



Heritage Appropriation and Commoditized Spirituality

Q'ero Mysticism & Andean New Age Healing.

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Globalization is perhaps one of the most dynamic issues in the social sciences. It is critical to map all fields of the human/cultural experience that are susceptible to manifestations of globalization in the growing international tourism industry. In this study, I have focused on the evolution of the Peruvian Andean highlands' massive tourist industry, including a specific analysis on the Paz Y Luz Healing Centre, in order to address spiritual tourism and its appropriation and commodification processes. I will explore Andean mysticism and the concept's effect on local cultural heritage, and illuminate Foucauldian understandings of the gaze, as well as other perspectives on the role of ritual elements in the construction of spiritual realities. Subsequently, I predictably conclude that spiritual tourism is a living relic of colonialism. Colonialism dilutes the cultural and spiritual heritage of peoples like the Q'ero for consumption by tourists, who use the gaze and its created 'other' to validate their own construction of spiritual realities.

Introduction

Within the 21st century, an era post-modernity, the Westerner's pursuit of healing through Indigenous spirituality is a revealing phenomenon. Colonialism has built an international capitalist hegemony that dictates every aspect of human experience and exchange. This structure has enabled extensive Western appropriation of indigenous spiritualities and tradition, that ultimately lead to an uneven exchange of culture and heritage between the Western tourist and Indigenous peoples. Evidence of such appropriating mechanisms is present in the spiritual tourism that engages the Q'ero mysticism of the higher Andes, where local indigenous groups are said to be direct healers from the Incan royal past (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 69).

This article is based on an amalgamation of discussions that work to further understand Andean spiritual tourism, the activation of its Western appeal, and the phenomenon depicted by Macerna Gomez-Barris' (2012) field research at Pisac, the Sacred Valley, and Cuzco, Peru. Through this examination, I will draw important connections between the way identities are commoditized through the tourist industry, the role of voyeurism in creating power structures as understood by Foucault (1977), and the simultaneous universalizing abilities of certain ritual elements that engage familiar sensations within the human sensorium. Beginning with a focus on the evolution of Peru's tourist industry, I develop the discussion by examining how viewership of Machu Picchu and Incan Ruins through tourism media provides

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agency to Westerners in determining the nature of the Q'ero identity. Finally, I include a description of the new age rituals experienced by Gomez-Barris (2012) in her field research, followed by examples of how Q'ero subscribe to their manufactured identity within the tourism industry. This exploration into the specific rites advertised and practiced at the Paz Y Luz spiritual retreat is essential to a full circle examination of how Q'ero identity has been appropriated for use by the Westerner through the identity creating processes inherent within the increasingly globalized spiritual tourism industry. With reference to both Baumann and Grimes, we can understand how the incorporation of symbolism and bodily involvement within the rituals discussed by Gomez-Barris (2012) allows for the activation of spiritual validity within the minds of the Westerner, whose agency subsequently perpetuates the manufactured identity of the Q'ero native as *mystical*. Ultimately, the progression of this article furthers understanding on how economic, visual, and ritual elements play a role in the construction of native identities and spiritual ability.

Constructed Exoticism and Relief from the Mundane: Voyeuristic Colonialism

Religiosity in all forms works to fill a gap of spiritual knowledge that humans are often socialized to feel they possess. In the case of Peru's Sacred Valley, Western ideas of novelty and foreign exoticism inspire and activate a form of spiritual tourism that is manifested as the absorption of enlightenment from indigenous healers. This originates from a position of Western disenchantment with the secular mundane, which looks to those in a position of alterity to provide the remedy of spiritual enlightenment. However, the subsequent transaction not only appropriates and universalizes Indigenous spirituality, but compels natives to participate in the dilution and commodification of their heritage-identity. In this way, the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Peruvian Andes

have become an entity that can be re-shaped, re-claimed, and commoditized through voyeuristic power, fetishism of the mystical, and hegemonic capitalist dependence.

As Gomez-Barris notes (2012, p. 71), Machu Picchu has become the most potent symbol of Incan culture and its' associated mystical, regal nature. Since Machu Picchu's discovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911, the ancient site's image has been captured and produced over 10,000 times through National Geographic's collaboration with Yale University (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 71). The subsequent voyeuristic enchantment has propelled waves of tourist traffic since the 1920's (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 71). Following the Peruvian Government's investment in the necessary infrastructure from the 1950s to the 1990s, including roads, rail, and Westernized hotels, tourists arrived en masse (Anderson, 2008, p. 2-3). The establishment of the National Institute for Culture in 1971 allowed the Peruvian government more control over Machu Picchu and the way in which its image was marketed to outsiders (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 71). Control over which heritage-identities could be used in tourism marketing propelled the expansion of hotel and transport service, and the growth of guided tourist experiences, retreats, and youth adventure programs (priced at 3,495 USD) (Rusticpathways.com). In tandem with the global tourist industry, the Peruvian government prioritizes which sites are accessible to witness and are visually elaborated within tourist-oriented media. This grants tourists the agency to determine grandiose Incan / Peruvian heritage-meaning (Jenkins, 2010, p. 307).

Currently, between five thousand to six thousand tourists pass through both Machu Picchu and the adjacent Sacred Valley per day, aided by an infrastructure that offers travel passes at fifty USD each (Ayerbe, 2012). In combination with how the Peruvian government markets the grandiose and exotic identity of Machu Picchu to internationals, tourists seeking to fulfill the

voyeuristic pull of foreign spectacle foster the transformation of Machu Picchu and other heritage sites from complex religious and cultural symbols of local and subjective meaning into raw material for outsider consumption.

The activation of this process can be understood through Foucault's (1977) understanding of vision as a mechanism of power in the creation of identity and alterity. In his famous work depicting the *Panopticon*, Foucault (1977) discusses the power of the *gaze* to establish control upon those viewed by the viewer. Foucault (1977) suggests that the ever-visible inmate, is always "the object of information, never a subject of communication". In other words, those [Indigenous] whom are viewed [by the Westerner, in this case], do not actively communicate their identity, but rather stand as information-laden symbols gazed upon and interpreted by the viewer. I relate this insight to the circumstance of the Western tourist and the Q'ero native because of the blatant imbalance of voyeuristic agency between the two. As Machu Picchu and the Peruvian Indigenous were discovered, photographed, and distributed by National Geographic and other Western-oriented media, it became the role of visual media to compose and convey Peruvian Indigenous identity to viewers, an act subsequently activated by Western culture's ocularcentric methods of establishing truth. As growing numbers of Western tourists travelled to these locations throughout the twentieth century, they brought with them preconceived understandings of the heritage-meaning of Incan sites and culture. Their gaze was constructed by images chosen and promoted by the tourism industry, National Geographic, and other published images of Peru that focused only upon grandiose and easily read symbols of Peruvian culture.

It is through these Foucauldian voyeuristic forces within Western marketed imagery, such as National Geographic's photographs and publications, Western travel brochures or imagery used by the

Peruvian tourist infrastructure, that Westerners' perceptions of exoticism are solidified. By traveling to witness what has been constructed by Peru's multibillion-dollar tourist industry as the exotic, mystical spectacle of Machu Picchu and ancient Incan culture, tourists use their gaze to subject the site to their interpretation of Q'ero identity, significance, and purpose (Foucault, 1977; Grimes, 2006). In the process, a relationship is solidified between the tourist and the native Other, positioning Indigenous peoples and their spirituality as something to be acquired by Western tourists. Their position as tourist informs them of an entitlement to gaze, prescribe their own understandings, and takes from these that which benefits their identity, world-view, and their interpretation of the Other (Grimes, 2006). In this way, the power to build the spiritual-heritage of the Peruvian Indigenous peoples is prescribed by the outsider and the government, no longer by the native. This capitalist-serving production of Machu Picchu and Q'ero mysticism's exotic novelty through Western gaze constructs spiritual uniqueness, which translates as spiritual validity to the Western tourist seeking enlightenment through what is inherently a colonialist mechanism. Commoditization of the identity and spirituality of the Q'ero native is transformed into something internationally consumable. Subsequently, the colonially granted voyeuristic power of the Western tourist and Western-marketed tourism industries not only perpetuates, but also functions alongside otherizing mentalities to create truth, identity, and power relations (Foucault, 1977, 202-203). Spiritual tourism specifically reveals the extent to which voyeuristic otherization of a culture works alongside universalizing ritual to allow an uneven exchange between Indigenous and outsider.

**Western-Appointed Spiritual Mediators:
The Vision of Paz Y Luz**

Dianne Dunn, founder of the *Paz Y Luz* (directly translated “Peace and Love”) hotel and healing centre in Pisac (A Peruvian village in the Sacred Andean Valley, well known for its Incan ruins), credits Peru’s tourist appeal not to commodification of a constructed exotic label, but to Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley’s intrinsic global role in achieving a new age of peace (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p.73). Consider the following quote: “Visitors from all over the world now converge on Peru to take in its spiritual energy and learn the secrets of the Andean path” (Dunn, 2006, p.129–131). Dunn stated that the mission of her centre is “to expand our consciousness, amplify our awareness and help others to do the same. To provide a haven for travelers and seekers from around the world to rest in the refined energy of the Sacred Valley surrounded by powerful mountains” (Dunn, 2006, p.129–131). Her website promotes a “univocal vision of transformation” that positions the Andean cultural-spiritual heritage as essential to establishing a new, peaceful world order (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p.72).

Dunn positions herself as a spiritual teacher and mediator to those who wish to learn the secrets of ancient Incan spirituality. The *Shaman* or *Magic Man* as a present-day fascination and liminal figure has strong roots in the colonial systems of governance (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p.72). According to Michael Taussig (1987), the dichotomous schema that colonialism produced and that Western cultural mentalities function under saw the *wild man* as a necessary figure of alterity. This figure acted as a repository for colonial violence, while providing forms of healing and resistance to the Indigenous (Taussig, 1987). The Shaman became a mediator as well as healer between Indigenous culture and Western colonial imposition of values and violence, standing as a visible, recognizable symbol of mediation between the West and the Indigenous. In the shadow of these relationships, Dunn, a New York local, is a

type of Shaman hybrid; a product of post-modernism that seeks to make the spirituality of the Andes universally applicable to Western tourists (pazyluzperu.com). Dunn, a self-proclaimed master in the Andean Spiritual tradition, and her healing centre at Paz Y Luz invite those coming from a position of Western melancholy, seeking more than the Western mundane, to “clear your energy fields, release blockages, identify problem areas and restore inner balance” (pazyluzperu.com). Additionally, Dunn advertises “guided meditation” through “connecting with the powerful mountain energy of the Sacred Valley, Dianne guides you to work with your inner child, your spirit-guides or inner wisdom to discover new insights and heal old wounds” (pazyluzperu.com).

Ultimately, Dunn’s practice and application of Andean spirituality seeks to create a universally relatable concept of spiritual energy and consciousness to be used and taken personally within the cultural context of each tourist, which heavily appropriates the spirituality of the Andean natives. Dunn’s use of Western lexicon, and the psychological promise of spirituality are ambiguous. The hybridized spirituality rejects common Western monotheism, and invites the tourist to a personal experience that is perceived as authentic Incan spirituality. Through notions of exoticism produced and previously consumed through the voyeuristic commodification of Peruvian culture, published in National Geographic and travel brochures alike, the Western spiritual tourist receives this form of Incan spirituality as authentic. This appropriating of cultural and spiritual heritage-identity enables Dunn and other Western “shaman” healers to position Andean Indigenous spirituality as exotic or as a “lost secret”; it is otherized but positioned as universally accessible and personally applicable to the tourist already familiar with the grandiose and mystical images associated with Incan identity. This increases its novelty, validity, and buyer-value to spiritual tourists, thereby

fashioning the historic spirituality of the Q'ero as a product in a globally capitalist structure.

Foucault's (1977) understanding of the truth-making power infused within the agency of gazing lays the foundation for the effectiveness of Dunn's role as spiritual mediator. Not only did the publication of images of Machu Picchu and Peruvian sites create a visual narrative of mysticism within the minds of Western viewers, but Dunn's modern centre positions her as a spiritual authority, as she is visible as a leader within group rituals, and therefore a valid mediator of Q'ero mysticism to the Western participant. Like the Colonial shaman, Dunn stands as a symbol of mediation. In line with Foucault's notion that it is the gazer that assigns information about the subject, it should be noted that it is only Westerners that possess the agency to look upon the Q'ero people, who are subsequently subjected to Westerner's preconceived understandings of Q'ero identity, as the tourist market continues to appeal to Western ideas of novelty, mysticism, and spiritual validity.

Universalizing Indigenous Rituals: Tangible Experiences of the Exotic

While Dunn's intent can be interpreted as harmless or altruistic in nature, the ideological function of Paz Y Luz produces inequalities and transforms Indigenous identity as free for appropriation within the world-view of the spiritual tourist. Dunn's mediation practice that appropriates Andean spirituality to something universally consumable is a complicated process. While Foucault's understandings of the objectifying power of vision and imagery to create identity account for a degree of Peru's growing tourism market, the individual processes that occur within the mindset of Paz Y Luz's guests must be examined with consideration of the ability of the human sensorium, when properly engaged, to activate spiritual reality (Yar, 2003). Partnered with Dunn's and the Peruvian

state's promotion of Incan sites as sacred and mystical, rituals and rites are a powerful medium for redefining the meaning of the rich historical and cultural significance of Andean heritage sites. Participation in rites that engage the senses and the application of voyeuristic power reassign ownership of space, heritage, and what is constructed as native spirituality to each tourist through ritually constructed experiential knowledge (Schirch, 2005).

After participating in a weeklong workshop at Dunn's centre, Gomez-Barris' (2012, p. 74) notes that Dunn spoke little Spanish or Quechua, despite the fact that she had invited two Q'ero healers to assist in the ritual. To emphasize the importance of this positioning, we must recognize that Dianne Dunn is seen by the Western participant as the spiritual leader in this setting, the mediating Shaman, while the Q'ero working at Paz Y Luz receive a different gaze as they are seen and positioned as assistants to the ritual, subsequently providing merely an aesthetic that works to affirm the validity of the ritual to Western participants. No translating was performed, despite more than 30 international participants, as most were monolingual English speakers (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 74). This placement of English as a universal language assists the intended unifying ritual and allows its transformations of Q'ero spirituality to be easily understood and digested through a Western lexicon. Yet, it painfully reflects globalization processes and Western dilution of historically dense culture and spirituality.

The workshop focused on learning the nine Munay-ki healing rites (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 74). These rites were first taught by Four Winds, a company based out of California and owned by North-American anthropologist turned spiritual guru, Alberto Viollida and were claimed to have been drawn from ancient traditions of healing (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 74). Evidently, the spirituality practiced and mediated by Dunn is a hybrid contortion and dilution of traditional Andean Indigenous spirituality

that is easily consumable to Dunn's distanced, Western participants that see Q'ero culture as mystical and ambiguous, yet accessible.

Additionally, these rites involved simple physical stimuli such as supposed energy transmissions through the *laying on of hands*, an act commonly used and understood within Western spirituality (Luhmann, 2012). With participants lying on the floor, energy transmissions through the laying on of hands were passed from both Indigenous Q'ero healers and Dunn to participants (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 73). The energy transmission rite also involved the speaking of Quechua by the Q'ero healers "as a ceremonial language, creating a soundscape of chanting and bells" (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 73). Participants additionally spent days in silence, in the *experience* (term used by Dunn: PazyLuz.com) of meditation, without being offered Q'ero context. The accompanying seminar replaced any study of Q'ero culture, tradition or epistemology with New Age discourse (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 73).

Dunn and her participants play off of the participation of the Other, and Q'ero culture becomes merely an ornament or ingredient in the enlightenment process of the Westerner (Baumann, 1992). The activation of these rites within the mindset of the Westerner is ultimately dependent upon the otherization of Q'ero natives and the liminal status of Dunn as mediator, who universalizes the experience into a language and process that the spiritual tourist can understand, experience, and consume from the grounds of their preconceived visualized notions of Incan spiritual heritage.

In line with Yar's (2003) discussion of the power of the human sensorium to enable the ideological creation of reality, the sensory elements in Dunn's rituals creates a ritualized spirituality that is experientially tangible through vision, sound, and touch. Subsequently, the Western tourist encounters symbols that are both familiar and exotic at Paz Y Luz, which enables them to feel that Q'ero spirituality is not only *real*

in its exoticism, but also an accessible phenomenon, perceivably affecting their processes of bodily healing and wellbeing. Dunn is able to capitalize on the commoditized experience created by a universalized, diluted practice of Q'ero spirituality. As Gomez-Barris (2012) confirms from their experience, "Q'ero approaches were reduced to a simplified and consumerist model of spirituality that was familiar to the participants" (p. 73).

Evidently, these ceremonial elements placed within the context of traditional Andean spirituality allow for its transformation from specific cultural heritage into something ambiguous and mystical, devoid of accompanying local narrative, and as an easily purchasable tool for Western-idealized enlightenment. In combination with the state's tourist initiatives and the gaze enabled through exotifying photographic publications that enabled Foucauldian voyeuristic power since the early 1900s, spiritual tourism retreats and rituals such as these perpetuate systems of inequality that enroll natives to perform a cultural identity that has been constructed by colonialist ideologies and capitalist intent.

Quechua Roles in the Peruvian Tourist Market: Symbols and Commodities

Peru's tourist industry depends in large measure upon the marketing of its Indigenous cultures (Anderson, 2008, p. 3). Similarly, in the Indigenous roles at Paz Y Luz described above, Q'ero people working in the tourist industry often act as shamans in spiritual adventures, their qualifications functioning off of their prescribed label as "magic man", making them able to transfer spiritual abilities of the ancient Inca to the Western visitor (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 72). As noted by Salas Carreño, many Q'ero *paqus* or specialists from other communities have become entangled within New Age spiritual tourism services similar to those offered by Dunn. As visualized, physical symbols of the constructed Andean mysticism, Q'ero people offer their services

to travel agencies, institutions, and are even contracted to travel to Europe or the U.S. to offer the secrets of ancient Incan healing (Salas Carreño, 2012, p. 105). In a similar method of commoditization, Q'ero women sit on the manicured lawns of hotels throughout the sacred valley and offer their crafts to tourists based on the premise of selling cultural novelty (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 69). Under Foucauldian theory, every visual or verbal interaction the Western tourist has with these figures confirms their interpretation of Q'ero identity, as they witness the Indigenous performing the role that was in fact prescribed to them by Otherizing Western gazes throughout the century.

The extent that this marketable identity has been infused into the image of the Q'ero Indigenous through these circumstances, the Western-marketed tourist experience, and the publication of titles such as "*Keepers of the Ancient Knowledge: The Mystical World of the Q'ero Indians of Peru*" (Wilcox, 2001) is dictated by Hill (2008). Hill (2008) states that Quechua culture or "Andean tradition" has been remarked as "part of every fiber of their (Q'ero) being", and that the "ancient spiritual knowledge is carried within their genes"(p.25).

Performing these tropes of the *spiritual Inca* or mediating shaman is often necessary for economic participation, and is often the only identity that is able to exist under hegemonic capitalist priorities (Salas Carreño, 2012, p. 50-55). While the government was praised by stock exchanges and boasted about Peru's positive macroeconomic figures, that are largely due to the success of industries and institutions within the tourism industry employing Q'ero natives, the Peruvian population did not perceive or report any improvement in living standards (Salas Carreño, 2012, p. 53). This was particularly notable in populations outside of Lima, including Pisac and the Sacred Valley, despite the profound number of tourists that attend the internationally

famous spiritual retreat (Salas Carreño, 2012, p. 53).

Through a broader context of the incorporation of Indigenous people as visually occurring symbols of authentic purity and spirituality, the appeal and impact of Dunn's healing centre at Paz Y Luz is understood. These mentalities are derived by colonialism, instigated by the state, and perpetuated by the tourist industry, its exotifying gazes, and actors like Dunn. These systems force the evolution of the native Q'ero heritage-identity into one that is not authentic but commoditized, as such systems work to fulfill the roles assigned by the Western spiritual tourist. The evolution of the Q'ero into something non-authentic but internationally consumable is inevitably coerced, as Q'ero participation allows them to profit from the sale of their constructed mysticism. Inequality is a blatant feature within this uneven relationship between Indigenous peoples and spiritual tourists.

Conclusions

From examination of the cultural exchange surrounding Machu Picchu and the Q'ero natives of the Sacred Valley and Andean mountains, it becomes clear that spiritual tourism constructs an unhealthy relationship between local and global entities. The tourist industry created by the official discovery of Machu Picchu in 1911 and its photographic publication grew through the power of voyeurism and Western gazing agency to assign the identity of the Other (Foucault, 1977). Harnessed by the government, programmed visuals positioned Machu Picchu and Peruvian culture as something sacred and grandiose, yet as something available to be observed and consumed by the Western tourist. Out of this uneven voyeuristic relationship, Western notions of the exotic Other emerged to solidify the implied mystical identity of the Q'ero native. It is through the foundation of truths constructed by Foucauldian visual mechanisms that the rituals at institutions such as Paz Y Luz are able to fully penetrate

the human sensorium, creating a felt spiritual experience within the mindset of the tourist. As supported by Yar (2003), the engagement of other sensory elements, alongside knowledge learned visually, is essential to create the advertised experience of spiritual healing with the use of universalizing elements that play off of the Q'ero aesthetic. The rituals, aesthetics, and ideologies used by Paz Y Luz and other spiritual retreats, function to make this Otherized culture consumable for the Westerner. From a position of Western melancholy and secular disenchantment, spiritual tourists operate under orientalist mentalities to construct novelty and subsequent spiritual validity from Andean culture. Individuals such as Diane Dunn and her construction of the healing centre at Paz Y Luz use othering mentalities to position the Q'ero as an element in her practice.

Before Dunn's universalizing, there is a distinct clash between Indigenous ontologies, typically organized around collective subjectivity, and the late capitalist model organized around the celebration of the self (Gomez-Barris, 2012, p. 70). However, Dunn's insertion of choice elements of Q'ero culture into New Age doctrine and ritual ultimately produces a hybridized dilution of Andean spirituality that is universally digestible and therefore marketable. The spiritual mediator allows a transaction between Q'ero culture and the spiritual tourist, using and perpetuating the trope of the *spiritual Inca*. This process has a circular effect as it conscripts the performance of an Indigenous identity, constructed out of colonialist ideology, subsequently informing the evolution of the Q'ero social role and heritage-identity. As affirmed by Gomez-Barris' (2012, p. 72) experience, current representations of indigeneity in Peru are informed by the transnational flow of ideas and capitalist trends. Voyeuristic power, fetishism of the mystical, and the work of Western spiritual mediators inevitably reveal the extent to which cultural and spiritual heritage have become a substance that can be removed

from its local narrative, to be commoditized in a global context that has produced hegemonic capitalism.

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