about to happen. However, there was a superficial paradox in the patient’s gestures of surrender. Even though as a patient, one assumed a somewhat submissive posture, throughout the interviews and conversations I had with healers, they all agreed that the critical aspect in Kichwa medicine was the willingness of the patient. Without the patient’s willingness to trust in the process, the healer had no power to heal. This was also reflected in the way many healers reacted to the gratitude of patients. Recounting a visit from a patient that was healed, one of the participants said:

“... Seeing that the mother began to draw tears. I asked ‘why are you crying?’ ‘Goodness, I thought my son was going to die’ she said. ‘Thank you, Mr Ambi!’... ‘No, don’t thank me, just faith. It’s just faith, nothing more!’” (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

The Limpia ceremony began in a dark place for the patient, where in the limitation of the faculty to see, the rite became a revitalisation of the other senses. Firstly, the awareness of the surrounding sounds grew higher; the insects buzzing in the background, the whispering conversations that occurred between the other people present, the noise of movement, the quivering of the surupanga, the healing melody and alternating also, the sound of the healer blowing smoke, kachiwa or cologne. At moments, the blowing sound resembled a very strong wind entering the small

opening of a window. In contrast to what I was told and observed, with my eyes closed, there were occasions where I could not distinguish whether the healer was sucking air or blowing it to me. In a comparable manner, the smells were also heightened. The underlying smell of the tobacco smoke that at some points was so strong that it made me nauseous, especially when natural tobacco was used. Kachiwa had a very sweet scent that stemmed from the sugar cane, though it was easy to feel the nostrils intoxicated with its high degree of alcoholic concentration and finally, the strong outburst of cologne that continued to perfume the hair and skin for at least another day. While the darkness made so much of the experience uncertain, there was something about the overwhelming alertness of the senses that are frequently overpowered by what is seen, that was actually calming and reliable. In my attempt to understand faith, in my conversation with Yachak Ambi I asked whether it was faith in the healer or faith that I would heal, and he answered:

“It's the same... you decide, right? You decide, ‘I want relieve or I want to become healthy’. That is called faith” (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

After-ritual care

The interaction between the Yachak and the patient continued after the ceremony was over. After the Limpia was over, the Yachak asked the patient to rest since reposing was also a key factor for a successful cleansing. Except for Limpias that occurred in sacred locations and would be followed by entering a cave or bathe in a waterfall, the relaxation had to take place right after the Limpia was done. As a patient, one had the option to leave the ceremony and put oneself to bed or sit back and rest. In some cases, the healer had a small reclining space where one was able to lay down and sleep if needed. The environment usually got quieter after the Limpia took place and it was not uncommon for people who wanted to stay, to stretch over the benches to sleep until the end. The slumber following the Limpia was so important, that it was said that the dream one had overnight revealed significant messages. Before giving space to the next patient, the healer also disclosed privately and in very general terms whether his vision was positive or not. I was never conveyed a negative vision and therefore, I do not know how does a healer approach the patient when his vision was of a different nature. In the process, the Yachak created an intimate bond with the patient, this was seen through his ability to participate in the patient's life through his visions.

After the ceremony, the patient was expected to follow a particular diet or in Kichwa language, “*Sasina, diet is sasina*” (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017). In my experience as a patient, the diet was irrespective of my health condition and it consisted of three days where I could not take a shower, touch soap or eat spices. In the case of a patient that was actually healed, the diet included some other specific considerations. Likewise, as I will discuss in the next section, the diet was also applied for care after childbirth:

“After birth there is a diet. The diet is called ‘sasina’... Besides eating natural food, not food from the city... for a week you have to bathe with slightly soured water to keep the body calm, for eight days” (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017).

However, as I mentioned before, the connection that the Yachak created with the patient extended to the point that if the diet was broken, he could get injured.

“Yachak Ambi: For example, if I heal you, I blow and I heal you, the diet that I give... I give the patient for three days. For three days, no cold water baths, no chemical food, let's say, chicken, eggs and so on... and also, no chilli. Three days, and the diet must be obeyed. If you do not obey, there may be... it is useless, why do anything?”

Me: And what happens if the patient does not comply with the diet?

Yachak Ambi: You can get sick... for me. Once a patient did not do the diet. My goodness! My hand began to hurt, ayayay! My arm became like this [shows as if it was swollen] very heavy, it was muffled, I could not lift it. That affects you of course. That is why I always tell the patient, ‘Ok, if you have faith, you comply the three days of this and not that’, and with that is all set... If they don’t, I know when the person, the patient has not complied” (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

For instance, after my first Limpia experience I accidentally used soap to wash my plate and this action was only evident to me when Marcos asked me if I had washed my hands because he was feeling pain in his. For this reason, some Yachaks would not accept to heal a misho or an outsider. They believed that a non-kichwa person does not share the same worldview and therefore, does not understand the relationship and importance of the procedural instructions of a healing practice.

The Kichwa birthing procedure

The concept of cleanliness was of main significance to health-related practices in Kichwa culture. In fact, the idea that the body is innately pure and to maintain good health it must be kept clean, extended even to the birthing process. While the process of giving birth itself was not considered unclean, the possible complications of a poorly attended birth were. The Kichwa birthing process was similar to conventional approaches to maternal health in the attention placed on the preventive measures during pregnancy. However, in Kichwa practices the preventive care in maternal health continues for at least eight days after the child's birth. The basic reason for the close postnatal care is essentially the cleanliness of the mother's body. On my visit to the Association of Kichwa Women Midwives from the High Napo – AMUPAKIN on October 18th of 2017, I had the opportunity to fictitiously be the focus of a Kichwa birthing procedure. AMUPAKIN is an association of Kichwa women whose aim was maintaining the knowledge of traditional midwifery and make it available to the public.

“As an association we are 24 years old. In order to maintain and prevail the culture of our ancestors we are grouped as an association” (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017).

Nonetheless, it was also a place of gathering where Kichwa women in addition to the midwife practices, socialised and engaged in all sorts of traditional activities such as sowing and weaving baskets. The interesting feature of the association was firstly that it was entirely formed by women and secondly, that it had begun to establish the practice of Kichwa midwifery. While traditionally midwives would attend births domestically, the women of this association have managed to gather the resources to build a sizeable construction and provide the services of Kichwa maternal care in a clinic fashioned facility.



Picture 42 (left) *traditional birthing demonstration*



Picture 43 (right) *Technique for 'enderezamiento'*

The reason I visited the association was primarily to undertake my interview with Marta Juarez, the eldest and more knowledgeable midwife in AMUPAKIN. Nonetheless, she insisted on giving me a tour of the establishment, the communal chakra and – considering that I am a woman – a demonstration of the Kichwa procedures of child delivery. The interview with Marta was the only session where I required the assistance of a translator, since Marta could understand partly what I said but did not speak any Spanish. The translator also assisted me with the photographic material during the demonstration. The demonstration took place in the delivery room, a traditional looking room that had all the artefacts for a Kichwa childbirth procedure at hand (see picture 42). As a pregnant woman, I would have prenatal checks starting on the third month and regularly thereafter. At the seventh month of pregnancy and since the child is almost completely developed, the checks will occur every fifteen days to make sure the baby is in the right position. Considering that traditionally the midwife attending the pregnant woman would be a close relative, the periodical controls to track the development of the child would be casual and short. During the controls the midwife touches and massages the belly, through this process she is able to determine the growth and position of the baby, sometimes the gender and mainly, the time left for the delivery. The periodical massages or what Kichwa people call “enderezamiento”, which means straightening, were basically a periodical positioning of the child inside the mother’s womb (see picture 43). The straightening of the baby was a procedure used to prevent complications in birth, for instance, the child tangling with the umbilical cord. Once the birth was due, the midwife did another check; this

time in addition to the massage, she introduced her hand to measure the openness of the uterus. This procedure was done by covering the midwife's hand with chicken fat and through her tactile abilities determine the posture of the baby, the size of the uterus opening and the time left for the woman to be in labour.



Picture 44 (left) *traditional birthing room*



Picture 45 (right) *Preparation for the birthing procedure*

During a traditional birthing procedure, the delivery room got prepared while the pregnant woman reached the right measurement of her uterus. Keep in mind that if the uterus was not ready, the pregnant woman had to walk around the room until her uterus opened up. However, the preparation consisted on collecting and placing long plantain leaves under ropes that hanged from the ceiling (see picture 45), lighting the log fire and the preparation of the medicinal plants to be taken before, during and after the delivery (see pictures 46). The ropes held the mother in a vertical position, which according to the Kichwa methods of delivery was the ideal position to give birth. During a birthing procedure, there was always the presence of at least two midwives, the principal carer and the assistant. In some cases a Yachak was also present at a birth session, although her intervention occurred only after the child was born. Likewise and only under the mother's preference, the husband and other family members could be present during the birth. As I was told, every single person assumed a participative role in assisting the mother and midwife with anything that was needed. The assistance of the family members was centred on the preparation of food and

warm beverages that were given to the pregnant woman throughout the birthing process. When the pregnant woman was ready, she was accommodated holding on to the ropes that hanged from the ceiling in a vertical position from where she pushed until the baby was born. Once the baby was born, the midwife washed the baby while still connected to the mother through the umbilical cord. The mother was then taken to a stretcher or small bed where she could rest and afterwards, the baby was given to the mother for breastfeeding. It is worth noting that the umbilical cord was not cut until after the baby was held on the mother's arms. Furthermore, the method for cutting the umbilical cord was also handled with special care by using utensils made out of natural materials and making sure the temperature was warm. For this procedure, the midwife used a knife carved from a bamboo stem and a natural fibre used to tie the umbilical cord before cutting it. To make sure the temperature was kept hot, the cutting was carried out in closeness to a lit candle. Indeed, throughout the entire birthing process there was a special attention placed on the body's temperature, which had to be kept warm in order for the mother to be well. According to what Marta explained, if cold entered the body of the mother she run the risk of getting sick and even loose her life. This was also the reason why the mother was given warm beverages and fed a warm chicken soup right after she had delivered the child. Once the umbilical cord was cut and both the child and mother had been fed, the mother laid down to rest. While most of the medicinal preparations had the function to heal any complication such as loss of blood, the mother was given infusions of sour leaves to cleanse her body internally before and after delivery. Likewise, right after the child was born, the midwife massaged the mother's abdomen once more to ensure that no residual blood clots had been left. If the midwife sensed a lump, she would take ashes from the log fire and wrap them on a leaf to massage the uterus until the abdomen softened (see picture 47).



Picture 46 (right) Preparation of medicinal plants



Picture 47 (left) abdomen massage

After the child was born, the Yachak took charge and began the ritual to clean the energy and give the baby the first Limpia. The ceremony consisted in giving the mother and baby presents, which were meant to introduce the child into the societal Kichwa life. In this sense, if it was a baby boy he was given hunting devices such as spears, darts and machetes, and if it was a baby girl she was given baskets, clay pots and guaysa – that as described in chapter six, was traditionally served by the women in the house – and sometimes a machete as well. Upon the handing over of the gifts, the people present danced around the log fire. The dance had a repeated pace that was particular to the Kichwa people, *“the Kichwa dance has only one rhythm, so that rhythm we maintain here”* (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017). The birthing ceremony was a celebration of the happy event of birth, where the Kichwa people danced and celebrated in order to transmit joy to the child and help the child assume the male or female roles in the community. However, many of these traditions, as Marta told me, were getting lost and that was the reason behind AMUPAKIN’s interest in maintaining the traditional birthing practices.

“So why does it have to be maintained like this, because in the past there were no doctors. Back then it was just based on that, with medicinal plants with which they gave birth, with that [knowledge] we have maintained until now, in order to maintain that tradition, to maintain that knowledge, in order not to forget” (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017).

In former days, the mother would be given at least eight days of rest after she gave birth. However, many women currently go back on regular activities in five or less days. The postnatal resting period was to avoid the mother getting sick and to ensure that she had a good pregnancy on her following children. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, during the eight following days after giving birth, the mother was given bitter medicinal plants to cleanse her body inside. On the last day, the mother ate a tropical fruit that made her vomit and expel any residual energy from the pregnancy that needed to be cleansed. After that, the mother was ready and considered having a successful birth.

Gender and the practice of medicine

“To a man appears spirit from woman, to woman appears the spirit from a man” (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 3rd October 2017).

“But shaman, shaman, Yachak... I don't think there is. I think it's for men only. If there are women, what they know is paju. What I say, paju for different things” (Ismael Quishpe, 18th December 2017).

“Plants for women because men suffer nothing. Women... that the breasts, than the ovary. For everything about women [women's health], there is a plant” (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017).

While I was told that men could also practice childbirth and have knowledge of woman's health, as Marcos once said *“women attend women”* (Marcos Ramirez - Notes, 01th October 2017). Although I was commonly told that there were equal opportunities for men and women to become Yachak, not only my search for a female Yachak was rather challenging, but also as reflected in the interview with Ismael, younger generations had little knowledge of female Yachaks. Even though I had the privilege to talk to the one female Yachak I met, she refused to let me record our interview. Nonetheless, our concise encounter made me aware of the gender disparity in the field. In contrast, all the other Yachaks I had access to and interviewed for this research, were men.

Good and evil practices

“A Yachak can only be good, once evil is done, it can no longer be Yachak” (Yachak Angel Parco – Notes, 12th October 2017).

“The Yachak has the gift, a Yachak has different powers. When its not controlled, it can be lost. When you do not work in line with health... for the good, to help, when harm is done, a form of punishment can be applied, 'parasito’” (Yachak Vinicio Lanchama - notes, 17th October 2017).

As detailed in the previous quotes, a Yachak was considered a mender and thus, her practices had to always be for the betterment of others. As I will discuss in the next section, a person who used the knowledge of traditional medicine to cause harm was called “shaman” or “brujo” and as Yachak Vinicio explained, the “*parasito*” was “*a procedure that was used to remove all the negative energy*” (notes, 17th October 2017) that was exercised when the community agreed a person was causing harm.

Rocks that hold power

As many Yachaks described, at some point in their initiation they were called by a rock. Kichwa indigenous people believed that all nature was alive and thus, the animate nature of rocks would call on those who were gifted with the abilities of healing. While there were millions of rocks that could be found near the rivers and in the jungle, the rocks that were associated to the Yachaks were unique. As two participants recount:

“The rock calls you, it cries, it whistles, it sounds and through its heat one can know which is the rock that is calling. It doesn’t matter what shape it has, only the Yachak can identify it. The identification is obvious, just as you would identify and distinguish a man from a woman” (Yachak Angel Parco, 12th October 2017),

“As they say in CIRAE, everyone has the strength from where they learn. It can be the anaconda, waterfalls, lagoons or jungle, like that. So how to say, as I explained before going there... the jungle whistles at you, but there is nothing. Then you see and there is nothing just

a rock. And it warns that you have that power, that ability to heal, ok. So you take that rock and at the moment of taking it, you heal it, you blow it, you keep it, as to say, an amulet” (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

Even though many Yachaks kept the rock, not all did. Essentially, the reason some Yachaks decided not to keep the rock was because they considered that as well as there were good energies in the jungle, there could also be bad ones. Nonetheless, the rock was generally considered an important feature and in some cases it was said that it was the rock that held the Yachak’s power. Indeed, if a Yachak had a rock, she kept it in a very secure place, out of the reach and sight of anyone. Moreover, the rock was fed with the smoke of the tobacco on a regular basis and given very special care throughout the Yachak’s life. As mentioned earlier, the rock represented such a significant source of power that once the community identified a malicious conjurer, the procedure to take away the power to harm would consist on finding the rock and burning it; *“the rock is burned to remove the power” (Yachak Angel Parco – notes, 12th October 2017).* Nonetheless, the relationship a Yachak had with the rock represented only one of the aspects of the Yachak’s connection with the energies or spirits of nature.

Yachaks and healers: the power to heal

“Some Yachaks say, they use the term ‘heal’. Not me, I like the term help. The thing is, is that I keep my culture, my dialect. All of that, the language, I keep. Others say, I’m going to heal you! I don’t, no. So what would happen if I use that term ‘to heal’ and I say, ‘I am going to heal you’... and if it doesn’t work? What then?... So that’s why I don’t use that term, I say, ‘I’m going to help you’. Nothing more! As I said before, I like to support you, to help you, as long as you have faith” (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

As discussed earlier, without the patient’s faith in the power of nature to heal, the healer had no power. However, a Yachak became more powerful depending on the number of powers she had acquired and had her experience in. Logically, the more spirits she had to aid her in her healing practice, the greater ability she had to heal. For instance, a powerful Yachak was one who had more than one power or “pajuyu” as the Kichwa people say. In this same matter, the highest rank for a Yachak and for Kichwa cultures from the Amazon region was to be a “Waikiri”. As revealed by the stories I was told, Waikiris had the power to transform into jungle animals, *“They [waikiris] do not*

die, they turn to live in a new life, as a tiger for example” (Yachak Angel Parco, 12th October 2017). According to Yachak Angel, there were still a few Waikiris living in the depth of the jungle. However, since the level of wisdom of a Waikiri required staying free from “contamination”, it would be only under extreme circumstances that a Waikiri would have contact with the mainstream or in that case, an ‘outsider’ like me.

The experience the Yachak had in a natural location and her later relationships with the spirits was of crucial importance, however, that was not the only way a Yachak obtained her power. Although when I asked Kichwa people what a “paju” or “pajuyu” was, the answer was that it was a power; a “pajuyu” could be better understood as a special skill or knowledge that was acquired through transference of energy. This was the reason why the Kichwa people considered a “pajuyu” to be of power and strength. In this regard, the Yachak learned powers both from nature and from other more experienced Yachaks. However, learning these skills from other experienced Yachaks alone did not make a person a Yachak. More clearly, someone who learned skills from elders but did not have her own experience in the jungle was considered a healer and not a Yachak. Certainly, there were healers who called themselves Yachaks – because the meaning of the word is wise-person - but amongst the Yachaks, the distinction was significant. As one of the participants said:

“So that’s why healing is not easy. Sometime I see, like so many times the impostors, no? That... they do like this... well with the typical or colono clothing, they paint themselves and everything... but it is not the same, it is just a costume. Knowledge belongs to each person. So they do it [heal], but they are not going to heal, because they don’t have that spirit, that gift of what they’ve learned” (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017).

Although the process of learning a “pajuyu” was in principle available to anyone, the process of transferring power was usually reserved to relatives and close friends. As Yachak Angel explained and demonstrated during our interview:

“It is the spiritual power that remains in each person, it is that “paju” that we know it by. You have your energy and I have mine. This is a property that every person has. It is that strength. We have a custom of tradition that in the moment one is healing – oneself, the father or the grandfather – we energise from the head. That is our custom, from the head to the feet, from the head, from the hand, sometimes from the tongue to have the power to

heal. That is, the power to absorb the evil that a person has. That is our custom, and so you transfer that paju – how we call it – we transfer that energy to the person. On other times, on other parts [of the body and not the tongue] and other simpler energies, when we are healing you take the hand of the person that is healing. For example if you want to learn to heal and you assure you will comply with the diet, we will say ok [in agreement to teach] and so you will take the wrist, the hand and you rub, rub, and rub. For example, you take me [his wrist] and I cure the patient, and after around twenty minutes, we take the hand rub it – I mean the healer [takes the hand of the learner] – and we crack your [the apprentice] fingers. We have to see if it [the cracking] comes out of one, two, three or if it comes out of 5 [fingers]. That would be the best. Sometimes it comes out of one, other times it comes out of two and after that we rub again [the learner's hand] and in that, the pajuyu is transmitted” (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017).

As I discussed earlier, during a Limpia ceremony when the Yachak blows onto the patient's head and hands, she also energises the patient. While transferring energy – to a certain degree – is what healed the patient, the process of transferring energy was also used to transfer power, in the form of a skill or knowledge. In this sense, Marcos' accounts on his learning process to become a Yachak, indicated:

“When my fathers: my godfather, my uncles and my father in law blew on me, that [their] knowledge would be transferred to my hands” (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 27th October 2017).

Consequently, through the combination of all of these different processes a person learned the wisdom of nature, the wisdom of the ancestors and the wisdom that came from within. In general, it was through a comprehensive acquisition of knowledge and the management of good relations with nature, the ancestors and other people, that a person became wise; became a Yachak.

The Yachak's journey

Among the stories that I was told when I lived with the Kichwa people of Rukullacta, the anecdotes about how the Yachaks became Yachaks were the most fascinating. As I have mentioned earlier, there was a clear distinction that Kichwa people made when they referred to the knowledge associated to their medicinal practices. In general terms, the knowledge of 'Kichwa medicine' was fundamentally related to plants and the effects that plants had over the body. While many people

knew how to apply their knowledge of plants for healing purposes, not every person had the ability to heal. In other words, not every healer was considered a Yachak. In fact, the knowledge of Kichwa medicine – that means the uses of medicinal plants - was available to everyone who wanted to learn, but the capability or power to heal was not. Keep in mind that until I realised this differentiation, much of my initial exploration consisted on the knowledge Kichwa people shared with me about the uses of plants. While a Yachak must also have the knowledge of the uses of medicinal plants, in addition, she had to have the ability to heal through her direct connection with the spirits of nature. The transcendent connection with nature was what differentiated the Yachak from someone who knew how to heal with plants. Most important, the connections with nature were the source of the Yachak's power and knowledge. As discussed in chapter five, the bond with nature was also the Yachak's greatest achievement. According to the stories I was told, the process of connecting with nature or what the Kichwa people called "*compactar con la naturaleza*" – which roughly means the *blending* of the individual with nature – was not an easy process. However, this was an elemental process for all Yachaks to accomplish.

In relation to the values presented in the previous chapter, the bond with nature was a common characteristic of traditional Kichwa healing, in all of its varied practices. This could be seen in the way that Kichwa people and mainly healers related to their *chakras*. Nonetheless, the competence to *blend with nature* was mainly associated to the Yachak. Definitely, the difference between the medicinal practices a healer did in comparison to a Yachak, was rather a subtle one to the eye. After I had introduced myself as a researcher who was interested in learning about traditional medicine or Kichwa healing practices, it was not entirely clear to most people if my interest was on the uses of plants, or in the context of learning to blend with nature. In fact, on one of the occasions where I participated in a Limpia ceremony – both as an observer and as part of the family who was cleansed – Marcos introduced me to his extended relatives in the following way:

"The lady will join us, she also wants to share the ceremony. She wants to know what the ceremony is, what bonding with nature is. She wants to 'compactar con la naturaleza' [blend with nature]. That is our custom, we have to connect with nature, ask for more energy, more spirit of healing. We are carrying out a very sacred ceremony, very sacred and with much respect, in order for nature to respect us back" (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 28th October 2017).

It was not until later that my methods of learning would clarify that while I was there to learn about the *blending* of the individual with nature, I had no plan to “*compactar con la naturaleza*”, which meant becoming a healer myself.

There was a current debate amongst the Kichwa people of Rukullacta around whether a Yachak was born with the gift of a Yachak or if anyone was able to learn it. The position every Kichwa person held around this matter was a very personal one. I met people who believed that only few people were born with the gift to heal, and others who either believed I was born with the gift or just eagerly thought that I could – like any other – foster it. The slight distinction – according to the Kichwa people that believe that both options were viable – was firstly, that innate Yachaks would always be better and stronger healers since they had a natural ability and secondly, that things changed with time. The recognition of the two approaches in the becoming of a Yachak was part of a natural change in perspective that had developed through the generations. This was one of the various changes arising from a naturally evolving Kichwa culture. In this regard, Yachak Angel had told me that as a Yachak he was able to recognise amongst his offspring who would follow his ways, “*there is always one who knows and learns more*” (Yachak Angel Parco 12th October 2017). Nevertheless, this was one aspect that was also changing and in this respect, he added, “*learning is hard, the work is difficult, sometimes children consider it a punishment. That's why the new generations do not want to learn*” (Yachak Angel Parco 12th October 2017). The Yachak – whether born or made – went through a personal transformation that required much strength and regardless of her inborn abilities, the process involved the acquisition of wisdom through tough experiences. In this sense, there were basically three different sources of practical instruction; the knowledge that came directly from the experience in nature, the knowledge that was learned from generation to generation – particularly in the application of medicinal plants – and the experience of transferring energies, knowledge or as Kichwa people call it “*pajuyu*”. The latter, in a very succinct way and as described in earlier sections, was a procedure where energy was passed from one person to another. Since in two of these types of practical learning the person was an apprentice of an elder or a more experienced healer, it was reasonable to think that any person with the desire to learn could indeed learn the practice of a Yachak. However, it was in the relationship with the spirits of jungle that it was difficult to define whether the knowledge of Yachaks could be learnt. Since there was no way to prove the Yachak’s connection with nature and her gift “*to see*” what nature allows her to see, the debate was an on-going one.

Regardless of the debate, a person in becoming a Yachak had throughout different stages of her life, a calling from nature. The calling was mainly presented as a natural inclination towards the jungle. Consequently, after a person accepted the calling, she would have the opportunity to journey into the jungle and experience the actual process of blending or "*compactar con la naturaleza*". This process would happen sometimes with the aid and under the influence of ayahuasca and sometimes in a natural way. Keep in mind that the term ayahuasca literally means "the rope of the soul"; 'aya' is the kichwa word for soul and 'huasca' for rope. The blending experience involved a journey to the jungle or any other sacred location, where the person had a very intense interaction with nature, usually by getting lost. For instance when Marcos recalled his own experience, he told me:

"It was days that I was lost. One could get lost forever, some go crazy, some will never get out. I remember I was tired and my head hurt, very strongly and so I sat on a log to rest. There, a light, like a bright balloon came from the sky. I opened the eyes and it was a girl, with blue eyes and long hair, almost white. There she took my head and blew over me, When I opened my eyes again she was gone" (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 16th October 2017).

Additionally, he told me in a later conversation that the spirit had told him to go back home and to not tell anyone until a year had passed; "*a secret*", he would say. In a similar way, while Yachak Angel was describing to me the process that a Yachak undertakes, he said:

"It is not from night to morning. One is lost in the jungle, one day, two days, eight days, fifteen days. That's when we will learn, that is when it [referring to the jungle] teaches. It is very accelerated, however, that is when we learn" (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017).

Additionally, he also told me that to obtain the jungle's knowledge, "*you have to wait sometime, two months, three months, sometimes a year. It is a secret you must keep*" (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017). According to what I was told, breaking the secrecy pact with the spirits of nature could have detrimental consequences to the Yachak in the process of learning. The journey for the Yachak at this stage was a process of self-discovery and autodidactic instruction, where it was understandable why some people were reluctant to it.

It is important to note that a Yachak could undertake more than one of these types of excursions and have more than one relationship with the spirits. In fact, the types of powers or healing abilities that the Yachak had depended on the origins of the spirits she had relation with. For instance, a

Yachak could have a first experience in the jungle, from which she received the powers or knowledge of the jungle. Subsequently, the Yachak could experience similar encounters with spirits of the mountains, rivers or lakes and respectively, received their powers. Each experience was reflected in the form of a spirit with human characteristics that held a relationship and accompanied the Yachak throughout her life. All of the Yachaks I interviewed mentioned the presence of their helpers. In the case of Yachak Ambi, our interview included also the presence of his three female spirits. Likewise, during Yachak Angel's interview there were two spirits accompanying and protecting him. As Yachak Angel described during the interview:

"They are next to me. Believe me I am not alone, they are right by my side... they are jealous sometimes. Mentally, energetically you can see and when one knows, one is able to feel them. It's like if they were people. For example, they know you are a friend that wants to take some knowledge and that is ok, they won't do any harm to you" (Yachak Angel Parco, 17th October 2017)

Gender and the Spirits of the jungle

"I have the power of... 'Sacha warmi', it means woman from the jungle" (Yachak Ambi, 13th October 2017).

The process of becoming a Yachak was an individual process in which through practical experience, the person encountered a spiritual relationship with nature. As revealed earlier, the relationship with nature manifested differently in men and women. For instance, the spirits of nature manifested in the form of a blonde woman to a male healer, and in the form of a blonde man to a female healer. It is worth noting the Kichwa depiction of the spirits of the jungle, which were deities that resembled the physical characteristics of Caucasian people. Nonetheless, as Marcos explained to me, *"nature transforms into a human, like a man for a woman and like a woman for a man" (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 28th October 2017)*. Related to the value of strength presented in the previous chapter and under the assumption that men were stronger, through the relationship with a male spirit, a woman Yachak was supposed to be more powerful. The association between genders was the way of nature to keep its balance and in the act of healing there was always balance between male and female energies. As I was told, the plants and the different properties that each plant had were also related to their gender qualities. For instance, for each type of plant there was a male and a female version. The male version was usually thinner and darker than the female version of that same plant that in

contrast, was generally thicker and more colourful. The gender distinction was important in the sense that to keep balance – and for effective healing depending on the condition – a female patient for example, would have to take the male version of the medicinal plant to be healed and vice versa. In spite of the inconsistency between the balances of nature with male and female energies and the behaviours of men and women amongst the Kichwa culture that I observed and discussed in Chapter Five, balance was a basic process in the becoming of a Yachak. While the encounter with a spirit of the jungle was what defined a Yachak, in the process of developing a relationship with that spirit, the Yachak learned to manage her own spiritual energy and the balance within, as Yachak Angel said, *“the Yachak first learns to manage the spiritual and later to apply the knowledge of the plants”* (Yachak Angel Parco, 12th October 2017). Likewise, in regard to the importance of maintaining a good relationship with nature and the spirits of the jungle, Yachak Marcos said, *“When you recognise yourself in the jungle, you understand that there are many good spirits, but there are also evil spirits. However, if we respect, they will also respect”* (Yachak Marcos Ramirez, 28th October 2017). The formation of a balanced relationship with nature entailed the development of an energetic empathy with nature and hence, the profound spiritual journey that the Yachak undertook.

As I detailed in the Methods Chapter, from the six healers I interviewed, only one woman was considered a Yachak. Although she refused to call herself a Yachak, she was one of the few women that participated in the Yachak gathering event. Furthermore, in our interview she told me about her spiritual gifts and her preference to call herself an “Ajajyo”, a term also referring to wisdom. Her reasons, amongst many, were fundamentally related to that fact that she was a woman. Although in general terms there was no discrimination between men and women about who became a Yachak, in exercise, prejudices over female strength influenced the practice of women healers in Kichwa culture. Consequently, most women healers focussed instead on the knowledge of midwifery and the uses of medicinal plants – which was the case for the other two female healers I interviewed. As presented earlier, Marta was the eldest midwife in the Association of Kichwa Women Midwives – AMUPAKIN; the other participant was a healer who was extraordinarily knowledgeable on the healing properties of plants, her name was Rocio. Rocio was married to the son of one of the most recognised Yachaks in the region. Although I could not interview the famous Yachak because of his deteriorated state of health, Rocio agreed to participate in this research and tell her story in our interview:

“I learned with my father-in-law. He is a shaman... aha. So he saw like this, he worked with... with the patients. They came to heal and I used to see what leaves he applied to them, what

leaves and for what... all of that. So there he would tell me, "for fungus you have to put this, for this, this"... everything. And so, in order to heal, a person must also have some power... because he, my father-in-law gave me that... how to say, a power so that I can heal [I now can]. I went on a diet for 15 days or maybe a month, where I could not eat anything... that is, a diet so that I could receive that power that he gave me, the gift of healing children with plants" (Healer Rocio Tupac, 12th October 2017).

Rocio also told me that although she was innately gifted with the potential to become a Yachak, due to family interrelation complexities, her power had been blocked. The blockage of the power to have a vision – a crucial ability of Yachaks – was a procedure that shamans⁵ were able to do. The process employed an energetic cut of the affected person's flow of energy. As revealed by one of the male Yachaks I interviewed, the blocking of energy to women healers was something that some people did out of envy. The reason behind it was that women healers were essentially stronger, as one of the male participants said, "A woman sometimes has more strength, because she is helped by a male spirit" (Yachak Angel Parco, 12th October 2017).

Health and illness

"Alli Causai means good life, Sumak causai is a synonym" (Yachak Angel Parco, 12th October 2017).

As Yachak Angel clarified, the Kichwa term for health or wellbeing was *Alli Causai*. In contrast to the western meaning of wellbeing, the notion of health for the Kichwa people included the nonphysical facets of the person. In fact, the understanding of an individual's wellbeing extended to the family as well. For this reason, a Limpia ceremony traditionally involved all the family. In conversation with one of the participants:

Me: *Do you feel healthy right now?*

Dolores: *Yes, I feel fine. There are times when my children get sick, only then I get sad. Sometimes when I think of my parents, I get sad. Just that, [otherwise] I am fine.*

Me: *What is being healthy for you?*

⁵ The term shaman amongst the Kichwa people refers to sorcerers. The shaman was someone who used their power or knowledge for malicious purposes. Calling a Yachak or healer a shaman, was generally considered offensive. However, sometimes the term was used to facilitate communication with non-kichwa people.

***Dolores:** Healthy for me would be... like, to live like this, without... so to speak, without disease and like, preventing the things that make you sick or getting healed soon... as to say, in health. If I am sick, I worry and [being healthy means] I can go anywhere to heal my body” (Dolores Morales, 21st November 2017).*

In reference to what being healthy meant, another participant said:

“Being healthy means being well with everyone, with the family” (Noelia Huaman, 28th November 2017).

Health and health issues of Kichwa people

After alcoholism and violence, the predominant illness suffered by Kichwa people was diabetes and according to the folk classification, the disease was classified into 3 types:

“Emotional diabetes, malignant diabetes and hereditary diabetes” (Yachak Angel Parco – notes, 12th October 2017)

However, there was an important connection to consider, since the diets of Kichwa people were changing and influenced everyday by western ways of living. As explained by two of the healers I interviewed:

“No Kichwa person had diabetes, it is a new disease caused by contamination” (Yachak Angel Parco, 12th October 2017)”

“In the past, there weren’t those diseases. One here and there sometimes, but currently with contamination, sometimes because of the food with chemicals. Or sometimes a pregnant girl without the knowledge of the parents, trying to get rid of the baby [she] takes pills, but the babies instead don’t want to be aborted... they endure, and then once born, they come with abnormalities or with some disability, like that with something abnormal. So, that is what has happened, because in the past there was nothing like that, nothing, no disease [like that], the children grew up with all natural food, with cassava, plantain, sometimes anything from the jungle. So, as I have now realized, I have lived for many years, I know, and currently

there are many diseases that I don't know why... would it be because the girls ignore, the boys do things their way, their way of living or sometimes as we say, the young people leave, get together, have relations and then as they get pregnant they want to take something to abort. So that causes many problems in the family, sometimes... as we say, they take any 'poison' and die. So because of those situations, in those cases, the highest percentage has been with Kichwa people, before there were almost none. Only the people, like colonos, mishos, they lived in the centre [the town] and sometimes it happened like that. Instead with the 'runas' [kichwa word for people], there wasn't even dia... what is it, diabetes, gastritis... nothing! Nowadays, with what they eat, the [artificial] flavouring, something like that they begin to have diabetes. So that is what has happened and right now there are all those things [diseases]" (Midwife Marta Juarez, 18th October 2017).

In relation to the discussion in Chapter Five, the influence of mainstream culture had an evident impact on Kichwa people, their diets and health. The second common way participants described illness or the source of their illness, was envy. As described by one of the participants:

"So, that. Everything people are seeing... so that makes them [feel] envy, they do harm... So if they do harm, you can see it, in anything. It may be... it may be that you fall into alcoholism" (Raul Huango, 21st November 2017).

Death and the afterlife

"A cleansing, so that... the, the soul of the deceased... so that it goes to its place, where it should be. So that it doesn't... like, the soul, so that it stops moving" (Raul Huango, 21st November 2017).

As discussed in Chapter five and in earlier sections of this chapter, Kichwa people believed that spirits continued to exist after death. The purpose of burying the body in the earth was for the rebirth of the person onto nature. For instance, when Yachaks maintained uncontaminated lifestyles they had the ability to transform themselves into jungle animals after their death. It was said that when a Yachak died there was lightning and it was customary not to go out for 3 days. As one of the participant told me:

"The custom is not to go out because the spirit of the healer can take you" (Yachak Angel Parco, 12th October 2017).

In one of the conversations, I asked Marcos if he would reincarnate into a jaguar when he died and he said that not longer happened, that life was too modernised and corrupted for a person to come back to its pure nature.

Summary

The findings in this section presented an account of the Kichwa health-related practices. I described the principal healing ritual of Kichwa TM, the Limpia ceremony, and discussed its fundamental components. I also described and discussed the traditional birthing procedure in Kichwa culture. Furthermore, I discussed the processes that a Yachak undergoes to gain experience and knowledge, and the relationship with the spirits of the jungle. Through the voices of the participants of this study, I have also presented the notions of health, illness and the current health issues experienced among Kichwa people. I will continue to discuss the findings of this ethnography in comparison to the broad literature review in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of this ethnography in comparison to the broader literature related to the health-related practices of indigenous populations that was identified and presented in Chapter Three. It will be shown that the findings of this study did capture many themes present in previous research around traditional medicines. However, a key claim is that it is not possible to represent and indeed understand the wholeness of the findings in this study with reference to previous empirical themes. A central claim (and concern) is that representing the indigenous Kichwa people's practices and beliefs requires the effects of colonisation and other underlying factors in the interaction between indigenous and *western* cultures to be recognised. Whilst this is often done to compare indigenous and western cultures, I argue that it is also important when considering only the indigenous emic perspective. In order to develop the discussions, I firstly examine the current findings in relation to the themes identified in the literature review. I then discuss the further considerations and main findings of this research and the limitations of the literature review, associated to the theoretic frameworks that were introduced in Chapter Three and that are argued to relate to the representation of non-western cultures. Furthermore, I discuss the issues around the representations of indigenous practices and beliefs associated to the practices of Kichwa people; which are also at the core of the misunderstood differences and behaviours of indigenous people related to health. In this chapter I discuss the implications of this study and to conclude, I review the challenges and limitations with emphasis on the iterative nature of this ethnographic research.

Relationship of findings to previous research

As a reminder, Chapter Three introduced evident themes that were identified in previous empirical literature relating to TM. In this section, these are revisited and the current findings considered in terms of; the animistic and holistic cosmos, spirit world, balance and harmony, and accounts of health and illness. It will be argued that these existing themes are apparent in the current study findings and while the themes suggest similarities between health-related practices of different indigenous cultures, an oversimplification of these themes presents a problem that needs to be analysed further.

Animistic and holistic cosmos

The findings of this ethnography show that similar to the descriptions of various TMs identified in the literature review, the Kichwa people also perceived the natural world as having life. Animism, as described in chapter three, entails that nature has spirit and therefore, that life exists in everything. Analogous to the worldview of the indigenous people from the Andes (Greenway, 1998; Yanez del Pozo, 2005), the Kichwa people in the Amazon also attributed a spirit life to everything in nature. The animistic features of the universe were particularly seen in the understandings of sacred sites and the power of rocks. Comparable to the descriptions of particular sites that were considered sacred by the indigenous people in Laos (Westermeyer, 1988), Australia (Maher, 1999), South America (Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Valencia, 2010) and Ghana (White, 2015), the Kichwa people in Rukullacta also considered that particular sites held spirits that were sacred and therefore had powerful energy. Furthermore, the Kichwa people – like the Andean indigenous (Greenway, 1998), the Q'eqchi Mayas (Waldram, 2015) and indigenous people in Ghana (White, 2015) – also believed that nature and sacred sites had the power to cause harm. This was evident when a person entered a sacred site with no permission.

Associated to the beliefs of Hmong Americans (Capps, 2011) and the Mayan indigenous (Berger-González *et al.*, 2016a), the Kichwa people of Rukullacta also believed that people's spirits were able to embody animals. For instance, Yachaks when they maintained uncontaminated lifestyles had the ability to transform themselves into jungle animals, such as jaguars, after their death. The animistic and holistic perception of the natural world meant that the relationship with nature – as discussed in Chapter Five – was of great importance for Kichwa people. In similar manner, the relationships within the community played an important role in Kichwa people's lives, just as it was identified in the literature for the indigenous people in South Africa (Pinkoane, Greeff and Williams, 2005), Belize (Waldram, 2015) and Australia (Maher, 1999). Moreover, the participation of the family in the healing practices of Kichwa people was corresponding with the partaking of the family in the health-related practices of Andean indigenous (Greenway, 1998; Yanez del Pozo, 2005), the Gadé in the French and English Caribbean (Massé, 2002), Hmong Americans (Capps, 2011), Alaskan Inupiaq (Turner, 1989) and the Q'eqchi Mayas (Waldram, 2015). As discussed in chapter six, the involvement of the family in the health-related practices of Kichwa people had various and different degrees. However, it was identified that Kichwa elders usually had a level of knowledge on medicinal plants and were also capable to provide an initial diagnosis.

In contrast to Thornton's (2015) descriptions, in the healing practices of Kichwa people the family was not considered an "audience", nor a potential clientele. While it was common in Kichwa healing practices to have the presence of relatives, they were not particularly listeners or observers of the healing process. Moreover, although any person or relative could be a potential patient, the family was not present with the objective to witness the event. Actually, during the Limpia – as I described in Chapter Six – the patient and the Yachak had a unique connection and during that time what happened around them, had no effect on the process. While there was some interaction as the Yachak requested tools and elements he needed, the communication with others was minimal. The relatives on the contrary, had conversations between them and frequently entered and left the room while they waited for their turn to be cleansed. Furthermore, Kichwa ceremonies occurred in the evening with very little light, if any, which I argue is another reason why the family was not considered an "audience" in the Kichwa healing practices.

Spirit world

As it was described in the beliefs and practices of various indigenous cultures (Westermeyer, 1988; Turner, 1989; Maher, 1999; Pinkoane, Greeff and Williams, 2005; Maiello, 2008a; Jacome, 2010; Thornton, 2015; Waldram, 2015; White, 2015), for the Kichwa people the bond with ancestors was also a fundamental aspect of people's lives. Similar to the descriptions of indigenous people in the Andes, who recognised the presence of spirits in both the aetiology and treatment of disease (Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Naranjo, 2010; Cardona-Arias, 2012), as described in previous chapters, the Kichwa people also described that spirits were in some cases the cause of illness and in every case, the sources of abilities to heal. According to Waldram (2015) and Maiello (2008a), the communication with spirits for the Mayan and Sangoma's respectively, was more important than the verbal exchange in the healing processes. In this regard, the Kichwa healing practices were also characterised by the dialogues with spirits of the jungle that guided the Yachak through the healing process. As I presented in chapter six, in the Limpia ceremony the Yachak called the spirits of nature – through melodies and chants – to intervene in the healing. Comparable to Waldram's (2015) and Maiello's (2008a) observations, during the Limpia ritual, there was limited verbal communication with the patient. Likewise, the Inupiat Eskimos (Turner, 1989), the Rajasthani people in India (Lambert, 1997), the Hmong Americans (Capps, 2011), the Sangoma's in South Africa (Thornton, 2015) and the indigenous in the Andes (Naranjo, 2010), perceived in similar manner to the Kichwa

people, that the ability or power to heal was the result of a collaborative participation with spirits. In relation to this, Thornton (2015) argued that the power or spiritual knowledge of the spirits for the Sangoma's, exceeded the capacity and understanding of the THs. While Kichwa people understood that the power of spirits was above their capacity to control it – as it was revealed through their reverence to the spirits – Yachaks understood that it was not in their dealing to overtake the power of the spirits. Moreover – as discussed in Chapters Five and Six – Kichwa people acknowledged that firstly it was not the healer, but the spirits that healed and secondly, that the understanding of the power of spirits was not something that could be taught, but only experienced.

Balance and harmony

In spite of the frequent use of the terms 'harmony' and 'balance' to describe the health-related practices of indigenous cultures throughout the literature, the use of these terms was not as prominent in the descriptions of Kichwa people about their TM. Nonetheless, in the findings of this ethnography the concepts of balance or harmony were also identified, particularly in the demarcation of dualities. In the literature review, indigenous worldviews were commonly described in terms of opposite components that in coexistence embraced balance and harmony (Lambert, 1997; Greenway, 1998; Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Jacome, 2010; Valencia, 2010; Thornton, 2015; Waldram, 2015; Berger-González *et al.*, 2016a). In the TM of Kichwa people, counterbalancing dualities was also identified; particularly between the dualities of 'hot' and 'cold' and of 'male' and 'female'. Like the indigenous people in India (Lambert, 1997) and South America (Reeve, 2000; Yanez del Pozo, 2005), the Kichwa people also found parallelism of the aforementioned dualities in food and medicinal plants. The duality and balance most present in Kichwa medicine was described as the contrast between male and female, which was reflected in the relationship of the Yachak and the spirits of the jungle, male and female versions of medicinal plants and their different uses. Resembling the beliefs of indigenous cultures in Australia (Maher, 1999) and South America (Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Naranjo, 2010), the characteristics and roles between men and women were clearly defined for the Kichwa people.

Regarding the power of rocks and the ability of people to use its power, the Kichwa people and the Sangoma's (Thornton, 2015) recognised that the same forces that enabled the healing could also cause harm. Therefore, the Kichwa people as well as various indigenous cultures around the world, also acknowledged 'witchcraft' as a source of illness (Massé, 2002; Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Maiello,

2008a; Thornton, 2015; Waldram, 2015). Similar to the observation among Andean concepts of the body, where male and female aspects were entwined in every form (Yanez del Pozo, 2005), the Kichwa people believed that interweave occurred at the level of the soul and this was seen in the interactions with the spirits of the jungle, that always took the shape of the contrasting gender.

Health and illness

Similar to the concept in Hmong and Andean TM that described the body as composed of physical matter and energy (Westermeyer, 1988; Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Capps, 2011), the Kichwa people also perceived the person's body as physical and energetic. As it was recognised by Kichwa healers, the Yachaks principally healed energy. This was witnessed in most of the Limpia healing ceremonies that were undertaken, although no visible illness was present. Moreover, the Kichwa healers were able to determine the patient's energy by feeling the strength or diminished emotional strength the patient had. The correspondence between earth and body that throughout the literature review was identified in South American indigenous cultures (Reeve, 2000; Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Valencia, 2010), was also recognised in the parallelisms between the human and nature that were discussed in Chapter Five. The meaning of health for Kichwa people was also comparable to the Andean concept of wellbeing that included the self and the environment (Yanez del Pozo, 2005) and within the environment, included also the family, the community and the spirit world (Westermeyer, 1988; Lambert, 1997; Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Maiello, 2008a; Valencia, 2010; Cardona-Arias, 2012; Thornton, 2015; White, 2015; Berger-González *et al.*, 2016a).

Like the Inupiat Eskimos (Turner, 1989), the Rajasthani people in India (Lambert, 1997) and the indigenous from the Andes (Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Naranjo, 2010), the Kichwa people also understood illness as an external element that could be extracted from the body. This notion of illness, as reviewed in the literature review, considered the body as pure (Turner, 1989; Lambert, 1997; Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Naranjo, 2010); the concept of the body as a pure form was in part the reason why the principal Kichwa healing practice was a 'cleansing' ceremony. Descriptions of aetiology such as "mal aire", "loss of energy" and "envy" among Kichwa people, were comparable to descriptions of illness in Andean (Greenway, 1998; Yanez del Pozo, 2005) and Hindu indigenous cultures (Lambert, 1997). A great similarity was identified with regards to the responsibility of the patient over her own health (Westermeyer, 1988; Maher, 1999; Pinkoane, Greeff and Williams, 2005; Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Cardona-Arias, 2012; Berger-González *et al.*, 2016a), which in Kichwa

TM was a crucial factor in the healing process. In relation to the notions of death, the Kichwa people also described a continuing relationship with ancestors that was identified in Hmong (Capps, 2011) and Andean indigenous beliefs (Yanez del Pozo, 2005; Valencia, 2010).

Limitations of literature review and further considerations

The relation between the findings of this study and those from the literature review, suggest similarities between the health-related practices of Kichwa people and various other indigenous cultures around the world. While an oversimplification of these themes already characterise a significant issue related to the representation of other cultures, the themes presented also reflect a process of categorisation that requires consideration. The further considerations regarding the findings of this ethnographic exploration relate to the theoretical literature that was introduced in Chapter Three, but as discussed, emerged from the iterative reflexive analysis that occurred throughout the development of this thesis. I will centre the discussion on three main observations, each one related to aspects discussed in the theory frameworks, these are: i) The developing Kichwa culture, ii) Cleanliness and wholeness in Kichwa TM as definitions of cultural identity, and iii) The representations of TM in Western public health. Following these considerations, I will discuss the limitations of the literature review in relation to the development of this research.

Culture that evolves

“If we misunderstand or deliberately misinterpret the past, however, we also misunderstand the present” (Rowland, 2004, pg. 2).

As discussed in Chapters Five and Six, the Kichwa culture in various aspects of their ways of life, was a culture that had changed and continued to change and adjust to the fast paced changes around them. One important observation I discussed was the striking generational gap. The discrepancies between one generation and the next were not only noticeable to me, but were also part of the narratives of the participants and ranged from the ways of communication – the uses of Kichwa and Spanish languages – to the approaches related to health. In many cases these differences were seen as a threat to the Kichwa culture. For instance, alterations to traditional rhythms and clothes were frequently regarded as improper Kichwa practices and carried with them a demand to reinforce the “maintaining” of Kichwa culture. While I understand the importance of protecting Kichwa practices –

like the drinking of guaysa, since the withdrawal of those practices take away with them invaluable Kichwa traditional knowledge – the semantic call of “maintaining” the traditions also denotes the idea that Kichwa culture should not change.

The emphasis on the term “maintaining” was not only present in the way that the Kichwa people of Rukullacta spoke about their cultural traditions, but it was also a significant discussion with regards to policymaking at the “First Regional Summit of Ancestral, Spiritual and Intercultural Medicine” I assisted in 2016. The term “maintaining” refers to a process of preservation and as the Kichwa people explained to me, this was an appropriate term since their culture had not yet disappeared. In the “maintaining” of the Kichwa culture it was recognised that the culture was alive. However, the conflict I evidenced was that the Kichwa culture in its liveliness was also constantly changing. In this regard, the notion of “maintaining” the Kichwa culture stands on a knife-edge, where on one side the survival of the culture is endangered and on the other, it faces the problem of being fixed to the past with no possibility to contribute to contemporary knowledge (Hall, 2001; Rowland, 2004). As discussed in the Theoretic Frameworks, the notion of “maintaining” the Kichwa culture is consistent with Said’s (1978) explanations of Orientalism and the representations of non-western cultures as static. Moreover, the idea of “maintaining” the Kichwa culture also links to the definition of what it means to be a Kichwa. As discussed in Chapter Three, this is precisely why Hall (1997) argues that issues of representation are also issues of power and in this regard, this is a subject that raises the question of who has the power to define the standards of a “good Kichwa”. While I will discuss the delineation of Kichwa identity in the next section, the pressures placed on younger generations to “maintain” their culture or to be “good” representatives of Kichwa culture is a subject that would benefit from a better understanding.

Cleanliness and wholeness in Kichwa TM as definitions of cultural identity

“Healing behaviours and ideas tend to reflect the wider cultural traditions of the society in which they develop” (Singer and Baer in reference to Erwin Ackerknecht’s work, 2012, pg.15)

The Limpia healing ceremony, as described in the previous chapter, was essentially a cleansing ritual. The reason why the Limpia was considered the principal healing ritual in Kichwa medicine was linked to the health-related views that regarded illness as something that could be extracted from the body. The notions of wholeness of the body and illness as external factors, are comparable to Douglas’ (1966) observations and ideas of purity and cleanliness; as considered from her studies,

“the idea of holiness [in the bible] was given an external, physical expression in the wholeness of the body seen as a perfect container” (Douglas, 1966 pg. 65). Moreover, in Chapter Five I recounted how I was welcomed in Rukullacta with a Limpia ceremony. While I came to the realisation that being an outsider to the Kichwa culture did not necessarily mean that there was something wrong, I also discussed how Kichwa people regarded conventional culture or the “external” as somehow contaminated. This observation links even further to Douglas’ (1966) concepts of cleanliness and purity as definitions of cultural identity (Hall, 2001). As discussed within the Theory Frameworks, the notions of purity and cleanliness within each culture, enable the processes of creating order and making sense of the world (Douglas, 1966). Considering culture as a system of shared meanings, the standards of cleanliness and purity also make part of what defines a culture (Geertz, 1973; Hall, 2001). In other words, they constitute the process of differentiation needed in order to uphold the standards that define what a culture is and what it is not. This differentiating process that I have presented in this thesis as the “Othering” is not only at the core of Orientalist approaches (Said, 1978), but it is also – depending on the position – a process that facilitates the definition of the “self” (Gliozzi, 1977; Hall, 2001). Nonetheless, as I began to discuss in the previous section, there are issues of power that surround the definition and redefinition of identity. The main problem I argue is associated to who is in the position to define what it means to be a “Kichwa”, in this case.

The Kichwa as many other indigenous cultures, has been subject to the consequences of colonisation and as I examined in the Contextual Background, to the mislead depictions of their own identity that were produced in order to justify the ownership of the American lands (Hanke, 1966; Pareja Y Díez Canseco, 1979; Batchelder and Sanchez, 2012). However, not all the problem can be ascribed to the socio-historical past. While there is no doubt that colonisation and other historical underlying conditions continue to affect indigenous populations, much of the interaction between indigenous and *western* cultures is occurring in the present-day. The influence of mainstream culture on the daily lives of Kichwa people was evident throughout the findings of this study. One more thing to consider is that an extent of the influence of mainstream culture in Kichwa lifestyle in the present was self-motivated. The advances of technology and easier access to certain products – for instance cigarettes to substitute handmade tobacco rolls – were appealing changes adopted by Kichwa people and healers in their practices. However, as Rowland (2004) stresses, the standards and expectations placed on indigenous populations to meet certain criteria – for example the criteria of the “noble savage” - serve as measuring tools that accentuate differences and affords the power to control. In this regard, I argue that the problem today comes from a confrontation that is also internal and founded on the contested definition of what it meant to be Kichwa. While the

younger generations of Kichwa people wanted to be part of the “modern” advances of society, they were limited by the idea that as Kichwa they should be a certain or fixed way. Notwithstanding the inner conflict indigenous people – such as the Kichwa – face in relation to the definitions of their own cultural identity, the confrontation also materialised in the way that policy makers approach indigenous populations; on one hand enforcing “modern” educational and health systems and on the other, promoting through specific policies the “maintaining” of indigenous knowledge and practices.

Representations of Traditional Medicine in Western public health

“It hardly needs to be demonstrated again that language itself is a highly organized and encoded system, which employs many devices to express, indicate, exchange messages and information, represent, and so forth” (Said, 1978, pg. 21).

I introduced this section emphasising the limitations of the literature review and how the resemblances between the themes in the literature review and the findings of this ethnography required further consideration. The first point to consider is that the themes presented throughout this thesis, are inherently the result of a process of categorisation. As presented in the discussions of theory, Douglas (1966) explains how cultures make sense of and give meaning to the world around them by classifying things according to their own concepts of what is “pure”. The shared meanings produced through this process of organisation, fundamentally make up the frameworks of each culture (Hall, 1997). Bearing in mind that thematic analysis is a method by which the researcher codes and organises the data collected, it is in essence a classificatory system itself. Linking back to the theoretical discussion, thematic analysis is a method by which the researcher makes sense of the data and the research experience, and in that sense, it is a process that more likely reflects the outlook of the researcher. As Thomas (1993) argues, *“we restrict observation to the internal character of a topic by naming what we see and imposing these names onto the data in the guise of objective analytic categories: by sanitizing our research of the pathos, oppression, or despair of the subjects: and by failing to explore the ironic and emancipatory potential of our research” (Pg. 7)*. The limitation of the narrative literature review is that under this consideration, the themes presented reflect more accurately the cultural background of the researchers rather than the cultures in study. In this regard, it is reasonable that much similarity can be found across the different studies included in the literature review and the findings of my own. As discussed in the Methods Chapter, even

when themes are grounded in the data, there are important concerns in relation to the readings of the them (Charmaz, 2014). The findings of this ethnography based on the methods used, suggested similar themes to the ones identified in the literature review. However, as I have widely discussed, my position and perspective played an important role in the results of this research. Not only the knowledge I had about indigenous people prior to my experience in the field – including the knowledge obtained through the literature review – were influences to my observations, but also the way that the data was organised and presented, as I have now reasoned, were limitations that need to be acknowledged.

The second point to consider is that while the apparent likenesses between different indigenous cultures are noticeably illustrated in the themes, these could actually exemplify an oversimplification of descriptions of traditional medicines. As discussed in Chapter Three, Said (1978) argues that general representations of the “Other” constitute one of the strategies of Orientalism, in which the grouping of all Oriental cultures into one category enables the well-defined contrast between the “east” and the “west”. Not only is it worth noting that the problem with general descriptions is that they are often stereotyped, but also that in the formation of this confrontation there is a power play (Hall, 1997). Furthermore, as Douglas (1966) also argues, there is power in the things that stand in the middle of the established categories, since these place a threat to the stability of the culture. On this account, the descriptions of traditional medicine in the literature review often accentuated dichotomies that were deceptive in comparison to the observations of my experience in the field. While there were instances that reflected dichotomies in the practices of Kichwa medicine – for example, gender differences – more often than anticipated, I found middle grounds; middle grounds and ambiguities in terms of race and generational differences, in terms of values and perceptions that were also often changing. As identified research gaps, the descriptions of *western* in relation to traditional medicines that were found throughout the literature review, were frequently presented in comparison to each other. In addition to that, the limited attention given to the positionality of researchers across the literature, give way to a critical query about how much awareness there actually is regarding the representations of traditional medicines within western public health.

Implications

This research has revealed that in relation to the approaches and understandings of TM and the health-related practices of indigenous people, there are still ontological, epistemological and policy gaps to consider. There are some academic and public health implications with respect of this ethnographic study. The implications for research compel greater attention to the positionality of researchers studying and commenting about Indigenous cultures and their traditional medicines. This thesis has presented in different discussions how the position of the researcher in the production of knowledge is inherently imbued with a sense of the “Other”. I have emphasised the importance of making the positionality of researchers within their respective research visible, as overlooking at this strengthens the critiques regarding academic approaches justifying and supporting *western* colonisation (Said, 1978; Smith, 1999). In light of Said’s (1978) discussions on Orientalism, the acknowledgement of the researcher’s positionality in the development of research recognises the responsibility that the researcher has in the production of knowledge and the need to account for it. A statement of acknowledgment of bias does not resolve the complexities in the processes of representation. The representation of other cultures from Western perspectives, stipulates accounts that enable the examining of possible political, ideological or power interests. Although sometimes inadvertently, a lack of attention to the researcher’s positionality facilitates the perpetuation of issues and powers that need to be addressed. Research about Indigenous or any other culture from a Western public health perspective, as this study has shown, needs to acknowledge the sensibility behind this topic. This research has contributed to the use of ethnography in the research approaches to understand indigenous practices. Notwithstanding Smith’s (1999) concerns about ethnographic methods, as I have presented and discussed throughout this thesis, ethnography and particularly critical ethnography provide a sensible platform for understanding Indigenous cultures. However, attention to the process of representation is imperative and related to it, the analysis and interpretation processes within research. Understanding the processes by which we make sense of the world – and in research, the methods by which we make sense of the data – enables coherence of the results and conclusions formulated. Further understandings and discussions about the processes of representation in research are needed in practice.

Throughout the discussions and findings of this research, I have reasoned the importance of recognising the context of the observations. Theoretically, this contributes to the debate related to the importance of context in the production of meaning and the claim that meanings cannot be

fixed (Hall, 2001). Furthermore, as I have discussed in this thesis, the power to give meaning and define what it means to be “Indigenous” has practical implications in the lives of Indigenous people. As I briefly mentioned in the discussions, the pressures placed on indigenous populations to “maintain” or meet the established standards of being “good representatives” of their cultures and the possible health-related repercussions, is a topic that needs better understanding and would benefit from further research. In addition to that, I have discussed how Kichwa health-related practices have changed and continue to change as a result of mainstream culture’s influence. It would be interesting to further the findings I have presented in this thesis with research focussed on the changes in traditional medicines. As I have discussed, one of the problems identified in current research regarding traditional medicine, is that the literature seems to portray fixed notions of culture and practice. There is potential in exploring and generating better understandings of the developments and changes in the health-related practices of Indigenous cultures.

In light of the earlier discussions and observations that already identify the approaches in Ecuadorian policymaking as mostly representative of the mainstream culture and rarely exemplifying the realities of the minority groups (ISAGS, 2012), in this research I have demonstrated that understanding Indigenous cultures from a Western public health perspective is problematic. This thesis discusses the importance of recognising the context in the understanding of Indigenous cultures, not only academically, but also regarding the development of programmes and policies focused at indigenous populations. As described in Chapter Five, while good intentioned, interventions deprived of proper understanding of the context and cultural values of indigenous people, can end up being disruptive to Indigenous societies and in some cases more detrimental than no intervention at all. This observation challenges the general approaches used to develop many of the policies that affect indigenous people and the implication for practice, highlights the importance of involving Indigenous people in the processes of policymaking and implementation of interventions aimed at the betterment of their conditions.

Strengths, challenges and limitations

This research was focussed on the values and health-related practices of the Kichwa indigenous people of Rukullacta. As I have presented throughout the Findings chapters, the community of Rukullacta is only one of various Kichwa communities in Ecuador. Not only have I discussed the differences in the perspectives of Kichwa people in Rukullacta, but also the diversity within Kichwa cultures in the Amazon and the highland regions. Moreover, as I have also discussed, the number of participants in the interviews were limited by number and by the access I had to them. While I had the opportunity to speak to different people during my fieldwork, I was only able to undertake recorded interviews with a total of five traditional healers and six patients. The limited number of participants allowed me to explore in depth the issues and perspectives they had on Kichwa traditional medicines and health-related practices. However, the limited number of participants also means that the particular findings of this research are not applicable to all the communities or the whole Kichwa culture. As a result, the findings that I have presented in this thesis are limited and cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, this ethnographic study has not only been a descriptive account of the health-related practices and values in Kichwa medicine. As I have reflected and discussed, this ethnography is predominantly an exploration of representation of indigenous health-related practices from Western perspectives. In this regard, the ethnographic accounts of this study and its contributions to theory are related to the applicability of the theories in the understanding of Kichwa health-related practices (Hammersley, 1992). Although the ethnographic descriptions of this research are not generalisable to represent other cultures, the discussions and considerations of the applicability of theory could be.

Another main limitation of this research is related to the limitations of my perspective. As I have discussed, this research is essentially the product of my process of representation of the Kichwa people of Rukullacta and thus, is limited to my perception and the experience I had during the time of my fieldwork. Considering that *“all forms of representation of experience are limited portraits”* (Riessman, 1993, pg. 15) and that *meaning* is ambiguous (Riessman, 1993; Hall, 1997), I have aimed to reveal my potential biases and the details of my undertakings in the processes of this research (Thomas, 1993). While ethnography has been criticised by the possible influence that the researcher has in relation to the data collected, I have discussed how the exteriorization of descriptions reflect a process of *“Othering”* that I argue, requires a critical ethnographic approach. On this account, I acknowledge the limitation of my perception and the responsibility I have as a researcher in the production of knowledge about the Kichwa culture. I have accentuated how the Kichwa culture is an

evolving culture and within that remark, as the experiences of Kichwa people have changed, so have I by the interactions I shared with them. This is the greatest limitation, but at the same time the strength of this study. This research has presented my perspective; the results of this thesis cannot be claimed as the truth about Kichwa people, it is just another viewpoint from where the understanding of Kichwa culture, their health-related practices and current issues can be better understood (Hart, 2006).

The challenges of the iterative process

This thesis has evidenced and highlighted the significance of the iterative process in qualitative research. Addressing the iterative nature of qualitative research and its comprehensiveness, I have presented how crucial the continuous reflexive evaluation, adjustment and reconsideration has been to this research process. As I have discussed, several reflexions led to understandings that required greater attention and in my venture to have a better understanding of Kichwa people and their health-related practices, to the reframing of my research. It was through recurring revision and analysis – and not without more experienced academic dialogue – that I was able to find the appropriate theoretical frameworks with which I have been able to link and address the issues of representation of Indigenous cultures. The recurrent reflexive dialogue within this research process, while leading to profound insights that readjusted the direction of this research into an approach that addresses the issues of relevance, was also formidably challenging. The iterative process that I have undertaken in regards to this research required a profound examination of my own beliefs. While I can now say that this research offered me the opportunity to question my own beliefs and preconceptions of indigenous people, overcoming my biases was uncomfortably demanding. The questioning of my beliefs opened up an overwhelming number of questions not only related to this research, but also and mostly personal. One of the challenges was that for the most part, I did not know how to approach those personal matters with respect to my research work. Moreover, the questioning of my own beliefs required great emotional maturity for which no academic written work was really proficient in. Understanding the association between my reflexions and this research was a journey I had to ascertain practically on my own and I must disclose, was not always understood within the more common linear systematic approaches of research. As I discussed in the Methods chapter, the iterative process is not widely examined in the texts and from this experience, I reason that the challenge of embracing the iterative nature of qualitative research was not having much guidance.

Doing qualitative research as an iterative process, took more than the expected time. What is not explained about the iterative process is that in order to reflect back and be able to understand with more clarity, I had to allow myself to move forward many times with no evident results. Knowing that this was a natural part of the iterative process would have eased the pressures I put myself through. The iterative process takes time and for this reason, I cannot proclaim that I have overcome all of my biases prior to the culmination of this thesis. It is not only a matter of time and the fact that the personal journey of self-knowledge goes beyond the timeframe of this research, but also that this is a rather continuous process. Although the iterative reflection of my recorded experience has shed lights on the meanings that enabled a better understanding of the Kichwa culture and practices, I must acknowledge that the furthest difficulty was accepting that in my naiveté, I had been the subject of my own critiques.

Concluding remarks

Throughout this study I have explored the traditional medicine (TM) and health-related practices of the Kichwa Indigenous people of Rukullacta in the Ecuadorian Amazon. While I had initially aimed to explore the relationship between Kichwa traditional healers (TH) and their patients in order to develop better understandings in contribution to the identification of bridges between traditional and biomedical health systems, I came to realise that there were greater issues that needed to be addressed regarding the relation between western and non-western cultures before attempting to identify bridges within the health-related practices. It was evident through the literature review that the descriptions of TM across studies from different indigenous cultures, recounted a generalised perception of indigenous practices. The likenesses throughout the descriptions of Indigenous health-related practices and beliefs, made me question whether the comparable representations were rather the result of a shared western perspective. As a result, this research's aims and objectives developed into the exploration of values within the TM of Kichwa indigenous people in order to improve the understandings of their health-related practices, but also to understand the process of representation of other cultures. Following the common use of ethnographic methods to research TM, I undertook an ethnographic exploration in the Kichwa community of Rukullacta. During the three-month fieldwork I lived with a Kichwa TH and his family, who introduced me to the community, culture and health-related practices of the Kichwa people of Rukullacta. My participant observation included photography and was combined with in-depth interviews that allowed me to explore the views of Kichwa people regarding the health-related practices and beliefs. While the aim of this ethnography was to develop the knowledge of Kichwa health-related practices, values and beliefs, it has also been my purpose to explore whether it is possible to understand and represent the health practices of another culture from a Western public health perspective. The conclusions reached through the iterative process of analysis and reflexion; contribute to the theories that discuss western approaches in the production of knowledge of non-western cultures. While it can be argued that the themes were unaffectedly grounded in the data, the fact that the theoretical framework was located following the data collection, reflect through the discussions the genuine issues that were identified in the data collected. This thesis has exemplified a methodological approach that aimed to bring to light my own biases in order to offer a different perspective and as a result, new understandings of indigenous cultures and health-related practices.

In conclusion, this research contributes to existing literature and empirical investigation of indigenous populations, and shares several similarities (eg. Notions like the animistic and holistic

cosmos, spirit world, balance and harmony, and accounts of health and illness); however, a key claim is that descriptions of indigenous practices in the extant literature represent an oversimplification, and exacerbate the difficulty in trying to appropriately represent other cultures. Findings from this research such as the complex inter-relationship of generations in the construction of indigenous medicine also represent important developments compared to previous literature, which offers more general and static representations. Acknowledging broader socio-historical contexts of the Kichwa, and themes such as colonisation in particular, also permits a more complete understanding of such populations and cultures. Kichwa culture – like all cultures – is an evolving and dynamic one and as an example of the production of knowledge related to indigenous cultures, this research has provided an important example of how a better representation of other cultures can be achieved.

Glossary

Traditional Medicine: as defined by the World Health Organisation, is “the sum total of the knowledge, skill and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness” (WHO, 2019 pg. 8). It refers to “health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being” (Fokunang et al., 2011 pg. 284). While some articles refer to it also as indigenous medicine, for the purpose of this thesis, the term traditional medicine (TM) has been used.

Traditional Healers: Traditional Healers is a term that describes the practitioners of traditional medicine. Frequently, the term Shaman is used to refer to traditional healers. Shaman is a term commonly used in contemporary Ecuador, though this term originated in Siberia and it relates to the knowledge of a person (Capps 2011, citing Janzen 2002; Furst 1997; Kehoe 2000). Depending on language variations, traditional healers in the Ecuador are also called “Uwishin”, “Altomisayoq”, “Yatiri”, “Paje”, “Yachaks” or “Curanderos” (5,7). The term for traditional healers in Kichwa culture is Yachak. Nonetheless, due to the diverse cultural accounts in literature, the term that will be generally used for the purpose of this thesis is traditional healer (TH).

Primary Health Care: as defined in section VI of the Declaration of Alma Ata (1978), “Primary health care is essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of selfreliance and self-determination. It forms an integral part both of the country's health system, of which it is the central function and main focus, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family and community with the national health system bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work, and constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process”.

Interculturalism: refers to the interaction that occurs between different cultures and the recognition of the aspects that develop from each of the cultures involved. This is a term that has been widely

used throughout Ecuador's official documents such as the Constitution and The National Development Plan. The concept of Interculturalism also acknowledges the cultural diversity of the Country and recognises the rights of Ecuadoreans to choose their cultural heritage and identity (Ecuador, 2008; Ayala Mora, 2010; CODENPE, 2011a). Interculturalism is considered one of the fundamental principles for the organisation and development of Ecuador and its people (Ecuador, 2008; SENPLADES, 2013).

Colono: is a Spanish slang word that means coloniser. It refers to the inhabitants of a colony, the people who are non-native or not directly related to the native people. Although it is most likely that the term was introduced upon the arrival of the Spaniards to the Amazon region during the colonisation period, this is a term that is still used by the Kichwa people when referring to outsiders. While *colono* was a term that was used initially to refer to the Spanish colonisers, in present-day Kichwa people refer to most Ecuadorean Mestizos in this way. On the contrary, they use the term "gringo" rather than *colono* to describe a European, North American or any person with Caucasian appearance.

Mestizo: refers to a person of mixed race. It is particularly a mixture between white descending from the Spanish and the native indigenous of the Americas. The majority of the Ecuadorean population (71.9%) is identified as Mestizo. However the percentages of racial lineage vary since most of the racial blend occurred during the Spanish Colonisation.

Chakra: is an area of land used specifically for the cultivation of produce and plants. It is not quite the same as a garden, since many households depend on what they cultivate for their daily sustenance. In some cases, they also grow animals like chickens and ducks. The *chakra* is usually looked after the women of the house. However, the *chakra* is very special to the Kichwa healers, regardless of gender, since healers usually grow their own medicinal plants. Additionally, while the *chakra* is the part of land that is worked, by tradition, it cannot represent more than 10% of the owned land.

Yachak: The word *Yachak* or "Yachag" refers to a wise man or woman. Although the name depends on the indigenous nation and language, the Spanish term for healer that is used by more acculturated indigenous groups, is "curandero". However, *Yachak* is the common Kichwa term for a traditional healer. When I asked about the meaning of the word "Yachak", the answers among the Kichwa people were slightly varied. For instance, some people defined it as "a person who heals"

(Rocio Tupac), “the one who has the visions” (Mama Ajayo) or “the person who has the power or the one that is gifted” (Vinicio Lanchama). The greatest ability of a Yachak is the ability to have “the vision” when taking the ayahuasca. This is why some define a Yachak as “the gifted”, because according to Kichwa culture not everybody has the ability to see. While nowadays there are Kichwa healers that are trained to become Yachaks and are able to have the visions, originally only few people were gifted and only those who were gifted could become Yachaks. While many people use the word Yachak interchangeably with being a healer or a wise person (with knowledge related to healing), the Kichwa word for wise person is actually “Ajayo”.

Guaysa: or Guayusa is a tree found in the Amazon rainforest. The guayusa leaves are brewed as tea. The guayusa contains caffeine, but has more antioxidant properties than green tea. While Kichwa people have been customarily drinking guayusa throughout history, the guayusa tea has become a trendy superfood amongst mainstream society due to its healthy properties. Over the past ten years, the benefits of guayusa tea have been widespread and become so popular that packed tea bags can be found in supermarkets and it is now being exported to other parts of the world.

Kuraka: is the Kichwa leader and the head authority of the community. The Kuraka is the chief leader and main political figure for the Kichwa people. In the Napo region, the Kuraka represents all the communities that are considered part of the “People of Rukullacta” – PKR. The people choose the Kuraka based on his qualities, since the Kuraka is the epitome of the male Kichwa figure.

Misho: is a non-native person, usually a Mestizo that comes from any other place in Ecuador. When referring to a person specifically coming from the highlands of Ecuador, Kichwa people would also use the term “awallacta”. In a similar way, a foreigner coming from a different country - specially if the person has white complexion - would be called “gringo”, though this is a more widely used term. In general, none of these terms are used in a derogatory way.

Finca: means a small farm is Spanish. Amongst the Kichwa people, the finca is a section of land allocated by family and it is usually sited deeper in the jungle. A finca has approximately 16 hectares. In many cases, the fincas have access to sacred locations that are limited to the family and their personal guests. However, some Kichwa families have chosen to open access to tourism, since it represents an option for income.

Chicha: is a fermented cassava drink, very typical amongst the Amazonian indigenous people. Depending on the ethnicity, the method of preparing, serving and drinking chicha varies. However, in general terms the chicha consists of mashed cassava that goes through a process of fermentation and afterwards mixed with water. Amongst the Kichwa people in Napo, the preparation does not commonly involve the chewing and spitting of the cassava. This process is done as part of the fermentation, where the salivary enzymes help the maintenance of good digestive health. Although, chicha is regularly made out of cassava, especially amongst Amazonian indigenous, it is also made from maize and a tropical fruit called chonta.

Kachiwa: Kachiwa is an artisanal alcoholic beverage with high content of alcohol (40% or higher) that comes from the distillation of sugar cane. This type of alcoholic beverage is also known as “trago”, “aguardiente”, “puro”, “puntas” and in the community of Rukullacta it is unceremoniously known as “veintichinco”. The word “trago” translates in English as “drink”, but this word is commonly used in Ecuador to refer to any type of alcoholic drinks. However, in the region it is used specifically for the liquor produced from sugarcane.

Bibliography

- Arroyo Abad, L., Davies, E. and van Zanden, J. L. (2012) 'Between conquest and independence: Real wages and demographic change in Spanish America, 1530–1820', *Explorations in Economic History*, 49(2), pp. 149–166. doi: 10.1016/j.eeh.2011.12.001.
- Ayala Mora, E. (2010) 'La Interculturalidad: El Respeto a las Identidades Diversas', in Avila Jacome, A. (ed.) *Medicina Ancestral*. Quito: Fundacion Taitas y Mamas Yachaks del Ecuador/ Ministerio de Cultura del Ecuador, pp. 81–85.
- Baszanger, I. and Dodier, N. (2004) 'Ethnography: relating the part to the whole', in Silverman, D. (ed.) *Qualitative Research: theory, method and practice*. 2nd edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd, pp. 9–34.
- Batchelder, R. W. and Sanchez, N. (2012) 'The encomienda and the optimizing imperialist: an interpretation of Spanish imperialism in the Americas', *Public Choice*, 156(1–2), pp. 45–60. doi: 10.1007/s11127-012-9953-9.
- Baumeister, R. F. and Leary, M. R. (1997) 'Writing Narrative Literature Reviews.', *Review Of General Psychology*, Vol 1(3), pp. 311–320. Available at: http://endoexperience.com/documents/literature_reviews_researched.pdf (Accessed: 10 April 2015).
- Belknap, D. F. and Sandweiss, D. H. (2014) 'Effect of the Spanish Conquest on coastal change in Northwestern Peru.', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. National Academy of Sciences, 111(22), pp. 7986–9. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1404568111.
- Berger-González, M. *et al.* (2016a) 'Relationships that Heal: Beyond the Patient-Healer Dyad in Mayan Therapy', *Medical Anthropology*. Routledge, 35(4), pp. 353–367. doi: 10.1080/01459740.2016.1141408.
- Berger-González, M. *et al.* (2016b) 'Relationships that Heal: Beyond the Patient-Healer Dyad in Mayan Therapy', *Medical Anthropology*. Routledge, 35(4), pp. 353–367. doi: 10.1080/01459740.2016.1141408.
- Berger, J. (1972) 'Ways of seeing'. London, United Kingdom: British Broadcasting Corporation and Harmondsworth: and Penguin.
- Bhatia, J. C. *et al.* (1975) 'Traditional Healers and Modern Medicine', *Social Science & Medicine*, 9, pp. 15–21.
- Brisbois, B. W. (2014) 'Epidemiology and “developing countries”: Writing pesticides, poverty and political engagement in Latin America', *Social Studies of Science*, 44(4), pp. 600–624. doi: 10.1177/0306312714523514.
- Capps, L. L. (2011) 'Ua neeb khu: a Hmong American healing ceremony.', *Journal of holistic*

- nursing: official journal of the American Holistic Nurses' Association*. SAGE Publications, 29(2), pp. 98–106. doi: 10.1177/0898010110385940.
- Cardona-Arias, J. A. (2012) 'Sistema Medico Tradicional de Comunidades Indigenas Embera-Chami del Departamento de Caldas-Colombia', *Revista de Salud Pública*, 14(4), pp. 630–643.
- Cardoso, S. *et al.* (2012) 'Genetic uniqueness of the Waorani tribe from the Ecuadorian Amazon', *Heredity*. Nature Publishing Group, 108(6), pp. 609–615. doi: 10.1038/hdy.2011.131.
- Carroll, C., Booth, A. and Cooper, K. (2011) 'A worked example of "best fit" framework synthesis: a systematic review of views concerning the taking of some potential chemopreventive agents.', *BMC medical research methodology*, 11(1), p. 29. doi: 10.1186/1471-2288-11-29.
- Carter, S. M. and Little, M. (2007) 'Justifying Knowledge, Justifying Method, Taking Action: Epistemologies, Methodologies, and Methods in Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Health Research*. Sage Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 17(10), pp. 1316–1328. doi: 10.1177/1049732307306927.
- Casanova, C. A. (2012) 'The Influence of Christianity on the Spanish Conquest of America and the Organization of the Spanish-American Empire', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*. Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture, 15(4), pp. 125–144. doi: 10.1353/log.2012.0029.
- Charlier, P. *et al.* (2017) 'A new definition of health? An open letter of autochthonous peoples and medical anthropologists to the WHO', *European Journal of Internal Medicine*, 37, pp. 33–37. doi: 10.1016/j.ejim.2016.06.027.
- Charmaz, K. (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory*. 2nd Editio. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- CODENPE, C. de D. de las N. y P. del E. (2011a) *Interculturalidad*. 3. Quito. Available at: <http://www.pueblosynacionalidades.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/dialogo/interculturalidad.pdf> (Accessed: 18 October 2019).
- CODENPE, C. de D. de las N. y P. del E. (2011b) *Plurinacionalidad*. 2. Quito. Available at: <http://www.pueblosynacionalidades.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/dialogo/plurinacionalidad.pdf> (Accessed: 18 October 2019).
- Coffey, A. (1999) *The Ethnographic Self, Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Collin, F. (1997) *Social Reality*. London: Routledge.
- Collins, J. A. and Fauser, B. C. J. M. (2005) 'Balancing the strengths of systematic and narrative reviews.', *Human reproduction update*, 11(2), pp. 103–4. doi: 10.1093/humupd/dmh058.

- Colomeda, L. A. and Wenzel, E. R. (2000) 'Medicine keepers: issues in indigenous health', *Critical Public Health*, 10(2), pp. 243–256. doi: 10.1080/713658247.
- Crosby, A. W. (2003) *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. 30th anniv. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Davisa, E. W. and Yostb, J. A. (1983) 'THE ETHNOMEDICINE OF THE WAORANI OF AMAZONIAN ECUADOR', *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, (9), pp. 273–297.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006) 'Discourse and manipulation', *Discourse and Society*, 17(3), pp. 359–383. doi: 10.1177/0957926506060250.
- Dijk, T. A. Van (2006) 'Ideology and discourse analysis', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11(2), pp. 115–140. doi: 10.1080/13569310600687908.
- Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and Danger*. Routledge. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Ellingson, T. J. (2001) *The myth of the noble savage*. University of California Press.
- Fanon, F. (1967) *Black skin, white masks*. Edited by C. Lam Markmann. Grove press.
- Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected essays*. (Vol. 5019. Basic books.
- Geertz, C. (1983) *Local Knowledge: Further essays in interpretative anthropology*. New York: Basic books.
- Gliozzi, G. (1977) *Adamo e il nuovo mondo: la nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500-1700)*. Nuova Italia editrice.
- Gosovic, J. and Kirkebæk, A. (2019) 'Gifts, reciprocity and ethically sound ethnographic research: a reflexive framework', *Journal of organizational ethnography*, 9(1), pp. 66–79. doi: 10.1108/JOE-02-2019-0011.
- Gracey, M. and King, M. (2009) 'Indigenous health part 1: determinants and disease patterns', *The Lancet*, 374(9683), pp. 65–75. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60914-4.
- Green, B. N., Johnson, C. D. and Adams, A. (2006) 'Writing narrative literature reviews for peer-reviewed journals: secrets of the trade.', *Journal of chiropractic medicine*, 5(3), pp. 101–17. doi: 10.1016/S0899-3467(07)60142-6.
- Greenway, C. (1998) 'Objectified Selves: An Analysis of Medicines in Andean Sacrificial Healing', *Source: Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 12(2), pp. 147–167. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/649541> (Accessed: 5 December 2016).
- Hall, S. (1997) 'The work of representation', in Evans, J. and Nixon, S. (eds) *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. 2nd edn. Sage, pp. 13–74.
- Hall, S. (2001) 'The Spectacle of the "Other"', in Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., and Yates, S. J. (eds) *Discourse theory and practice: a reader*. London: Sage, pp. 324–344.
- Hammersley, M. (1992) *What's wrong with Ethnography? Methodological explorations*. London: Routledge.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995) *Ethnography: principles in practice*. 2nd editio. London: Routledge.

- Hanke, L. (1966) 'The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America', *Revista de Historia de America*, pp. 5–22. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41307330?seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents (Accessed: 12 April 2016).
- Hart, C. (1998) *The Literature Review in Research*. London: Open University, Sage.
- Hart, C. (2001) *Doing a Literature Search: A Comprehensive Guide for the Social Sciences*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hart, G. (2006) 'Denaturalizing Dispossession: Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent Imperialism', *Antipode*, 38(5), pp. 977–1004. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2006.00489.x>.
- Heins, V. M., Unrau, C. and Avram, K. (2018) 'Gift-giving and reciprocity in global society: introducing Marcel Mauss in international studies', *Journal of International Political Theory*, 14(2), pp. 126–144.
- Hey, J. A. K. and Klak, T. (1999) 'From protectionism towards neoliberalism: Ecuador across four administrations (1981–1996)', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 34(3), pp. 66–97. doi: 10.1007/BF02687628.
- High, C. (2016) "'A Little Bit Christian": Memories of Conversion and Community in Post-Christian Amazonia', *American Anthropologist*, 118(2), pp. 270–283. doi: 10.1111/aman.12526.
- Hoey, B. A. (2014) 'A Simple Introduction to the Practice of Ethnography and Guide to Ethnographic Fieldnotes', *Marshall University Digital Scholar*. Available at: https://works.bepress.com/brian_hoey/12/ (Accessed: 3 March 2017).
- Hoff, W. (1992) 'Traditional Healers and Community Health', in *World Health Forum*, pp. 182–187.
- Holstein, J. A. and Gubrium, J. J. (2004) 'The active interview', in Silverman, D. (ed.) *Qualitative Research: theory, method and practice*. 2nd edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd, pp. 140–161.
- Hughes, J. A. and Sharrock, W. W. (1997) *The Philosophy of Social Research*. Third Edit. Longman Group UK Ltd.
- INEC (2010) *Resultados del Censo 2010/ 2010 Census Results*. Available at: <http://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/resultados/> (Accessed: 4 April 2016).
- INEC (2012) *Statistics about Religion*. Available at: http://www.inec.gob.ec/inec/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=513%3Ainec-presenta-por-primera-vez-estadisticas-sobre-religion&catid=56%3Adestacados&Itemid=3&lang=es (Accessed: 4 April 2016).
- ISAGS (2012) *Sistemas de Salud en Suramerica: desafios para la universalidad la integralidad y la equidad*. Edited by L. Giovanella et al. Rio de Janeiro: Instituto

Suramericano de Gobierno en Salud.

Jackson, M. (2012) *Lifeworlds: Essays in existential anthropology*. University of Chicago Press.

Jacome, M. (2010) 'La Medicina Ancestral Andina', in Avila Jacome, A. (ed.) *Medicina Ancestral*. Quito: Fundacion Taitas y Mamas Yachaks del Ecuador/ Ministerio de Cultura del Ecuador, pp. 71–80.

Kant, I. (1781) *Critique of Pure Reason, Translated from German by J.M.D Meiklejohn., 1855*. 2nd ed. London: Henry G. Bohn (Bohn's philosophical library). Available at: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=hnARAAAAYAAJ>.

King, M., Smith, A. and Gracey, M. (2009) 'Indigenous health part 2: the underlying causes of the health gap', *The Lancet*, 374(9683), pp. 76–85. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60827-8.

Kvale, S. (1996) *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, Calif. ; London: SAGE Publications.

Lambert, H. (1997) 'Illness, Inauspiciousness and Modes of Healing in Rajasthan', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. SAGE Publications, 31(2), pp. 253–271. doi: 10.1177/006996697031002004.

Leslie, C. (1980) 'Medical pluralism in world perspective [1]', *Social Science & Medicine. Part B: Medical Anthropology*. Pergamon, 14(4), pp. 191–195. doi: 10.1016/0160-7987(80)90044-7.

Levers, L. L. (2006) 'Samples of Indigenous Healing: The path of good medicine', *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 53(4), pp. 479–488.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1963) *Structural Anthropology*. (Volume 1). Basic books.

Lu, F., Bilsborrow, R. E. and Oña, A. I. (2012) *Modos de vivir y sobrevivir: Un estudio transcultural de cinco etnias en la Amazonia Ecuatoriana*. Quito-Ecuador: Ediciones Abya-Yala.

Lucio, R., Villarcres, N. and Henríquez, R. (2011) 'Sistema de salud de Ecuador', *Salud pública de México*, 53(Suplemento 2), pp. S177–S187. Available at: <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/spm/v53s2/13.pdf> (Accessed: 3 April 2016).

Madison, D. S. (2004) 'Introduction to Critical Ethnography, Theory and Method', in *Critical Ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 1–16. doi: 10.4135/9781452233826.

Maher, P. (1999) 'A Review of "Traditional" Aboriginal Health Beliefs', *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 7, pp. 229–236.

Maiello, S. (2008a) 'Encounter with a traditional healer Western and African therapeutic approaches in dialogue', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, (53), pp. 241–260.

Maiello, S. (2008b) 'Encounter with a traditional healer Western and African therapeutic approaches in dialogue', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 53(2),

pp. 241–260. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5922.2008.00719.x.

Malo-Serrano, M. and Malo-Corral, N. (2014) 'Reforma de salud en Ecuador: nunca más el derecho a la salud como un privilegio', *Revista Peruana de Medicina Experimental y Salud Pública*. Instituto Nacional de Salud, 31(4), pp. 754–761. Available at: http://www.scielo.org.pe/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1726-46342014000400022&lng=es&nrm=iso&tng=es (Accessed: 26 February 2016).

Martin-McDonald, K. and McCarthy, A. (2008) "Marking" the white terrain in indigenous health research: literature review', *Journal of advanced nursing*, 61(2), pp. 126–133.

Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Massé, R. (2002) 'Gadè deceptions and lies told by the ill: The Caribbean sociocultural construction of truth in patient-healer encounters', *Anthropology & Medicine*. Taylor & Francis Group, 9(2), pp. 175–188. doi: 10.1080/1364847022000029732.

May, T. (1993) *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*. Third. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Mays, N. (2000) 'Qualitative research in health care: Assessing quality in qualitative research', *BMJ*, 320(7226), pp. 50–52. doi: 10.1136/bmj.320.7226.50.

Menéndez, E. (1994) 'La enfermedad y la curación¿ Qué es medicina tradicional?', *Alteridades*, 4(7), pp. 71–83.

Mideros, R. (2010) 'Parir y nacer sin prisas ni rutinas: vigencia de la partería tradicional andina en el siglo XXI', in *Etnomedicina y Etnobotánica: Avances en la Investigación*, pp. 73–80.

Mignone, J. *et al.* (2007) 'Best practices in intercultural health: five case studies in Latin America.', *Journal of ethnobiology and ethnomedicine*, 3, p. 31. doi: 10.1186/1746-4269-3-31.

Montenegro, R. A. and Stephens, C. (2006) 'Indigenous health in Latin America and the Caribbean.', *Lancet (London, England)*, 367(9525), pp. 1859–69. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(06)68808-9.

Mora Rodriguez, L. A. (2007) 'La "ideología colonial": teorías antropológicas al servicio del poder', *Revista Comunicación*, 16(No.1), pp. 34–40. Available at: <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/166/16616106.pdf>.

Morris, M. W., Leung, K. and Ames, D. (1999) 'VIEWS FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE: INTEGRATING EMIC AND ETIC INSIGHTS ABOUT CULTURE AND JUSTICE JUDGMENT', *Academy of Management Review*, 24, pp. 1781–796. Available at: http://www.columbia.edu/~da358/publications/etic_emic.pdf (Accessed: 22 April 2017).

MSP (2011) *Nuevo Modelo de Gestión/ New Management Model*. Quito.

MSP (2013) *Manual del Modelo de Atención en Salud*. Acuerdo Ministerial 725-1162. Quito.

MSP (2014a) *Dirección de Nacional Inteligencia de la Salud | Ministerio de Salud Pública*.

Available at: <https://www.salud.gob.ec/direccion-de-inteligencia-de-la-salud/> (Accessed: 16 January 2015).

MSP (2014b) *Estatuto Orgánico Sustitutivo de Gestión Organizacional por Procesos del Ministerio de Salud Pública*. 00004520. Quito-Ecuador. Available at: <http://www.salud.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/09/ESTATUTO-SUSTITUTIVO-MSP-ALCANCE-REFORMA-ABRIL17.pdf> (Accessed: 23 March 2016).

MSP (2015) *Producción Estadística MSP 2006-2014 / Statistic Production MSP 2006-2014*. Quito-Ecuador. Available at: <http://www.salud.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/PRODUCCION-ESTADISTICA-2006-2014.pdf> (Accessed: 6 April 2016).

Muldoon, J. (1994) *The Americas in the Spanish World Order: The Justification for Conquest in the Seventeenth Century*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Murphy, E. and Dingwall, R. (2007) 'Informed consent, anticipatory regulation and ethnographic practice', *Social Science & Medicine*, 65(11), pp. 2223–2234. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.08.008.

Naranjo, P. (2010) 'La etnomedicina en el Ecuador', in *Etnomedicina y Etnobotánica: Avances en la Investigación*, pp. 61–71.

Noymer, A. (2011) 'Population Decline in Post-Conquest America: The Role of Disease', *Population and Development Review*. Population Council, 37(1), pp. 178–183. Available at: http://www.jstor.org.eresources.shef.ac.uk/stable/23043268?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents (Accessed: 9 April 2016).

O'Reilly, K. (2005) *Ethnographic methods*. Routledge Ltd. Available at: <https://www.dawsonera.com/abstract/9780203320068> (Accessed: 24 September 2015).

Ortega, F. (1988) 'Health systems and traditional medicine in Ecuador.', *DEVELOPPEMENT ET SANTE*, 78, pp. 25–27.

De Paepe, P. *et al.* (2012) 'Ecuador's Silent Health Reform', *International Journal of Health Services*. SAGE Publications, 42(2), pp. 219–233. doi: 10.2190/HS.42.2.e.

PAHO (2008) *Perfil de los sistemas de salud: Ecuador, monitoreo y análisis de los procesos de cambio y reforma*. Third. Washington DC: Pan American Health Organization PAHO / World Health Organization WHO. Available at: www.lachealthsys.org.

PAHO (2012) *Health in the Americas: Ecuador*. Country Vo, *Health in the Americas*. Country Vo. Available at: http://www.paho.org/saludenlasamericas/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=128&Itemid= (Accessed: 21 April 2016).

Papaioannou, D. *et al.* (2010) 'Literature searching for social science systematic reviews: consideration of a range of search techniques.', *Health information and libraries journal*, 27(2), pp. 114–22. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00863.x.

- Pareja Y Díez Canseco, A. (1979) *Ecuador: De la prehistoria a la conquista española*. Quito-Ecuador: Ed. Universitaria.
- Pedersen, D. and Baruffati, V. (1989) 'Healers, deities, saints and doctors: elements for the analysis of medical systems', *Social Science & Medicine*, 29(4), pp. 487–496. doi: 10.1016/0277-9536(89)90194-9.
- Pedersen, D. and Coloma, C. (1983) 'Traditional medicine in Ecuador: The structure of the non-formal health systems', *Social Science & Medicine*, 17(17), pp. 1249–1255. doi: 10.1016/0277-9536(83)90017-5.
- Pinkoane, M., Greeff, M. and Williams, M. (2005) 'The patient relationship and therapeutic techniques of the South Sotho traditional healer', *Curationis*, 28(4), pp. 20–30. doi: 10.4102/curationis.v28i4.1005.
- Reeve, M.-E. (2000) 'Concepts of Illness and Treatment Practice in a Caboclo Community of the Lower Amazon', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 14(1), pp. 96–108.
- Republic of Ecuador (2008) *Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador*. Republic of Ecuador: Comparative Constitutions Project. Available at: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Ecuador_2008.pdf (Accessed: 7 March 2016).
- Riessman, C. K. (1993) *Narrative Analysis*. Volume 30. Newbury Park: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Risenga, P. R., Botha, A. and Tjallinks, J. E. (2007) 'Shangaan patients and traditional healers management strategies of hypertension in Limpopo Province', *Curationis*, 30(1), pp. 77–84.
- Robarchek, C. A. and Robarchek, C. J. (1998) 'Reciprocities and realities: World views, peacefulness, and violence among Semai and Waorani', *Aggressive Behavior*. Wiley Subscription Services, Inc., A Wiley Company, 24(2), pp. 123–133. doi: 10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(1998)24:2<123::AID-AB3>3.0.CO;2-N.
- Robarchek, Clayton and Robarchek, Carole (2005) 'Waorani Grief and the Witch-Killer's Rage: Worldview, Emotion, and Anthropological', *Source: Ethos*, 33(2), pp. 206–230. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3651929> (Accessed: 22 August 2016).
- Rose, G. (2012) *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. 3rd edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Rowland, M. J. (2004) 'Return of the "noble savage": Misrepresenting the past, present and future', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, (2), pp. 2–14. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279180967_Return_of_the_'noble_savage'_Misrepresenting_the_past_present_and_future (Accessed: 4 October 2019).
- Said, E. W. (1978) *Orientalism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, Penguin group 2003.
- Sanchez-Jankowski, M. (2002) 'Representation, Responsibility and Reliability in Participant-Observation', in May, T. (ed.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage Publications Ltd,

pp. 144–160.

SENPLADES (2013) *National Development Plan / National Plan for Good Living, 2013 - 2017. Summarized Version*. Edited by National Planning Council. Quito: National Secretariat of Planning and Development (SENPLADES). Available at: <http://www.buenvivir.gob.ec/> (Accessed: 13 February 2016).

SETECI (2014) *Mapa Interactivo de Cooperación Internacional: Salud*. Available at: <http://app.seteci.gob.ec/mapa/reports/cooperacionPaíses> (Accessed: 20 April 2016).

Silverman, D. (1985) *Qualitative Methodology & Sociology: Describing the Social World*. Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Limited.

Silverman, D. (2013) *Doing Qualitative Research*. 4th Revise. Edited by K. Metzler. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Simoës, A. and Hidalgo, C. (2011) *The Economic Complexity Observatory: An Analytical Tool for Understanding the Dynamics of Economic Development., Workshops at the Twenty-Fifth AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence*. Available at: <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/ecu/> (Accessed: 5 March 2019).

Smith, L. T. (1999) *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed books. London: Zed books.

Thierner-Sachse, U. (2009) 'Hombre bárbaro versus hombre silvestre en la Nueva España ¿Ideas exóticas de origen europeo?', *Anthropos*. Anthropos Institut, Bd. 104(H. 1), pp. 81–92. Available at: http://www.jstor.org.eresources.shef.ac.uk/stable/40467108?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents (Accessed: 9 April 2016).

Thomas, J. (1993) *Doing Critical Ethnography, Qualitative research methods*. Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publications Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412983945.

Thornton, R. (2015) 'Magical Empiricism and "Exposed Being" in Medicine and Traditional Healing', *Medical Anthropology*. Routledge, 34(4), pp. 353–370. doi: 10.1080/01459740.2015.1031225.

Turner, E. (1989) 'From Shamans to Healers: The survival of an Inupiaq Eskimo Skill', *Anthropologica*, 31(1), pp. 3–24.

UNFPA (2013) *Country Programme Evaluation - Ecuador (2010-2014)*. Quito. Available at: <https://data.unfpa.org/docs/ecu> (Accessed: 5 March 2016).

Valencia, M. A. (2010) 'Salud y extirpacion de idolatrias', in Naranjo, P. (ed.) *Etnomedicina y Etnobotanica: Avances en la Investigacion*. 1st edn. Quito: Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar / Ediciones Abya-Yala, pp. 29–60.

Waldram, J. B. (2015) "'I Don't Know the Words He Uses": Therapeutic Communication among Q'eqchi Maya Healers and Their Patients', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 29(3), pp. 279–297. doi: 10.1111/maq.12160.

Westermeyer, J. (1988) 'Folk Medicine in Laos: A comparison between two ethnic groups', *Social Science & Medicine*, 27(8), pp. 769–778.

White, P. (2015) 'The concept of diseases and health care in African traditional religion in Ghana', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 71(3), p. 7 pages. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2762>.

WHO (2009) *WHO Country Cooperation Strategy Ecuador 2010 - 2014*. Washington DC. Available at: http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccs_ecu_es.pdf?ua=1 (Accessed: 12 April 2016).

WHO (2013) *WHO Country Cooperation Strategy: at a glance / Ecuador*. Available at: http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_ecu_en.pdf (Accessed: 12 April 2016).

WHO (2015) *Ecuador: WHO statistical profile*. Available at: <http://www.who.int/gho/countries/ecu.pdf?ua=1> (Accessed: 11 April 2016).

WHO, I. C. on P. H. C. (1978) *The Declaration of Alma -Ata*.

WHO, W. H. O. (2010) *WHO | The determinants of health*, WHO. World Health Organization. Available at: <https://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/> (Accessed: 6 October 2019).

WHO, W. H. O. (2019) *WHO GLOBAL REPORT ON TRADITIONAL AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE 2019*. Geneva. Available at: <http://apps.who.int/bookorders>. (Accessed: 29 October 2019).

WHO, W. H. O. and UNICEF, U. N. C. F. (2018) *Declaration of Astana - Global Conference on Primary Health Care*. Astana, Kazakhstan. Available at: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/primary-health/declaration/gcphc-declaration.pdf> (Accessed: 25 November 2018).

Wolffers, I. (1989) 'Traditional Practitioners' Behavioural Adaptations to Changing Patients' Demands in Sri Lanka', *Social Science & Medicine*, 29(9), pp. 1111–1119.

Yanez del Pozo, J. (2005) *Allikai Bienestar/ Estar bien: La salud y la enfermedad desde la perspectiva Indigena*. 1st edn. Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala.

Zimmerman, A. (2010) *Alabama in Africa : Booker T. Washington, the German empire, and the globalization of the new South*. Princeton University Press. Available at: <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691155869/alabama-in-africa> (Accessed: 16 February 2020).

Appendix



Downloaded: 11/09/2017
Approved: 07/09/2017

Andrea Madrid Menendez
Registration number: 150255925
School of Health and Related Research
Programme: N/A

Dear Andrea

PROJECT TITLE: The relationship between traditional healers and their patients among Amazonian Indigenous people in Ecuador: An ethnographic study

APPLICATION: Reference Number 015010

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 07/09/2017 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 015010 (dated 01/09/2017).
- Participant information sheet 1034802 version 2 (01/09/2017).

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'P.P. C.E. Spooner'.

Jane Spooner
Ethics Administrator
School of Health and Related Research



School Of Health
And Related Research.



Comité de Ética de Investigación en Seres Humanos
Universidad San Francisco de Quito

El Comité de Revisión Institucional de la USFQ
The Institutional Review Board of the USFQ

Aprobación MSP, Oficio No. MSP-VGV5-2016-0244-Q, 26 de Abril de 2016

Quito, 25 de septiembre de 2017

Señorita
Andrea Alejandra Madrid Menendez
Investigadora Principal
THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
Ciudad

De mi mejor consideración:

Por medio de la presente, el Comité de Ética de Investigación en Seres Humanos de la Universidad San Francisco de Quito se complace en informarle que su solicitud de revisión y aprobación del estudio de investigación "**La relación entre curanderos tradicionales y sus usuarios en poblaciones Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana: Un estudio etnográfico.**", ha sido aprobada el día de hoy como un estudio *expedito*, debido a que la investigación va a tomar datos personales pero el investigador asegura que serán codificados para el análisis y presentación de los resultados y una vez concluido el estudio cualquier dato que pudiese identificar al participante será borrado.

El CEISH - USFQ aprueba el estudio ya que cumple con los siguientes parámetros:

- El proyecto de investigación muestra metas y/o objetivos de significancia científica con una justificación y referencias.
- El protocolo de investigación cuenta con los procedimientos para minimizar sus riesgos de sus participantes y/o los riesgos son razonables en relación a los beneficios anticipados del estudio.
- Los participantes del estudio tienen el derecho a retirarse del estudio y su participación su conseguida a través de un proceso de consentimiento informado
- El protocolo cuenta con provisiones para proteger la privacidad y confidencialidad de los participantes del estudio en sus procesos de recolección, manejo y almacenamiento de datos
- El protocolo detalla las responsabilidades del investigador

Además el investigador principal de este estudio ha dado contestación a todas las dudas y realizado todas las modificaciones que este Comité ha solicitado en varias revisiones. Los documentos que se aprueban y que sustentan este estudio es la versión # 1 de septiembre 12, 2017 que incluyen:

- Solicitud de revisión y aprobación de estudio de investigación, 12 páginas;
- Solicitud de aplicación al consentimiento informado por escrito, 2 páginas;
- Anexo 1. Aide-memoire o guía temática, 1 página.
- Anexo 2. Hoja Informativa. 1 página.

Casilla Postal 17-12-841, Quito, Ecuador
comitebioetica@usfq.edu.ec
PBX (593-2) 297-1700 ext 1149

- Hoja de vida de la Investigadora principal, 3 páginas.

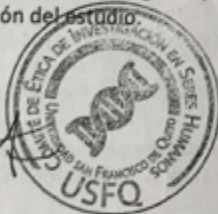
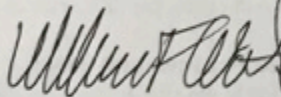
Esta aprobación tiene una duración de **un año (365 días)** transcurrido el cual se deberá solicitar una extensión si fuere necesario. En toda correspondencia con el Comité de Bioética favor referirse al siguiente código de aprobación: **2017-108E**. El Comité estará dispuesto a lo largo de la implementación del estudio a responder cualquier inquietud que pudiese surgir tanto de los participantes como de los investigadores.

Favor tomar nota de los siguientes puntos relacionados con las responsabilidades del investigador para este Comité:

1. El Comité no se responsabiliza por los datos que hayan sido recolectados antes de la fecha de esta carta; los datos recolectados antes de la fecha de esta carta no podrán ser publicados o incluidos en los resultados.
2. El Comité ha otorgado la presente aprobación en base a la información entregada por los solicitantes, quienes al presentarla asumen la veracidad, corrección y autoría de los documentos entregados.
3. De igual forma, los solicitantes de la aprobación son los responsables por la ejecución correcta y ética de la investigación, respetando los documentos y condiciones aprobadas por el Comité, así como la legislación vigente aplicable y los estándares nacionales e internacionales en la materia.

Deseándole los mejores éxitos en su investigación, se solicita a los investigadores que notifiquen al Comité la fecha de terminación del estudio.

Atentamente,



William F. Waters, PhD
Presidente Comité de Ética de Investigación en Seres Humanos USFQ
cc. Archivo general, Archivo protocolo