

THE HEALING POWER OF THE ICAROS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF AYAHUASCA EXPERIENCES

by

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Certificate of Approval

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the intense healing experiences of individuals who, in the context of the Peruvian *vegetalismo* tradition, ritually imbibe *ayahuasca* (a hallucinogenic brew of plants) as a type of shamanic songs called *icaros* are sung.

Some anthropological studies describe the position of *icaros* within this tradition, as well as their functions in ceremonies with *ayahuasca* throughout the Amazon Basin. However, research on *icaros* is scarce, particularly as regards to their healing functions during these ceremonies. The present study addresses the lived experience of ritual attendees, in order to uncover the essential structure of meaning of the phenomenon of intense healing with an *icaro*, with a secondary focus on the perception of musical features.

Using Giorgi's (1986, 1997) method of descriptive phenomenology as it pertains to psychology, data were collected in traditional contexts in Peru during an eight-month fieldwork period; this includes written reports and in-depth interviews. Participants were 5 adult men and women with extensive past

experience with ayahuasca, who reported their experiences after a sound-recorded ceremony and identified the icaros that were significant to them.

The experience with the icaro stands out as a pivotal moment within a healing process that unfolds during a ceremony. The phenomenon emerges as dependent upon contextual and integration factors, as process-like, and dynamic. Its structure presents 28 meaning constituents and one variation in two constituents related to the direct exposure to the icaro. The perception of musical features, which relies upon the essential meanings of the phenomenon, is described under the categories of lyrics, singing voice, and musical dynamic. Supplementary data present the distribution of the phenomenon under the labels of demographic variables, the healer's perspective of his healing work on participants, and a formal musical analysis of the icaros that were identified.

This study contributes to the understanding of the use of singing in facilitating therapeutic states of consciousness under psychotropic effects in a controlled setting. Since traditional vegetalismo knowledge on the healing use of the icaros is culturally-bounded and progressively disappearing, it deserves further study to be bridged to the West and to contribute to clinical use.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to nature and to its workers, the keepers of the sacred songs. May nature's higher project, and its workers' knowledge, service, and love be honored and protected. May their work continue to benefit all beings in our quest for fulfillment, our tuning in to the Great Concert.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background Context

The present study is the result of two quests that became interrelated. The first began as a personal and later developed into a professional interest in the healing potentials of nonordinary states of consciousness. The second was a passion for singing and playing musical instruments that opened into a deeper exploration of the therapeutic states and healing outcomes music could generate. With time, both quests dovetailed and became an inseparable unity. *Vegetalismo*, a mestizo healing tradition from the Peruvian jungle area (Luna, 1984), entered the equation while seeking a cure for a personal health condition.

The exploration of *vegetalismo* practices and cosmology progressively unveiled a vast therapeutic territory. Rooted in a shamanistic approach, and based largely on purging, plant diets, and ayahuasca ceremonies (Giove, 2002), these practices consistently involve the use of songs called *icaros*. These songs are believed to embody natural and supernatural spiritual powers and entail, therefore, healing capabilities. They are one of the primary tools of the shaman and a sign of his power (Giove, 1993; Luna, 1992). *Vegetalismo* constitutes a synthesis that holds Amazonian indigenous beliefs and practices together with Christian and other Western elements. It appears to still be the primary operational health care system for the vast urban poor and rural population of the region that still harbors strong indigenous elements (Dobkin de Rios, 1973; Giove, 1993; Zuloaga, 1997),

since it is empirically efficient, deeply rooted in the culture, and financially accessible (Mabit, 1993, p. 1).

However, in recent decades, an increased interest in the therapeutic and self-exploratory possibilities of the ayahuasca brew among the general population, therapists, and scientists, has attracted a more diversified clientele to these knowledge and practices, particularly those held by *ayahuasqueros*, *vegetalistas* specialized in the use of this brew.

Ayahuasca has powerful hallucinogenic properties, and evidence indicates its usage for millennia in shamanic practices in the Upper Amazon and Orinoco Basins (Furst, 1976; Schultes, Hofmann, & Raetsch 1992/2001). Ayahuasca ceremonies have not only become a constitutive part of this Peruvian mestizo tradition, but also of Brazilian syncretic churches that developed last century and are more recently spreading into the West (Labate, 2004). Nontraditional uses of ayahuasca, or what Metzner (1999, p. 35) refers to as an expression of “hybrid shamanic psychotherapeutic rituals,” are also becoming popular among Westerners. Studies on ayahuasca taken in ritual context and its clinical applications in a pilot program for drug abuse rehabilitation, show promising results in this respect (Giove, 2002; Grob et al., 1996), as well as decrease of symptomatology such as anxiety and panic (Santos, Landeira-Fernandez, Strassman, Motta, & Cruz 2007), and development of healthy abilities to cope with life and social situations (Grob et al., 1996; Silveira, 2003). On the medical side, Quinlan (2001) and Topping (2002) show positive healing effects of the ritual use of ayahuasca on cancer patients.

An essential element of traditional ayahuasca ceremonies in the Amazon area is singing or chanting. In shamanic traditions such as vegetalismo, the shaman's singing mediates between spiritual forces and the human realm in order to restore the equilibrium in their relational network whose disruption expresses itself in sickness (Bellier, 1986; Demange, 2002; Gebhardt-Sayer, 1985, 1987). The use of highly ritualized procedures and symbols that are culturally meaningful gives the adequate context for healing songs to catalyze transformational dynamics in the clients, as well as in the shaman (Niemeyer, 2006; Hill, 1983; Keifenheim, 2002; Olsen, 1996). In vegetalismo context, the main practical functions of the icaros during the rituals are to influence, structure, and promote the continuity and flow of the trance state, therefore affecting the quality and the content of the experience (Andritzky, 1989; Metzner, 1999; Narby, 1998; Presser-Velder, 2000). According to Giove (1993, p. 10), under trance effect the icaros help to metabolize the visions, remove subjective contents, guide the self-exploration, and at the same time to provide the link to the normal plane of reality. At some point in the ritual, specific icaros are chosen according to the health needs of the participants (Bustos, 2005; Chaumeil, 1993).

A few anthropological and ethnomusicological studies address the role of icaros in mestizo ayahuasca ceremonies (Brabec, 2002; Demange, 2002; Dobkin de Rios, 1973; Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971). Shanon (2002) also refers to their role in a broader study on ayahuasca experiences. However, despite their central position in vegetalismo in general and in ayahuasca ceremonies in particular

(Giove, 1997; Luna, 1992), the healing effects of icaros have not been studied in depth.

What can be learned from the use of these songs in promoting therapeutic states of mind in ayahuasca ceremonies in particular, and in psychedelic psychotherapy in general, is the larger query of the current study. Definitely, generations of cumulative knowledge and a particular worldview and cosmology are supporting vegetalismo practices, the generation of adequate settings for apprenticeship and work with psychotropic substances to promote healing. This study, conducted in traditional vegetalismo context, aims to shed light on an essential aspect of this knowledge that may contribute to the understanding of the crucial role of icaros in ayahuasca ceremonial settings and their healing potential on subjective experience.

Lastly, it is significant to address part of the actual situation of traditional vegetalismo practices in Peru. In the last decades, with the flourishing of the interest on ayahuasca among Westerners, vegetalistas have progressively embracing clients with different backgrounds and understandings of their work, who in short periods go through intense traditional practices eager to attain an extraordinary life-changing experience. New generations of ayahuasqueros with doubtful training are incorporating more hybrid elements into traditional rituals. In addition to considerations about the risks for ayahuasca tourists, already addressed by Dobkin de Rios (1994), it seems clear that the tradition is undergoing a transformation due to Western influence.

The practice of *vegetalismo* involves intensive and long-term training, along with a particular lifestyle that not many mestizos are ready to choose, so experienced maestros are increasingly difficult to find. The situation becomes even more complex with the progressive acculturation of indigenous population and the disappearance of vast areas of rainforest around Peruvian Amazon cities—the source of traditional medicines, training, and knowledge—due to oil and lumber extraction. Without adhering to a dogmatic preservationist stance, and intrigued by the transformations *vegetalismo* will most probably undergo, we can state that the traditional ways, as known until now, along with the experiential knowledge of how to effectively utilize the *icaros* for healing purposes, are slowly disappearing. In the opinion of this researcher, it is critical to study *icaros* and other aspects of *vegetalismo* practices sooner rather than later, if we want to explore and understand these ways and their possible contributions to healing and therapy.

Description of the Study

The present study explores in depth the experience of *icaros* as intensely healing during an *ayahuasca* ceremony led by a mestizo *curandero* in traditional *vegetalismo* context. The study seeks to describe this phenomenon comprehensively and vividly as it emerges in lived experience, with a particular focus on the perception of musical features that stood out in the healing experience with the *icaros*. The chosen qualitative methodological approach offers enough flexibility and rigor to explore *in situ* a complex human experience

scarcely studied. The particular research method selected is descriptive phenomenology in psychology, as developed by Giorgi (1985). This method focuses on the meanings attached to the experiences in order to bring forth the structural psychological essence of a phenomenon.

Participants were 5 adult men and women who experienced intense healing with icaros during a ceremony that was sound-recorded. Selection criteria included having extensive experience with the brew, which would support their higher discriminatory capacity from multiple experiences under ayahuasca effects (Shanon, 2002), and the subsequent identification in the recording of the icaros that were significant. Data collection procedures involved written reports and open-ended, in-depth interviews. Listening to the icaros before the interviews aimed to facilitate the recalling of their lived experiences in participants, supporting a richer description (Strassman, 2001).

The study was conducted in a traditional vegetalismo setting in Peru, which offers a legal frame for ayahuasca practice. It was primarily developed at the treatment center led by maestro curandero Juan Flores Salazar, of Ashaninkan ascendance and with over 40 years of practice, close to the city of Pucallpa, in deep jungle.

Significance of the Study

This exploratory study addresses the initial mapping of a scarcely studied healing phenomenon in traditional vegetalismo context. Icaros are not only a key component of vegetalismo: they are also the main tool of the healer during ayahuasca ceremonies. How intense healing is experienced with icaros under

ayahuasca effects, how the icaros are perceived, and what the psychological meaning structure of the phenomenon is, contribute in shedding light on multiple variables that are involved in a complex experience, as it is lived by participants.

On the one hand, the present study expects to enrich the psychological understanding of a culturally bound phenomenon, central to Peruvian mestizo medicine, which has been mainly studied either from the ethnocentric perspective of the curanderos or from the perspective of the social anthropologist. On the other hand, it hopes to open up new venues of research on a phenomenon that could provide significant guidelines regarding the use of singing in generating therapeutic states of mind under ayahuasca influence in other contexts. The ritual use of ayahuasca is progressively proving to have extensive therapeutic effects. Its use in psychedelic psychotherapy could benefit greatly from the knowledge of holders of these traditional ways, in terms of generating substance-specific therapeutic settings. The use of icaros as a constitutive element in Peruvian mestizo ayahuasca ceremonies appears as influencing a specific healing phenomenon whose broader and deeper study could facilitate their adaptation to other therapeutic contexts. Comparative studies with other traditions that use ayahuasca and ceremonial singing or chanting could also be beneficial in clarifying larger experiential healing patterns associated with particularities in the musical perception.

Western shamanic traditions typically are not considered a part of the Western psychospiritual heritage. An East-West psychology perspective could be enriched and broadened by incorporating the knowledge of native healing

traditions of the West into its understanding of human consciousness and growth into healthier and more holistic states of being. Eastern cultures have developed complex musical healing systems that seem to share universal aspects with the use of music in vegetalismo healing practices, a theme that would be interesting to explore through comparative studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on icaros is scarce, and it usually presents them as one of the shamanic aspects of Peruvian Amazonian vegetalismo practices. Icaros have been mainly studied by anthropologists and ethnologists, where the perspective of the practitioner is approached and understood under social, cultural, and cosmological views, and hypotheses on how the icaros work are outlined. A few ethnomusicological studies on icaros are also available. To date, no known research has focused systematically on the experience of the icaros by participants in ayahuasca ceremonies, other than some references in Shanon's study (2002) on the phenomenology of ayahuasca experiences.

Given the specificity of the research topic, this section starts with an overview of the theme: its concept and presence in research literature. Then, it progressively develops its broader contexts, namely Peruvian Amazonian mestizo shamanism or vegetalismo, and its ayahuasca healing rituals, incorporating an overview of the larger use of ayahuasca, its pharmacology and therapeutic functions. A subsection follows, describing the role and characteristics of icaros in ayahuasca ceremonies, along with references to the music employed in contemporary ayahuasca contexts, and particularities of the musical perception during ayahuasca effects. Next, studies on healing songs of indigenous Amazon traditions are presented. Lastly, a broader theme on the use of music for healing and therapeutic purposes is developed, emphasizing its role in shamanic healing practices.

An Overview

The Concept of Icaro

Icaro is the generic name given to the songs utilized by the urban mestizo curanderos—or mixed race healers—of the Peruvian Amazon Basin and by some indigenous healers of this region during their ritual works (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Giove, 1993, 1997; Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971; Luna, 1984, 1992; Luna & Amaringo, 1991; Metzner, 1999).¹ With no direct translation from native languages, Luna (1986) speculates that the word *icaro* would be a castilianism from the verb *ikaray*. In Quichua—a dialect of Quechua, the main stem-tongue of several ethnic groups of the Amazon Basin—the word means “to blow smoke” in order to heal.

Interestingly, the Shipibo-Conibo people of Peru refer to their magic melodies as *taquina*, *masha*, and *cusho*, which means “to work by blowing” (Arévalo as cited in Luna, 1986). In both cases, the use of the ritual song is linked to blowing or infusing breath or smoke. Although it is difficult to draw etymological conclusions, the Kuna people of Panama and Colombia use a similar term, *ikar*, to refer to the healing songs used to rescue souls kidnapped in their

¹Some of the literature reviewed seems to indiscriminately use the word *icaro* to refer to the songs used by mestizo curanderos, as well as to the songs used by indigenous healers. Anthropological and ethnomusicological studies conducted among Amazonian native groups, however, allude to the healers’ songs in their language.

different cosmological domains. In Kuna language, *ikar* means also “pathway,” “habit,” or “personal experience” (Sherzer, 1983). The Yaminahua of Peru conceive the song as a path as well, that is followed as well as cleared out and straightened by the shaman’s breath while singing. The breath embodies the shamanic power (Townesley, 1993, 2001).

The verb *icarar* and the noun *icarada* employed by the mestizo curanderos indicate, respectively, the ritual act and situation of singing or whistling an icaro on a person, substance, or object. The goal is to invest them with a specific power or property—protection, healing, cleanness, vigor—as well as to influence the will or cause harm to a person (Bustos, 2005, 2006; Giove, 1993; Luna, 1986, 1992). In that way, as Townesley (2001) suggests, the “blowing” effect of the song can be speculatively seen as clearing out and following a straight path to infuse something with the desired intention, an act of shamanic power.

The icaros are employed in healing contexts—preparation of remedies, healing sessions—, in special activities or occasions—fishing or hunting for certain animals, bewitching, farewells, and in ayahuasca rituals. Ayahuasca is one of the main psychoactive plant-brews used in Amazonian curanderismo for diagnosis, healing, divination, and learning purposes (Andritzky, 1989; Fericgla, 1997; Luna, 1986, 1992; Metzner, 1999). Icaros have been described as the “quintessence of shamanic power” (Luna & Amaringo, 1991, p. 13), the curandero’s “healing weapon, the wisdom, the means of his personal energy, the

symbol of his power, his inheritance for the apprentice” (Giove, 1997, pp. 7-8),² including yet transcending the healing context.

Research Literature on Icaros

Despite their crucial role in Peruvian curanderismo, the research literature on icaros is scarce. They have been mainly studied or referred to by sociocultural and medical anthropology for their role in ayahuasca healing ceremonies. A comprehensive approach to the icaros in mestizo curanderismo is found in the anthropological work of Luna (1986, 1992). Dobkin de Rios (1972), and more recently Demange (2002), also contribute to the subject from that field. Ethnomusicological studies on icaros have been conducted by Brabec (2002), Katz and Dobkin de Rios (1971), and Padilla (as cited in Luna, 1984), among a few others. However, the literature in both fields is broader regarding the shamanic songs of particular Amazonian indigenous groups in the large Amazon area, including tribes of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, and Peru. See, for example, the works of Baer and Snell (1974) and Stocks (1979) among the Matsigenka; Bellier (1986) among the Mai Huna; Brown (1985) among the Aguaruna; Chase Smith (1984) among the Amuesha; Hill (1983, 1992, 1993) among the Arawakan Wakuénai; Gebhart-Sayer (1986, 1987) and Lucas (1971)

²“el arma curativa, la sabiduría, y el vehículo de la energía personal del curandero, el símbolo de su poder, su herencia para el aprendiz.” Translation by the author.

among the Shipibo-Conibo; Keifenheim (2002) among the Kaxinawá; McLean (1994) among the Quijos Quichua; Olsen (1973) among the Warao; Pellizzaro (1978) among the Shuar; Taylor and Chau (1983) and List (1964) among the Jivaroan; Townsley (1984, 1993, 2001) among the Yaminahua; Siskind (1990) among the Sharanagua; and Wistrand-Robinson (1975) among the Cashibo.

Wistrand (1969) provides a thorough account of studies on the music of Amazon tribes conducted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although she observes that most descriptions are partial and miss a cross-disciplinary perspective required to approach tribal songs, which would involve aspects of musicology, linguistics, anthropology, and literary analysis. Pinilla's survey (1998) focuses on ethnomusicological studies of indigenous groups in lowland Peru during the 1900s. He classifies their musical instruments and songs, the songs constituting ninety percent of the music of that region.

An increasing scientific and popular interest in the healing, therapeutic, and visionary properties of the ayahuasca brew in the last decades has motivated some psychiatrists, transpersonal and cognitive psychologists, as well as ethnopsychologists, to pay attention to the utilization of songs³ and hymns (in the case of Brazilian syncretic churches) in rituals involving the brew, where they

³In the last 10 years, recordings of icaros have been increasingly available to the general public, particularly through the Internet. A few organizations are developing musical archives of recordings of icaros in situ. See for example Lawler and Lawler's project (2002) on the preservations of these songs.

appear to play a crucial role (Andritzky, 1989; Fericgla, 1997; Fonseca Rehen, 2007; Metzner, 1998, 1999). Even though the literature repeatedly alludes to the musical experience during ayahuasca rituals, Shanon's (2002) study on ayahuasca is the only one that offers a systematic phenomenological approach to the music under the effects of the brew. As one of the elements of the ayahuasca experience in different contexts, this study refers to music that ranges from classical to ethnic.

Icaros are key in Peruvian mestizo curanderismo. Therefore, in order to understand their position, functions, and use in context, pertinent aspects of this tradition are presented next. A complete review of mestizo curanderismo in Peru is found in Luna (1986).

The Vegetalismo Tradition

Social Role and Healing Approach

Mestizo curanderismo, or vegetalismo, is a Peruvian shamanistic tradition that evolved from indigenous Amazon practices and cosmologies progressively permeated by Western elements, due to a complex group of factors involved in the acculturation and disintegration of native groups (Luna, 1986). Vegetalistas address the physical, psychosomatic, and psychosocial healing requests of a vast urban poor and rural population that still harbors strong indigenous elements (Giove, 1993; Luna, 1984, 1992; Luna & Amaringo, 1991; Mabit, 1993; Zuloaga, 1997). They may be playing a key cultural role: bridging, giving meaning, and integrating different cultural beliefs, thus constituting a referent for groups

experiencing acculturation trauma (Andritzky, 1989; Winkelman, 2007b). In this line, some authors affirm that they primarily take care of culture-bound syndromes (Mizrach, 2003) of psychosomatic character (Dobkin de Rios, 1972, 1973; Luna, 1984).

Mabit (1993, p. 1) states that these traditional medical ways are still the primary operational health care system in the Peruvian jungle, since it is empirically efficient, deeply rooted in the culture, and financially accessible. At the same time, and not without some tension, these ways and Western medical practices are used complementarily (Dobkin de Rios, 1973). Greene (1998) addresses this issue as part of the hybridization of Peruvian indigenous healthcare options, particularly in places with a wide presence of indigenous population.

According to Zuluaga, (1997) the *vegetalistas*' concept of health "recognize(s) the illnesses with a broader criterion than in modern medicine, since not only the body is checked, but also the personal story, the relationships with oneself and with others, the lifestyles, emotions, and desires" (p. 131). Luna (1986) states that the closeness that these kinds of healers develop with their clients has therapeutic value in itself, being a kind of psychological hygiene even for healthy people: they host their clients at their home, are interested in their emotional and financial problems, and tell them stories that entertain and inform them. Jacques Mabit (1996) adds that the social legitimacy, and thus the trust in the healer's capabilities, relies upon his successes, personal story, and lineage, known in his own community.

Health in *vegetalismo* refers not only to the physical realm but also to being in harmony with the visible and invisible environment. The body seems to be conceived as a mind-body unity of energetic qualities, dwelled in, yet transcended by a spiritual dimension (J. Mabit, 1996, 2003, 2007). Body and spirit appear as intrinsically interrelated and usually treated as one single complex (Bustos, 2005).

The etiology of illnesses is usually attributed to external causes, such as envy, malice, or revenge of people through witchcraft, to spirits of dead people, some spirits of nature, and is produced by soul-loss, intrusion of pathogenic objects, or breaching of a taboo or group norm. These beliefs are described as remnants of indigenous cosmologies, widespread among the Peruvian population (Andritzky, 1989; Dobkin de Rios, 1973, 2006; Luna & Amaringo, 1991). However, in their treatments, *curanderos* often incorporate Christian symbolism, prayers, and invocations (Giove, 1993), which express an aspect of their cosmological syncretism with the Western heritage. The dichotomy between good and evil, although not exempt from flowing boundaries and paradoxes, is described by Taussig (as cited in Freedman, 2000) as a possible inheritance from colonialism. The presence of sorcery and other apparent ambiguities in Peruvian *curanderismo* may come from Amazon indigenous cosmologies, which allow dichotomies to coexist as part of a larger natural, supernatural, and social order. This theme is treated by Fausto (2004) and Pollock (2004) in the revealing book edited by Whitehead and Wright (2004) on the dark side of Amazon shamanism.

Medicinal Knowledge and Icaros

Peruvian mestizo curanderos refer to themselves as *vegetalistas*, thus pointing out that their power and medicinal knowledge derive directly from the spirits or *madres* (mothers) of certain plants, also called plant-teachers or *doctores* (doctors), some of which are psychoactive (Chaumeil, 1993; Fericgla, 1997; Luna, 1984, 1986; Luna & Amaringo, 1991; M. Mabit, 1996; Metzner, 1998, 1999; Narby, 1998). *Vegetalistas* combine the use of medicinal plants, icaros, tobacco blowing, sucking out of sickness, and often massage, baths, diets, and other healing techniques. According to their specialty in the use of certain plants or healing methods, they assume specific designations (Brabec, 2002; Demange, 2002).

Although both men and women can become a *vegetalista*, the majority of them are men, possibly given the demand of exclusive time devoted to the initiatory period, which would isolate women from their socially expected family duties. It is often a mentor-*vegetalista* who accompanies the transmission of knowledge during this period. The role of the mentor involves protecting, guiding, and directing the apprentice in the strict conditions of isolation, diet and sexual abstinence needed to receive the knowledge from the plant-teachers. This knowledge comes in the form of visions, voices and sounds, dreams or dream-like states. Ayahuasca is said to enhance the apprehension of these teachings (Stevens, 1998), and is periodically used. It is during the apprenticeship, but also after it, that the *vegetalista* receives icaros from the plants and from his mentor (Andritzky, 1989; Chaumeil, 1993; Giove, 1997; Luna, 1992). The transmission

from a mentor usually involves the procedure of installing the icaro into the physical/energetic body of the apprentice (Mabit as cited in Bustos, 2006). This follows a similar logic as the songs received from the doctores: the knowledge is inserted in the body/soul of the healer, as the plants and their song-essences stay in him once he has correctly dieted them. The healer's body may constitute then the therapeutic and ritual tool par excellence, once having been the instrument of initiation (Mabit, 2007; Mabit, Campos, & Arce, 1991).

In the vegetalista cosmology, each animate and inanimate being has icaros, even stones and metals (Luna, 1992). Icaros correspond to the subtle life essence of a being, involving a particular energy, structure, and knowledge or power (Mabit as cited in Bustos, 2006). Luna and Amaringo (1991) state that, "The icaros and the phlegm⁴—both of which have material and immaterial qualities—represent a transference of the spirits of each plant, with all their knowledge and theriomorphic and anthropomorphic manifestations, into the body of the shaman" (p. 13). Therefore, they constitute his or her essential power. By singing the icaros, the vegetalista is able to use the properties of the plant, animal, or object, and to unite with it.

⁴The phlegm is called *yachay*, *yausa*, *mariri*, or medicine, and it is utilized to suck out the illness from the client's body. It has magical and concrete reality, and is transmitted by the plants, the mentor, or both, to the apprentice (Luna, 1984).

The repertoire of icaros of a curandero usually varies between 30 and 200, depending upon his or her years of experience and number of diets. Some healers may also learn icaros from their contact with other healers or create their own. However, it seems to be a hierarchy, where the ones received directly from the plants and those in indigenous languages or tongues are considered the most powerful (Demange, 2002; Luna, 1986). This is correlated with the prestige attributed to a curandero if he or she was trained under the tutelage of an indigenous shaman (Luna, 1984; Luna & Amaringo, 1991), but also with the efficacy in establishing a direct communication with the spirit realm.

The icaros seem to synthesize the cosmological syncretism of mestizo curanderismo. They are conferred magical properties to influence or counter-effect the influence of visible and invisible others, material and spiritual realities; their texts allude to plants, animals, and spirits that have power and symbolism and/or are embedded in mythic conceptions, but also refer sometimes to biblical passages, Christian symbols, or are adaptations of Christian prayers and chants; they often involve native language mixed with Spanish, or are sung entirely in indigenous language (mostly Quichua) or Spanish. Therefore, they are partly understood by different segments of the population. Some healers refer to the name of their clients or their needs while singing them. Sometimes icaros even take the melodies of popular songs (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Giove, 1993).

Through chanting, the curandero is believed to communicate with the spirit realm, and to mediate the healing. The singing voice as embodied song could be seen as a dynamic relational bridge among curandero, clients, spirits, the

here-and-now, and the living syncretic cosmology which aims to be all embracing, concrete and magic at the same time (Bustos, 2005). Singing seems to capture the essence of the integral health beliefs in *vegetalismo*.

Luna (1992) identifies six types of *icaros* according to their function:

(a) for calling or invoking a person, plant, or animal, also mentioned by Brabec (2002), Demange (2002), Katz & Dobkin de Rios (1971), and McLean (1994); (b) for protection—*icaros arkana*—whether for the *curandero* or the client, also in Dobkin de Rios (1972) and Demange (2002); (c) for winning the love of someone—*huarmi icaros*—, also described by Brabec (2002); (d) for healing and curing, also in Bustos (2006), Brabec (2002), Demange (2002), Giove (1993), and Luna (1984, 1986); (e) to modify the effects of *ayahuasca* or other psychotropic plant teachers, also in Dobkin de Rios (1972, 2006), Mabit as cited in Bustos (2006), Katz & Dobkin de Rios (1971), Narby (1998), and Presser-Velder (2000); and (f) for other purposes, for example, to affect the elements, also in Giove (1993).

Vegetalistas tend to agree that the *icaros*' effectiveness relies upon the correct singing of their melodies (Dobkin de Rios, 2006; Giove, 1993; Luna & Amaringo, 1991). Sometimes, they also refer to the right resonance of the singing voice, a consequence of experience and successful dieting processes (Bustos, 2005). These aspects can be understood from music therapeutic and musical standpoints. As Benenzon (1998) and Benenzon, de Gaínza, and Wagner (1997) describe, melodies can activate different layers of sonic identity in a person. These layers go from more idiosyncratic group and cultural identity, to deeper

universal ones. Their activation may contribute to recover and reconstitute the person's sense of wholeness and belonging. In music, voice resonance is related to its vibratory and harmonic qualities, but also to the phenomenon of evoking those qualities in the receiver (Jordi, 2004).

Ayahuasca Healing Rituals

A Vegetalismo Practice

As stated, ayahuasca healing rituals are constitutive of Peruvian vegetalismo practices, particularly among *ayahuasqueros*, the name given to the vegetalista specializing on its ceremonial use (Luna, 1986). Traditionally known as *la purga*—the purge, as it is seen as well as a strong cleanser (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1984; Mabit, 2003; Mizrach, 2003), ayahuasca is conceived as one of the most powerful plant-teachers (Luna, 1986; Luna & White, 2000).

Ayahuasca is taken in ritual context for the purposes of accessing communication with the spirits, diagnosing and/or treating diseases, doing or undoing sorcery, and for gaining hidden knowledge through divination, or traveling to distant places (Andritzky, 1989; Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1984; Metzner, 1999). It allows access and tuning in to the subtle knowledge of other plant medicines (Stevens, 1998), therefore its crucial role during apprenticeship and healing. Ayahuasca ceremonies may also enhance interpersonal and community bonds, social identity and cohesion (Andritzky, 1989; Dobkin de Rios, 1984; Winkelman, 2007b).

The ritual use of ayahuasca in vegetalismo, and the icaros that form part of the ritual, have roots in ancient shamanic tribal practices. These practices have expanded in the last century into new expressions and therapeutic applications. The following studies inform the rationale behind the use of ayahuasca in vegetalismo and other contexts.

What is Ayahuasca? Overview and Therapeutic Functions

Ayahuasca is a brew of hallucinogenic properties, extensively used among indigenous groups of the Upper Amazon and Orinoco Basins in ritual contexts, seemingly for millennia (Furst, 1976; Naranjo as cited in McKenna, Callaway, & Grob, 1998; Schultes et al., 1992/2001). It takes its name from the vine from which it is prepared (*Banisteriopsis caapi*), though the admixture includes other plants, usually *chacrana* (*Psychotria viridis*), and sometimes also others, depending upon the sought effects—about 20 different preparations have been described (Andritzky, 1989; Devereux, 1997; Junqueira, 2006; Riba & Barbanoj, 1998).

Ayahuasca, from the Quechua language, is translated as the “vine of the dead” or the “vine of the soul.” The word *aya* in Quechua also means “corpse,” according to Ladrón de Guevara (1998). The brew is known by other names, such as *yagé*, *natem*, *nishi*, *Daime*, depending upon the tradition in which it is employed. Besides indigenous use, the brew is considered a sacrament in the Brazilian syncretic churches *Uniao do Vegetal* (UDV), *Barquinha*, and *Santo Daime*, some of which have become widespread throughout Europe and North

America (see Labate, 2004). The ritual use of ayahuasca is also found in some Western neo-shamanic groups (Metzner, 1999).

Pharmacologically, the activity of the brew is dependent on the synergistic interaction of the active alkaloids contained in it: harmine, tetrahydroharmine, and N, N Dimethyltryptamine (DMT). Trace amounts of harmaline are also found in it. Harmine and tetrahydroharmine are betacarbolines with inhibitory functions present in the vine: the first inhibits the enzyme monoamine oxidase (MAO), responsible for degrading the alkaloid DMT before it crosses the brain/blood barrier; the second inhibits serotonin reuptake. DMT, present in the additives of the brew, activates the brain's serotonin receptors and is responsible for the psychoactive effects. Acting together, the betacarbolines of the vine allow DMT to be orally effective and prolong its effects in the body (Callaway, 1999; Grob, 1999; McKenna, 1999; Ott, 1994; Riba & Barbanoj, 1998).⁵ See also Grob et al. (1996) for a complete pharmacological description of the brew. The research suggests that ayahuasca intake has no adverse physiological effects or addictive risk (Gable, 2007; McKenna et al., 1998), though some temporary tolerability may occur (Callaway et al. as cited in Cougar, 2005; Riba et al., 2001).

Ayahuasca is conceived as an entheogen or psychointegrator, along with other plants with hallucinogenic properties used ritualistically in cultures around

⁵DMT is present in several hallucinogenic plants used in shamanic rituals around the world and is also endogenously produced by the human body (Strassman, 2001).

the world. An entheogen is a botanical or chemical substance that “given the proper context and intent, can produce spiritual or mystical experience” (Dombrowe, 2005, p. 7). See Ott (1993, 1994) for further references on this concept. These substances are called psychointegrators by Winkelman (1995, 2007a). Sustaining his view on the neurological and experiential effects of psychointegrators, and informed by studies on cross-cultural shamanism, hallucinogens, and transpersonal psychology, he states that these substances stimulate the entire organism towards an integrative holistic development. These substances also inhibit conditioned responses by blocking habitual pathways in neurotransmitters, thus having de-conditioning effects on the egoic structure and opening new ways of behavior and perspective. This leads to an integrative mode of consciousness that may facilitate the resolution of deep developmental changes or crises, and seems to be the base of shamanistic healing practices around the world (Winkelman, 2000). Winkelman’s model holds a larger concept of psyche that involves spiritual dimensions and collective social processes, with an inherent drive to self-healing and wholeness. This approach to the human psyche shows consistency with the work of Stanislav Grof (1980, 1989, 1992, 2000) and other scholars of expanded states of consciousness or holotropic states.

Cross-cultural motifs found in the use of psychointegrators are: personal relationship with a reality established in mythical time, and with spiritual beings as a source of power and personal identification, access to the numinous, experiences of ego death, rebirth, and transformation, healing processes, interconnectedness, reinforcement of social identity and belief systems, among

others (Dobkin de Rios, 1984; Winkelman, 1995, 2007b). Several authors refer to the capacity of these substances of lowering the brain and psychological filtering processes, making more unconscious information available for consideration (Fericgla, 1999; Passie, 2007; Reidlinger & Reidlinger, 1994; Schultes et al., 1992/2001; Villaescusa, 2006), catharsis and abreaction (Grof, 1980), in addition to enhancing an integrative information processing (Winkelman, 2007a). Therefore, metaphors such as nonspecific amplifiers of psychic contents or microscopes are used as well to refer to them (Metzner, 1998, 1999). Grof (1980, 2000, 2007) adds that the material amplified seems to be the most emotionally charged, are currently the most psychodynamically significant, and is ready to be released to consciousness, processed and integrated. He calls this the “inner radar” process of holotropic states.

Recently, Tupper (2002a, 2000b) has explored the implications of the use of entheogens in education, referring to their ability to promote what Gardner (in Tupper, 2002b) calls existential intelligence. That is, “a heightened capacity to appreciate and attend to the cosmological enigmas that define human conditions, and exceptional awareness of the metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological mysteries that have been perennial concern in all cultures” (Tupper, 2002b, p. 504). Shanon (1998), alluding to ayahuasca experiences, finds shared ideational contents that seem aligned with the concept of an existential intelligence, yet adding the components of ethical values, proper human conduct, and insights on the foundations of healing and healing practices.

Ayahuasca has been affirmed to offer a full confrontation with the true self (Mabit, 2003; Shanon, 2002). It seems to allow conscious access to internal symbolization processes (Andritzky, 1989; Fericgla, 1999; Villaescusa, 2006), thus promoting the development of what Fericgla (1997, 1999) understands as “dialogic consciousness,” the ability to observe and dialogue with itself. Mabit (2007) appears more precise on this idea, by stating that in ayahuasca experiences the person becomes simultaneously the observer and the observed. This ability is related to increased neuronal/intrapsychic differentiation and interconnectivity, impacting the representation of self, and therefore, its experiencing. At the physical level, ayahuasca may produce nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, salivation, and sweating, among other symptoms (McKenna et al., 1998; Zuloaga, 1997). Usually, physical evacuation is accompanied with catharsis of repressed emotional contents or lost memories of past experiences (Giove, 2002; Mabit, 2007).

Not only the psychotherapeutic potential of ayahuasca intake, but also its use on medical conditions has gained the attention of some clinicians and researchers. Drug abuse rehabilitation projects that include traditional and nontraditional use of ayahuasca are being conducted by Mabit and Fericgla, respectively, showing positive results (Giove, 2002; Fericgla, 1999). Grob et al. (1996), report that regular and long-term participation in ayahuasca rituals in a Brazilian religious context decreases self-destructive behavior, including addiction, while it increases general psychological maturity, socially sensitive behavior, and healthy abilities to cope with life. In long-term members of the

same context, Callaway et al. (as cited in McKenna, 2007), report stable elevated measures of serotonin reuptake transporters compared to control subjects, which may suggest a reversal of the biochemical deficit associated with self-destructive and violent behavior (McKenna, 2007). Silveira's (2003) results are similar to Grob's in Brazilian adolescents belonging to the Santo Daime and UDV cults, including radical changes in value-systems towards others and oneself, as well as significantly higher scores on some neuropsychological capacities compared to the control group. Guimaraes dos Santos (2006) and Santos et al. (2007) report decreased psychometric measures of anxiety, panic-like symptoms, and hopelessness in experienced Daime practitioners under acute effects of ayahuasca, and discuss the therapeutic potential of ritual ayahuasca intake in addressing these symptoms. On the medical side, Quinlan (2001) and Topping (2002) show positive healing effects of the ritual use of ayahuasca on cancer.

Although the scientific research so far is not able to completely prove and sustain the therapeutic efficacy of ayahuasca, quoting Winkelman (2007b), "there seems little doubt that ayahuasca can have profoundly psychotherapeutic benefits when administered in the right context and under appropriate supervision" (p. 36). That context in vegetalismo is discussed next.

The Ceremonial Setting

Ayahuasca intake is highly ritualized in different contexts. The ritual context enacts a particular shared cosmology and tradition, from which it takes and offers meaning and a sense of safety to participants. The ritual conditions

facilitate the structuring and integration of experiences (Andritzky, 1989; Dobkin de Rios, 1984; Mabit, 2007), and their long-lasting therapeutic results (Cooper, 1987).

The set and setting hypothesis, posed by Leary, Metzner, and Alpert (1964/1983), state that the internal expectations, intention, and motivations for a psychedelic experience, as well as the external context, including the presence of the guide, are its primary determinants (see also Grof, 1980; Metzner, 1998, 1999; Strassman, 2001). Shamanic rituals in general, and ayahuasca healing rituals in particular, have been consensually described as offering a structured setting and facilitating an aligned mindset in participants. Interestingly, Ribeira Barbosa, Sales Giglio, and Dalgarrondo (2005) suggest that the ways ayahuasca contents and ritual events are processed are also subject to some particularities of ayahuasca states of consciousness that are independent of set and setting. These particularities refer to transcultural traits, as identified by Shanon (1999), such as the experience of receiving cognitions and feelings from the outside, which combined with the high suggestibility and impaired judgment of the state, may lead to more idiosyncratic attributions of meaning. The authors conclude that these considerations add complexity to the dynamics sustained by the set and setting hypothesis. The increasing use of ayahuasca among Westerners in traditional and nontraditional contexts, sporadically or regularly, but without necessarily adhering to a shared cosmology, raises questions about the efficacy of the ritual container for their experiences, as well as for their subsequent integration (Mabit, 2007). Dobkin de Rios (1994) treats some of the risks of what

is called “ayahuasca tourism,” which Winkelman (2005) later questions and relativizes. This theme will be treated in the discussion section of the current study.

In vegetalismo, the ayahuasca healing setting of the ritual presents common features. Generally, a previous relationship has been established between an attendee and the ayahuasquero. The participation in the ritual may be part of an ongoing healing treatment, or may have been agreed upon by request of the attendee. There is a preparation time, where clients are encouraged to follow a specific diet and sexual abstinence (Mabit, 1993; Mizrach, 2003). Frecska (2007) sheds light on the biochemical benefits of this diet. Sometimes before the ceremony, plant baths are prepared for the client, and a cold shower or a bath is often suggested. Usually, the rituals are conducted in a natural context, at night. People gather in a *maloca*, a simple open hut, where they sit in circle on a mat. The ayahuasquero sets up a nearby altar with shamanic tools, namely the brew, *mapachos*—black tobacco cigarettes, or a pipe for tobacco, *agua de florida*—a type of cologne water, or plant perfumes, personal power objects, often a *shacapa* or bundle of leaves used as a rattle, and sometimes, other musical instruments and healing tools such as stones, tobacco soaked in water, etc.

First, there is a conversation phase while the participants arrive, which naturally decreases as people start concentrating on their issues for the night. Then a nonverbal working phase starts, in which the ayahuasquero blows tobacco smoke and whistles on the brew, as a way of charging, honoring, and invoking the spirit of the ayahuasca. After that, he gives an amount to every participant,

depending upon their physical and emotional needs and conditions. Some people may partake in the healing ceremony without ingesting the brew but receiving individual healing treatment during it. From that point on, the ceremony is conducted in complete darkness. Often, a period of silence follows before the ayahuasquero starts singing, which lasts between 15 minutes to about an hour.

During the effects of the brew, which last from two to six hours, reality is primarily mediated by aural, olfactory, and eventually tactile stimuli with the shacapa. About 15 to 20 icaros are sung during the ceremony, depending on the needs of participants. Silent pauses, where healer and clients are absorbed in their visions (Luna & Amaringo, 1991), may play a grounding role in the experience or exacerbate the effects of the brew. Usually based on the perceived needs of participants, the ayahuasquero approaches or calls particular persons for healing. This is done by singing a particular icaro on the person and/or the blowing of tobacco on key areas of the body, the use of perfumes or other beverages, and occasionally, by sucking the sickness out from affected parts of the body. Some ayahuasqueros may blow smoke on people who momentarily leave the circle to physically evacuate, before they reenter it. Towards the end of the ceremony there is a final sharing phase among the participants who stay (Andritzky, 1989; Dobkin de Rios, 1972), where the healer is available to listen to their experiences and often offers his feedback on them. Frequently, a cold shower is suggested after sleeping, in order to cut off the remnant effects of the brew.

The role of the ayahuasquero is that of guiding the experience, protecting, modulating, and controlling the group and individual factors involved in the

ceremony through the icaros (Giove, 1993; Mabit et al., 1991; Presser-Velder, 2000), doing healing interventions, and sometimes translating the visions into meaningful contents (Dobkin de Rios, 1972). Mabit (2007) and Mabit et al. (1991) describe the energetic quality of his presence, also expressed through his icaros, as highly conditioning the results of the ritual.

Although initial variables of set seem to influence the participant's experience, the effects tend to be unpredictable, surprising, and even contrary to the previous ideas of participants (Mabit et al., 1991; Shanon, 2002). The experiential dynamic appears dependent on several interdependent factors, including the experience with the brew (Fericgla, 1997; Shanon, 2002) and the perception of energetic influences from other participants (Mabit et al., 1991). See Fericgla (1997) for a review of the phenomenology of ayahuasca experience, and Shanon (2002) for the phenomenology of its visionary aspect.

Music in Ayahuasca Rituals

Ayahuasca Icaros

In vegetalismo ayahuasca ceremonies, the icaros are sung and/or whistled. At specific times, they may be accompanied by the rhythmic, massive sound of a shacapa (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Luna, 1992; Luna & Amaringo, 1991; McLean, 1994; Mizrach, 2003). Their main practical functions during the rituals are to influence, structure, and promote the continuity and flow of the trance state, therefore affecting the quality and the content of the experience (Andritzky, 1989;

Metzner, 1989; 1998, 1999; Narby, 1998; Presser-Velder, 2000).⁶ According to Giove (1993, p. 10), under trance effect the icaros help to metabolize the visions, remove subjective contents, guide the self-exploration, and are at the same time the link to the normal plane of reality.

Ritually, the first icaros sung are for protection, invoking spirit helpers, and for *subir mareación* or *llamar las visiones*, that is, to raise the psychotropic effects or calling the visions. Then, specific icaros are chosen according to the health needs of the participants (Chaumeil, 1993; Gebhardt-Sayer, 1985, 1987; Siskind, 1990). See Mabit and Giove (as cited in Bustos, 2006) for ways in which curanderos access information regarding which icaro is appropriate to sing to particular individuals. If someone becomes frightened, icaros *para sacar mareación*, or to decrease the intensity of the visions are sung (Luna, 1984, 1992; Luna & Amaringo, 1991). According to Luna and Amaringo (1991, p. 33), the use of the shacapa has three functions: to *ventear el mal*, which means to take away the sickness through the wind they produce while beating on certain parts of the body of the client; to energetically “seal” a client in order to protect him from negative influences; and to stimulate the visions during ayahuasca sessions.

Dobkin de Rios (1972, 2006) and Katz and Dobkin de Rios (1971) suggest that fast or slow rhythmic patterns in the songs are related to the quickening or slowing down of the visionary experience. These authors give a key importance to

⁶For the Sharanahua “without singing, only snakes appear” (Siskind, 1990, p. 25).

the high degree of suggestibility people are in during the trance state, which would enable the ayahuasquero to condition the visions through verbal and nonverbal interventions. Metzner (1999) also attributes a central role to the steady, fairly rapid rhythm of the icaros, which would keep the flow of the visions, to avoid getting stuck in any type of experience. The soft, soothing quality of the singing and whistling has been mentioned as producing a calming effect during the rush, smoothing the entrance into the unconscious realms (Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971). The icaros' soft, repetitive nature may promote feelings of comfort, familiarity, and safety in the clients. Shannon (2000) hypothesizes that such an environment, facilitated by the healer through the qualities of his singing, would encourage participants to safely surrender into catharsis and abreaction.

Katz and Dobkin de Rios (1971) suggest that the mathematical structure of music, in terms of tone and rhythm, operates as a "jungle gym" of culturally programmed visionary pathways that are imposed on the client by the healer, thus directing to some degree the course of his/her inner visions. Some authors propose that physiological, chemical, and/or energetic responses may be elicited by the use of precise tones through whistling (Mizrach, 2003) and by the preponderance of certain intervals in the melody of the icaros (Giove, 1993; Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971).

It is interesting to note some differences in emphasis and perspective between Western authors and curanderos, regarding the role of the icaros in ayahuasca experiences. While curanderos assert the icaros have a significant healing role, Western authors tend to assign them a more supportive role in

experience than a direct healing one. This supportive role tends to be attributed to the aural to visual synesthetic effects of the icaros, and to their influence on physically informed emotional experiences. Curanderos attribute the healing role to aspects of the icaros that express the quality of the relationship between the healer and the spiritual world. In addition, the visionary experience of the client is not necessarily conceived of as the primary sign of a successful healing process. These differences in emphasis and interpretation between Western researchers and curanderos may be based on deeper paradigmatic differences than a mere assumption of an emic or etic approach. Turner (1992) and Walsh (1990) therefore conclude that the study of shamanic phenomena involving direct access to spiritual dimensions requires from researchers the recognition of their possible epistemological and perceptual biases. Culturally based phenomena may be sustained on other legitimate modes of knowing and perceiving.

Because musical analyses of icaros are few and narrow, it is difficult to draw general conclusions about their musical characteristics. However, in comparing the studies from Katz and Dobkin de Rios (1971), McLean (1994), and Padilla (as cited in Luna, 1984), similarities emerge. Their rhythm tends to be regular and fast, with variations that include syncopation. At the melodic level, the diatonic pentatonic scale typical of Andean music seems to be preferred, and the intervallic distance is not broader than a fifth. The structure of the songs tends to be a maximum of three to five musical phrases that are repeated several times. Expressively, the icaros are sung softly with few variations, and often include blowing and/or suction at the end.

Brabec (2002) points to a clear strophic structure, repeated between 5 to 30 times. The length, number, and repetition of strophes may vary. Basic melodic and rhythmic motives are distinguishable, although the melody can be transposed higher in tonality or vary in tempo or melodic/rhythmic details. Within strophes there are two sections, usually bridged by an intermediate part. The first one is higher in tone and volume; the second, softer and deeper, presents a narrower tonal range, and is generally repetitive. The text of the first section invokes a known entity or describes an activity. The potential bridging part goes into further details, while in the last section, the entity is asked to perform its task. Sometimes the text is repeated or just a concept is expressed among long phrases built of repetitive syllables (see Appendix A for the musical analysis of maestro Juan's icaros).

Studies of healing songs of Amazonian indigenous groups also document a tendency to repetition at the melodic and text levels (Hampejs, 1994; Hill, 1983, 1993; Keifenheim, 2002; List, 1964; Wistrand, 1969). Slight yet continuous variations are often found in repetitive formulas. Parallelism is usual in musical and grammatical structures and meaning (List, 1964).

Ayahuasca Music in Brazilian Churches and Neo-Shamanic Groups

The ritual use of ayahuasca in the three Brazilian syncretic churches include chanting or solo singing, sometimes accompanied by musical instruments, as one of the components of their collective rituals (Metzner, 1998, 1999). Particularly interesting in this respect is the Santo Daime church, which gathers

its doctrine in *hinarios* or collections of hymns channeled by different members under the ayahuasca effects (Fonseca Rehen, 2007; Luna & White, 2000; Polari de Alverga, 1999). The singing of the hymns involves the entire congregation, led by a group of female singers and sometimes some musical instruments, accompanied by simple rhythmic dancing. Guimaraes dos Santos (2006) asserts that the music in the Santo Daime and UDV churches has a marked rhythm, harmonizing the group. The functions of the texts are to orient the interpretations of the experiences, reduce anxiety, and to facilitate a unitary experience among individuals under the frame of shared symbols and myths, which reinforces the group identity.

Neo-shamanic groups that use ayahuasca ritualistically, utilize evocative recorded music with singing and/or rattling, and dancing (Metzner, 1998). These groups often combine shamanic and psychotherapeutic settings and techniques, the leader, if any, assuming shamanic and/or therapeutic functions. Shanon (2002) describes the experience of listening to classical music in this context.

Phenomenology of the Musical Experience under Ayahuasca Effects

Shanon's study (2002) on the phenomenology of ayahuasca experience includes depictions of participants in traditional and nontraditional ritual contexts, and his main focus is on the visionary aspect of the brew. Therefore, it accounts for general aspects of the phenomenology of the musical experience under ayahuasca effects, where the type of music utilized is varied. Its findings tend to show more aesthetic types of experiences with the music, while healing

experiences are rarely directly addressed, under the premise that it is the experiencer who decides on the focus of his work during ayahuasca effects. However, there is some mention of the influence of icaros upon experience. It is important to note as well that Shanon's phenomenological approach considers the ways in which people perceive the contents of their experiences. The emphasis of the present study on uncovering meaning structures corresponds to another type of phenomenological tradition.

The author affirms that although the visual phenomena in ayahuasca experiences are the most salient ones, all other perceptual modalities are also enhanced (Shanon, 1998, 2002). Audition is sensed to be more acute and subtler (also in Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971), so that music and sounds feel fuller and stronger. There is the perception of sounds beyond the normal auditory threshold, including unknown melodies, that may make people sing (Shanon, 2002). The perceived location of the sound source and its nature may be altered. Strassman (2001) refers to high pitched vibrations, buzzing, humming, whining, crinkling, whirring, and crunching sounds often heard under DMT effects, which coincides in part with Harner's (1973) and Narby's (1998) descriptions under ayahuasca influence of a continuous buzzing and humming sound inside the ears, "the sound of running water."

There is beautification of the perceived music: many people report hearing marvelous, heavenly, sublime music, and also of discovering deeper nuances and fine distinctions in previously known music. "With frequency drinkers state that the music they heard sung during the sessions had a pivotal influence in their

experience. Often songs are characterized as being enchanting and the music is said to have wondrous power to carry those who listen to it far away to other worlds” (Shanon, 2002, p. 310). In traditional contexts, it is described that the spirits arrive singing varied and exquisite, as well as terrifying, songs (Langdon, 2000; Luna & Amaringo, 1991).

Synesthetic experiences under ayahuasca influence are common: the visions are simultaneously seen, heard, and/or smelled⁷ (Dobkin de Rios, 2006; Luna & Amaringo, 1991; Shanon, 2002). Auditory to visual synesthesia appears often, and the interaction with the sound-image is usually experienced as full of meaning. While music does not clearly imprint a form to the content of a vision, it does imprint a rhythmic pattern and flow in them. Icaros appear directing the course of visions and their general emotional qualities (Shanon, 2002). Sound-images and sound-patterns with which one may interact are often referred to among indigenous groups (Gebhardt-Sayer, 1985, 1987, 2000; Langdon, 2000; Narby, 1998; Siskind, 1990), and also among other types of ayahuasca drinkers. Among the Shipibo-Conibo, these sound-patterns are the expression of the health state of a person and can be influenced by songs (Gebhardt-Sayer, 1985, 1987). At times, the phenomenon of music itself, the relationship of music with the

⁷Langdon (2000) explains that the Siona people take yage to know their universe, which is composed by different domains, each of them characterized by particular sounds, rhythms, music, smells, and colors. Through learning the songs of the yage people, the Siona believe to be able to visit them again.

cosmos and the human psyche, as well as its process of creation, are the contents of the experience (Shanon, 2002).

Healing Songs in Indigenous Amazon Traditions

At the descriptive level, anthropological and ethnological studies on healing songs of Amazon indigenous groups show both their wide range of culturally-based specificities, as well as their high degree of consistency in terms of fundamental cosmological views underlying their use, their relevancy in healing practices that often involve psychoactive substances, and musical characteristics. Icaros would be one culturally specific expression of Amazon healing songs, thus sharing many of their common aspects. This is not surprising, considering that *vegetalismo* results from a process of acculturation of indigenous beliefs and practices into Western culture. At an interpretive level, the studies of songs in Amazon indigenous tribes provide interesting hypotheses and conceptual frameworks in attempting to understand how these songs may work.

The linguistic and textual analyses of lyrics in icaros are frequently used and understood as expressions of “culturally distinctive representational processes” (Bohlman, 2005, pp. 205). Thus the songs are described as strengthening the specific cosmology and social order, from which they earn their symbolic power in return (Bellier, 1986; Brown, 1985; Chase Smith, 1984; Olsen, 1996; Taylor & Chau, 1983; Wistrand-Robinson, 1975). Healing songs catalyze transformational dynamics in the healer and the clients (Gebhardt-Sayer, 1985, 1986; Hill, 1983, 1992, 1993; Keifenheim, 2002; Niemeyer, 2006; Olsen, 1996),

as they are performed in the context of highly ritualized procedures and symbols that are culturally meaningful.

Interestingly, it is often pointed out that the songs are only partly understood by the clients. Townsley (2001) even states the irrelevancy of the client's comprehension in the healing efficacy of a song among the Yaminahua people. In fact, the lyrics of shamanic songs of the Amazon often show characteristics that seem to entail meaning only for the shaman and the spirits he is in direct communication with: recurrent use of onomatopoeias (Bellier, 1986; Brabec, 2002; Keifenheim, 2002; Townsley, 1993) or "nonsense syllables," (Wistrand-Robinson, 1975); contraction or superimposition of words, ideas or images; ambivalent object and subject and spatial references (Niemeyer, 2006); "twisted language," where things are called with names that mean something different in daily life (Townsley, 1984). The songs would be the language of the spirits given to the shaman to communicate effectively (Bellier, 1986; Chase Smith, 1984; Hill, 1983; Stocks, 1979; Taylor & Chau, 1983).

The analyses of texts of shamanic songs show that they refer to larger mythological sequences, metaphors, and symbols, as well as to the experiences and actions of the shaman during his actual journey (Bellier, 1986; Brown, 1985; Hill, 1983). Therefore, shamanic songs show constancy and variation (Severi, in Niemeyer, 2006). This may account for the high degree of idiosyncratic creativity in texts with the same melody, found among some indigenous tribes (Brabec, 2002; Gebhardt-Sayer, 1986, 1987; Taylor & Chau, 1983; Wistrand, 1969). As in the case of icaros, often melodic and aesthetic criteria are attributed the healing or

magical powers (Arévalo, 1986; Bellier, 1986; Brown, 1985; Gebhardt-Sayer, 1986; Townsley, 1993). These aspects seem to be directly related to an experience of synesthesia from aural stimuli (Gebhardt-Sayer, 1986; Siskind, 1973). Interestingly, synesthesia has been described by Shanon (2002) as the sensory-perceptual counterpart of metaphor.

Integrating the discursive and aesthetic aspects of shamanic songs, Niemeyer (2006) understands them as dramatic actions embedded in aesthetic expressions of particular cosmologies: previously walked pathways that legitimize the action of the shaman. The superimposition of images, or stereoscopic effect, which describe the actions and experiences of the singer during the shamanic journey, would reflect the positional variations in the invisible and visible realms of his self scissioned into multiple aspects.

Music in Healing Practices

In this last section, the healing use of icaros in *vegetalismo* is contextualized under the vast perspective of the use of music for healing and therapeutic purposes, particularly in shamanic practices.

Ancient Traditions and New Approaches

The use of music for healing purposes has been present for millennia in most of the cultures around the world (Redmont, 1997; Rouget, 1985; Timmerman, 1987; Wright, 1989). Often, the premise underlying this use is that sound and music are directly linked to the spiritual realm, whether considered of

divine origin, divine nature, or mediators between god(s), the spirits and the human beings: in both cases, an earthly reflection of a vibratory activity taking place beyond the physical world. For example, the Nada Brahma branch of the Vedic tradition conceives sound as the first manifestation of Spirit, the Cosmic Vibration, the “Soundless Sound”—*shabda*—at the origin and basis of all the matter and energy in the Universe. Audible sounds—*vaikhari*—are faint echoes of the ineffable primordial Sound, which is beyond the compass of human hearing (Behrendt, 1987; Limbrick, 1991). Sufism, Tibetan Buddhism, Kashmir Shaivism, the Jewish tradition based on the Torah, esoteric schools such as Theosophy and Rosecrucianism, among others, share a metaphysical explanation for sound (Chetananda, 1991; Gass, 1999; Hoffman, 1994; Tame, 1984).

Therefore, music has been described as holding an inherent power to re-harmonize, re-order, re-connect, re-align, and/or transform an undesired or unhealthy condition into a superior—and a more holistic one (Chetananda, 1991; Rudhyar, 1982; Tame, 1984). The same premise underlies most of the historical use of sound and music to influence states of consciousness for spiritual, divinatory, or healing purposes.

There are two disciplinary fields that can be considered modern developments of the use of music for therapeutic or healing goals: music therapy (see Bruscia, 1989; Davis, 1992; Hanser, 1987; Smeijsters, 1999; Thayer Gaston, 1968/1993) and sound/music healing (see Gardner, 1990; Goldman, 1991; Leeds, 1999; Perry, 2002; Thompson, 1999). Music therapy founds its work on the biological, psychological, and psychosocial effects of the use of music for

therapeutic purposes. Most of the sound/music healing methods and techniques are based on the physical and biological effects of sound and music, while many of them are also or purely inspired on ancient metaphysical knowledge. See examples of physiological and neurophysiological studies coming from both fields in Aldridge (1996), Chollet (2000), Edwards (2000), and Thompson (1996). Psychological and psychosocial theories regarding the use of music for therapeutic purposes are found in Benenzon (1998), Bonny (1978), and Schapira (2000), among others.

The developments of both fields are wide. Music therapy is more consolidated and validated as a consistent discipline among the main-stream therapeutic community than sound/music healing methods, which have been flourishing predominantly as alternative healing methods. According to van Putten (1992), the current developments of these fields do not yet offer a cohesive theory explaining the healing potential of music and sound. Clearly, the phenomenon itself is complex and involves multiple dimensions.

Music in Shamanic Healing Practices around the World

Icaros are only one expression of the pervasive use of music in shamanic practices around the world. Some of their cross-cultural characteristics are presented in order to frame the icaros into their broader context of shamanic music in general.

One of the distinctive features of shamanic healing practices is the achievement of a trance state in ritual context, through which the shaman is able

to access the spirit worlds in order to get help for a sick person (Drury, 1989; Fericgla, 2001; Grim, 1983; Halifax, 1979). See Hess and Rittner (1996a) and Rouget (1985) for a characterization of the trance state. Harner (in Horrigan, 1997) states that the majority of the consciousness-altering techniques used for that purpose are music based. While a minority of these techniques is based on the ritualistic use of hallucinogenic plants, music still constitutes a key ingredient of these rituals.

It is important to remark that the shamanic trance state seems to be supported by an innate, but trainable psycho-physiological component, as well as by a cultural component responsible for its variability among cultures (Fericgla, 2001; Rouget, 1985). Conscious intention and a meaningful ritual context, part of the cultural set and setting in shamanic healing practices, play a structuring function that contributes to the safety of the shaman's trance state (Metzner, 1997). In addition, Hess and Rittner (1996b) state that certain types of music are prone to induce expanded states of consciousness, direct them, and bring them back to the ordinary waking state. Therefore, the ritualistic and pervasive use of music in shamanic practices may impact the psycho-physiological and cultural components of the trance state, which indicates some cross-cultural commonalities in shamanic music, as well as its cultural idiosyncrasies.

There are two main musical expressions consistently utilized in shamanic healing practices: singing or chanting, and/or steady drumming or beating

(Ebersoll, 1985).⁸ As a particular type of shamanic song, the icaros share several of their general characteristics: (a) shamanic songs are the manifestation of the shaman's power and intent (Drury, 1989; Grim, 1983); (b) they are often received in dreams, during trance states, or during initiatory periods; (c) their functions are to induce the trance state, invoke and summon the spirits, and guide the shaman's journey (Eliade, 1964/1989; Halifax, 1979; Kalwait, 1992). Halifax (1979) conceives these songs as the expression of the transformed psyche and spirit of the shaman, therefore having the distinctive power to heal both the singer as well as the sick person.

From a sound/music healing perspective, sung songs have a melody, rhythm, and a timbre range, among other features that may have a relationship to their healing power. Music therapist Sabine Rittner (1996) describes common elements in singing and voice from which it is possible to derive therapeutic/healing functions: (a) they are primary expressive forms; (b) physiologically, sound emission and sound reception involve the systems responsible for breathing and moving;⁹ (c) interpersonally, prosodic distinctions support emotional communicational aspects; song/voice also impacts the experience of psychological distance/closeness; (d) the voice timbre reflects the

⁸See examples of the shamanic use of songs and drumming in different cultures in Cook (1997), Eliade (1964/1989), and Halifax (1979).

⁹The phenomenon of "organismic resonance" consists in the body's neuro-vegetative empathetic response towards the voicing or singing of or with others.

anatomical-physiological as well as the psychological condition of the person. Several sound/music healing systems base their health diagnoses on the overtone spectrum of the voice, which gives it its timbre (Edwards, 1977; Thompson, 1990, 1996, 1999). Voice and singing, along with breath, have been described as the most intensive physical means for self-suggestion and consciousness focalizing, key ingredients for inducing expanded states of consciousness (Rittner, 1996; Hess & Rittner, 1996b).

The second typical mode of musical expression in shamanic healing practices is drumming or the production of a monotonous and steady percussion sound with sticks, rattles, and other instruments (Horrigan, 1997; Metzner, 1997). Icaros are intrinsically rhythmic and often the shacapa replaces the function of the rattle. From the anthropological perspective, the drum represents the shaman's horse, the carrying means for his/her trip into the spirit worlds, and offers voice to the spirits (Eliade, 1964/1989). Drumming acts as a focusing device as well as a concrete referent that enables the shaman to sink into trance (Drury, 1989). Jilek's classic research among the Salish Indians found that rhythmic shamanic drumming produced a drumbeat frequency in the theta wave EEG frequency (4-7 cycles/second) (as cited in Drury, 1989, p. 39). In waking state, this brainwave range is associated with deep meditation states, daydreaming, memory enhancement, increased creativity, integrative experiences, receptivity for new experiences, behavior and belief system changes, as well as with the production of catecholamines and endorphins (Thompson, 1999).

Music is just one element of the complex network that supports trance states, and its impact may be dependent of the constitution, quality, and cohesiveness of that network.

Summary

Icaros have been presented in progressively broader contexts that finally position them as shamanic songs with healing functions, framed under a culturally specific tradition. Vegetalismo shares general cosmological approaches to healing practices with Amazonian indigenous tribes, including the use of healing songs and psychotropic substances in ritualized contexts. The use of songs and music in ayahuasca healing rituals is pervasive in traditional and nontraditional settings.

Different disciplines emphasize different aspects of the healing functions and possible healing mechanisms involved in the use of icaros, ayahuasca, and of icaros in ayahuasca ceremonies. The present study proposes an in-depth exploration of the lived experience of icaros as healing in these rituals in order to uncover an essential meaning structure of the phenomenon as it appears in a particular context. Such an approach aims to contribute to the understanding of the icaros' healing effectiveness and to a more integrative understanding of a phenomenon now only partially addressed by different disciplines.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study is to explore in depth the experience of the icaros or curandero's chants as healing during an ayahuasca group ceremony. It focuses on experienced ayahuasca drinkers who perceive one or more icaro(s) as intensely healing during an ayahuasca ceremony. The two complementary research questions are: (a) What is the basic phenomenology of the lived experience of the icaros as healing? (b) What are the particular perceived musical features involved in the experience of the icaro(s) as healing?

Type of Research

The study is framed in the qualitative research paradigm. This choice responds to several considerations about the nature and complexity of the subject matter, its stage in research, and the most suitable ways to approach it.

The lived experience of the healing aspects of the icaros during an ayahuasca ceremony involves the nonordinary perception (Grof, 2000; Metzner, 1999) of a number of interacting factors while under the influence of an induced state of consciousness. It also involves the ability of the person to sufficiently discriminate among those factors, namely, the ritual setting, the unfolding effects of the brew, and the singing itself. A qualitative paradigm of inquiry not only allows an approach to the phenomenon from an emic standpoint, that is, from the perspective of those who live it, but it also acknowledges that any human

phenomenon is inherently multidimensional. Such a paradigm proposes to systematically address phenomena in ways that capture their richness and subtleties while holding the perspective of their wholeness (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research also offers the flexibility to redesign aspects of the study around key emergent material coming from the phenomenon itself as well as from the context in which it appears (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2000), therefore appearing as a sensitive frame to address its complexities.

Further considerations of the subject under study are relevant. The verbal report of an experience in a nonordinary state once back into normal consciousness, not only offers challenges to the participant but also to the researcher. Classical literature on the theme point out the experience of ineffability (Grof & Grof, 1990; Tart, 1975, 1979) and to the concept of specific-state memory, which refers to aspects of the experience that are only remembered under a similar state in which they were lived (Strassman, 2001). A qualitative approach fosters the active learning, participation, closeness, and sensitivity towards the research participants on the part of the researcher (Creswell, 1998), which appears as crucial for the data collection process as well as for the data analysis. This sensitivity is also required in studying a phenomenon that involves personal issues and healing concerns (Giove, 2002; Metzner, 1999).

Given the fact that the healing aspects of the icaros have primarily captured the interest of researchers for their culturally bonded particularities, in-depth attention to lived experiences and their meanings for the listener have been scarcely documented. Therefore, the present study has an exploratory character,

aiming to contribute to the initial mapping of the phenomenon, which is best sustained by a qualitative approach to it (Marshall & Rossman, 2000).

Finally, several reasons, including issues of legality of ayahuasca consumption and availability of participants and traditional healers, led to the decision to conduct the research in situ in the Peruvian Amazon, a decision which brought this research closer to a field study. The qualitative research paradigm acknowledges the complexity of studying a phenomenon in its natural setting, thus encouraging a sensitive and flexible attitude in the researcher and in the design itself (Marshall & Rossman, 2000). This flexibility was required throughout the study and followed the standards of quality offered by this approach.

Qualitative research includes methods that go in a continuum of merely describing and classifying the data to others that emphasize a critical observational stance towards them (Moustakas, 1994). The selected method for the present study belongs to the latter, for reasons that will be explained next.

Descriptive Phenomenological Research Method

The particular research method chosen for the present study is descriptive phenomenology, as developed mainly by Giorgi from the Husserlian philosophical approach to knowledge (Giorgi, 1985, 1987, 1997, 1998, 2000). The phenomenological tradition of inquiry aims to understand the essence of a phenomenon as it was lived and described by participants (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Giorgi, 1985, 1995). This is based on the assumption that a phenomenon as lived

experience reflects an essential pattern of relationships of meaning that selects, shapes, and gives a unified coherence to the multiplicity of aspects and dimensions involved in it (Husserl, in Kohak, 1980). Therefore, in research, the locus of the data resides in the individual's depiction of a concrete experience of the phenomenon. That depiction goes through a process of analysis that systematically unveils the meanings that structure the essence of the phenomenon itself (Creswell, 2003; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). Giorgi synthesizes this concept of essence as "the most invariant meaning for a context" (1997, p. 242).

Descriptive phenomenology requires from the researcher a building up of a dialogical setting during the data collection phase (Giorgi, 1986). This provides the participant with a nonconstraining space to express his/her experience as closely as possible to the way it was lived and allows the researcher to hold the attitude of phenomenological reduction (Giorgi, 1987, 1992, 1997). This reduction, which is necessary for a phenomenological perspective, helps the researcher to be fully present and open to the participant's account, implying the conscious withholding of current knowledge about the phenomenon, as well as abstention from making existential claims regarding it on the part of the researcher (Giorgi, 1997, 1998). Consequently, the questions ask for concrete, precise, and detailed descriptions from within the natural attitude from the participants, but are broad and open-ended. Auxiliary interview questions follow the criterion of getting a concrete lived experience with a minimum of generalizations and abstractions, aiming to allow further description or to give a concrete example. The omissions, prejudices, or details in the description are

considered an expression of the presence of the participant to the phenomenon as lived and construed by him or her, and therefore as key data for better understanding the phenomenon's deeper meaning structures (Giorgi, 1997). The data, however, are analyzed from within the phenomenological reduction, which is the perspective assumed by the researcher.

Since, in Giorgi's words, "Meanings are discovered only reflectively, not straightforwardly" (1986, p. 13), in order to detect the meanings of a phenomenon beyond the natural or philosophical ones, a particular sensitivity coming from the discipline or disciplines framing the study is required (Giorgi, 1985, 1986). In the case of this study, this means that the data analysis is approached with a general understanding of psychological phenomena and language.

Even though Giorgi does not directly address the complexities of studying transpersonal or transegoic experiences, which defies the mainstream psychological attitude, the method appears promising to such a study. Its focus on lived experiences is open-ended, and the proper use of a phenomenological attitude is sensitive to shifts in stance with respect to the contents of consciousness. The challenge is to rigorously translate the experiences into proper expressions that will depict a phenomenon that involves a nonordinary state of consciousness (Grof, 1980; Tart, 1979; Wilber, 1989). For that purpose, this research adopts a general psychological frame in an extended sense, which may include innovative terms if appropriate, following the considerations of an attitude of phenomenological reduction. A necessary multidisciplinary approach is used to

discuss the findings, including other fields of knowledge, such as music/healing and anthropology.

The selection of the descriptive phenomenological research method for this study supports an in-depth exploration of how the phenomenon of the icaros perceived as healing presents itself to experienced ayahuasca drinkers under the influence of the beverage. The icaros are defined in the current study as the healer's songs used during ayahuasca ceremonies. As described before, ayahuasca is an entheogenic beverage traditionally used in ritual context for healing and accessing knowledge in the Amazon and Orinoco Basins. The phenomenon under study is complex, involving at least five general dimensions of experience, according to previous research: the context or setting, the inner state and predisposition of the participant or set (Grof, 1980; Leary, Metzner, & Alpert 1964/1983; Metzner, 1999; Strassman, 2001), the ayahuasca effects (Shanon, 2002), the icaros sung by the curandero (Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971), and the perception of healing. With a phenomenological approach, these distinctions, if present, emerge during analysis of the lived experience. The search for an essential meaning pattern in this study aims to illuminate known and unknown meaning aspects regarding how the phenomenon presents itself to those undergoing the experience, and also to shed light on how the music is perceived and organized in the context of the phenomenon as a whole.

Research Sites

The study was conducted in two localities in North-Eastern Peru: *Takiwasi*,¹⁰ Center for Drug Abuse Rehabilitation and Research on Traditional Medicine, located in the city of Tarapoto, province of San Martín (Andritzky, 2000; Presser-Velder, 2000), and *Mayantuyacu*,¹¹ Institute of Natural Medicine and Ecology, situated in deep jungle and close to the village of Honoria, in the province of Huánuco. Pilot research procedures were conducted at Takiwasi, and general demographic data of the phenomenon under research were collected there and at Mayantuyacu. However, all the actual participants in the study were selected at the latter site for reasons that will be explained.

First, traditional healing practices involving the use of ayahuasca and other psychotropic plants are allowed under Peruvian laws and give an alternative to Western medicine to a diverse population from inside and outside the country.

¹⁰*Takiwasi* in Quechua means “the singing house” (Presser-Velder, 2000). Mabit (1996), director and co-founder of the center, explains that this name was chosen because “the therapeutic song or ‘ikaro’ is the favorite healing weapon used by Amazonian shamans and also in Takiwasi” (p. 1).

¹¹In Quechuan language, *Mayantuyacu* means “strength of the mountain, spirits of the river,” in honor to the spirit allies of the place, according to personal conversation with maestro curandero Juan Flores, founder and chief healer of the Institute.

This offered a legal frame for the study, as well as the possibility to encounter a reasonable variation in the phenomenon. Second, the expansion of the use of ayahuasca beyond the confines of practices and cosmologies linked to particular indigenous communities in the last decades, has contributed to the emergence of a mestizo (mixed-raced) healing tradition which involve shared practices and understandings. This study focused on icaros used by mestizo healers, which besides their centrality in ayahuasca ceremonies and other healing practices, also have some common musical characteristics and are of easier access.

Third, the study was designed to be primarily conducted at Takiwasi for its diversity of clients, visitors and participants in its seminars, the availability of mestizo healers, and for its experience and contained environment, appropriate for the safety of the participants and the researcher. The center was legally constituted and has been working as a therapeutic community for about 10 years, combining Western psychotherapy and medicine with traditional mestizo Amazonian healing practices (Giove, 2002; Narby, 1998). Takiwasi treats mostly interned male clients, poly-addicted primarily to a crack variant called basic paste of cocaine, alcohol, cannabis, and/or cocaine (Giove, 2002). Even though the center uses a broad variety of medicinal plants and different traditional healing techniques, ayahuasca rituals, done once a week, are one of the main therapeutic tools in Takiwasi, given their vast purging effect and the rich symbolic material they provide for the progress of psychotherapy (Presser-Velder, 2000). The therapeutic staff is also involved in the ayahuasca rituals, whether as participants or as leaders, some of them assuming the role of the curandero after a period of

rigorous training. Takiwasi offers ayahuasca sessions, among other traditional healing techniques, to visitors and participants to their seminars. Mestizo curanderos or vegetalistas (Luna & Amaringo, 1991) often spend some weeks or months a year working at Takiwasi, but do not stay there permanently.

However, once at Takiwasi and 3 weeks after the beginning of the research, the Cocama mestizo curandero don Lucho had terminated his work contract earlier than expected. This, and the difficulties the institution faced in finding a substitute during the following 2 months, resulted finally in a permanent change of location for the study allowed under the frame of possibilities described in its design. After a month of contacting, visiting, and interviewing curanderos in the area, at Takiwasi's suggestion, the researcher contacted the mestizo Ashaninka healer Juan Flores, one of the director's main teachers and an occasional support to Takiwasi's traditional healing activities. Maestro Juan generously offered his institute Mayantuyacu as the main research site. Mayantuyacu lies in the Alto Ucayali river area, 5 hours away from the closest city (Pucallpa), in deep jungle, and hosts native as well as international clients seeking healing of a diversity of conditions as well as teachings from Maestro Juan. The majority of the clients stay in the place for periods that last between weeks and months, engaged in different healing practices and teachings, which involve ayahuasca ceremonies every third day.

During the 5 months data collection phase at Mayantuyacu, an average of 6 clients were constantly there and open to participate in the study once requested. The conditions of the institute resemble a small indigenous settlement amidst

exuberant nature, without electricity, and involve a sense of community living that also allows privacy and practices in isolation that revolve around the lead of maestro curandero Juan Flores. Maestro Juan, who has over 40 years experience and settled in his center in the year 2000, facilitated by every means the conduct of the study with the intention of bridging the traditional medicinal ways of the jungle to the broader academic community.¹²

Selection of Participants

Participants in this study were 5 experienced ayahuasca drinkers, who reported having experienced an icaro as intensely healing during an *ayahuasca* ceremony. In addition, they stated being able to identify with a complete degree of certainty which icaro was perceived as such after listening to the recording of the ceremony in which the phenomenon emerged, following design procedures.

The number of participants exceeded the three recommended by Giorgi. In agreement with committee members, it accords with guidelines proposed by Dukes (1984) and Polkinghorne (1983). Dukes proposes 3 to 10 participants, while Polkinghorne suggests 10, interviewed once for about 2 hours each, thus incorporating the data criterion. Five participants in this study went through a process of two interviews of 1.5 to two hours each and were requested to write

¹²A certification letter of the research activities conducted at Mayantuyacu and the services provided by the Institute for those purposes was signed by both parties (see Appendix B).

previously a report of their experiences. The sampling number is, therefore, adequate within the mentioned parameters.

The sampling was purposeful, expecting to select information-rich cases (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002), which was emphasized by looking for “intensity,” i.e., by selecting people whose experience of healing with an icaro during an ayahuasca ceremony was perceived as intense (Miles & Huberman as cited in Creswell, 1998, p. 182).

Specifically, the selection criteria for participants were:

1. Men and women older than 21 years old, who are considered legally adults under the Peruvian laws. Given the absence of information on the distribution of the phenomenon among population, no other demographic criteria or gender-balanced sample were set a priori.
2. Fluent Spanish and/or English speakers.
3. Experienced ayahuasca drinkers, defined as persons who have consumed ayahuasca in ritual contexts for at least 12 times.
4. Individuals who reported having intensely experienced the phenomenon under study, after participating in an ayahuasca ritual sound-recorded by the researcher.
5. Availability and willingness to participate in the research as it was designed.

The only exclusion criterion was to have experienced a psychotic episode in the last 3 years. Only one potential participant was excluded from the study for this reason at Takiwasi.

There were two reasons for selecting experienced ayahuasca drinkers. First, experience with the beverage has been described as increasing the discriminatory capacity of the drinker (Shanon, 2002). This discrimination is crucial given the complexity of the ayahuasca experience itself, and the focusing of the study on a particular aspect of it. Second, the number of 12 sessions was determined following strict rehabilitation treatment considerations, under the premise that clients of Takiwasi would be potential participants for the study. This number of sessions would select clients of Takiwasi in their fifth month of treatment from an average of 9 (Giove, 2002), which assured some degree of advance in their rehabilitation process. A higher level of psychological integration would increase the reliability and richness of the description of their experience, and would decrease the possibility of adverse consequences for their treatment resulting from the interviewing process.

The inclusion of this type of participants in the design was based upon the phenomenological assumption that any variability in the experience of a phenomenon would only contribute to enlighten its deeper meaning structure.

Selection procedures were originally designed in order to allow participants who identified the icaro experienced as intensely healing with the highest degree of certainty in the recorded ceremony, to constitute the final sample. However, all the actual participants in the study met the criterion of complete certitude, which offered the possibility to explore the particular musical features associated with the healing experience.

The 5 participants selected for the study were clients at Mayantuyacu, 3 men and 2 women, their ages ranging between 24 and 39 years old, the average age being 30. The majority of the participants were long-term clients, whose stays at the center lasted between 40 days and 5 months. Another participant continuously alternated stays in the center with her life in Pucallpa. The only participant who was not a long-term client was a woman, who spent 12 days in treatment. All of them were seeking psychological and/or physical healing, not directly related to drug abuse issues, as well as teachings from maestro Juan and the plant-doctors. Two men were U.S. citizens and their interviews were conducted in English. The rest of the participants were from Latin American countries and were interviewed in Spanish: an Argentinian man, a Brazilian woman, fluent in Spanish, and a Peruvian woman, native of the jungle. Three people experienced intense healing during their individual *icarada* and *soplada* within the ceremony (the act of singing an icaro “into” the client, and to blow smoke and perfumes onto him/her, respectively), and 2 of them with icaros that were sung in group context. The 2 U.S. citizens had a second intense healing experience with an icaro later on in their processes and were interviewed as well, data that may be used for future research.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection involved procedures to sound-record the music during the ceremonies, pre-select participants, and gather data from their experiences.

Two main questions were posed to participants in this study:

1. Describe your experience with the curandero's song that was intensely healing for you during the ayahuasca ceremony. Give as much detail as possible. You may include your aural perceptions, bodily sensations, visions, smells, tastes, thoughts, emotions, or any aspect that stood out for you as having been a part of the experience.
2. Describe as detailed as possible how you perceived the music that was intensely healing for you. You may refer to musical features and how they stood out in your experience.

The concept of healing was not delimited or pre-defined to participants, but left to their interpretation and experience. However, the word *healing* in the interview questions was purposefully chosen, in order to allow the participants a more holistic consideration of health and well-being issues, namely physical, psychological, social, and spiritual, instead of *curing*, usually associated with the “fixing” of physical or emotional illnesses (Jaimovich, Lange, & Urrutia, 1997).

The data collection procedures in this study are described below, along with specific considerations taken in order to caution their standards of quality. In addition, demographic data of the presence of the phenomenon in the recorded ceremonies, under variables of site, sex, and average of age are presented at the end of this section.

Sound Recording of Ayahuasca Ceremonies

High quality and compact digital sound recording equipment was utilized and set up to record for about four consecutive hours in Wave and MP3 formats.

Three pilots were conducted with the support of Takiwasi's personnel in order to strategically place the equipment in the ceremonial maloca, assuring sound quality and minimal disruption to attendees and healers, experience that expedited the process once in Mayantuyacu. Ceremonies were recorded an average of twice per week, with previous consent of healers and attendees. The researcher participated as an attendee in all the ceremonies, aiming to keep the naturalistic conditions of the ceremonial setting, reduce possible adverse reactions to her presence as a mere observer, as well as to gain relevant experience with the beverage and the icaros to allow a more sensitive presence to participants and the phenomenon under study during data collection and analysis. Bracketing of personal experiences was taken care of by keeping a journal with reflections, questions, and hypotheses.

Procedure for Selecting Participants

Attendees of ceremonies were given general information about the study in advance individually and their potential participation was requested. Only one person declined to participate. Either during sharing time after the ritual or the following day, each attendee was asked in their language of fluency: "During this ayahuasca session, did you experience one or more of the curandero's songs as intensely healing for you?" The researcher kept a record of the frequency of the manifestation of the phenomenon in every session. A positive answer was followed by giving the person, at an agreed moment, an Information Letter describing the purpose of the study and the criteria for inclusion in the study,

along with the Participant Informed Consent Form, and the Bill of Rights of Participants in a Psychological Research, either in Spanish or English (see Appendix B). Any question about the contents of those forms was carefully approached and clarified by the researcher and selection criteria were checked together. The participant kept copies of the signed documents.

Written Report and Identification of the Icaro in the Recording

Next, the participants were requested to write down their experience in privacy, following the first question to participants, and to listen to the recording of the ceremony in order to try to identify which icaro was felt as having an intense healing effect on them and express in a scale from 1 to 5 their degree of certainty in their selection, 5 being the highest degree. Enough time to do so and hand the reports to the researcher before the first interview was agreed upon. The listening step was simplified from the original design. Instead of asking the participants to listen to a 30 minute CD with extracts of the icaros, they were given the entire recording of the ceremony and allowed to randomly search for the particular icaro. This decision was taken due to limitations on battery lifetime to address music editing in a context where no electricity was available. This actually facilitated the process of identification, which was the original purpose of the design, compared to the results in the pilot interviews conducted at Takiwasi, where the procedure was followed as planned. Four participants identified the icaro primarily through keywords, and one by its location in the recording, all of them with a degree of certainty of 5.

Preparing the First Interview

The report was reviewed with the objective of searching for areas that needed clarification, or to be described further or more concretely, keeping in mind the criteria of getting from the participant a rich depiction of the experience as it was lived by him/her, and the attitude of horizontalization. In addition, the identified icaro was listened to and set up to be played during the interviewing process.

Interviews

Initially, two pilot interviews were conducted at Takiwasi and discussed over email with the expert methodologist, Dr. Barbro Giorgi, in order to verify the adequacy of the questions to live experience, their understandability, the richness of the data obtained by those means, and the ways in which the researcher followed the methodological approach in facilitating the interviews.

With participants, two interviews of 1 ½ to 2 hours were conducted and taped-recorded in a private setting of common agreement, usually a cabin or *tambo*. Care was taken to facilitate a climate conducive to trust and openness, and to ensure that interview procedures were understood and comfortable for participants. The researcher remained receptive, attentive, and empathetically adjusted her language and the pace of the interview to those of the participant, normally still profoundly moved by his/her experience. Following methodological procedures, pre-conceived ideas about healing experiences with icaros were avoided to influence the course of any statement. Additional questions aimed only

to clarify, verify understanding, request further description or a concrete example of any aspect of the lived experience that seemed unclear or abstract.

Paraphrasing, brief summaries, among others, were naturally used to keep the ongoing flow of the interviews. They ended when they felt complete for both, researcher and participant, after checking in with the latter.

The first interview addressed the two main questions to participants and deepened into some areas of the written report, if they were not spontaneously clarified or enriched during the dialogue. Transcriptions of the written report and first interview were sent to the methodologist via email for review. After receipt of feedback and re-reading of transcriptions, the researcher set up a second interview with the participant.

The second interview started with the person re-listening to the identified icaro in a comfortable and relaxed position, trying to go back to her experience. This procedure aimed to facilitate the memory of the lived experience that the timing between interviews may have had influenced, according to the concept of specific-state memory (Strassman, 2001). This concept refers to aspects of the experience that are only remembered under a similar state in which they were lived. Then, some areas of the transcripts were addressed, based on their previous review, following the same considerations described above.

The design proposed having participants re-listen to the icaro at the beginning of both interviews. However, unexpected technical problems with the sound equipment, in addition to field obstacles, didn't allow the playing of the recording at the beginning of the first interview for the second and third

participants. This omission in the procedure was done to avoid considerable delay in the realization of the first interview, with the concomitant distancing from the lived experience on the part of the participant. In order to homogenize the procedure for the majority of participants, the same omission was used with the rest of them. This also made sense, since the first interview was conducted at a time closer to the experience and the person had already re-listened to the recording privately beforehand. The second interview was addressed between 1 to 2 weeks after the first one, the participant being probably more prone to memory distortions. The time between the emergence of the phenomenon for the participant and the completion of the data collection process was in average 2 weeks.

Among participants, an initial willingness and enthusiasm was observed for depicting in full detail the sensorial and emotionally charged aspects of the experience. Later on in the interviewing process, participants were able to articulate more comprehensive connections with meaningful personal material and the reasons underlying the identification of the experience as intensely healing for them. The fact that the phenomenon sought was of an intense quality may explain this tendency. People need time to gain perspective and integrate primarily nonverbal experiences, which are also normally overwhelming to the senses. Two interviews were therefore necessary and helpful, both for the participants and the study.

The interviews were extensive, rich, and intimate. The context of sharing daily life activities, personal experiences, histories, and ongoing teachings over

long periods of time with the potential participants set up favorable conditions to make them co-inquirers into their own living experience throughout the interviewing process.

On the other hand, for some participants the ongoing ayahuasca ceremonies and other works with plants throughout the interviewing process blurred the precise memory of the experience and/or introduced new elements into consideration. Re-listening to the icaro at the beginning of the second interview was described as helping to recall the experience more precisely.

The recruitment of participants and the collection of data took a total of 8 months, 3 of them spent at Takiwasi and 5 at Mayantuyacu. During that time, the frequency of emergence of the phenomenon in each site, under demographic variables of sex and age, was taken. 37 ceremonies were recorded, either led or co-led by the mestizo healers don Lucho or Orlando and Jacques Mabit at Takiwasi (N=3), or by maestro Juan at Mayantuyacu (N=34). The total of attendees was 239, corresponding to 46 different individuals. The phenomenon emerged 13 times, 4 times at Takiwasi and 9 at Mayantuyacu. It appeared 9 times among men (7 individuals) and 4 among women (4 individuals), with an average age of 31 years old for both sexes. A complete description of totals and percentages of occurrence of the phenomenon per variable is found in Appendix C.

Among participants in the study, the average of ceremonies it took for the phenomenon to emerge, once they were informed about it, was 7, ranging from 2 to 13.

Additionally, two in-depth interviews to maestro Juan were conducted in order to explore his perspective on how the icaros worked for each participant, and some formal musical aspects of the icaros were analyzed. General results of these additional inquiries that will be partially included in the discussion section, can be found in Appendixes D and A, respectively.

Data Analysis

The Four Steps of Descriptive Phenomenology

The data analysis procedure follows the four essential steps addressed by descriptive phenomenology (Giorgi, 1985, 2000), which presupposes an all-pervading presence of the phenomenological reduction attitude.

Step 1: Getting a Sense of the Whole

In this step, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts in order to grasp the holistic constitution of the experience's depiction, as well as to get familiar with its language. In accordance to Creswell (1998) and Patton (2002), each statement was approached without a priori judgments, as being equally important in the constitution of the experience ("horizontalization" of the data), which supports the holding of the phenomenological reduction attitude in this step. In order to better grasp the participant's experience, the researcher listened to the icaro that was intensely healing for him/her before and during the readings of the depiction.

Step 2: Discrimination of Meaning Units

The description was re-read from the beginning and divided into workable units. In the context of a psychological sensitivity and focused on the phenomenon being researched, any time the researcher experienced a transition in meaning within the participant's depiction, that is, in the inner relationship of the person to the fact, a meaning unit was marked in the text (Giorgi, 1998).

Step 3: Transformation of the Person's Language into Phenomenological Psychological Expressions

Through reflection and the method of free imaginative variation, the researcher tried to capture the essential most invariant psychological meaning of the experience contained in each unit, and finally described it using a wording closer to her discipline of study. The method of free imaginative variation consists in taking different perspectives, frames of references, etc., regarding possible meanings (Creswell, 1998) and ways to express them as accurately as possible (Giorgi, 1985). This step was gone through twice in order to capture deeper and subtler meanings in the depiction, and to arrive at a more precise and synthetic language to express them.

Step 4: Synthesis of the Structure of the Experience

Through free imaginative variation the researcher selected the most invariant meaning constituents and used them as the basis for a description of the structure of the experience.

The four steps were followed separately for each participant's transcripts and written report, considered as one text. The final stage consisted in the composition of an integrated structural description of the group, which expressed the essence of the phenomenon as it appeared in this context (Creswell, 1998). The researcher took some time before approaching the data to put herself in a state of equanimity, and kept a journal with reflections during the process that aimed to help her bracket her own thoughts about the phenomenon and the experience of participants.

For the sake of rigor, the data were analyzed in the language of the descriptions, i.e. Spanish or English, in order to account for meaning nuances in the use of particular words or expressions. The final composite structure was approached in English after translating the structural synthesis of Spanish speaking participants into English.

Although triangulation is not a validation procedure employed in descriptive phenomenology, it was utilized in the current study in agreement with committee members. In accordance with Creswell (1998), different researchers were involved in the data analysis, in order to corroborate the findings and arrive at consensus and sufficient validation. The process of analysis was carefully cross-checked in its entirety for English-speaking participants by the methodologist. Spanish speakers were addressed next, and cross-checked at step four with the depiction of the interview, once translated into English. The methodologist was available for consultations during the entire analysis phase. Translated interviews, structural analyses per participant and the composite

structure were also sent to the chair of the dissertation's committee for review and feedback. A bilingual proofreader, familiar with the study, supported the process of verifying the accuracy of transcriptions and translations, as well as the general internal consistency between the depictions of participants and the meanings unveiled by the researcher at the end of the different stages of analysis.

Standards of Quality and Verification

Phenomenological research relies primarily upon the consistency of the researcher's approach to the entire process under the criteria of phenomenological reduction and accurate description of essences (Creswell, 2003). According to Giorgi (1988), a strict consideration of these two criteria is conducive to validity and reliability:

[Phenomenology] tries to raise the content of experience to the eidetic level through essential description. If the essential description truly captures the intuited essence, one has validity in a phenomenological sense. This means that one adequately describes the general essence that is given to the consciousness of the researcher. If one can use this essential description consistently, one has reliability. (Giorgi, 1988, p. 173)

The current study followed Polkinghorne's set of five questions (1983) as a guideline for quality standards, since it operationalizes the two main issues posed by Giorgi:

1. Did the interviewer influence the content of the participants' description in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the participants' actual experience?

2. Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview? This question was also posed to the translations.
3. In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified this alternative?
4. Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?
5. Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations?

As suggested by Creswell (1998), verification that the criteria these questions identify were respected during the course of the study was sought, including their ongoing check in with the methodologist, and other committee members to whom monthly reports of the fieldwork was sent for feedback, and transcripts and details of the analysis were made available. The proofreader acted as an external consultant for accuracy in transcriptions and translations, as well as for the general consistency between the findings and the data.

The prolonged engagement in the field and participation in the ceremonies allowed the building of trust with potential participants, thus predisposing them to be open and to share in depth their experiences once emerged, as was verbally confirmed by them throughout the stay at Mayantuyacu.

Bracketing Process Account

As described above, the entire phenomenological research process requires a shift in the researcher's attitude that allows him/her to be as present as possible to the participant and his/her description through phenomenological reduction or bracketing (Giorgi, 1998, 2000; Patton, 2002). It implies gaining some clarity about the researcher's preconceptions regarding the phenomenon and to suspend them during the study, in order to encounter it freshly and to describe it as experienced, withholding of existential claims of what is presented by the participants (Giorgi, 1997). In order to address the assumption of the phenomenological reduction as a researcher, a journal was kept throughout the research process about personal and theoretical thoughts, emotions, etc., which helped the researcher distinguish between her own material and that of the participants.

The main themes that emerged for the researcher were: (a) personal expectations of possible findings, based on her theoretical knowledge, personal experiences of the phenomenon, and ongoing preliminary interpretations of the findings obtained during the research process; (b) preconceptions about the participants' inner healing processes through the personal bonds developed with them during the shared time spent at Mayantuyacu; (c) the aspiration to grasp the entire depth of their experiences through verbal description and analysis; (d) caution to avoid "psychologizing" the material encountered, in terms of reducing the perspective of the experience to a purely egoic experience.

In general, the personal work the researcher engaged in during her stay at the sites greatly facilitated her being open, sensitive, and able to release many of her initial thoughts about the phenomenon. The encountering of a living cosmology, that started to emerge experientially through intensive purging, plant dieting and participation in ayahuasca ceremonies, allowed a new, deeper and meaningful comprehension of these millenary healing practices, a sense of profound honor for the work and the people engaged in it, including participants. Their intense work and life quests gained the researcher's deep respect, their honest and generous sharing of their own humanity, engrained in their experiences of the icaros during interviews, inspired her to bring forth the best skills in bridging what they had to say to the larger academic community. The researcher felt humbled throughout the entire experience, and a fuller and fresher presence appeared available to her with people, their situations and experiences, the practices, the power of the icaros and the plants. "May this work benefit all our relations" is the thread of gratefulness that was knit through this study.

Delimitation and Limitations of the Study

This study was delimited to the inquiry of the phenomenon of the icaros as healing, regardless of other experiences that might be elicited by them. It focused only on experienced drinkers, whose serious and longstanding engagement in traditional Amazonian healing practices positioned them amidst an exceptional group of people. The study was also confined to study the phenomenon in ayahuasca ceremonies guided by one mestizo curandero, where only the basic

admixture of *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Chacruna viridis* was administered, among several other possible combinations.

All these considerations need to be held in trying to extrapolate the results of the study to the larger population, contexts, and diverse music encountered in ayahuasca circles around the world.

The present study aimed to inquire into fresh experiences of the phenomenon, which means that it was an ongoing process until 5 persons, who had spontaneously presented the phenomenon and agreed to participate in the study, had been procured. The researcher does not know how this situation and the information given to attendees to the ceremonies about the goals of the study may have influenced the frequency in the occurrence/nonoccurrence of the phenomenon in the group as well as within the individuals. The facts showed, however, that the emergence of the phenomenon is rather low and particular. The criterion of intensity required in the phenomenon appeared to have added complexity for potential participants in subjectively discriminating whether their healing experience with the icaros was significant or not, as it was discussed with some attendees. However, it seems to have screened out usual experiences for experienced drinkers from deep transformational situations of healing with icaros, which this study hopes will contribute to enlighten the phenomenon in clearer and deeper ways.

Since the phenomenon under study emerged in the context of an expanded state of consciousness, it was originally assumed difficulties would be encountered by participants and the researcher in trying to verbally approach the

contents of their lived experiences. Precautions were taken in that respect, both, during the data collection phase and the analysis. However, during the study participants and researcher acknowledged the difficulty of being fully able to communicate the depth, intensity, and complexity of the experiences by verbal means. Experience with ayahuasca was identified as crucial in order to better understand the nonordinary realms of experience that are made available. The study was, therefore, limited to offering the best verbal descriptions of the phenomenon under study that were possible.

Special care was taken in order not to reduce the intuition of essences to the perspective of the subject experiencing from a normal state of consciousness, who in this case is the researcher. Listening to the recordings of the music of the ceremonies and meditation techniques when approaching the data, combined with a continuous attitude of phenomenological reduction, were perceived as contributing to that goal.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the descriptive phenomenological analysis of the written reports and interviews of participants. Two main bodies of results are described: the structure of intense healing with an icaro, and the perception of the music within that phenomenon, as experienced by participants in an ayahuasca ceremony led by a mestizo curandero. First, a synthesis of the results is expounded and supported by tables, in order to offer a general overview of the phenomenon and its meaning constituents. This synthesis includes the description of a structural variation of the phenomenon. The perception of musical features is presented and explained within the frame offered by the direct constituents of the phenomenon. Two dynamics involved in the process of healing with an icaro are outlined, which sustain the unfolding interaction and interdependence among constituents, as well as the experiential range within them.

Then, the meaning constituents are described. They are grouped in three categories: contextual, direct, and integration constituents. Musical features are presented as perception of the lyrics, perception of the singing voice, and perception of a musical dynamic. Within constituents and features perceived, structural and some empirical variations among participants are shown. Finally, some aspects of the psychological and empirical variations of the phenomenon for participants, in the context of their larger healing process, are presented and discussed.

Structure of Intense Healing with an Icaro, as Experienced by Participants in an Ayahuasca Ceremony

In the present study, intense healing with an icaro during an ayahuasca ceremony took place in the context of a larger traditional healing process, and sometimes also a learning process, with a mestizo curandero. In that context, it stood out as the pivotal moment in the unfolding of a significant healing experience that occurred within an ayahuasca ceremony.

Synthesis

Intense healing with an icaro occurred in a state of heightened receptivity to the singing, where participants experienced a significant experiential shift attributed to the singing, which quickly increased focus and expectation to the point of surrender into full and exclusive engagement in listening and inner experience. Singing and inner experience were apprehended as unfolding in perfect simultaneity and syntony with each other, and intimately addressing an innermost felt healing need, in a novel, yet direct and precise way.

Participants perceived the healing as beneficially intended by the healer and/or the ayahuasca being through the singing, and unfolding with distinctive sensitivity and care, as if exclusively tailor-made. The singing provided a sense of intimate support and empathetic connection with the healer, increased confidence and trust and intensified feelings of security and openness to the process and its challenges. A variation occurred for one participant, who did not perceive a clear healing intentionality in the singing, but rather, felt that it allowed him access to

the curandero's higher and healthier state of being. This individual's confidence, receptivity, and felt sense of safety in the process were based on a similar previous experience elsewhere.

A deep and necessary release of core unhealthy conditions was experienced throughout this unfolding, and participants felt restored back to a sense of expanded connection with themselves and their available resources, as well as empowered and enabled to approach positively further healing. This was followed by a subsequent experience perceived with continuity of meaning, during and/or after the singing, where participants felt a flowing access to a new comprehension of their core issue and to concrete ways of addressing it. This understanding came through a clear, broader, and highly integrated perspective, which was perceived as significantly revealing, perfectly fitting, and viable within their life context.

The whole experience was conducive to deep relief, well-being, and a sense of personal achievement and completion. Participants were also profoundly touched and in deep emotional resonance with their experience.

Contextual Constituents

Particular contextual constituents emerged as supporting and building up towards the phenomenon. Process-long contextual constituents were: an increased emotional tension to finally resolve a long-lasting and unhealthy personal condition, perceived as significantly restricting the person's life; an increased awareness of personal limitations to resolve the issue through ways or patterns

that were familiar; based on previous experience, participants held strong expectations of being able to resolve the problem condition by experientially engaging in traditional healing practices; these practices were highly valued as they were carried by the particular curandero in the space he offered.

Proximal contextual constituents for participants were: a meaningful personal intention for the ceremony along with a readiness to release a sense of control over the possible experience; as well, right before their experience with the singing, their openness and receptivity to be influenced by the singing increased.

Integration Constituents

Once back in an ordinary context, several factors were experienced as necessary to confirm and legitimize the significance of the healing as intense. Integration constituents were: engagement with the experience after the ceremony; further understanding of intrinsic aspects of it, along with a positive reframing within the larger personal context; legitimation of the experience as intensely healing; sense of a meaningful healing direction to undertake; and the experience that the healing with the icaro was the pre-requisite for a meaningful subsequent healing event.

Table 1 shows a summary of the structural meaning constituents of the phenomenon, as experienced by participants in the ayahuasca ceremony led by a mestizo curandero. Constituents in the table are grouped under contextual (process-long and proximal), direct, and integration categories. Each constituent

was assigned a letter and a number in order to facilitate reference to their individual descriptions in the text.

Table 1

Summary of Structural Meaning Constituents

| <i>Contextual Constituents</i> | | <i>Direct Constituents</i> | <i>Integration</i> |
|--|--|---|---|
| <i>Process-long</i> | <i>Proximal</i> | <i>(R)</i> | <i>Constituents</i> |
| <i>(PL)</i> | <i>(P)</i> | | <i>(I)</i> |
| PL1 Increased emotional tension to resolve unhealthy personal condition | P1 Personal intention held for the ceremony | R1 Perception of a significant experiential shift attributed to the singing | I1 Engagement with the experience after the ceremony |
| | P2 Readiness to release sense of control over the possible experience | R2 Full and exclusive engagement in listening and in the inner experience | I2 Further understanding of intrinsic aspects of the experience |
| PL2 Increased awareness of personal limitations to resolve the issue through familiar ways or patterns | P3 Increased openness and receptivity to the influence of the singing | R3 Apprehension of simultaneous syntonic unfoldment between singing and inner experience | I3 Positive reframing of the experience within the larger personal context |
| PL3 Strong expectation to resolve the issue by experientially engaging in traditional healing practices | | R4 Being addressed in the innermost felt healing need in a novel way | I4 Legitimation of the experience as intensely healing |
| | | R5 Perception of a beneficial intention guiding the healing experience | |
| | | R6 Perception of the singing as tailor-made | |
| | | R7 Sense of intimate connection with the healer through the singing | (cont.) |

Table 1 (continued)

| <i>Contextual Constituents</i> | | <i>Direct Constituents</i> | <i>Integration</i> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Process-long</i> | <i>Proximal</i> | <i>(R)</i> | <i>Constituents</i> |
| <i>(PL)</i> | <i>(P)</i> | | <i>(I)</i> |
| PL4 | | R8 | I5 |
| High | | Security through the process and | Sense of a |
| valorization | | openness to its challenges | meaningful |
| of the healer | | | healing |
| and the space | | R9 | direction to |
| he offers | | Release of core unhealthy | undertake |
| | | conditions | |
| | | R10 | I6 |
| | | Restoration into an expanded | Attribution to |
| | | inner connection | the experience |
| | | | of a key role |
| | | R11 | in accessing a |
| | | New comprehension of the core | subsequent |
| | | issue and of viable ways to | healing event |
| | | address it | |
| | | R12 | |
| | | Sense of empowerment and | |
| | | confidence of capabilities to | |
| | | approach positively further | |
| | | healing | |
| | | R13 | |
| | | Deep relief and well-being after | |
| | | the experience | |
| | | R14 | |
| | | Sense of achievement and | |
| | | completion | |
| | | R15 | |
| | | Emotional resonance to the | |
| | | process | |

Note. All tables created by author.

Musical Perception of an Icaro as Intensely Healing, as Experienced by
Participants in an Ayahuasca Ceremony

Each participant perceived particular musical features in the singing of the icaro that stood out as contributing to intense healing. The perception, attribution of meaning, and variability of awareness of these features were embedded in the participant's actual experiential context, healing need, and personal background. These musical features were experienced as interacting dynamically amongst one another, as well as with other nonmusical factors, in supporting the emergence of the phenomenon. Therefore, structurally, the perception of musical features appeared to be sustained within the direct constituents of the phenomenon, thus enriching the understanding of the participation of musical elements.

In general, participants apprehended the singing as influencing flowing, and perfectly simultaneous and syntonic experiential changes, which contributed to a full surrender into the process and to the core healing shift. This apprehension also involved the experience of synesthesia. The musical features that stood out as contributing to the experience of intense healing were related to the perception of the lyrics, the perception of the singing voice, and the perception of a musical dynamic.

For participant L, the experiential understanding of the unfolding lyrics constituted the core of his healing process, whereas for D, it was the syntonic attunement of her state of mind to the perceived qualities of the singing voice. Participants B, S, and C perceived a musical dynamic into which they engaged completely, and that contributed to a fundamental shift in their state of being.

Throughout the experiences of participants, the same and/or other musical features in the lyrics, voice, and musical dynamic were perceived as building up towards a core healing experience.

The perception of the lyrics was characterized by an unexpected recognition of meaningful words and/or verses that contributed to flowing yet sudden inner shifts, consistent with the meaning attributed to the lyrics. The individuals felt directly and intimately addressed by those words, and experienced changes in attitude, emotion, perception, and/or visionary contents. The singing voice was mentioned as plain or involving certain distinctive qualities that influenced the experience. A core healing shift was experienced as a progressive, yet quick tuning in to these perceived qualities of the singing, which were attributed to the healer's state. This shift was consistently physical, emotional, and mental. The perception of a consistent, strong, and multi-sensorial musical dynamic was experienced as subduing the sense of independent self, and influencing a fundamental restructuring of the psyche/body.

Table 2 presents a summary of the perceived musical features grouped under the headings of lyrics, singing voice, and musical dynamics, describing how they were experienced as influencing an inner shift. The table also shows how for each participant the perception of these features was engrained within a progressive emergence of structural constituents of the phenomenon. The table contains abbreviated names of the constituents, but their assigned letters and numbers are kept in parentheses for a full reference.

Table 2

Perceived Musical Features for Participants within the Structure of the Phenomenon

| Perceived Musical Features | Participants | | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------|---|---|--|
| | B | C | D | L | S |
| <p><i>Lyrics:</i></p> <p>Unexpected recognition of words and/or verses as involving a relevant personal meaning</p> <p>A shift is experienced as flowing, yet sudden, in attitude, emotions, sensitivity, and/or visionary contents, consistent with the meaning attributed to the lyrics</p> | Not present | Not present | <p>Openness, receptivity, and full engagement in the singing (P3, R2)</p> <p>Being addressed in healing need. Apprehension of the healer’s beneficial intention. Singing perceived as tailor-made (R4, R5, R6)</p> <p>Connection with the healer. Security and openness to the process (R7, R8)</p> | <p>Significant shift. Full engagement in the singing (R1, R2)</p> <p>Simultaneity and syntony address healing need (R3, R4)</p> <p>Connection with the healer and his beneficial intention. Security. Singing perceived as tailor-made (R7, R5, R8, R6)</p> <p>Expanded inner connection, release. New comprehension (R9, R10, R11)</p> | <p>Full engagement in the singing (R2)</p> <p>Connection with the healer. Apprehension of his beneficial intention. Security. Singing perceived as tailor-made (R7, R5, R8, R6)</p> <p>(cont.)</p> |

Table 2 (continued)

| Perceived Musical Features | Participants | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--------------------|--|
| | B | C | D | L | S |
| <p><i>Singing voice:</i></p> <p>Particular qualities (or the plain singing voice)</p> <p>A shift is experienced as a progressive, yet quick tuning in into perceived qualities of the singing voice, and is emotional, mental, and physical</p> | <p>Perception of the plain singing voice sustains sense of intimate connection with the healer, security and openness to the process (R7, R8)</p> | <p>Openness and receptivity to the singing (P3)</p> <p>Perception of the singing voice is also integrated into the perception of a singing dynamic</p> | <p>Significant shift. Full engagement (R1, R2)</p> <p>Simultaneity and syntony between singing and experience address healing need (R3, R4)</p> <p>Connection with healer. Beneficial intention. Security. Singing as tailor-made (R7, R5, R8, R6)</p> <p>Expanded inner connection, release (R9, R10)</p> | <p>Not present</p> | <p>Singing voice is integrated into the perception of a singing dynamic</p> <p>(cont.)</p> |

Table 2 (continued)

| Perceived Musical Features | Participants | | | | |
|--|--|---|-------------|-------------|--|
| | B | C | D | L | S |
| <i>Musical dynamic:</i> | Significant shift. Full engagement (R1, R2) | Significant shift. Security. Full engagement (R1, R8, R2) | Not present | Not present | Significant shift. Full engagement (R1, R2) |
| Powerful and consistent dynamic, experienced multisensorially, which subdues sense of independent self | Simultaneity and syntony between singing and experience address healing need (R3, R4) | Simultaneity and syntony between singing and experience. Expanded inner connection, release of unhealthy conditions, and new comprehension of core issue (R3, R9, R10, R11) | | | Simultaneity and syntony between singing and experience. Being addressed in innermost felt healing need (R3, R4) |
| A shift is experienced as a fundamental restructuring of the psyche/body | Connection with ayahuasca. Beneficial intention. Security. Singing as tailor-made (R7, R5, R8, R6) | Being addressed in innermost felt healing need (R4) | | | Connection with the healer. Beneficial intention. Security. Singing as tailor-made (R7, R5, R8, R6) |
| | Expanded inner connection, release of unhealthy conditions (R9, R10) | | | | Expanded inner connection, release of unhealthy conditions (R9, R10) |
| | New comprehension of core issue (R11) | | | | New comprehension of core issue (R11) |

Dynamics of the Healing Process with an Icaro

Two dynamics account for the healing process with an icaro. One refers to the interaction of larger factors supporting the emergence and signification of the phenomenon as intensely healing, and the other refers to the inner dynamic of the healing experience with the icaro during the ayahuasca ceremony. The latter clarifies the type of interaction that emerges among constituents and the range of experiential quality within them.

The phenomenon was dependent upon contextual factors, grouped as process-long and proximal, and upon integration factors. Chronologically, contextual factors appeared before the direct experience with the icaro, and integration factors, after it. The meaning constituents that emerged from the participants' experience of their larger healing quest supported the understanding of the meanings of the direct constituents of the healing experience during the ayahuasca ceremony. In other words, participants made sense of their experience in the context of their quest, therefore, contextual factors entail a personal as well as a structural significance.

Within the context of an ongoing healing process, the healing during the ceremony emerged as a pivotal moment that continued afterwards, with the challenge of its metabolization and expression in ordinary life. The time between interviews showed that integration factors affected the meaning and relevance attributed to aspects of the experience, thus pointing to the evolving quality of the phenomenon itself. The significance of the experience was reframed within a larger personal and healing process, which relativized some aspects of it. A clear

example of this emerged for participant D, who achieved a new comprehension of her vocational dilemma, one perfectly fitting, viable, and clear within her larger personal context, as perceived during the experience. However, right after it, she started questioning the validity and viability of her insight, which set her back again into a state of anxiety. In her second interview, she had been able to further metabolize her experience. Being able to approach her insight with a deeper and broader perspective gave her more freedom to deal with it in her life. Again, the phenomenon, imbued into a larger process, was subject of processual evolving itself, and therefore, it cannot be treated as univocal.

The second dynamic emerged within the direct healing experience with the icaro during the ayahuasca ceremony. Following individual variations, it evolved from a moment of profound receptivity and full engagement in an experience apprehended as intensely meaningful and beneficial, though not fully understood, into a stage of increased comprehension and active participation. Within the experience of full engagement, the healing process was described as predominantly physical, emotional, and/or symbolic in nature, and a core healing shift was consistently perceived at this stage of the process. As the dynamic evolved, clear personal contents emerged into awareness as directly related to the core healing issues. Participants naturally accepted unexpected situations and new insights on these contents, and addressed them with a clearer, broadened, and interconnected perspective and meaning, and with a sense of empowerment. The dynamic of the entire healing process was finally conducive to a sense of relief, expansion, achievement, and completion.

This internal dynamic certainly makes sense within the experiential unfolding of the ayahuasca effects, although other factors involved in the phenomenon itself appeared to be sustaining it. The point in describing this dynamic is to shed light on the experiential range involved in the direct structural constituents of the phenomenon. In the lived experience of participants, the meanings emerged from different layers of processing: some of them were experientially apprehended, others involved cognitive means, others had some of both. The description of some direct constituents of the phenomenon incorporates these distinctions when they emerge without variations in all participants. However, several of them do not, as the inner dynamic of the phenomenon influenced differently the experiences of each participant. In addition, some of the constituents appeared strongly interdependent with others, in a way that they reinforced each other's meaning. An example of experiential range within a constituent is the perception of an intrinsic beneficial intention involved in the process. This can be apprehended by directly experiencing it, or it can be attributed after a quick process of reflection on perceived aspects of the experience while in it. In the same example, the interdependency among constituents is evident when the perception of a beneficial intention appeared supported by the intimate connection experienced with the curandero. The latter usually involved the experience of the singing as tailor-made for the healing needs of the person.

These considerations about the process-like quality of the phenomenon, as well as the interaction and experiential range of its direct structural meanings, are important to keep in mind in approaching the description of its constituents.

Description of Structural Constituents

This section describes each constituent as it emerged in its most invariant meaning, its structural and psychological variations among participants, if present, and offers examples from lived experiences in order to flesh out its deeper meanings. Constituents are presented in the following order: contextual (process-long and proximal), direct, and integration, each of them keeping their assigned letters and numbering.

Process-Long Contextual Constituents (PL)

PL1—Increased Emotional Tension to Resolve an Unhealthy Personal Condition

Intense healing with an icaro was experienced within the context of a heightened inner tension to finally resolve long-lasting personal conditions perceived as significantly restricting the participant's life. This degree of emotional tension progressively increased until the participant experienced an imminent urgency to resolve its causes.

For B, S, and L, whose conditions were primarily of a psychological nature, this sense of urgency appeared higher than among S and C, whose concerns were primarily, although not exclusively, physical.

B was involved in a trip to Brazil, when he recognized himself in a state and situations that were familiar to him as a street kid with addiction, where he dwelt in a feeling of deep loss of his sense of center and belonging, and was overwhelmed by an overarching desperation at feeling unable to connect with reality. Despite his focused attempts to address his situation, it aggravated to a point where he accepted that old patterns of disconnection and impulsivity from his past were activated, although he had consistently addressed them through therapeutic and spiritual practices in the past:

Every day become a sort of battle like that, of seeing impulsive behaviors, seeing unwieldy explosions of energy, inability to concentrate, spacing out, um . . . my disconnection with my own emotions. It turned out into a purgatory, basically.

B was longing to recover a meaningful connection with himself as he traveled to do inner work in Peru.

D's level of emotional urgency to resolve her situation was similar. In the last couple of years she had been confronted with several significant personal and professional losses and challenges conducive to an existential crisis. She was diagnosed and treated for depression and anxiety disorder. Although also motivated to address her issues in Peru, her primary travel intention was to escape from her situation and be relieved of all responsibility for an undetermined time. After a brief initial feeling of well-being, particular circumstances during her travel strongly confronted her with her underlying emotional condition, which made her firmly re-own her healing intention.

After the divorce of his parents, L experienced a deep lack of a sense of belonging, along with a blockage of his artistic abilities that, in his words, had

been previously: “the engine of my existence.” He seriously addressed these issues for a couple of years, also the purpose of his work in the Peruvian Amazon. As in the case of B and D, L’s emotional tension had increased recently, when he discovered in alarm a deeper foundation for his issues: a basic difficulty in self-expression.

C shared a similar recent increase of emotional tension. He stated: “Each ceremony [at Mayantuyacu] I was presented with various unresolved internal conflicts that I was already aware of at varying levels.” C perceived a pervading emotional load interfering with the quality of his relationships and the effectiveness of his communication, since his teens. Although ready to address those concerns, his main healing quest in the Amazon was to cleanse his body from unhealthy conditions and lifestyles, as well as to release tensions associated with living in a big city. The sense of urgency to resolve his issues appeared lower in C than it did in S.

S had become progressively puzzled in recent years by her constant atypical diseases and the consistent obstacles she had found when attempting to go further into her practice with traditional Amazon medicines. Although questioning herself whether these issues might have had a deeper cause, she was mostly concerned with releasing from her body the sense of accumulation of the previous year’s constraints by means of attending regular ayahuasca ceremonies.

PL2—Increased Awareness of Personal Limitations to Resolve the Issue through Familiar Ways or Patterns

The phenomenon arose in the context of awareness that the usual personal attempts to address the healing concerns had been fruitless. Participants became progressively clear that they had to approach their healing differently in order to bring their issues to a definitive resolution. In the past, they had consciously used personal and professional alternatives to face them, only to find out that their issues were momentarily alleviated, but still present. C's statement exemplifies a missed personal attempt:

I was trying, you know, to work things out [with his mother]. You know, I lived with her the last year. One of the reasons I lived at home was because I had been away for so long and hadn't seen my family, and had always done a lot of traveling when I was younger. I was kind of a rebel teenager. . . . I didn't want to be around the house at all. I wanted to try to be around my family a little bit more. . . . [But] the only thing I can think of to call it is emotional baggage. It's just there, it's there. Yeah? And you feel it.

In addition to other approaches to resolve their issues, B, D, and S had periodically worked with ayahuasca and other Amazon healing plants, but without a sense of resolution. They all attributed these partial positive achievements to a misleading personal approach to the work, thus still holding trust in these ways. In D's case, for example, she understood that she was blindly believing the insights gained in her work with ayahuasca were going to manifest in her life by themselves, instead of assuming that their concretizing required a process of consistent work in daily life.

PL3—Strong Expectation to Resolve the Issue by Experientially Engaging in Traditional Healing Practices

Intense healing with an icaro involved the decision to focus on resolving the healing concerns, and the strong expectation to achieve that resolution by means of traditional Amazon practices. Participants who were foreigners decided to travel and stay at Mayantuyacu for that specific purpose, whereas the participant native to the jungle held a more general, though radical expectation and commitment to the work. S had already decided to give up her profession as a nurse for a longstanding engagement in traditional practices, combining her life in Pucallpa with regular healing stays at Mayantuyacu, and administrative support to the Institute. She held a deep faith in the plants to address her burning physical and emotional problems in general, her current physical constrictions being one of them.

Based on positive personal experience, all participants felt a personal resonance and preference for these ways over others. In addition, B, C, and S had in-depth knowledge about the tradition's healing capacity, and had extensive personal background with their own practices. B stated:

The Zen practice somehow wasn't sufficient to break through the [impulsive] patterns to the bottom. And so, when I first drank ayahuasca about three years ago, I realized these medicines have the power to allow one to work at an even deeper level within oneself than what I was able to reach with Zen meditation. . . . And there is a sense of this being a part of one's path of healing, of work that I was called for.

He added that the only way out he could see from his aggravated emotional condition, was to pursue the "path of the plants." In contrast with B's high degree of commitment to the work, for different reasons, D experienced

doubts about doing deep work in the jungle, going through a back and forth process of being certain it would help her, to fearing it would worsen her issues. These fears dissipated only upon arriving at Mayantuyacu, where she immediately experienced a sense of rightness in being there and an improvement of her emotional state. This was self-confirmatory of the choice she had taken and allowed her to sink into her work.

Whereas L and C had long planned to focus on their concerns specifically at Mayantuyacu, the decision of B and D was contingent upon the aggravation of their conditions while traveling, where they found out about the maestro and his institute. D described part of her decision process as follows:

I was already traveling for two months and started to feel bad again. I said: no, now I have to go to do what it was I came here to do, my work, to work with myself. Go to the jungle, drink ayahuasca and see if I find a solution and not just be traveling, partying, because I came to do a work and I have to do it. I felt that I had to be with myself. . . . For me it's difficult to be alone and like center myself and think of what I have to do and all. And for that reason, I believe that if I came here to the jungle to do a work I was truly going to concentrate on myself, in what I have to concentrate. Therefore, I felt that it was that work that I had to do, and I felt as well that it was a work of being with the plants, with nature.

The meaning constituent of decision to focus on healing issues by means of traditional healing ways was directly associated with the choice of healer and place, which is described next.

PL4—High Valorization of the Healer and the Space he Offers

The phenomenon emerged within the context of feeling a high degree of confidence and reliability in the healer as a person and expert, as well as highly valuing the space provided to do the work. The healer was initially recommended

to participants by persons they trusted, which predisposed them to a positive attitude towards him. Their direct experience with his work confirmed and increased their valorization equally. Based on his first stay at Mayantuyacu, C freshly affirmed: “Juan’s a great person. If I wouldn’t have been able to come across a great curandero like Juan, shoot, who knows. Maybe I’d be in Africa drinking *iboga*.”

Participants highly valued the possibility of being in direct connection with exuberant nature and/or with the type of teachings offered at Mayantuyacu. One or the other, or both, played a main role in their decision to stay and to return in the future. L phrased it in these words:

When I discovered this place, it was like I have to be here. . . . It was like finding a place with a nucleus of people [where] I could say this is my place, it is my school. There is the school of life and the school of plants. This is more than graduate studies. It is another type of study. But the constancy of coming back every year helps me.

Proximal Contextual Constituents (P)

PI—Personal Intention Held for the Ceremony

The healing experience with the icaro appeared to respond to a preliminary expectation for the ceremony, perceived as poignant within the participant’s larger healing process. A psychological variation occurred for one individual, where no initial intention was explicit, and the intense healing with an icaro emerged unexpectedly, even shockingly, although in perfect accord with his larger healing intention:

[During the ceremony] I didn’t feel hardly anything. I went up to go take [ayahuasca] a second time but I missed it. I was too late. And I thought

that was it for me for the night, so I was just going to go back, chill out, practice some icaros and go to bed. Then he [the healer's apprentice] started singing, and that's when it happened. And I was really shocked.

S anticipated a strong ceremony for herself, interpreting unexpected events that prolonged her stay at Mayantuyacu as signs that she had to focus on her work that night. S was aware of a longstanding accumulation of diseases in her body, which she was ready to address by seeking a stronger *mareación* than she had had in the last year during ceremonies. B had a significant dream right before the ceremony, which made him aware he had still not resolved an issue around sexual impulsivity, awareness that he brought in to the session. L held the intention of being fully present to the unfolding of the ceremony, as he aimed to address his issues and had not been able to do so in recent ceremonies, when he had felt discapacitated in varying degrees by the psychotropic effects of the brew.

Rather than entering with a personal intention, D focused explicitly on asking the ayahuasca-being to resolve her specific concerns once the ceremony had started. She asked for a definitive answer to a vocational question she was eagerly seeking and to be released from her pervading anxiety.

P2—Readiness to Release Sense of Control over the Possible Experience

As much as the phenomenon appeared in the context of a particular intention, it also appeared when participants felt ready to release their expectations once the ceremony had started. This was particularly clear in B and S, who associated the possibility of addressing their work with achieving strong psychotropic effects. Whereas B struggled to hold on to his decision of taking an

unusually normal dose of ayahuasca and to trust that the medicine would provide him with a valuable experience, S requested a good amount of it, but ended up surrendering with some reluctance to the willpower of the ayahuasca:

Because even when I took the ayahuasca, normally one always asks for something, right? That it helps us, that . . . I don't know. And the only thing I said was well, I took it, I made some crosses over it and I told her, it will be as you want, you'll see. So as to say, what has to come to happen, let it happen.

In a heart-felt communication with the plant once having drunk it, D directly and humbly offered herself to the willpower of the ayahuasca. These 3 participants subdued their sense of control to the ayahuasca-being, based on their confidence in its higher wisdom.

The release of a sense of control appeared later during the ceremony for L and C. Informed by an earlier experience, L decided to be simply present to whatever showed up for him, assuming that it would naturally address what he needed. Although C did not describe having held a particular intention for the ceremony, he did state that towards the end of a session with no significant inner experiences, he had already completely released his expectations of entering any.

P3—Increased Openness and Receptivity to the Influence of the Singing

Intense healing with an icaro was augmented by an open predisposition to receive the influence of the singing. Although 3 participants experienced the phenomenon during their individual healings, which set up a receptive stance while they were sung over by the healer, the quality of that stance varied. After being called forward, B recognized in himself a sudden positive change, from an

unmanageable state of physical exhaustion and mental restlessness at the beginning of the session, to a nonordinary alertness and focus, which prepared him to receive the individual healing:

As I approached his seat in the darkness I could feel something in my state beginning to radically shift. . . . I was very tired and having a very difficult time focusing that evening. I seem to recall my mind not being able to settle. . . . As I approached his seat it was like the ayahuasca kicked in and I was no longer drowsy, and I was aware of that condition of being *mareado* where the landscape has changed, your senses are just different. . . . I remember I had energy in my body that wasn't there before, so I was able to get up. There was no tiredness anymore. Visually, the darkness was more numinous, it was more alive, like the whole room was, I wouldn't say it was glowing with light but it was more radiant. And I felt different, much more receptive. And ready to go forward.

D felt in a state of calm and openness to whatever she would experience as the song started, while S, overwhelmed by an ongoing experience, was eager and open to receive the healing support of the singing, which she uncharacteristically requested from the maestro. Struggling by himself with a similar situation as S, L found himself trying to keep his focus on the healer's singing, feeling extremely sensitive to the effects of the lyrics on his inner experience.

The majority of the participants were already experiencing an increased nonordinary sensitivity and openness when their experience with the singing emerged, except for C. C's receptivity increased as his attention felt grabbed by unusual qualities in the healer's voice, which were familiar from a previous intense experience with an *icaro*, helping him to open up in anticipation of a radical shift in his inner experience.

Direct Constituents of the Phenomenon (R)

R1—Perception of a Significant Experiential Shift Attributed to the Singing

The phenomenon of intense healing with an icaro started by recognizing that a meaningful shift in the inner experience was emerging, attributed to the current singing. Participants described this shift as starting either simultaneously, or briefly after the beginning of a new icaro. It involved a vision, a physical experience, an insight, and/or an intense emotional opening, associated with the increase of nonordinary sensitivity towards oneself, the surroundings, and/or others. The concept “nonordinary” describes here an unusual perception of the experiential contents, and/or of contents that are not part of the normal flux of awareness in ordinary consciousness, related to the psychotropic effects of the ayahuasca. Participants depicted a nonordinary perception—either physical, emotional, mental, or a combination of them—as a focused yet expanded, integrated, multisensorial, and highly sensitive experience or perspective on a particular content.

L’s experience illustrated the complexity of this shift:

The icaro started precisely at the beginning to say: “Little boy Manuel, what can I give you?” My father came to me. His name is Manuel. And it was like an explosion. . . . It was to break up the circle in which one is trapped, looking and asking the plant and oneself with the head, from the head. And the explosion was in the feelings, it was like to leave a little the head aside and to feel, to use all the senses, to start listening, which was what the icaro brought to me immediately: the lyrics, and to start perceiving my saliva different, the taste my pain had [as he started crying]. Maybe to start seeing in another way, because it was like to out of a sudden open my eyes, see it was night time and that it [a meaningful picture of his father as a child] was the product of a vision, but to enter in my vision, not in a vision as fluorescent, but in a completely real vision. . . . It was a way of remembering, of entering in time, in his time, which I didn’t live, but I could see him, and in my time, where I know where he is.

So, I can focus perfectly, as if I could enter in his territory, see absolutely everything, even with the light off.

Simultaneously, L gained insight that his expressive blockage was inherited from his father's history of suffering in that area as a child.

The recognition of this experiential shift quickly increased the focus and expectation in the unfolding of the singing and in the concomitant inner experience.

R2—Full and Exclusive Engagement in Listening and in the Inner Experience

The experiential shift quickly brought participants to a point of full absorption in the singing and in the concomitant inner experience, as if everything but that had disappeared from the perceptual realm. Absorbed into the profound calm she perceived in the singing, D described her exclusive focus as follows:

It's so tranquil that it is almost a silence. So, when I hear someone with such a calm voice, singing for you, in a situation like this: an icaro, in a session, the ayahuasca in myself . . . I think I receive, it's like I received the energy he is passing, of calm, listening only to what he is singing, nothing else. As if the whole worlds, the rest of the world was in silence and I only heard that. . . . I didn't hear anything else, just the singing and the icaro.

This constituent emerged at its extreme in B and C's depictions, whose sense of an independent self was experienced as subdued into a foreign yet familiar dynamic where singing and inner experience were fused together. B states:

And really it's got nothing to do with emotions. It's got nothing to do with my life narrative. It was an organic thing that was happening. . . . And that was all consuming. I was . . . there was barely even a voice in my head saying oh, my God, this is going on. I just, my ego was kind of swept away.

R3—Apprehension of a Simultaneous Syntonic Unfolding between Singing and the Inner Experience

Along with a full experiential engagement, a perfectly simultaneous attunement and unfolding between the singing and the concomitant experience was apprehended. Borrowing concepts that Shanon (2002) applies to ayahuasca experiences, syntony is understood as the perception of two different events as perfectly coordinated. In this case, perceived musical features stood out in lived experience as perfectly matching and unfolding along with an integrated experience that was predominantly visionary, physical, sensorial, and emotional, but also cognitive—usually in the form of insights. Some of these experiential dimensions dominated others, yet all of them were present in the experience of the participants.

Shanon also uses the concept of synesthesia, which refers to the phenomenon of cross-modal perception. Several participants perceived that particular qualities in the singing perfectly translated into other perceptual modalities. Yet for all of them it was the meaning attributed to the perceived qualities of the singing, in the context of the healing process of the participants, which emerged as significant in lived experience. For example, in L's case, there was no direct association between his inner experience and the perceived qualities of the singing, but with their perceived meaning. L had an inner vision of his father as a child that emerged when the lyrics mentioned what he understood as his father's name. This was conducive to a profound sensorial and emotional opening, and an immediate change of perspective regarding his core issue.

The majority of the participants leaned towards attributing a causal link between singing and experience, though they were aware that their experience with the singing was subjective and probably different from that of other attendees. Only B stated that he could not discriminate whether what was leading his experience as a whole was the singing, his vision, or the perception of organic changes emerging simultaneously and syntonically with each other.

The quote selected from participant D only alluded to a vision that emerged simultaneously with the singing and was perceived as synesthetic, although she also experienced physical and emotional syntony with the singing.

It fit, because he was singing so, so delicately, he was singing low . . . and very slow and very calmly, and the vision I had was exactly like that: the flowers were sprouting [from her brain] very slowly, like at the same rhythm he was singing. Everything was related, like it was the image of the music. . . . I think we talked the other day that the little flowers were very tiny, very delicate.

A more complete description of this constituent is found later in this chapter, in the description of musical perception.

R4—Being Addressed in the Innermost Felt Healing Need in a Novel Way

Each participant in this study experienced the integration of song and inner contents as directly, precisely, and intimately addressing her or his core healing need. In addition, they felt wonder at the new way their own needs were addressed and that they were finally able to access a deeper experiential comprehension of their true needs. Although each participant was aware in differing degrees that they required a deeper healing, it was through this

directness and intimacy that they fully realized that this was exactly the healing they needed. For example, B described:

[The integrated experience] was touching me in a place that I can't give a location for, but . . . felt, or I knew, was essential, and so . . . I was in the session for that. That's what I came all the way to the Amazon for . . . To be healed. To be expanded, to learn about essential underlying places in me and my experience that are always there but I can't always be in touch with. . . . The feeling with the icaro was that it was resolving the issue: the anger, the jealousy, the other things I brought into the session were melting as ossified things that were in my mind. Like I was being washed [of them] and the attachment to them. Attachment in the sense of wanting continuously to negotiate with them, trying to resolve them in some kind of way. The experience was reaching to a deeper place than that. I felt it was soothing the emotions that gave rise to them in the first place and touching them in me.

The integrated experience with the icaro carried C directly into a higher state of consciousness, where he was able to reach a distinctively clear and interconnected understanding of "all his unresolved inner conflicts." A qualitatively different level of physical awareness or proprioception allowed him to experientially understand that his unhealthy habits were perpetuating a familiar mental/emotional state at the base of his conflicts. The element of wonder was concisely given in his statement: "I was really surprised. It was my first experience where I have been taken up there [to such an elevated state of consciousness] since I have been here [at Mayantuyacu]."

S, a native from the jungle, described her surprise, verging on fear and shock, as she felt guided by her experience to discover the underlying reason of her health problems and blockages when she attempted to sink deeper into her healing work with the plants. She recognized she had a *daño*, or witchcraft, whose purpose was to kill her:

With the intensity of the icaro [which was directing her relentless and intensive massaging towards her foot], I could visualize a fishbone in my foot. . . . And when I see the fishbone I got scared because I understand that when one is done that is in order to kill, as it is said here [in the jungle]. . . . I said: my God, I am alive despite this! I thought it was a dream, I thought it was a film, that it wasn't me who was crossing through that. But at the same time I said: my God, thanks! Because I could bear this. And thank you because it's coming out, which is the most difficult, that it comes out.

The feeling of being addressed in the innermost healing need followed a process of progressive awareness that appeared characteristic of the inner dynamic of the experience.

R5—Apprehension of a Beneficial Intention Guiding the Healing Experience

There was an experiential understanding that the healing was beneficially intended by the healer through his singing or by the ayahuasca being directed or supported by the song. This constituent showed one psychological variation in C, where no direct intentionality was perceived. When present, distinctive sensitivity and care was attributed to the process. D summarized her experience of a beneficial intention held by the maestro, by referring to his sensitivity to sing precisely the icaro involved in her healing, and to direct it onto her at the right moment and in the right way. For S, the power of the healer was expressed in the perceived quality of his voice, which she described as conveying a sense that he was clearly, though sensitively, directing the ongoing healing action of the plant in her. S was certain that the maestro knew precisely what she needed in order to go successfully through her overwhelming healing process.

In referring to his experience of being intimately caressed and soothed in his core wounding, B also remarked that he experientially understood he was worked on by the ayahuasca being itself: “as if the icaro and the plant and the images flowing before me were fused in a single movement, and that movement was the medicinal intelligence of the plant.”

R6—Perception of the Singing as Tailor-Made

Whenever there was a perception of intentionality involved in the healing, the singing was experienced as exclusively and intimately tailor-made. L offered the most explicit example of this constituent:

And then it was when this icaro came, that [maestro Juan] sang to me . . . he opened the door for me, he sang it for me, that is, it wasn't for anyone else. I guess, another person may not have even listened to it, or didn't consider it, or was there and said: ah, a new icaro! But . . . it was like if he had taken my shoulder and would have whispered to me, like: take it, this is for you, work, connect, open up . . . And it was demolishing, because as it was, it entered where it had to.

B showed an extreme experience of the component of intimacy in the perception of the singing as tailor-made: his sense of self felt inside the icaro, “as if being sung by it.” This constituent clearly presented interdependence with others already described, namely the apprehension of a healing intentionality, the perception of syntony and synchrony between singing and inner experience, and the experience of being addressed in the innermost felt healing need.

R7—Sense of Intimate Connection with the Healer through the Singing

Whether or not the beneficial intention was attributed to the healer, the singing conveyed in participants a sense of being in constant intimate connection and/or communication with him. This contact was described as sensitively supportive and empathetic, the participants feeling seen by the healer in direct and indirect ways, which in turn increased confidence and trust in him and in the inner process. Such a connection was reinforced occasionally by direct verbal and nonverbal exchanges.

This constituent showed a psychological variation in participant C, for whom the connection with the healer through his singing—in his case, the healer’s apprentice’s singing—was perceived as intense and intimate at the energetic level, yet not personal. This connection was experienced as brusque and brief in the context of C’s healing, as playing just the role of a gateway to a healthier realm of consciousness.

B’s experience illustrates this constituent:

I felt in very deep communication with Juan and that my body was becoming much more settled and open. And I felt like I was, in communicating with Juan, I was very open to the teaching of the plant and the sound of the icaro.

In referring to the way she felt helped by the healer’s singing to cross through her experience, S described an indirect type of intimate connection with the maestro: “All that [dynamic perceived in the singing] was helping me. . . . I believe he knew what my body was going through, the pain I felt.”

This constituent may partially overlap with the one described next, in participants in which the intimate connection with the healer was felt as personal.

R8—Security through the Process and Openness to its Challenges

Healing with an icaro unfolded as a strong inner process that challenged the participants' sense of safety, openness, and receptivity. However, participants had a fundamental certainty that the process in itself was secure and beneficial; this allowed them to remain open to address unfolding challenges. Security was also linked to trust in the healer, his healing capabilities and beneficial intentions, as well as to the perception of being in intimate connection with him.

In some cases, the certainty in the security of the process was strongly challenged. Some individuals were unsettled or scared either by unexpected inner contents or by the quality of their experiencing. However, support, and sometimes also courage to continue, was found within themselves, their experiential realm (for example, well-intentioned spirits), and/or in the healer.

S offered a rich example of this constituent. She was scared and shocked when she realized that she was under the influence of witchcraft, and reached out for help from the healer. He tried to extract the fishbone from her foot, but it broke. As much as S felt validated in her perception and supported by the healer, it became clear to her that he had failed in his attempt, and she felt helpless and terrified. At that moment, she stated:

I felt like I was told: "Well, now it's your turn. You saw it, you have to take it out." And I said: "I won't die. If you [the spirits] made me see I had this, whatever, but I won't die." . . . So I did, and I started seeing curanderos who came to me. I saw curanderos I had met when alive who have already passed away, and they helped me . . . Because I was extremely tired, I wanted to lie down and give up already, because it was something strong I couldn't [deal with]. And they said: "You have to, you can, you can!" They encouraged me, and I felt like they were passing over

my head. . . . And then, I said: “No, if I don’t care for my own curing, there’s no way.” So, I stood up again from my weakness and resumed massaging my feet.

S found resources in herself and within her experience to remain open and actively take on her healing process. Only in C’s case, whose experience of the singing felt completely unexpected and puzzling, his own insights about what he was crossing through, based on a past experience with the icaro of another healer, along with his readings on the subject, acted as referents to anticipate an intense but secure process, and to be open to surrender into it.

R9—Release of Core Unhealthy Conditions

Under the healing influence of the icaro, participants experienced a deep and necessary release of basic conditions related to their core issue, which was considered unhealthy and confining. The release was perceived as simultaneously mental and/or emotional, and physical in nature, which was conducive to intense relief. In addition, it allowed access to a broader perspective of the participation of the person in holding onto those conditions, or having generated, through negligent or unconscious actions, a propitious context for them to manifest. In some cases, experiences of release continued after the icaro had ceased.

An interesting illustration of this constituent was present in L’s depiction. He had been disturbed during the ceremony by an ongoing discomfort in his throat, which escalated to a point where he felt trapped, frustrated, and scared at being unable to clarify and resolve the issue. At the moment his experience with the icaro started and he realized his expressive blockage was inherited from his

father, he started crying out of compassion for him and for his own suffering. L stated:

What the crying allowed me was . . . to loosen. It was to loosen completely, it was like dissolving that knot [in the throat]. . . . If it was made of wood, it was like a sandpaper that started to polish gently all that knot into dust. . . . It was an issue of relief, of release.

L immediately apprehended that the knot in his throat was a physical manifestation of his expressive blockage, which manifested more strongly when his parents divorced, as a defense towards his intense feelings of helplessness. At realizing later that he had difficulties in keeping the connection with his emotional pain and fully surrendering to crying, he became aware he had been defensive also towards connecting with his sensitivity in general. He described that the icaro ended with the phrase, “cry, cry bud, so that pretty flowers can sprout,” which reinforced his discovery: “And that [phrase] is something I am learning now, like gosh, to connect [with myself].”

This constituent did not vary at the psychological level in any participant, although compelling empirical variations were present in all of them.

R10—Restoration into an Expanded Inner Connection

The release of unhealthy conditions led to a sense of being restored back into a broader, fuller, and more genuine contact with oneself and one’s resources. Direct awareness of this experience might have come later within the process or along with the release. For example, B noted that at the same time he felt a deeply held tension being released, his sense of self became fortified and integrated at its foundations. B felt not just fuller, but he also referred to the component of

genuineness involved in this constituent, when he rephrased: “I think you could make it simpler and just say, myself, just being myself.” In addition, he experienced a deep restoration of his sense of belonging to the human family, which broadened his own feeling of human beingness. B attributed to that expanded inner contact his ability to successfully resolve later in the ceremony an old interpersonal conflict that had emerged unexpectedly to his awareness, toward which he usually reacted negatively. He felt he dealt with it coming from a place of compassion and love, where he was able to see the other involved in the conflict as a human being with bad moments, as he has. B’s sense of resolution confirmed his experience of having undergone an integrative healing process of scissored aspects of his psyche.

R11—New Comprehension of the Core Issue and Viable Ways to Address it

An effortless and natural access to a new comprehension of the health concerns was suddenly or progressively made available. Participants also gained flowing insights regarding concrete and viable ways to approach their issues at the ceremony and in daily life. This new comprehension appeared as a clear, broader, and highly integrated perspective on the issue; it was perceived as significantly revealing, and perfectly fitting within the person’s larger context.

This constituent emerged either within the healing process with the singing and/or after the icaro was over, during subsequent experiences within the ceremony. These subsequent experiences were perceived as resuming or unfolding a new aspect of the same core healing theme. Therefore, whether

temporally following the experience with the icaro, or resuming after a short break, they were perceived as a continuation of the same process.

C's account described how this constituent showed up in actual experience:

I knew that my smoking was harming my body, but the actual experiencing of how this was related to many other tensions, and my own level of consciousness was what made it, become a healing experience. I actually stopped inhaling tobacco smoke a week before and smoking entirely several days before. At the moment of this realization I saw, or rather experienced, how my breath was connected to my level of consciousness, energy level, and the tension beginning in my throat and radiating outward. Also with regards to the trigger in my breath. . . . After the icaro finished I smelled Juan and R sharing some mapachos. The smoke hit me and I felt its energy and it was very strong. I realized I didn't need to inhale the mapacho smoke to use its energy . . . it is already there, and that the breath of the mapacho should not be mixed with the breath of life. I was shown that the tightness in my throat was due to poor breath, which in turn was from inhaling tobacco smoke. . . . I said I taught myself how to smoke.

C's interest in using tobacco relied upon his learning process of traditional Amazon healing ways, in which tobacco is used for directing, blessing and activating other plant spirits.

R12—Sense of Empowerment and Confidence of Capabilities to Approach

Positively further Healing

Related to the constituent described above, participants also felt confidence that they could now take on further healing within the ceremony and after it. This confidence appeared in some cases as a deep conviction. When D envisioned her brain blossoming, experienced release of her anxiety, and an infusion of inner peace, she felt certain that she would start flourishing herself. In

looking retrospectively at her experience, she was sure that it was that peace of mind that set up the right inner conditions to “listen” later in the ceremony to a perfectly fitting answer to her urgent vocational question. She also found a renewed enthusiasm and strength to concretize her insights in daily life, as well as to take care of herself by keeping in daily life the state of mind she reached during the ceremony.

R13—Deep Relief and Well-being after the Experience

The phenomenon appeared as a complex healing process with progressive interdependent stages. Relief and well-being were usually experienced in different degrees at the end of each experiential stage, and deeply, towards the end of the entire process. This state was described as physical as much as emotional by all participants, and it involved the perception of lightness, renewal, and ease. Exhaustion appeared along with relief and well-being for B, S and C in different stages of their processes.

R14—Sense of Achievement and Completion

At the end of the healing process, a sense of having been able to successfully cross an intense and deeply meaningful experience emerged as constitutive of the phenomenon. All participants perceived having received or gained something significant for their lives, and had the feeling that the work for the night was completed.

Only B experienced a thorough completion of his healing issue within the experience. The other participants considered it a significant healing opening in their processes, that required yet pointed in a specific direction for personal work.

R15—Emotional Resonance to the Process

This constituent refers to exit emotions at contemplating and experientially absorbing the healing undergone during the ceremony. Participants felt profoundly touched and deeply appreciative of the uniqueness and meaningfulness of it. B, D, and L also experienced awe, deep happiness, and elation. Appreciation took the form of deep gratitude towards the divinity, and/or the plant and the healer, in all participants, except for C. In his case, appreciation is not directed towards an otherness, but to the healing process itself.

Integration Constituents (I)

I1—Engagement with the Experience after the Ceremony

Hours to days after the ceremony was over, participants experienced moments of spontaneous engagement with the experience during the ceremony. Their state of mind and body felt different from the habitual, and they found themselves frequently focusing back on meaningful aspects of the experience. Long-lasting physical sensations and some reactions to daily life events were attributed to the healing emotions participants continue to dwell in; further cognitive processing and insights about the healing appeared as expressions of

this constituent. The description of the following integration constituents addresses specifically this point.

A particularly strong manifestation of this constituent was described by L. He experienced his state of *mareación* (psychotropic effects of the ayahuasca) and a prolonged intense inner work for a couple of days after the ceremony. The same night of the ceremony he was unable to sleep, in deep reflection on his experience, gaining further insights about human suffering. Profound feelings of existential understanding, belonging to humankind, and inner peace accompanied these insights. The following days, L also found himself spontaneously singing the main phrase of the *icaro*, even waking up singing it. He made sense out of this repetitive singing by stating:

So this *icaro* kept repeating for me, it entered my unconscious to be present there [with my father], yeah? How to send him energies, whatever [could be useful for him]. And to not allow myself to keep walking in this [sense of] totality of the end of the session, to keep searching, digging inside, right?

This reminder about his responsibility towards his father's well-being was also accompanied by a strong emotional longing to concretely be with him. One of L's main insights during his experience was his responsibility to support his father's healing process in order to heal his own expressive blockage and feeling of uprootedness.

I2—Further Understanding of Intrinsic Aspects of the Experience

A broader, deeper, and more integrated understanding of the experience was made available to participants through subsequent insights and reflection.

They usually remembered parts of their experience that had been forgotten, and meaningfully connected together aspects of it that had not been seen as such, which led to further insights. Participants described this as still learning from what they went through.

For example, D envisioned a big mosquito buzzing in her brain right before her healing experience. She directly understood it was a symbol of her overwhelming mental anxiety, and asked the ayahuasca to take it away from her. When reflecting back about her experience, she connected the fact that her healing vision occurred also in her brain, which she envisioned blossoming at the rhythm and quality of the icaro, and progressively tuning her into a state of deep physical and emotional tranquility. During that reflective process, D gained certitude that experientially it had felt to her as if the maestro was planting the seeds of the flowers through his singing: the seeds of the peace of mind she was longing for and, the peace of mind she perceived was necessary to being able to “listen” more deeply to the ayahuasca teachings. D realized that during her experience she had forgotten about the mosquito, but in thinking about it after the ceremony, she became aware that it had indeed vanished. This realization confirmed and deepened her sense of meaningfulness of the experience.

I3—Positive Reframing of the Experience within the Larger Personal Context

Subsequent insights and reflection of the experience were conducive to a broader understanding of the significance and value of it in the larger personal context. Participants were able to see that the insights gained applied to broader

aspects of their lives and core issue. They sensed the teachings were pointing towards positively redirecting their fundamental existential stance, which was linked also to their core issue.

C stated that one of his most meaningful realizations during his healing experience with the icaro was that he had a responsibility in all his past interpersonal conflicts. He became aware that his inability to sustain a positive inner state interfered with the way he expected to come through to others, the others perceiving and reflecting that energy back to him. C was later able to connect this insight with his steady marijuana consumption, as one of the factors that had contributed in unbalancing his state of health. He became certain that in holding the perspective and equanimity he achieved in the ceremony, he could have easily prevented unnecessarily painful and irresolvable conflicts with significant others. C further reflected:

It showed me that the key for everything is myself. That I need to work everything inside me first, and clear up everything before I'm going to have . . . the right, the relationships I know I could have, with other people around me. . . . [C came to realize that] problems and conflicts for me stem from the fact that I haven't been balanced, healed. And that's what it has come off from, that's the root.

As with C, S's entire experience led her to a profound life review, where she was able to acknowledge that she had been consistently taking risks and stretching herself for others at the expense of a real sense of self-care and direct care to her family. She was profoundly touched at realizing that, in following that pattern, she had put herself in the situation of receiving the *daño* some years ago. She was also able to relate empathetically to herself in the context of her actual situation during that time. Reflecting on the intensity of her entire experience, she

stated: “Maybe this is what I was needing, besides everything I have gone through, I needed this in order to be aware . . . that I cannot keep with this life rhythm. Now it’s something I feel from within.”

14—Legitimization of the Experience as Intensely Healing

Participants were aware of long-lasting positive changes in themselves, which confirmed the legitimacy of their experience as intensely healing. Those changes were predominantly physical, mental/emotional, or behavioral, although usually all of them were acknowledged to some degree. In addition to their subjective appreciation of changes, participants D, S, and C strengthened their sense that the experience was legitimately healing, in relying upon others seen as authorities in traditional medicine. These people, whether the healer, the apprentices, or older practitioners, attested for their changes or offered insights about the experience that were considered relevant or confirmatory of their own.

An example of this constituent is found in B’s description. After the session, B felt liberated from an oppressive blockage in his ability to perceive the world and express himself, which he depicted as a “membrane” around him. Along with a longstanding experience of an expanded sense of inner/outer connection, he noticed in the days following his healing an unusual flow and easiness in his ability to integrate his experience into daily life, an evolving sense of tranquility, receptivity and humor. B stated, when referring to an emotionally threatening situation he dealt with successfully days after the healing experience:

I think it was the first time in my life where I was able to contain a threatening energy like that and stay grounded and let it pass. Just

completely cleanly, with no trace afterward. So, yeah, there definitely has been something going on. The vision [during his experience with the icaro] was symbolical of something real that was occurring.

15—Sense of a Meaningful Healing Direction to Undertake

Awareness that a significant openness to broader healing possibilities was made available during the experience, contributed to a sense of direction, empowerment, and motivation to pursue concrete action towards a healthier and more meaningful lifestyle. Concrete action was described by participants as the implementation of the insights gained during and after reflecting on their experience, necessary to fundamentally address and sustain their core healing change. Intention and motivation to more sensitively take care of themselves was present in all participants, along with awareness of some personal challenges they would face in order to consistently integrate their insights into normal daily life.

In addition to L's motivation and reflections around possible ways to help his parents and himself to overcome emotional wounds, he felt a deeper call to start developing his healing abilities. During his experience, he acknowledged a longing to being able to help others, and that he was offered the possibility to start doing it. In addition, L felt an urgency to concretely take action to resolve his creative blockage, and started right after the experience outlining a plan to undertake. Through further reflection, he understood that his creativity would be another way to fully give himself to others, as he experienced earlier in his life.

He described:

I was never drawing, like I shielded myself in asking but not in doing. I didn't know what to do. So this was healing because . . . I found the point

where to begin, like the first little step that is always the most difficult one. Then, it's [about] taking the second step and beginning to walk, but the first step puts oneself in a certain direction. Then [in his experience], the direction was set towards curing my folks because I have to cure myself. That is, I need, it is an internal issue already, to unblock this whole story. I don't want to drag it along anymore. And . . . beyond not dragging it, is that I want to offer it, right? I feel in me there's a very big issue of giving, and today what I have is myself. That is, until I learn other things, what I have is what I am. And in what I am there is a strong artistic thing. Therefore, I begin from there.

I believe it is the trigger for other things, it is always there. It's a virtue, a gift that appeared in my life and I don't understand why I have to waste it, not to take benefit of it, yeah? . . . I give myself over when I am in that. So now it will take me a lot of effort to start, I will have to oblige myself a little bit to put, as it is said, "the butt in the saddle," and say: I keep going on. But when I begin to see some results it won't take much to continue, right? I don't like at all to suffocate myself. So, the experience was a healing one for me: it found the core and well, now the path is to see how, in which way I can help in order to help myself, right?

16—Attribution to the Experience of a Key Role in Accessing a Subsequent

Healing Event

Participants had a new significant healing event after the ceremony, where the healing impact of the experience with the icaro was identified as a significant pre-requisite. Through it, participants achieved a sense of deeper completion of their personal healing processes. In terms of meaning, both experiences were seen as connected. The new healing event occurred either during a subsequent ayahuasca ceremony (for participants D and C), during plant dieting (spontaneously for L, and in a meaningful dream for B), or once back in daily life (participant S). It appeared close in time to the emergence of the phenomenon, and before participants had completed the interviewing process.

Among participants, S presented the most dramatic new healing experience, which unfolded right after the ceremony. She attributed this directly to expected consequences after having extracted the daño from her system. S felt progressively overwhelmed and scared by unbearable physical malaise and unusual physical symptoms despite her stoic efforts to overcome them: impossibility to move without intense pain, nose bleeding, high temperature, among others. Once in Pucallpa, she finally surrendered to medical care, which atypically intensified her symptoms, along with her desperation and fear of dying. She was then unexpectedly confirmed and supported by the physician in her intuition of needing traditional medical treatment. S understood that her physical reaction was a quick and strong cleansing of accumulated sicknesses, as a consequence of the release of the daño, and that her atypical intensification of symptoms with the medical care, were part of the usual effects of sorcery that she had heard of. She experientially validated the stories she had previously approached with fascination but did not consider to be true.

Maestro Juan treated her successfully with medicinal plant baths and teas. Terrified to death during a process that lasted over a week, as she started to quickly feel better with the healer's procedures, she gained complete certitude that she had crossed successfully through the extraction of the sorcery that begun concretely in the ceremony. As it was already stated, all this led her to a profound and heartfelt revisioning of her life experiences and lifestyles, and motivated her to take better and more sensitive care of herself and of her relationships in general.

Description of the Musical Perception of an Icaro as Intensely Healing

This section presents the perception of musical features that appeared as distinctively contributing to the experience of intense healing with an icaro. The features are described as they emerged, imbued in invariant experiential meanings; their influence on inner shifts is also described, as is their relations to different structural constituents. Examples of the musical perception are offered within each feature. The features are presented under perception of the lyrics, perception of the singing voice, and perception of the musical dynamic.

It is important to restate that different features emerged as experientially significant for each participant, in that some of them contributed to building up towards the full surrender into the experience, and others—or the same—contributed to their core healing shift. Participants were aware of musical features only when they appeared directly, syntonically, and meaningfully related to the emergence of an experiential shift. The core healing shift was apprehended as significantly influenced by the perception of the singing, but other aspects of the inner experience played a role in the healing as well, as previously described.

Participants were able to identify the icaro from the recording of the ceremony in which the phenomenon emerged with complete certitude. B, D, S, and L recognized it primarily through one or more words in the lyrics that were meaningful for them in the context of their experience. C knew where the icaro was placed in the recording, since he clearly recalled it was the last sung that night. After re-listening to the entire icaro identified, participants confirmed their

appreciation that that was the healing one, by noticing the features that stood out in their experience. Only C stated that his perception of the vibratory quality of the singing voice during his actual experience was stronger than what he was able to hear in the recording, which he attributed to technical drawbacks.

Perception of the Lyrics

The type of perception of the lyrics that appeared significant to some participants was the unexpected recognition of words and/or verses as involving a relevant personal meaning. They felt directly and intimately addressed by the lyrics, and a flowing yet sudden shift in inner experience arose, consistent with the meaning apprehended in the words, as if they were experientially understanding this meaning. The shifts were consistently attitudinal, emotional, and/or visionary. They were experienced as a new opening in the healing process, increasing focus, receptivity, and expectation in the unfolding of the singing and the concomitant experience. All this heightened the person's engagement in the actual healing process.

Additionally, the recognition of meaningful words involved the perception of a healing intentionality attributed to the healer. This perception contributed in building up in participants a sense of being in intimate and relevant healing connection with the curandero, as well as that the singing was intentionally tailor-made for them.

Only fluent Spanish-speaking participants L, S, and D, referred to the perception of the lyrics in the icaro as intensely healing. B, an English-speaking

participant who understood Spanish, identified that the icaro he was sung mentioned the plant he was currently dieting, but he did not acknowledge an impact on his experience, just the facilitation of the process of recognizing the icaro within the recording of the ceremony.

L experienced his healing primarily unfolding along with unexpected phrases or words in the icaro, perceived as imbued with profound personal meaning. The start of the icaro's lyrics marked the beginning of L's intense healing, as the words "Little Boy Manuel, what can I give you?" were experienced as referring to his father, whose name is Manuel. Manuel, an abbreviation of Emmanuel, is also a name given to Christ in the Spanish tradition, which the icaro was concretely alluding to that Christmas night of the ceremony (see Appendixes A and D for full lyrics and description of the healing intention of the icaros from the perspective of the curandero). L felt directly, intimately, and exclusively called by the healer to connect and focus precisely on his innermost felt need of personal work and had no doubt the singing was tailor-made for him. His sense of meaningful healing connection with the healer, safety and trust in him and in his inner process, increased accordingly.

L experienced immediate change from a sense of being caught in unfruitful mental self-absorption to alertness, sensorial expansion, and emotional connection. Simultaneously, L envisioned with unusual realism, a picture of his father as a child. The nonordinary qualities of the vision involved a panoramic, integrated, and profound understanding of his father's suffering and artistic blockage coming from his family history, a blockage which L himself had

inherited from his father. These quotes describe L's emotional response and perception of the vision, in the context of his direct experience of the lyrics:

It is beautiful [L smiles] because there is a picture of my old man when he is very . . . when he is little really, when he had, let's say, an age with which I also identify myself. Like in a stage of mischievousness, of discovery, maybe 10 or 12 years old. A beautiful moment, right?, in which one is very creative and does things and is, that is, one notes in the face a boy awake like that. And that image came to me a bit because just a boy, it was textual, it was "Little Boy Manuelito," something tender, of remembering my father but not seeing him [as he is] nowadays but instead to see the kid inside, that is the boy that suffers . . . That was the image that came but in a flash. It was . . . it was direct, I believe.

It was a context, it was seeing the house where that picture belonged, his home, precisely, where my grandmother lives nowadays, big protagonist in all this, mh . . . Where I also lived, where he always had his wood working shop. Therefore, it was a lot altogether, right? The picture was alive . . . It was simply like I could enter in the picture's expression, in the face's expression. I could . . . inside of that flash that can be three words like "Little Boy Manuel," I was going t-t-t, and before he said this third one and took the step to what it followed, it was like . . . like seeing him and understanding his history, an issue of comprehension.

It is interesting to note that before the icaro started, L felt caught in the conflict between his desire to be fully present to the ceremony and to his inner work, as well as an overwhelming sensation of his throat being knotted and blocked. He was desperately trying to resolve and make sense out of this sensation "from his mind," as he described, when he got the first verse of the icaro, and felt his sensorial and emotional connection opening like an "explosion." His focus and expectation at the unfolding of the lyrics and the concomitant inner experience was described in the following way: "So, it was directly: to see him, to see him little, and to try to listen to what else Juan was going to say, I don't know, as if he sang slower than what he could sing. The

images were faster, the sensations were faster.” He continued to describe his experience with the lyrics:

And right after when he started to say “what can I give you?” it was when I began to question, not so much myself, but rather that . . . Like the question changed. Instead of asking myself what happened to me, why did I have that, why that sensation, it was: what happened to him, why to him, in what way, that it show me why this was the product. It was like to transfer this knot into his history, to understand everything at the same time as an issue that was inherited, something that wasn’t mine. That I had to take charge of it, clearly, from that moment, but [as] if this answer I was requesting was his expression, the understanding that something happened to him there that he couldn’t resolve.

As stated before, L broke into tears of compassion and tenderness for his father and himself, and noted his knotted throat progressively dissolving, which led him to further insights regarding the roots of his expressive and artistic blockage. The rest of his experience revolved around finding ways to comfort and lovingly communicate with his father through a subsequent vision, following his interpretation of the unfolding lyrics—“what can I give you?” Some verses of the lyrics were later experienced as confirmatory of his insights—“cry, cry bud, so that pretty flowers can blossom.”

Despite being aware that his inner shifts emerged flowingly, with no sense of directing them, L was also aware of later mishearing some words of the icaro, in a way that fitted his actual experiencing.

The perception of the lyrics followed the same basic experiential pattern in D and S, although the meanings apprehended in the lyrics appeared to build up towards their core healing shift. D attributed her main shift to the singing voice, and S, to a complex integration of features, in which the lyrics played only a supportive role.

Participant D felt similarly addressed and seen in her healing need by the curandero, as she unexpectedly recognized in the lyrics of her icaro the name of the plant she was prescribed earlier that day by the healer's apprentice. She felt immediate admiration for the high sensitivity she attributed to the curandero, as well as privileged and safe. Her sense of having a personal healing connection with him increased, supported by her perceiving the word *friend* in the lyrics. She felt taken care of by him and treated with precision and loving care, as the diminutives used in the lyrics added to that experience. The word *medicine* focused her on her healing intention. In D's case, the perception of the lyrics contributed, therefore, to build up the perfect conditions for her to be receptive and focused on the singing and to finally surrender to its progressive healing influence.

Interestingly, no cognitive process appeared to mediate the personal meaning L apprehended in the lyrics, whereas D showed some reflective processing after the emergence of the inner shifts experienced with it. This may be attributed to the inner dynamics of her process, but also to unconscious further processing at describing her lived experience retrospectively.

S was already working with a "strong healing energy," attributed to the ayahuasca being, when the song started. As she recognized the icaro calling this being, she experienced a profound intimacy with the icaro, as if it was "of her own." S also perceived her name repeated several times during the singing, having absolute certainty the icaro was precisely intended and tailor-made for her and the process she was going through. The phrases "cure your body, give healing

to your body,” increased flowingly and syntonicly her determination and strength to keep massaging herself. The meaning of the phrases directly translated into a corresponding attitude and action, as if flowingly following an intimate personal command. The flowing emergence of some shifts in D and L also showed similar characteristics. It was the perceived intimate meaning of the words in the context of the healing process that translated into an experiential shift.

As shown, no major psychological variations emerged in the perception of the lyrics, although the experiential intensity and relevance of the aspects involved appeared dependent upon the participants’ healing needs within the context of their actual experiencing.

Perception of the Singing Voice

When the perception of the singing voice emerged as significantly related to the healing, particular qualities in it were experienced as affecting a beneficial syntonic shift in the inner state. The experience manifested itself as a progressive yet swift attuning to these qualities, attributed to the state the healer was in while singing. This led to a change that was consistently emotional, mental, and physical. During that experience, participants apprehended themselves in intimate healing connection with the curandero through his singing. While some of them perceived this connection involving a direct healing intentionality, one did not. Those who perceived intentionality also experienced distinctive care during the

process, and the healer was perceived as being secure and strong, which increased participants' sense of safety and trust.

Only D perceived that her core healing shift was primarily affected by the qualities of the singing voice. C and S experienced this shift through the combination of the qualities they perceived in the voice and the dynamic of the singing, which will be developed later. B referred just to the plain singing voice as increasing a sense of safety in his process and a feeling of being in intimate healing connection with the curandero.

D's experience illustrates the influence of perceived features in the singing voice. At some point of the icaro, she started envisioning her brain cut in half, and tiny flowers sprouting from it slowly and uniformly. She described a synesthetic perception of the singing, in which the slow tempo, low volume, delicacy, tranquility, and security she perceived in Juan's voice translated into the rhythm and shape the sprouting of her vision took. D syntonized with the singing by progressively relaxing physically, emotionally, and mentally. D witnessed this shift in awe, tranquil happiness, and confidence, gaining insight that her life and she herself would start blossoming accordingly. She stated:

The sensation I had was uniform during the entire icaro, especially because of the tranquility of Juan's voice, which is something incredible for me. From the first time I heard him, but in this icaro particularly, he was so tranquil . . . He transmits a security with the voice, like he knows well what he is doing . . . He was singing so, so delicate, low, he wasn't singing high and very slow, and the vision I had was exactly like that: the little flowers were sprouting like that, very slowly, like in the same rhythm he was singing. Everything was related, it was like it was the image of the music. . . . And I remember that, to be veeeery relaxed and like as if my pulse was lowering [D speaks very slowly].

D also referred to the sound and strong smell of the shacapa that the maestro used with her, as contributing similarly to her experience. Interestingly, the shacapa included, among others, the plant she was earlier prescribed, which she was not aware of. The icaro called that plant and the others that constituted the bundle of green leaves:

I think that the sound of the shacapa as well, besides, not only the sound of his voice, for me it had the same vibration. He wasn't shaking the shacapa strongly in my ears, but instead, he was sh, sh, sh, sh, very low. . . . Like it was the wind between the leaves, a little stronger, but if it was that. . . . All, all was an experience of peace of soul and tranquility [D smiles].

D signified her experience as intensely healing in that she was looking to resolve her "anxious depression," as she defined it and was diagnosed with. The symptoms she pointed out were inability to stop thinking, acting, and be surrounded by people, as well as feeling constantly tired, anguished, and trapped. Later, after the icaro, she accessed the vocational answer she had been strenuously looking for, attributing to the state of calm she gained with the icaro the establishment of the necessary inner conditions to be able to listen to that answer, as it was previously described.

Perception of a Musical Dynamic

Sometimes, intense healing with an icaro involved the perception of a powerful and consistent musical dynamic that ended up subduing the sense of independent self into it, and was conducive to a major shift in state of being. This musical dynamic was synesthetically translated into movement and touch. It involved also a strong visionary component unfolding accordingly for participants

B and C, as if the vision perfectly corresponded to the action of the singing. The shift for B and C was experienced as a fundamental restructuring of the psyche/body into a fuller, expanded, and relaxed state of being and perception. For S, the musical dynamic was experienced as syntonically influencing the positive unfolding and building up of an ongoing healing experience, into a moment of revelation and release of a negative condition inserted in the structure of the body/self.

The perception of a musical dynamic did not always involve the apprehension of a healing intentionality. B and S were certain that an intelligence, coming either from the ayahuasca or from the healer, respectively, was carefully and sensitively directing the dynamics. In contrast, C experienced it as an involuntary transmission of healing energy coming from the state the curandero's apprentice was in, embedded in his singing. Nonetheless, in all a deep, intimate contact with the healing drive, multisensorially experienced in the musical dynamic, was present.

B equated his apprehension of a healing drive in the dynamic to the beneficial intelligence and action of the ayahuasca being. He experienced the song "like a living force rather than a song," as he was "being worked on or in deep communication with an intelligence that wasn't human . . . but something definitely other and curative and um, loving." Resorting to a metaphor, at not finding the right words to describe his experience, B continued:

It's like being caught up in a river and the current is carrying you along, and so you are moving with it. It's not like you are stationary and you're experiencing it from your center. You kind of lose your center. You are gone. The icaro is taking you for a ride. . . . I was aware I was seated in

front of Juan and that he was singing, but at the same time, my whole inner landscape was moving. And at that moment I could not have gotten up and walked or something. It was completely impossible. So, I hadn't left my body, but it was almost like I was detached, for sure, from my normal sense of being in my body.

Along with the auditive and kinesthetic perception of the musical dynamic, B had simultaneous inner visions and tactile sensations, all experienced as perfectly integrated and coherent. The vision, while unfamiliar and puzzling, was apprehended organically, as being a living organic process occurring within the structure of his psyche, lifting and clearing out inner restrictions. He summarized this as his own "mind shedding." The tactile and kinesthetic qualities of the musical dynamic were expressed in the following way:

I was like each note was falling upon me gently, you know, so gently, and they were opening me up, my heart area, if I want to locate it in my body, and each thing that he sang seemed to almost tickle me inside, you know, reach inside me and move something. . . . Each thing that he sang being a progression of something that was unfolding. . . . It was kind of being massaged by music in a way. . . . And I felt sort of caressed by the plant. Almost like it was a lullaby. A loving lullaby.

Later in his description, B referred to his sense of self being "sung" within the icaro. He perceived being fundamentally soothed, touched, and restructured at the very core of his emotional wounding as an abandoned child, thus relieved and "saved" from a fundamental anguish, self-constriction, and disconnection, into a state of relaxation, fuller and broader beingness, receptivity, and contact with himself.

C's experience with the icaro started when his ordinary attention and focus felt grabbed by the unusual quality of voice in the singing of the shaman's apprentice. His voice was perceived as tangibly shaky, a little lower in tone, more

nasal and forceful than usual, which C attributed to a state of intense mareación. C rapidly entered into an eidetic imagery of a perceived dynamic within the singing, into which he suddenly experienced his sense of self entirely consumed. He said:

I'm thinking, almost visualizing this icaro in front of me. Like I'm seeing a cyclone and I just feel like this circular, like, waxing and waning of energy going in front of me. . . . When he [the apprentice] was singing, there was no stopping in between the lines of the icaro . . . I don't really know how to describe it, the energy and the force with which he was singing would kind of come and go, and to me it just, I saw it form in a circular motion . . . because it was continuous, he didn't break between the lines . . . [and it was] kind of building up speed.

For the first six seconds I was only paying attention to A's singing. It was like it hypnotized me. . . . I was trying to figure out what was going on . . . Like he was picking up speed for those first few seconds, and then all of a sudden it just, it was like the energy from him in just an instant came off like static electricity. Just rubbed off on me. And all of a sudden it was like I was taken to like his energy level.

In C's experience, the singing was perceived as an integrated dynamic that involved the qualities of the voice, the accentuation and uninterrupted repetition of melodic phrases with renewed strong upheavals and slight wanes, as if building up speed, translated into image and finally, into touch and kinesthetic perception.

The association of particular qualities of the musical dynamic with a integrated multisensorial experience, appeared more evidently in C than in B. C's shift was described as the sudden entrance to a primordial state of being, recognized as familiar, which enabled him to perceive reality pristinely, smoothly, directly, and in complete relaxation. C reported that once in this state of consciousness, his focus immediately shifted from the icaro to his strong physical reactions, which he experientially understood as the urgency of his body to correctly align itself with and support this higher state he was already in. Highly

aware of his body sensations, C experienced a progressive release of tensions, realizing through the process that physical blockages ingrained systemically within unhealthy habits were obstacles in accessing this state in daily life. Once fully in it, C felt rejuvenated, relaxed, and in a stance of equanimity such that he was able to address positively, learn, and finally release emotionally loaded personal material during his healing and life review experience, which was prolonged until the next day.

Different from B's and C's healing experiences, which started with the singing, S was already dealing with a strong "curing energy" in her body. She reached out for support from the maestro, overwhelmed by the intensity of her process and her physical exhaustion. The singing dynamic was apprehended as carefully supporting her in going through that process, and directing it to reaching its pivotal moment, where she discovered the fishbone in her foot. S perceived a consistent alternation in the volume and accentuation of the voice, as a beneficially intended musical dynamic, which conveyed that the healer was in sensitive connection with her needs:

When it was very low the healing was like lowering, and when the maestro elevated his voice, it was like the energy rose, an energy within me like of curing. [Telling S] that I had to take out everything that should not be there, like if my body was rejecting some things. . . . At the same time, when he lowered [the volume], for me it was also good, because it is, like it gives you more tranquility. . . . Because the pain I was feeling also lowered and like I could take a breath in order to bear the next phase of the curing.

And I felt that the voice, the words, the rhythm he was singing it in [the icaro], a little higher, lower, singing it like for the curing not to be too strong for me. It was like everything was helping me. I believe like he was managing the icaro. I believe he knew what my body was going through,

the pain I had. . . . Because in that moment I was concentrated in what he was singing, in the icaro.

Although S's perception of the curing energy was already present before the icaro started, the singing dynamic was experienced as synesthetically increasing and decreasing the sensation of that energy in her body, and as directing it. The multisensoriality of the dynamic emerged from the concomitant experience of these consistent alternations of volume, the syntonic meaning apprehended in some phrases, and the perception of firmness and focused direction in the singing voice. She described her curing energy as "an energy that was moving through me, as if searching for something," and that obliged her to massage her body. So, kinesthetic, tactile, and auditive components appeared as integrated in the perceived singing dynamic, although they cannot be just attributed to the singing. In addition, even if S definitely experienced full surrender into the musical dynamic, her sense of the self appeared less radically subdued into it than in B and C.

With the support of the song, S perceived the energy focusing on her right foot, where she found the bone, instantly understood it was sorcery, and went through an emotionally strong process that finally allowed her to fully extract it. She experienced intense cleansing and relief, but the actual completion of her healing process into a sense of expanded and relaxed self occurred later, by the events that were precipitated after the ceremony, which were already described.

The Phenomenon in the Context of the Larger Personal Healing Process

In the present study, the phenomenon of intense healing with an icaro in an ayahuasca ceremony appeared as a pivotal moment within the ceremony itself, as well as in the larger healing process of participants. It has already been explained that the phenomenon emerged as dependent upon contextual factors conducive to the intensification of the participants' focus on bringing their process to a resolution, by means of traditional Amazon medicine with maestro Juan at Mayantuyacu. Integration factors appeared to be necessary to re-signify the experience as intensely healing in ordinary context, within the larger process. The meanings in these factors were considered part of the structure of the phenomenon, as they supported and allowed a deeper understanding of its direct constituents. Their psychological and experiential variations provide a source of data from which individual psychological dynamics playing a role in the participants' core healing issue can be identified.

This section aims to shed light on a psychological finding that appears as intrinsic to shaping the individual variations of the phenomenon and is, therefore, interesting to consider. From a psychological point of view, experiential and psychological variations in constituents among participants emerged as perfect expressions of their background, inner conflicts and needs. However, the individual shape the healing took not only reflected the person, but appeared to perfectly, creatively, and wisely address the underlying psychological conflict she held, bypassing defensive mechanisms. Since a full analysis on this matter

transcends the purpose and delimitation of the present study, only one example will be developed in order to sustain this statement. The variety and richness in which this appeared in all participants deserves further study.

As described by B, his psychological dilemma was rooted in the trauma of being separated from his family by his mother at an early age and left in a children's shelter. In order to cope with profound feelings of abandonment, ostracism, fear, and unworthiness, he developed defensive mechanisms he discovered later were still encrusted in his personality structure, and emerged under conditions that potentially involved the threat of re-experiencing those same feelings. These mechanisms expressed primarily as alienation or disconnection from his core sense of self, reality, and others, as well as impulsive destructive and self-destructive behavior. Consequently, his commitments and intimate relationships were compromised, and deep anxiety and addictive patterns appeared as pervasive. He also referred several times to feeling unsettled in his body.

B's healing experience was characterized by the apprehension of a loving, caring, and beneficial intention of a non-human otherness intimately touching, soothing, opening him up, and restructuring him organically in his core wounding. He described the feeling of being tenderly caressed by the singing, as if it was a "loving lullaby." His concomitant vision was of an alien and foreign landscape he was organically connected with. The singing voice of the healer was perceived as a resource for safety in surrendering to the process. One of B's main exit

emotions was a profound gratitude related to a sense of having been redeemed by this otherness.

Psychologically, it appears that his deeper need was to feel intimately re-encountered, acknowledged, loved, and soothed maternally in that aspect of his psyche that was wounded as a child and consequently, emotionally scissioned. Metaphorically, he was met in his longing to be taken back home, to be saved from the helpless situation he had felt himself to be in, which his own hard attempts to overcome had failed to achieve. It is interesting that the otherness in B's experience didn't take a concrete human shape but the one of a transcendent, puzzling, highly sensitive and intelligent being. The symbolic quality of this otherness seemed to offer him enough trust and emotional safety to allow his receptive surrender into the intimacy and foreignness apprehended in the process. As in Ariadne's thread, he also needed the security of the connection with the world as known, attained through the singing voice of the healer. Through the action of the symbolic, organically experienced other, B himself became a numinous home-host, fuller, broader, more integrated, simply and genuinely himself, as he described.

Interestingly, before reaching a full sense of completing his healing process, B went through three more stages, where he was challenged with the reemergence of emotionally threatening personal contents he started to address more actively. First, he found himself overwhelmed by sexual fantasies and agitation after the core healing shift was experienced. B attempted to cut those off by refocusing on his inner process, just to find himself back into a similar

visionary landscape. This time, it was not a solitary landscape, but inhabited by unseen benevolent entities that directed him to put those thoughts, which he attributed to his core unsettledness, in a sealed box. He flowingly followed their instructions and experienced a sense of final yet unimaginable closure in dealing with energies felt as no longer needed. Again, in trusting the otherness, he found support in metaphorically handling his issue instead of cutting it off, as well as confirmation that it was over.

Second, B returned to a similar landscape where after slight disorientation, he knew he was required to take something of the virtue from in order to ground himself, which he concretely did by taking a stone and a pinch of sand. Symbolically, he seemed to be bringing back to ordinary reality the healing that occurred in the alienated territory of his psyche, and the possibility of consolidating it in everyday life. Finally, once the psychotropic effects of the ayahuasca were felt diminishing, B was able to approach differently and give a positive closure to an old recurrent and bothering resentment towards a fellow student, which came unexpectedly back to his memory. This final experience was attributed significance, in that it was felt as a confirmation that a new and meaningful possibility was available to him in dealing with such issues from a genuine place of love and compassion instead of anger. He was capacitated and enabled.

This sequence suggests that the integration of B's healing experience with the icaro started to build up within the process itself, which also emerged in the other participants' experiences.

As explained in this example, the shape each element of the experience took, including musical perception, visionary contents, and sensations, among others, seems perfectly designed to transcend defensive mechanisms and reach the person's healing need at a deeper and profoundly meaningful level. The lived experience was multisensorial, offered access to a broader and integrated perspective, and was highly emotional. The possibilities these findings open up for psychotherapeutic and healing purposes are huge, and merit further serious research, as does the integration process that follows, which will be addressed, among other considerations, in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The discussion in this section is oriented by the two main research questions in this study: (a) What is the basic phenomenology of the lived experience of the icaros as healing? (b) What are the particular perceived musical features involved in the experience of the icaros as healing? First, general aspects regarding the emergence of the phenomenon among the studied population are addressed, including reflections on the processual quality of its emergence. Second, the phenomenon is discussed by groups of constituents, some of which are reorganized under relevant themes, according to the general sequence of appearance of constituents in lived experience, as expressed by participants: set and setting, direct experience during the ceremony, and integration. A preliminary model of the direct experience is delineated within that subsection, followed by a discussion on the musical perception of the icaros during the healing experience.

Finally, clinical and research contributions are outlined, and suggestions for further research are presented. A summary of the results is found on pages 78-80.

On the Emergence of the Phenomenon

As remarked upon in Appendix C, supplementary data were collected during the field study stage of this research, which allowed for an initial mapping of the frequency of occurrence of the phenomenon under variables of site, sex, and age. A distinction was made between attendees to the ceremonies and

individuals, since the number of attendees to the 37 recorded ayahuasca ceremonies was not the same as the total number of individuals who attended them. This means that the same individuals might have participated in more than one ceremony. Among a total of 239 attendees, intense healing with an icaro showed a frequency of 5.4%, while among individuals, the phenomenon was reported by about 1 of 4 (23.9%).

Shanon (2002) describes a predominance of visionary experiences over other perceptual modalities, hence, it was expected that the phenomenon under study would emerge less frequently than other possible types of ayahuasca experiences. In addition, the research focus and design addressed a complex type of ayahuasca experience, where two phenomena that can be experienced independently, namely healing and musical experience, were asked to be simultaneously present, interdependent, and attributed intensity.

In a general sense, it is possible to state that all ayahuasca experiences are potentially healing. Nonordinary states of consciousness, particularly in ritual context, provide favorable conditions to allow the sense of self to expand to new, broader, deeper, and/or subtler realms of direct experiencing and processing beyond defensive patterns, where unconscious material may be positively integrated (Grof, 1992, 2000; Winkelman, 2007a). However, the awareness of these experiences as healing does not necessarily emerge immediately. It may manifest later, at perceiving longstanding or transitory changes in oneself (House, 2007; Villaescusa, 2006), or more commonly, after integrating them, as pointed out by several authors (Bravo & Grob, 1989; Fericgla, 1999; Giove, 2002; House,

2004, 2007). In the present study, the experience of healing sought was one that participants would perceive directly, strongly, and unequivocally as such during a recorded session and would report shortly afterwards, independent of its subsequent impact in daily life. The goal was to get fresh lived experiences that would minimize variables of distortion of information due to memory loss and integration processes.

On the other hand, experiences with the songs are normally varied and not necessarily directly related to healing. Several attendees to ceremonies offered informal accounts of experiences with the icaros that were not signified as healing. These accounts show consistency with some of the ascribed functions and effects of icaros in ayahuasca ceremonies. For example, often attendees described their experiences as being organized or led by the icaros, which addresses the structuring or orienting functions of these songs (Giove, 1993; Dobkin de Rios, 2006; Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971). They also reported an increase and decrease in psychotropic effects with particular songs, as described Luna (1984, 1992) and Luna and Amaringo (1991). Synesthesia appeared for several attendees in the form of visual formations and colors following the rhythm and tempo of a song (Dobkin de Rios, 2006; Shanon, 2002). Some of them described the experience of polyphony contrasting with the solo singing voice of the ayahuasquero, which correspond to one of the types of ayahuasca experiences with music, as stated by Shanon (2002). In terms of contents perceived as led or structured by an icaro, several attendees referred to going through mythological sequences, journeying to foreign places, transforming into animals, and

communicating with particular beings. These contents have been described in specialized literature without a direct association with songs (see for example, Andritzky, 1989; Harner, 1973).

In these ways, the songs appeared to be experientially significant at different moments of a ceremony for many individuals. This coincides with Shanon's broader findings (2002): "Indeed, in all contexts of Ayahuasca use, it is very common to hear drinkers of the brew declare that the music they heard sung during a session had a pivotal influence on their experience" (p. 310). The fact that in the present study this pivotal influence was experienced as healing by participants appears sustained by variables of set and setting, among others involved in the particular structure of meanings constituting the phenomenon. However, it is not unthinkable that individuals more sensitive to aural stimuli or with a predominance of a perceptual auditory modality over others may have been more prone to healing experiences with icaros.

Special attention was given to the possible influence of research procedures on predisposing attendees to ceremonies to experience or report the phenomenon. Potential participants were informed in advance about generalities of the study, and their willingness to contribute was found ample. Interestingly, the report of healing experiences at Mayantuyacu occurred 2 to 14 ceremonies after the information about the study was delivered. In contrast, each ceremony presented at least one experience at Takiwasi, where the number of attendees was significantly higher in that site than at Mayantuyacu. As discussed in Appendix C, other variables associated with the subculture of Takiwasi may have also played a

role in these results. It is likely that variables related to the larger healing process of participants had contributed to their readiness to experience icaros as healing. In both sites, several participants stated having heard in previous ceremonies the same icaros with which they experienced intense healing, but without a direct healing result. This possibility, supported by meaning constituents of the phenomenon, is addressed later in this section.

In summary, the phenomenon under study is a complex type of ayahuasca experience, whose particularities emerge less frequently than other possible types. It is not possible to be conclusive whether research procedures did or did not influence attendees to experience the phenomenon, yet variables constitutive of the phenomenon itself appear as strongly sustaining its occurrence.

A Process within a Process within a Process

Healing with an icaro during an ayahuasca ceremony emerges as a dependent phenomenon. For participants in the present study, this healing was significantly embedded in a meaningful moment and context in their lives, and kept unfolding after the ceremony. So, context, experience during the ceremony, and integration seem inseparable: the meaning structure of a unified phenomenon emerges from all these factors.

The phenomenon is also dynamic in that it emerges as a sequential unfolding of events in time, each group of factors entailing its own inner process. In this way, it can be described as several processes embedded within one another and informing each other at a meaning level—hence its richness and complexity.

Basically, contextual factors were experienced as unfolding and interplaying in the build up towards the healing experience in the ceremony. The experience with the icaro also built up as a progression, and stood out as a pivotal moment in the unfolding of a significant healing process during the ceremony, one which usually transcended the time of exposure to the song. This healing process not only makes sense within contextual factors, but the shape each experience took seems to have responded to deeper unconscious personal dynamics involved in the participants' core healing issue.

After the ceremony, the healing was reframed and revalued within broader contexts by all participants. So, integration constituents emerge as part of the phenomenon, and as necessary to confirm, legitimize, and resignify the meaning of the experience in ordinary consciousness. These constituents also appear to have played a role in the selection and meaning attributed to contextual factors. As contextual factors were expressed in this study after the experience had occurred, they can be seen as part of the effort of participants to integrate their experiences.

The constituents of the phenomenon, separated in groups according to their experienced unfolding, shed light both on some of the particularities of their processes, as well as on their inseparable interplay. These distinctions seem particularly important in attempting to understand a phenomenon that implies the experience of transitioning through different states of consciousness.

Context: The Issue of Set and Setting

The hypothesis of set and setting (Grof, 1980; Leary et al., 1964/1983; Metzner, 1998, 1999; Strassman, 2001) states that variables of mindset and of the external context of a psychedelic experience may primarily determine its outcome. The results of the present study suggest that this mindset builds up over a long-term period conducive to the intensification of the participants' focus, motivation, engagement, and trust of bringing a meaningful healing quest to resolution within this particular setting. This mindset informs specific expectations and intentions for the ceremony that may or may not coincide with its specific outcomes, but directly address the greater healing expectations.

Consequently, variables of the participants' larger healing process may be playing a role in the emergence of the phenomenon. The process seems to have followed a progression that made them ready to experience a healing breakthrough in their respective ayahuasca ceremonies, either attributable to the larger traditional treatment they were involved in at the Institute and/or to other processual factors. The material was pressing to be released, and the "inner radar" operating in expanded states allowed it (Grof, 1980, 2000). It is interesting to note that although several participants were familiar with the icaros of maestro Juan, during their healing they experienced them as radically different: as gateways reaching precisely and directly into their core issues. Consequently, the perception of the icaro appears to be related to the participants' readiness for a breakthrough.

The attribution of intensity to the phenomenon appears related to the participants' experience of having been addressed in their innermost felt healing

need—their main healing quest—in a direct, precise, and new manner. Drawing a parallel between a traditional treatment and a psychotherapeutic process, a pivotal moment in therapy may resemble a healing breakthrough in an ayahuasca ceremony. Von Knorring-Giorgi (1998) describes this phenomenon in therapy. In it, contextual factors lead to focus on an intention, and to the motivation and decision of entering therapy. The setting is experienced as safe and valuable, including the relationship with the therapist, and the intra- and interpersonal process evolves until the client reaches a moment of significant change of perspective or insight regarding his/her core issue. Similarly, in a long-term traditional *vegetalismo* treatment, along with processual aspects, it may be expected that the determinants of outcomes in ayahuasca ceremonies would rest more strongly on the larger mindset and appreciation of the setting than on the ones made explicit right before a ceremony. Some of these aspects in psychedelic-based therapies have been addressed by Grof (1980) and Passie (2007), among others.

Another consideration is the sense of familiarity with the setting. Participants in this study were experienced, knowledgeable, and confident in the traditional ways as held by the maestro. Except for participant D, whose stay at the Institute was relatively short, the rest had developed a long-term relationship with him. Nonetheless, all of them perceived the maestro as a reliable healer and trustworthy person, and had confidence in the effectiveness of their treatment. As in psychotherapy, in psychedelic treatments the strength of the therapeutic alliance is seen as a strong predictor of success (House, 2007). In addition,

participants in the present study were familiar with navigating under ayahuasca effects, with other vegetalismo practices, and with the larger cosmology involved. Their familiarity and confidence in the larger setting appears to have influenced the value and meaning individuals attributed to the ceremonial context and to predispose them to a receptive mindset towards the experience. While holding an initial intention for the ceremony, most participants expressed their willingness to surrender to their experiences as they would unfold, which may have been also related to their positive outcomes (House, 2007; Marsden & Lukoff, 2007). A few participants reached intense experiences with a mild dose, an evidence of experience with the brew (Mabit, 2007).

According to Goldsmith (2007), in psychedelic psychotherapy preparation and knowledge, mindfulness and intentionality, openness and receptivity to whatever is encountered, highly influences the sense of safety, outcome, and lasting value of the experience, even “on a just-noticeable dose” (p. 121). In addition, support from experienced guides minimizes fear and fosters beneficial outcomes. The author adds: “Mindset is perhaps the single most important factor in determining the outcome of a psychedelic experience. More influential than setting or dose, set trumps all, because it determines the phenomenology or direct internal experience of those other factors” (p. 119). Even if Goldsmith refers to the tribal or religious context of intake as a secure and shared container for the experiences, in his more hybrid equation he does not address the significance of being a participant in a shared cosmology where the relationship with the setting, including the substance, is sacralized or revered.

Based on their experience with the brew, several of the participants in the current study described an intimate, spiritual relationship with the plant, perceived as a beneficial living being with whom they could communicate and were willing to surrender to by trusting its higher purposes. For them and for other participants in whom this relationship was less evident, the intimacy, confidence, and honoring of the maestro's subtle abilities acted as a container to remain open to the experience and feel secure throughout its challenges, yet this container had a quality of being blessed. If we accept that set "trumps all," in this context—and maybe others—we must not forget that set is an open and dynamic mind frame that transcends the individual confines when affected and modified by the otherness, particularly when subdued by an experience of the presence of a numinous other. If not, we may fall into the psychological solipsism that everything is reducible to functions of the mind, which closes precisely the door of refreshing Mystery that these substances are attempting to keep open.

The Direct Experience of Healing With an Icaro

The healing during the ceremony presents a dynamic that transpires from the way participants experienced and related to the contents of experience throughout the process. With individual variations, this dynamic moves from receptivity/communion, to activity/integrative autonomy. The first pole appears predominantly under direct exposure to the singing signified as healing, whereas the second emerges more strongly afterwards. It seems important to recall that all participants perceived their healing as a unified process, whether it unfolded

entirely under the influence of the icaro, as with one participant, or it kept unfolding after it.

Participants experienced a core healing shift consistently during exclusive engagement in the icaro, when the contents of experience were predominantly physical, emotional, and metaphorical in nature. The healing significance, and on a few occasions deep insights, emerged from direct experience and. This may be described as an experiential immersion in emergent unconscious material, due to the synergistic combination of singing and rise of psychotropic effects (Fachner, 2006a, 2006b).

As the process unfolded, participants became aware of the emergence of direct personal contents related to their healing issue. They also experienced a more active participation in processing (Mabit, 2007) and integrative understanding (Winkelman, 1995) accompanied by unexpected insights, solutions to their main healing problems and ways to address them concretely (Mabit, 2007). This phase was experienced as completing the healing process, and participants who experienced it after direct exposure to the singing, consistently attributed it to the healing impact of the communion with the icaro.

For discussion purposes, a tentative model of the direct experience of healing with an icaro is presented in four stages that organize its meaning constituents, keeping in mind the dynamic described above. The stages are absorption into the singing or “the mermaid’s singing effect”; apprehension of the healing process or “communing”; perceived healing outcomes or “returning home”; and exit states or “the hero’s reward.”

The Four Stages of Direct Experience

Stage 1: The Mermaid's Singing Effect

In Homer's mythology, the sirens' singing is lethal when it seduces and absorbs the listener into forgetting his human limitations. The mermaid (also called *sirena* in Spanish), is a double-edge character in vegetalismo cosmology (Luna & Amaringo, 1991). Her singing, among other qualities, may put the listener under a spell, yet it may also provide healing. It is in this healing sense that the term is used as the title of this stage.

The results of the present study show an experiential progression into full absorption in the icaro: receptivity, discrimination of an experiential shift attributed to the singing, increased focus and expectation, and surrender. While the majority of participants held the expectation of being positively influenced by the healer's singing before the main icaro started, its perceived influence on the inner experience was usually unexpected. The reactions towards this experience fluctuated between being surprised, disoriented, and/or pleased. Nonetheless, the quality of the perceived shift was felt as personally significant enough as to capture the focus and heighten the sense of expectation in the simultaneous unfolding of experience and singing. While this seems to follow the usual patterns described by the psychology of expectation (Huron, 2006), it is interesting to note that the quick, sometimes instantaneous assessment of the shift as highly significant contributed to the surrender of participants into its unfolding, even if unpredictable and/or emotionally charged. Participants felt that something of utmost healing importance was being touched and opened up in them, even if

most of them were as yet unable to identify what it was. As described by Shanon (2002), enhanced conferral of meaningfulness to contents under ayahuasca effects may emerge directly in experience, without cognitive mediation.

Participants experienced themselves quickly “taken over” by the process, where there was no other choice than to follow the stream of events. Complete and exclusive engagement or absorption into the unity of singing and concomitant journeying followed, which coincided in all participants with a rise, sometimes dramatic, of the psychotropic effects: thus, the mermaid’s singing effect (“sirens,” in Fachner, 2006a). These moments of deep absorption in lived experience under ayahuasca effects have been described by Mabit et al. (1991), Luna and Amaringo (1991), and Shanon (2002). They represent the very essence of highly focused states of consciousness such as trance states (Pilch, 2006; Rouget, 1985). Although the experiential unfolding varied among participants, this moment appears as an expression of unitive phenomena (Merkur, 2007).

Stage 2: Communing

The apprehension of perfect simultaneity and syntony between the unfolding of singing and inner experience during absorption was one of the most salient constituents of the healing experience, within which the core healing shift was consistently experienced. As stated before, the unfolding of the healing usually extended beyond the direct exposure to the singing. The complexity of this stage, supported as well by other constituents, is addressed here under three

main themes: dimensions of communion with the singing, apprehension of the process, and causal attributions.

Dimensions of communion with the singing.

During absorption, the mind-body unity, and in two participants, the core sense of self, were experienced as resonating, locked, or subdued into the singing. Among participants, this “communion” with the singing appeared simultaneously, engaging several experiential dimensions along the process, yet in diverse degrees within individual differences. These dimensions were sensorial, mostly proprioceptive and kinesthetic, visionary, emotional, and cognitive.

The majority of sensorial experiences were apprehended as unfolding syntonically with perceived musical features such as pace and intensity, and their emotional qualities, such as delicacy and refreshment. In addressing synesthetic phenomena in ayahuasca experiences, Shanon (2002) states, “auditory stimuli may (literally) move one, shatter one, induce physical sensations in the inner parts of one’s body” (p. 190). These sensorial experiences also remind one of the concept of sonic-entrainment (Goldman, 1989; Hoffman, 1994; Leeds, 1999), the active physical phase-locking of two oscillators, where one of them overpowers the other until the point that the two rhythms become one: the embodied singing subduing the participants’ body-mind.

The visionary experience of the singing confirms the normality of aural to visual synesthesia under ayahuasca effects (Dobkin de Rios, 2006; Luna & Amaringo, 1991; Shanon, 2002). Several participants described that the rhythm,

movement, and general flavor of their visions appeared to correspond perfectly with the qualities they perceived in the singing. This may sustain the appreciation of several authors that the icaros “direct” the course of the visions (see for example Giove, 1993). Even if some participants associated musical features with a few qualities in the form their visions took, the visionary contents were generally not experienced as shaped by the singing, which coincides with Shanon’s findings (2002). Visions were apprehended as metaphorical (see House, 2007) or literal constituents of the deep personal healing process unfolding in syntony with the icaro, hence their experiential meaningfulness and emotional impact.

Insights also emerged mostly ingrained in the complexity of the healing process, although some participants apprehended parts of the icaro’s lyrics as highly meaningful and attained insights and/or experienced concomitant emotional responses. It has been held that music does not directly convey meaning, but does elicit emotions and feelings (Pilch, 2007). In this context, where experiential dimensions were thickly intertwined in direct lived experience, it seems arbitrary to separate singing from meaning (see also Bonny, 1978).

Although an attempt has been made to analyze separately the experiential dimensions involved during absorption, its essence lies in the communion with the icaro at levels where the sense of self seems to be “singing” along.

Apprehension of the process.

For participants in this study, the experiential communion with the singing was apprehended as deeply intimate, addressing directly and precisely the core healing quest in a new way, one that put them in touch with what they really needed to resolve their issue. Thus, this sense of intimacy seems to have emerged simultaneously from an experience of being profoundly met by the singing, and meeting or engaging from a deeper and more genuine place of awareness of oneself. The experience of coherence and cohesion of self under psychedelics described by Merkur (2007, p. 196) resemble the depiction of participants in this study. It is possible to think that the synergistic combination of singing and psychotropic effects (Fachner, 2006a, 2006b) suspended the usual defense mechanisms (Grof, 1980; House, 2007), thus allowing the release of the unconscious integrative striving (Walsh & Grob, 2007; Winkelman, 1997a) manifested in coherence and cohesion of self. Supporting this view, additional findings in the current study suggest that the shape each experiential content took, including musical perception, was perfectly designed to transcend defense mechanisms and reach the healing issue at a deeper and more profoundly meaningful level (see Chapter 4). This would have contributed to perceiving the icaro as “tailor-made,” sensitive and caring, by most participants.

Although not exempt from challenges, all participants apprehended the process as fundamentally secure and beneficial in itself. This seems to have been reinforced by the experience that resources were available to support them when unsettled or scared, either resources within themselves (see also Marsden &

Lukoff, 2007) and/or in their experiential realm of the “otherness” (for example, spirit helpers and the healer). So, intimacy with oneself and therefore, with one’s resources, often included the experience of close, supportive relations.

The whole experience may be explained by self-healing mechanisms activated in an integrative mode of consciousness and by the mind set to engage in certain types of experiences (Winkelman, 2007b). However, that different moments or the entire process were experienced and signified by participants as relational, and most of the time intentional, opens up further considerations.

The most evident expression of the process as relational is found in the perception of the singing. In the majority of participants, the singing conveyed a sense of being in constant intimate connection and/or communication with the healer, with the exception of one participant for whom the singing was not intended to be personal, yet produced a strongly intimate and brief connection with the healer at the energetic level. For the rest of participants, through the singing, the healer was perceived as an intimate witness and co-participant in the inner process, who most of the time empathetically and sensitively supported them into and through their healings. In turn, this increased confidence and trust in the healer as a resource and container, and seemed to have had an effect on the apprehension of the process as beneficial and safe.

As described by Bonny (1978), singing “touches areas of deep relationships and tends to encourage feelings of closeness and humanness, and, especially when positively oriented, can establish a reassuring and comforting mood (p. 32).” Rittner (1996) adds that prosodic distinctions support emotional

communicational processes. It is to be expected that under ayahuasca effects, these distinctions were perceived more intensely and full of interpersonal meaning (Shanon, 2002).

Several authors refer to the use of suggestive maneuvers on the part of the healer to promote feelings of safety, comfort, and surrender in attendees in ayahuasca ceremonies, particularly through singing (Dobkin de Rios, 1972, 2006; Shannon, 2000) but also whistling (Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971). However, the direct relational aspect is just overviewed. In this study, it is not possible to determine whether the relational perception of the singing was due to the participants' process, to the precise intention of the healer, or both, yet any relationship involves a similar dilemma, particularly in its nonverbal expressions.

It may be expected that an experienced curandero would be highly sensitive to the state of his clients under ayahuasca effects, that he would care about their processes and well being, that he would do his best to support their experiences through conscious and intuitive actions, and that it all would be reflected in the qualities of his singing. Part of this is supported by the description of the healing intentions maestro Juan held for each participant during the ritual in which the phenomenon emerged (see Appendix D). It is also likely that participants in the intimate setting of individual *icaradas* were more suggestible to the influence of the healer, and the healer more focused on the particular needs emerging from their processes, although this same quality of intimacy was experienced by one participant in group context. In this case, the perception of

connection with the healer may have been predominantly affected by the participant's inner process itself.

Besides these considerations, the mindset of all participants was aligned with an explicit relational setting in the context of their healing commitment to work with the maestro, which the communion with the singing recalled.

Causal attributions.

In trying to understand more deeply the phenomenon of healing with an icaro, it is intriguing to consider, how did participants in this study attribute their healing to the singing, and what was their perception of what or who led that process?

The majority of participants leaned towards affirming that their healing was due to the singing, attributing to the healing outcomes of the communion with the icaro their access to a state of mind and material that completed the process. In addition, for the majority, this healing communion rested on the apprehension that a beneficial intention was guiding the process and was expressed in the singing. This intention was attributed either to the maestro or to the ayahuasca being's action, directed and supported, or expressed by the maestro's singing. In other words, during communion, most participants experienced the healing sustained by a beneficial source other than themselves.

It was already mentioned that several participants began their session by communicating to the ayahuasca being and surrendering to its higher purposes. Their relationship with this being may reflect their experiential immersion in the

vegetalismo cosmology, where the brew appears as a teacher and a healer, and is revered as such. This cosmological approach to the brew has been extensively addressed by specialized literature (Andritzky, 1989; Chaumeil, 1993; Dobkin de Rios, 1984; Metzner, 1999; Lamb, 1974; Luna, 1984, 1986), and it is also present in the Brazilian churches (see Fonseca Rehen, 2007; Labate, 2004). Shanon describes (2002) how ayahuasca contents can be guides and teachers with human features, including “mother Ayahuasca” (Luna, 1984), from whom one receives knowledge or directions. Mythological or phantasmagorical beings and creatures are also possible contents of experience. In addition, among the transcultural traits of the ayahuasca experience that are independent of set and setting, Shanon (1998) describes the experience of receiving cognitions and emotions from the “outside,” i.e., from an unspecified other beyond oneself.

Whether the experience of ayahuasca as a transcendent teacher and healer belongs to the particular effects of the substance on experience, or is a psychological construct of self-healing or integrative dynamics (Passie, 2007; Winkelman, 2007b), or expresses a subtler reality made available by the brew, transcends the purpose of this study. Whatever the case may be, it is of utmost epistemological interest in understanding vegetalismo cosmology, the reception and nature of the icaros, and experiences with subtle beings in Westerners relatively foreign to this cosmology, which is the circumstance of the majority of participants in this study.

The point that concerns us, though, is that the phenomenon of healing with an icaro emerges as a relational process, most often supported and intended within

a relationship perceived as intimate and beneficial: with the singing, with the healer through the singing, and several times with the ayahuasca being or other spiritual entities. As described above, the treatment's set and setting is explicitly relational, which would support the perception of the healer's singing as expressing a particular healing bond. Added to that, it is likely that the singing itself would act as a strong referential force perceived as independent, though deeply embedded in the inner experience. This consideration is based in Giove's (1993) point that singing is the dominant perception of the ritual setting linked to the usual plane of reality. Evidently, the sympathy and familiarity of participants with the vegetalismo cosmology and the effects of the brew set a precedent of openness to relational experiences. The healing phenomenon seems to be set up as communal. This has therapeutic and clinical implications that are treated later in this chapter.

Let us briefly consider the relational aspect in C, the participant who did not experience a personal intended connection either with the healer or with the ayahuasca being. His healing relationship was established with the healer, not with the apprentice whose singing elicited the phenomenon in him. One may say, therefore, his mindset was not explicitly open to the apprentice's influence. However, this changed as the quality of the apprentice's singing captured his attention from the beginning of the ceremony. The experience was described as an involuntary energetic transmission of the apprentice's unusual state of mind onto C via the singing, similar to an entrainment process (Leeds, 1999). The moment of communion was experienced accordingly, and was unexpectedly and

overwhelmingly intimate. C adds: “[It was] Like N [the apprentice] brought me to his energy pitch because I didn’t have that energy that night. But he did.” The relational aspect of the healing was also present in this case, yet not attributed direct intention.

Stage 3: Returning Home

What are the experiential outcomes of the healing? The results of this study show four interrelated outcomes in all participants: release of core unhealthy conditions (Villaescusa, 2006); restoration into an expanded and more genuine connection with oneself and one’s resources (Giove, 2002; House, 2007; Villaescusa, 2006); new, integrative insight of the core issue (House, 2007) and of viable ways to address it (Marsden & Lukoff, 2007); and readiness to approach positively further healing (Mabit, 2007). While individual variations were broad, there was a tendency for release and restoration to occur mostly under direct exposure to the icaro, while new insights and readiness emerged often afterwards. This is in alignment with the inner dynamic of the process described earlier.

These results are consistent with the usual healing outcomes found with psychointegrators in general (Winkelman, 1995, 2007a) and with ayahuasca in particular (Mabit, 2007). Particularly noticeable, though, is that in the current study the de-conditioning process was experienced primarily proprioceptively and kinesthetically. Most participants associated the release of deeply held physical tensions with the melting away of well-established psychological patterns and

habits directly linked to their core healing issue. This association emerged from an experiential integrative understanding of the process (House, 2007).

Shanon (2002) and Villaescusa (2006), among others, report that proprioceptive sensations are enhanced under ayahuasca effects. In addition, the “purging” effects of the brew have been linked to catharsis and abreaction of stored psycho-emotional material (Giove, 2002; Mabit, 2007). The majority of participants in this study did not experience evacuation, yet they experienced the releasing effects similarly, and at a pace that allowed them to recognize the process as the physical expression of the release of self-imposed habitual responses. This access to their psycho-physical symbolization process (Fericgla, 1999; Villaescusa, 2006) was attributed deep healing meaning.

Unlike the others, S’s experience was intensely physical. Her physical health issues were attributed to a daño discovered and released during the session. However, during the process of releasing, she also gained insight about meaningful psychological and behavioral patterns in herself that provided the conditions for this daño to occur. The fact that S’s experience was markedly physical compared to the others, may reflect culturally-specific conditionings, yet it may also reflect other findings about the healing process. These suggest that its form and shape sensitively deals with possible defense mechanisms underlying the core issue of each participant, in a way that set nonthreatening conditions for participants to acknowledge and re-own some of them from a freer and deeper place.

The liberation of restrictive egoic patterns was accompanied by feelings of expansion, relief, and more genuinely being oneself (House, 2007, Mabit, 2007)—or “returning home” (Bustos, 2006). Sometimes, participants perceived access to an integrative mode of consciousness (Winkelman 2007a, 2007b) during the release and as a consequence of it. All participants described that at some point of the process, they saw different dimensions of direct experience and psychological contents as pristinely clear and meaningfully interdependent (House, 2007). There was no effort associated with it, just a natural flow that allowed access to new insights and understandings regarding the core healing issue, which appeared as full of meaning and new possibilities.

Another interesting outcome of the healing process were insights regarding how to concretely and effectively address the core healing issue and its related dynamics (see also Marsden & Lukoff, 2007). A sense of empowerment and enablement to take on one’s own healing process followed, which can be seen as a preparation for a subsequent implementation stage in ordinary life (House, 2007).

Stage 4: The Hero’s Reward

The entire process during the ceremony results in deep relief, well-being, and a sense of personal achievement and completion, as if coming out of a huge endeavor successfully (Shanon, 2002). This shows some similarities with the rewards of the hero’s journey elucidated by Campbell (1968).

Although participants had a sense of completion, they usually sensed as well that the healing process opened a door to a larger healing they will have to face with the resources gained. This resembles the hero's process of bringing back the elixir into ordinary life. As said, participants felt refreshed, empowered and enabled to face the next steps which, rather than as a burden, appeared like a new journey to undertake. This exit state may also facilitate subsequent integration and implementation processes (House, 2007).

Other significant exit emotions were related to an experience of inner tenderness, elation and deep gratitude for the meaningfulness of the healing. Elation and gratitude were often connected to a spiritual source, as if having been blessed. Paraphrasing Loewald (in Merkur, 2007, p. 196) "the healing process is intrinsically and inalienably mystical."

Singing and Healing Experience

This section addresses the perception and attribution of healing to musical features that stand out for participants in their experience. The discussion includes some findings of the formal musical analysis of the icaros (Appendix A), the healing intentions of the healer (Appendix D), and reflections on the healing functions of icaros during ayahuasca ceremonies.

The perception of meaningful musical features is inseparable from the meaning structure and dynamic of the phenomenon. In other words, musical features were not perceived as a discrete aesthetic category, but as directly, syntonically, and meaningfully associated with the healing process. Some of these

features were described as supportive of the healing, facilitating full experiential surrender, and others—or the same—as contributors to the core healing shift.

Nonetheless, all of them effected syntonic and synesthetic changes in the inner experience perceived as beneficial. What features were perceived and how they were signified varied among participants; therefore, common aspects of the perception of the lyrics, voice, and the musical dynamic are addressed in this section.

Shanon (2002) describes that under ayahuasca effects, text and verbal utterances in the music often gain deep meaning. Participants in this study who referred to words and/or verses in the lyrics that were significant in their experiences, showed a shared pattern: the meaning of the lyrics was directly apprehended, it was unexpected and personally relevant, and was perceived as intended by the healer to directly address the participant or his/her issues. This type of perception of the lyrics catalyzed flowing experiential openings and insights syntonic with immediate needs, reinforced the sense of safety, bonding and communication with the healer, as well as immersion in direct experience. For instance, the phrase “cure your body,” was perceived by S as a message of encouragement from the healer to keep working hard on her inner process: she felt seen, and responded according to the command.

When the core healing shift was attributed to the lyrics, the meaning apprehended emerged as a deep experiential insight that unfolded in multiple dimensions of experience. Indeed, the semantic of the explicit meaning of words was selected and personalized in the context of the emergent inner material and

the suggestibility to the healer's influence. This appears to have had a more immediate impact on experience than nonverbal musical features. Nonetheless, some participants also related the meaning apprehended in words to prosodic distinctions perceived in the singing, i.e., to how the healer said it, particularly through nuances in volume and accentuation. In this case, the perception of the lyrics became a verbal communication.

Only fluent Spanish-speaking participants referred to aspects of the lyrics as significant in their experiences. Even if the two English-speakers understood Spanish, they only mentioned nonverbal aspects of the musical perception as relevant, i.e., the voice within the gestalt of a singing dynamic. As described below, this type of perception was attributed expressive meaning, thus entailing communicational content. It may be that for English-speaking participants, the cognitive effort required to follow and translate the lyrics into personal meaning was undermined by the ayahuasca effects. This raises the question whether the frequency of the phenomenon under study is or is not altered by the familiarity with the language in which the icaros are sung. This is an interesting subject to explore in future studies. A broader understanding of the possible ways in which the phenomenon emerges in lived experience may be achieved by comparing its constituents between native and non-native speakers.

Similar to the perception of the lyrics, when meaningful, the musical qualities of the voice or the musical dynamic were consistently attributed expressive meaning. Participants understood that the voice or the singing dynamic communicated the healer's inner state and/or his beneficial intentions and actions,

or those of the ayahuasca being: the singing was secure and strong, caring and delicate, tranquil, opening, directed the plant, and touched lovingly. The qualities perceived in the voice were mainly supported by certain characteristics of tempo and volume, yet for one participant it was the unusual timbre and resonance of the voice what expressed the state of *mareación* the healer was in. As already addressed, the majority of participants perceived the singing voice itself as conveying a sense of intimate bonding with the healer, thus increasing their feelings of safety and trust.

In general, these results are supported by evidence on the effects of vocal music. This type of music usually evokes deep interpersonal material (Bonny, 1978), can convey a sense of emotional communication particularly through nuances in prosody and loudness, impact the experience of psychological closeness (Rittner, 1996), and offer signs of the psychological and physiological state of the singer (Goldman, 1992; Thompson, 1999; Tomatis 1991). It seems clear that a number of other factors converged as well, such as when participants detected relational and expressive meaning in the singing. As stated earlier, the healing context was set as relational, and in general during the rituals the singing becomes the main relational tool of the healer and the main concrete perceptual referent for participants. The psychotropic state participants were in may have enhanced these perceptions and the general effects of vocal music on experience, as well as affected the valence of cognitions and emotions related to it (Shanon, 2002). The healer and/or the ayahuasca being, voiced in the singing, became key agents in the healing.

An interesting aspect of the singing that appears as sustaining the core healing shift of participants is the experience of consistency and the recurrence of musical features in time, which imposes itself or settles into a syntonic change in the inner state. For example, for D, the singing was consistently delicate, tranquil, and perceived as safe, and features of low volume and slow tempo reinforced that appreciation. She experienced her core healing as a progressive mind-body tuning into these characteristics. S perceived recurrence in the form of regular alternations of volume and accentuation, whereas for C, it took the form of an uninterrupted repetition of melodic phrases with a characteristic accentuation, which became stronger and quicker in tempo over time. These perceived patterns quickly imposed themselves upon the mind-body unity, resulting in an experience of structural inner change that was signified as healing. Release and restoration, as described earlier, were part of this type of healing experience.

Dobkin de Rios (2006) states that under ayahuasca effects the ayahuasquero's singing has an imposing quality over the senses and promotes the structuring of the experience. This structuring function of music in general is well described in specialized literature (Bonny, 1978; Hoffman, 1994; Thayer Gaston, 1968/1993). The effects of music on the body-mind unity are also extensively addressed. For example, evidence shows that the cerebellum, a region of the brain that plays a crucial role in the integration of sensory perception and motor control, synchronizes its activity with musical rhythms and tempo (Levitin, 2006). According to Rittner (1996) and Taylor (1997), singing reception affects breathing patterns and muscle-skeletal tonicity. Thus, the core healing

experienced by participants as an integrated tuning to the recurring or consistent qualities of the singing was likely supported by psycho-physiological responses to the singing.

Growing evidence on the matter would suggest that this attunement was facilitated by two physical mechanisms of sound/music: resonance and entrainment. Constancy and recurrence of musical or sonic features are basic conditions for these mechanisms to act. Resonance is the physical process by which a sounding object makes a second one sound as well if calibrated at the same vibrational range (Gardner, 1990; Leeds, 1999). Sound healers are exploring how sonic resonance may dissolve and release physical and energetic blockages when their vibratory frequency is matched (Edwards, 2000; Perry, 2002; Thompson, 1996). This is based on the assumption that the body-mind functions as a unity constituted by resonating sub-systems (McClellan, 1991). During the stage of communion with the singing, participants in this study experienced release of core unhealthy conditions and a sense of being restored back to an expanded self. Among other factors involved in such experience, it is possible to hypothesize that the singing, via the mechanism of sonic resonance, played a role.

Entrainment, on another hand, is the active process of mutual phase-locking of two oscillators until the point where two rhythms become one (Hoffman, 1994). Entrainment follows three rules: resonance, power—the first system must have sufficient power to overcome the second, and consistency—the first system must be at a constant frequency or amplitude (Goldman, 1989; Leeds, 1999). Sound healers present interesting evidence about the influence of this

mechanism on brainwave coherence and inter-hemispherical synchronicity through sound/music (Leeds, 1999; Thompson, 1999). In this study, this mechanism may have been involved in experiencing simultaneity and syntony with the singing, of being locked-in and absorbed in it.

D's case allows a brief illustration of a possible action of entrainment. The qualities she perceived in the singing were consistent with her experience of feeling more and more relaxed, as if her pulse was lowering: "an experience of peace of soul and tranquility." In sinking deeper into her experience, D realized that her anxiety was released and that she was back in the inner state she was longing for. Interestingly, the tempo her icaro was sung at differed from those of the other participants in that it slowed down progressively, and was indeed low in volume and fairly expressively uniform (Appendix A). Gardner (1990) and Schroeder-Sheker (in Leeds, 1999) utilize a progressive deceleration in musical tempo to entrain breathing and heart-rate into slower rhythms. The binary rhythm of the icaro, easier to process by the cerebellum, and characteristic of these physiological systems, may have contributed to such an effect (Levitin, 2006; Taylor, 1997).

The perception of constancy and recurrence is consistent with the general rhythmic and melodic structure of the icaros, as shown in their musical analysis (Appendix A). The results of this analysis suggest strong similarities between the musical features of these icaros and those of other types of music cross-culturally identified as supportive of trance states (Fachner, 2006a, p. 22): constancy and

monotony, simple forms with minimal variations and many repetitions, no exact motives but step-by-step progressions, and a narrow tonal range.

Musical analyses of icaros conducted by Brabec (2002) and Katz and Dobkin de Rios (1971) show consistency with the common musical features identified in the icaros in the present study (Appendix A). Particularly interesting to discuss is their type of melodic variations. The icaros presented a large amount of minimal variations within the short motifs constituting their melodic phrases, as well as variations in their strophic structure. Participants did not attribute these variations as perceived: it was the gestalt of the icaro what appears to have stood out in their experience. Levitin (2006), among other authors, would understand this perception of a musical gestalt as a natural phenomenon, where listeners tend to complete or generalize musical stimuli into familiar forms.

It is also possible to conceive that there are underlying reasons for the use of minimal variations in icaros. One possibility is that, even if not perceived by participants, these variations would act subliminally in their processes. The entrancing effects of the icaros' perceived gestalt would promote entrainment and a sense of familiarity with the song. The simultaneous presence of subliminal variations, hence, of unfamiliarity and unknown territory, would generate a paradoxical effect in the mind of the listener. This paradox would allow the opening of unconscious gateways for the inner material to find new alternatives and unique forms of expression among the alternatives presented by the musical variations. This concept is similar to Katz and Dobkin de Rios's jungle gym (1971), yet it goes beyond the assumption that the mathematical structure of the

icaros provide with a variety of culturally shaped alternatives of inner experiencing. In contrast, it is based on the premise that in expanded states of consciousness, the processing of subtle external musical stimuli—the variations, could meet and could provide to emergent material a range of alternatives for configuration, while the awareness is entranced under the dominance of a perceived musical gestalt.

Another interesting consideration about the possible effects of the musical features of the icaros on the inner process is that they are consistent with archetypal musical parameters, as described by Benenzon (1998) and Benenzon et al. (1997). Among these are: a binary rhythm, a pentatonic scale, small progressions that resolve in the tonic, and repetition. Under the psychointegrative effects of ayahuasca, the icaro's archetypal features would meet more easily the deeper layers of sonic identity of a person. This may wake up primary experiential patterns where the individual and the collective, the mechanical and the generative, the human and the spiritual, encounter each other. Beyond the cultural diversity found in trance and shamanic music, these universal parameters are generally shared (Fachner, 2006a; Pilch, 2006).

Another topic for discussion in this study is whether there was a straight intentionality in the healer's singing. What is clear through the maestro's narrative (discussed in Appendix D) is that he knew where each participant was and what they needed in their larger healing process before the ceremony. Most noticeable, he also held a specific healing agenda for some of them which he transmitted through the icaro that was perceived as healing during the ceremony. In addition,

he was sensitive to signs of openness and receptivity to that song on the part of each participant, which gave him feedback about its effectiveness.

Appendix A shows that the icaros sung were invocatory of medicinal power-beings, and involved a rich inner imagery for the healer in which he called, praised, and invited these beings to dance and act beneficially upon the patient. The way the healer selected or created the right icaro to sing was a combination of following orders of the spiritual realm and his own appreciation of the healing needs of participants (see Bustos, 2006, on this theme). So, agreeing with Niemeyer (2006), it is possible to state that during these healing ceremonies the leader experiences his self scissioned, thus simultaneously inhabiting, acting upon, relating, and bridging two intertwined domains of existence: the spiritual and the human. And so does the participant: he wanders in the depths of his own Mystery while holding onto the singing—as if to Ariadne’s thread, the link to this plane of reality and relationship.

We may conclude that a healing intention and different levels of communication were expressed in the healer’s singing, and that they were more or less available to the participants’ direct experiencing. Inevitably, for the healer, as well as for participants, the specific form and meaning they took appeared to be shaped by the dynamics of their own processes. We must agree with Stroebel (in Fachner, 2006a) who, referring to music and trance, states: “Strictly speaking, it is not only the sound, but the therapist via the sound who affects the client, and the client re-influences the therapist with his responses” (p. 31). In sound-healing practice, holding a healing intention while working with a client appears to be key

for the experiential attunement of the client and consequently, for the effectiveness of the treatment (Gardner, 1990; Schroeder-Sheker, in Leeds, 1999). In ayahuasca ceremonies, as they appeared in this study, this seems to perfectly fit the healing equation.

A tangential point in the phenomenon under study that deserves some consideration is the role of the plants the icaros addressed, in the healing experience of participants. While Mabit (in Bustos, 2006) describes some of the psychological healing effects of dieting with particular plants, *vegetalistas* in general tend to emphasize the physical effects or access to spiritual knowledge these plants provide. In this study, the majority of the healing icaros sung to participants addressed either the plant they were currently dieting or the plants that would have a direct action on their immediate needs. Curiously, the outcomes of the healing experience expressed symbolically the physical or spiritual effects attributed to those plants. For example, the *Came Renaco* is used to restore and fortify joints, bones, and skeletal structure. The icaro of this epiphytic vine was part of the healing experience of two participants that were dieting it, and the experience was one of deep restructuring of their psychological foundations (refer to Appendix D for the reasons for using particular icaros with other participants).

We can speculate that the icaro, conceived in *vegetalismo* as the embodiment of a spirit power (Luna, 1986), entails a specific healing action that is experienced idiosyncratically when the patient is ready. It may manifest physically and psychologically in a particular way. Certainly, the psychological healing that particular plants can provide, as well as the plants through their

icaros, is an unknown yet fascinating territory that deserves investigation. An in-depth psychological study on these themes could reduce the gap between the cosmological understanding of the icaros in vegetalismo and the current scientific paradigm of the West.

Integration

Literature on the psychotherapeutic use of psychedelics consistently addresses the need for an individual to integrate the experiences into the view of self and the world in ordinary consciousness (Bravo & Grob, 1989; Grof, 1980, 2000, 2007; House, 2007; Marsden & Lukoff, 2007; Passie, 2007). In the phenomenon under study, integration constituents emerged as necessary to confirm and legitimize the signification of the experience as intensely healing after the session.

House (2007) proposes a useful distinction between integration and implementation. Whereas the first involves cognitive and usually emotional processing, the second is behavioral, aiming to congruently concretize the learnings of the experience into one's own life. Implementation, or "long-term integration" (Marsden & Lukoff, 2007, p. 303) may last from days to years. The results in this study show that, in differing degrees, both processes were present in participants during the period of time the interviewing process lasted.

Specifically, the results suggest that integration began within the experience itself, when egoic aspects started to reconstitute after deep experiential engagement. Bravo and Grob (1989), House (2007), and Marsden and Lukoff

(2007) found similar results towards the end of a psychedelic session, where the effects of the substance decrease and the observing mind is restored. In the present study, the dynamic of the healing process showed a progressive contextualization of insights into broader personal contents, often accompanied by reflection, attribution of meaning, and increased directiveness over the material presented, usually towards the second half of the ceremony. The possibility of consciously participating in one's experience is characteristic of the ayahuasca phenomenon (Fericgla, 1997; Shanon, 2002), and may be conceived as a movement towards integration (House, 2007). Insights regarding concrete healing directions to undertake were experienced by participants as suitable, empowering, and enabling, which could be also seen as a mindset's preparation towards implementation (Marsden & Lukoff, 2007). In this respect, Mabit (2007) states:

He (the drinker of ayahuasca) can actively intervene in his internal process and thus return as the direct protagonist of his treatment. This provides him with a notable improvement in self-esteem and a powerful sense of self-confidence over that which he has discovered, generating motivation to implement the changes necessary in his life. (p. 95)

Integration constituents expressed internal, relational, and behavioral processes. Internal constituents referred to staying with, understanding further, and resignifying value to the experience. For hours and days after the ceremony, participants felt experientially engaged with the state and contents of the healing, as if still partly in an expanded state. Jansen (cited in House, 2007, p. 179) coined the term "Pandora's box syndrome" to describe the tendency of psychedelic experiencers to stay with the material beyond the actual session, an expression of the difficulty of holding it in ordinary consciousness. Yet, this staying with the

material may act as well as a drive for integration. In dwelling with their healing experiences after the ceremony, participants processed it further: they recalled forgotten aspects of it and made meaningful connections among contents, which led them to more insights and *learning*--a term used by the majority. Journaling and sharing appeared also supporting this processing. A part of standard integration procedures in psychedelic treatments (Passie, 2007), journaling is neither explicitly encouraged nor discouraged in traditional settings. While it seems to have been a well established routine in Western participants to help them metabolize their experiences (also in House, 2007), sharing is the way the native participant naturally followed--maybe due to cultural differences.

Integration constituents include personal considerations regarding the value of their experience in their larger healing process. Participants shared a sense that the teachings indicated that a fundamental existential stance, linked to their core healing issue, should be reoriented. They reframed their experience, resignifying it as profoundly meaningful within broader contexts. The healing was also legitimized at identifying concrete positive changes attributed to it, such as consistent shifts in emotional and mental states, sometimes expressed in new behaviors in facing concrete challenging situations. These shifts are consistent with short-term after effects of ayahuasca experiences in nontraditional settings, as found by Villaescusa (2006).

Interestingly, this legitimation of their healing experience was also based on the occurrence of a subsequent healing event shortly after the ceremony while participants were dieting--where it occurred spontaneously or in a dream, were

back in daily life, or in a subsequent ayahuasca ceremony. They directly attributed this experience to the positive effects of their healing with the icaro, and perceived it as a continuation and completion of that process. Indeed, in the context of an ongoing psychedelic treatment and congruent mindset, the healing is likely to unfold coherently with previous experiences in sessions (Passie, 2007) and afterwards (Mabit, 2007).

The support of significant others in honoring and valuing psychedelic experiences has been described as an important ingredient in retaining insights and implementing them (Stolaroff, 1993, 1999), something which occurs naturally in social contexts where the use of these substances is legitimized (Andritzky, 1989; Goldsmith, 2007). Participants in the present study had their mindsets aligned with the setting provided, and among its many benefits, this setting offered supportive interpersonal resources: a relatively stable community of peers (see Mabit, 2007, on this theme), the healer and his apprentices, and an ongoing practice (refer to Goldsmith, 2007, on this topic). Participants shared their experiences informally, which was perceived as supportive of their processing, and some of them also resorted to others to whom they attributed more authority in these traditional ways, to get their opinions, support, or confirmation of their insights and appreciation of changes.

The interviewing process was also perceived as a resource for integration. It seems that not only the written report and sharing were important, but also the container of a time and space where interest, active listening, and empathy were provided by a researcher who, in addition, was perceived as an experienced fellow

practitioner. This container resembles in some ways the benefits of an individual therapeutic setting for integration of psychedelic experiences, as described by House (2007).

During their integration, participants reinforced their sense of having a meaningful healing direction to undertake. They felt empowered and motivated to pursue concrete action towards a healthier and more meaningful lifestyle, while they also held awareness of challenges to face once back in their usual life contexts (also in Villaescusa, 2006). Their motivation to implement their insights, the intensity and impact of an experience perceived as a response to their healing quests, and the supportive setting that participants in this study had, may increase the likelihood of long-lasting changes solidifying in their lives (refer to House, 2007).

Clinical Contributions

The phenomenon of experiencing healing with an icaro in an ayahuasca ceremony contributes to the understanding of the therapeutic potential of the vegetalismo setting and may shed light on the therapeutic use of music in nontraditional ayahuasca rituals and in psychedelic psychotherapy in general. An effective clinical use of ayahuasca in the West, besides the need for an acceptable legal support and professional regulations, may highly benefit from the accrued knowledge of these traditional practices.

Goldsmith (2007) has already made an attempt to synthesize basic guidelines for set, setting, and integration that would support a therapeutic

outcome from psychedelic sessions. He based this synthesis on accrued lessons from psychedelic psychotherapy and on the knowledge of indigenous cultures that use entheogens. Most of these basic guidelines were naturally present in the vegetalismo setting selected for this study (see also Mabit, 2007), with which participants were familiar. Factors such as the previous commitment to a larger therapeutic context that was highly valued and perceived as supportive, a positive relationship with the healer, the participants' motivation and expectation to resolve a relevant long-term health situation, as well as their familiarity with navigating under ayahuasca effects and with the ceremonial situation, all appear to have set up favorable general conditions for the phenomenon to emerge and for positive integration to unfold.

The question about integration and implementation of the healing benefits of the experience into their usual contexts remains open, and is especially intriguing in the case of participant foreigners to the jungle. A longitudinal study would definitely shed light regarding the long-term impact of this experience and of its integration into the mind frame and lifestyle of the West.

Besides these general considerations, the vegetalismo ritual use of ayahuasca, in which the singing of icaros is a key constituent and a therapeutic tool for the ayahuasquero, entails interesting clinical implications. The current study has shown how the singing voice created a relational bridge with the client and provided support to fully surrender to the inner experience. It described as well that healing was experienced with an icaro when there was a moment of absorption or lock-in between the perceived attributes of the singing and the inner

experience that generally unfolded into new healing openings. This moment shows characteristics of a unitive state of mind (Merkur, 2007): the singing was experienced in different ways as a perceptible expression of a beneficial otherness that was intimately acting with, within, and for the person. This unitive moment may have acted as a corrective experience in itself, in that the feeling of being reached, seen, allied with at such deep intimate and meaningful levels of identity would have finally allowed the unlocking of deeper inner healing resources, as Goldsmith (2007) suggests. Interestingly, it was usually after this moment when participants started moving into more autonomy/interdependency in their inner processes.

If any type of music would be used in nontraditional ayahuasca sessions for therapeutic purposes, direct singing appears to provide some of the richest possibilities: it can be directly intended to a particular person, modified according to feedback signs, is most likely to convey a sense of human contact and support, intensify feelings of safety and deep meaning in participants, and offers therefore a sensitive processual structure around which the inner experience can be organized and unfold in time. Besides their subtle expressive qualities, the musical characteristics of the icaros provide guidelines of the type of singing that may have the best therapeutic effects: constancy and recurrence within simple melodic forms with minimal yet constant variations, narrow intervallic distances, a moderato tempo, a simple binary rhythm, a pentatonic scale, among others already described. Basically, therapeutic singing in ayahuasca sessions should include the simple archetypal musical features that have been described as

supportive of trance states cross-culturally (Fachner, 2006a) and that icaros share. We have proposed earlier the possible role of minimal variations in allowing the structuring of new emergent material into consciousness.

Yet, we have to take into consideration that it is not just the singing what appears to have been effective, but the singing in a particular context and moment of a patient's inner process, adequated and intended to meet his/her healing needs, a singing that comes from the transformed psyche and spirit of the healer (Halifax, 1979) and from his prepared body (Mabit, 2003). If we consider these facts, we have to accept that there is more involved in singing than a healing technology to promote and manage therapeutic states of consciousness under psychotropic effects (Dobkin de Rios, 2006): the singing involves the complexity of who is the singer and how is he/she prepared to deal with the intricacies of the healing situation at relating with the client. The singing then, becomes a healing art, an embodied practice.

Research Contributions

The exploratory character of the current study, on a phenomenon that had been not systematically addressed by other researchers, was subject to several delimitations and entails limitations that were explained at the end of Chapter 3. Major research contributions of this study refer to the initial mapping of the phenomenon, methodological considerations that appear to have been successful in approaching it, and delineations for further research.

The collection of data about experiences of healing with an icaro in vegetalismo ayahuasca ceremonies was conducted as a field study. This allowed to: gather demographic data related to the emergence of the phenomenon (Appendix C) among the studied population; get access to information-rich cases in the context of a traditional vegetalismo treatment; gain access to the perspective of the healer regarding his healing intentions in the ceremony where the phenomenon emerged for participants (Appendix D); and have a deeper, first hand understanding of the context and cosmology underlying healing practices and the role of icaros in vegetalismo. The field study allowed also the recording of 120 hours of icaros sung in ayahuasca ceremonies by five different ayahuasqueros, as well as interviews to practitioners about the healing functions of these songs. All this material is ready to be processed and disseminated in the future. An in-depth study that would pair and compare the data provided by participants in this research, with the musical analysis of the icaros they identified as intensely healing, and the healing intentions of the healer, would greatly contribute to precise what and how musical features and healing intentions emerged in the lived experience of participants, thus unveiling further aspects of the phenomenon.

Being a long-term participant/observer of these practices in situ appeared to have influenced a positive attitude in participants to share their experiences in depth, and seemed to have normalized the situation of recording each ceremony, both for participants and healer.

The collection of freshly lived ayahuasca experiences a few days after the participation in a ceremony minimized distortions due to variables of memory loss, cognitive and emotional after-processing. Even if participants were still dwelling with their experience, they expressed their readiness to verbalize and share it with the researcher. This was an important ethical consideration for initiating the interviewing process, which was then valued as an instance that contributed to the metabolizing of their experiences. A second interview spaced one or two weeks after the first one showed that integration factors influenced the significance attributed to some aspects of the experience in the first interview. This suggests that in order to study how ayahuasca manifests in direct experience, it is recommendable to collect the data as soon as the person feels ready. Simultaneous collection of ayahuasca experiences via microphone during the course of a ceremony has proved to introduce a variety of research distortions (Stuckey, 2004), and poses relevant questions regarding the adequacy of the procedure to the nature of the phenomenon.

Having had participants re-listen to the sequence of icaros of the ceremony where the phenomenon emerged, facilitated their recalling of proprioceptive, emotional, and visionary aspects of their experience, which enriched the information delivered in the interview. For a longitudinal study interested in following up on the impact of these healing experiences in participants' life, it could be useful to incorporate this procedure as part of the interviewing process. This would probably contribute in focusing the person on that particular experience and select it again into awareness from a variety of others that may

have influenced its re-shaping. A similar procedure could be utilized when studying healing experiences with songs or chants employed by traditions that use ayahuasca or other types of entheogens ceremonially, such as in the Santo Daime movement, the Native American Church or the Mazatecan tradition.

The particular method selected for this study introduced interesting challenges in the analysis of the material that contributed to a deeper understanding of how the phenomenon was experienced. On one hand, the detection of meanings in the protocols unveiled that the experience was sustained by meanings that emerged experientially or were subject to different degrees of processing. The identification of different levels of meaning construction that were predominant at different stages of the process, allowed to delineate an experiential dynamic involved in the phenomenon. It also suggested the possibility that unconscious dynamics related to the healing issues of participants were playing a role in shaping the contents of experience. So, the method allowed for unveiling the processual quality of the phenomenon and addressing deeper aspects of its complexity.

On another hand, the exercise of bracketing opened a richer and more sensitive approach to the lived experience of participants: from the interviewing process itself, where only two open questions guided its reporting, to the analysis, the researcher was challenged to allow participants to express what and how it was meaningful for them. The bracketing process was supported by the researcher's journaling, but primarily by the deep respect that participants' experiences instilled in her, in the context of having known them personally,

having sunk into their particular ways of expressing themselves and understanding their processes, and having witnessed their engagement in their treatments in a mid to long-term period.

Besides agreeing with Shanon (2002) and Fonseca Rehen (2007) that the familiarity of the researcher with ayahuasca is crucial in understanding the experiential qualities and depths of its effects, some procedures facilitated the tuning in with the data as described by participants. Before approaching the data, a meditation time was set, where the observing mind was present to the contents of experience. This showed to be beneficial in supporting the bracketing process. The researcher listened to the icaros sung during the ceremony that was relevant for participants, which allowed her to sink into a more receptive and empathetic state of mind towards their experiences. The entire data analysis was carefully validated through triangulation procedures during and after its completion, which minimized interferences due to the researcher's own processing, and proved possible to translate these types of experiences and their therapeutic significance into an adequate psychological language for the broader academic community.

The results of the current study delineate interesting possibilities for further research. First, it showed that several functions of the icaros in ayahuasca ceremonies that were already described in the literature (Dobkin de Rios, 1973, 2006; Giove, 1993, 1997, 2002; Katz & Dobkin de Rios, 1971; Shanon, 2002) were playing a supportive role in the phenomenon. The study of how they help in creating favorable therapeutic conditions for deep material to emerge seems an important venue of research. Second, possible psycho-physical mechanisms

involved in the phenomenon, such as brainwave entrainment, would be clarified by research on physiological and neurophysiological effects during ceremonies. EEG measurements, along with a spectral analysis of the singing and qualitative analysis of experiences would be some adequate procedures to consider together for this purpose. Third, it was suggested that a study on the psychological effects of certain plant diets would contribute to the understanding of healing experiences with the icaros that refer to them during ayahuasca ceremonies. This would bridge to our Western mind some of the cosmological understanding on which the healing use of icaros lies in this traditional context. Fourth, phenomenological studies on healing experiences of other shamanic traditions that include the use of entheogens, singing or chanting ceremonially, along with the results of this study or others, may be used as data to arrive to a deeper description of the structural essence of this larger phenomenon.

Lastly, it is important to remind the reader that any phenomenon has multiple ways of expression. This study is limited to give account to the way it emerged for 5 participants in this particular context. In this sense, it describes one of its multiple possibilities of manifestation, thus leaving the door open for further findings that would enrich its description and understanding.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The experience of intense healing with an icaro during a traditional ayahuasca ceremony in vegetalismo context corresponds to one particular type of ayahuasca phenomena that appears to emerge less frequently than other possible types. Its significance, however, is based on the cosmological understanding that the icaros embody natural spiritual powers that entail healing functions, express the power of the healer, and are one of the main healing tools of the ayahuasquero leading ceremonies.

On another hand, the healing function of the icaros has been addressed by specialized literature mainly from the perspective of vegetalistas but not systematically and in-depth from the experience of the clients. Other traditional ayahuasca ceremonies employ singing and chanting as a constitutive aspect of the ritual; nontraditional ceremonies usually include recorded music. So, it appears to be relevant to clarify the role of music and singing in supporting therapeutic states of consciousness in ayahuasca rituals (Dobkin de Rios, 2006), a practice that is spreading widely into the West and is experiencing a renewed blossoming within traditional contexts, particularly in Peruvian vegetalismo.

The results of the present study show that the emergence of the phenomenon is supported by a structure of meanings that an interdependence among the direct experience as it is lived under ayahuasca effects and recalled afterwards, the perception of contextual factors leading to its emergence, and the process of integration of the experience once occurred. In other words, the healing

meaning of the phenomenon is apprehended and processed in lived experience, as well as reconstructed processually within larger contexts once back to normal consciousness. In all its stages, the phenomenon emerges as processual, where the direct experience with the icaro constitutes a pivotal moment within a significant healing experience that unfolds during the ceremony.

The direct experience of healing presents an internal dynamic that tends to go from full engagement in the singing to a relatively more autonomous participation in the process. This pivotal moment presents characteristics of a unitive state of mind, in which the majority or all the experiential dimensions of the person feel locked-in, unfolding in syntony with perceived qualities of the singing. The experience of synesthesia with some of those qualities is also present. Participants signify this moment as profoundly intimate and beneficial, reaching the very core of their healing concerns with a new depth and angle. Typically, the experience is apprehended as intended by the healer or the ayahuasca being, therefore the singing is perceived as tailor-made and a strong relational component appears to support the process. One participant does not clearly perceive intentionality, nor intentional support during his process—a structural variation of the phenomenon. However, he too experiences the unitive moment as relational and his process follows otherwise a similar experiential pattern and structure of meanings.

Participants have the consistent experience of release of unhealthy conditions and restoration into an expanded sense of self during the pivotal moment. Therefore, it is hypothesized that a corrective experience occurs,

wherein unity with a beneficial otherness supports full surrender and new unconscious resources to emerge into awareness. The researcher also speculates that the physical mechanism of sonic entrainment may be involved in the process. In addition to these considerations, it seems clear that the alignment of the participant's mindset to the traditional setting provided play a role in the emergence of the experience as relational, including a previously established healing relationship with the curandero leading the ceremony and the familiarity with how healing works in this context, among other factors.

The entire healing experience often unfolds after direct exposure to the singing, a moment that most participants perceive as having generated the right inner conditions to access further healing. The subsequent healing process, sometimes experienced as well with the singing, finds the person in an integrated state of mind where information regarding healing issues is made available in a clear, new, and interconnected way. This usually takes the form of deep insights that unfold processually in experience. Perfect new solutions and understanding of how to address healing issues in viable ways emerge into awareness, providing a sense of empowerment and capability to engage positively in further healing. This moment of the healing process seems to show that the integration of the experience begins during the ceremony itself. The sense of direction and autonomy over the process increases and larger contexts of the healing issue are experienced and processed. This may be related to a natural experiential unfolding under ayahuasca effects, yet it could be also an expression of the process that follows a unitive healing experience.

What is interesting is that the whole healing process revolves consistently around the same theme in different guises and ways of experience, following a pattern of intimacy/unity that unfolds into autonomy/interdependency and empowerment. The results show as well how the shape the healing process takes seems to address underlying unconscious dynamics sustaining the healing issue and bypasses defensive structures that may interfere with it. This summarizes in a snapshot a psycho-therapeutic process and includes in addition a strong psycho-physical component that may be key in supporting therapeutic changes that endure in time.

Deep relief and well-being, a sense of achievement and completion, and exit emotions such as deep gratitude and a sense of elation are typically experienced towards the end of the process. The direct healing experience in the ceremony is formulated as a preliminary model of four stages: absorption into the singing or “the mermaid’s singing effect”; apprehension of the healing process or “communing”; perceived healing outcomes or “returning home”; and exit states or “the hero’s reward.”

The data collection was done some days after the healing, so the report of the experience directly addresses a subsequent integration process that emerges as supportive of its resignification as intensely healing in ordinary consciousness. The meaning of the experience is progressively reframed under larger personal contexts and considerations. Conditions of the traditional treatment setting emerge as adequately supportive of the process, such as the availability of significant others with whom to share the experience, receive some guidance and feedback,

and the ongoing participation in rituals and other healing practices. A new strongly healing experience emerges during this process as confirmatory of the healing effects of the experience with the icaro, and hence, is perceived with continuity of meaning with it. The intensity of the healing with the icaro, along with the positive mindset of participants and the favorable conditions provided by the setting may act as good predictors of implementation of insights in ordinary life (House, 2007).

It is possible that the recalling of the lived experience was affected by a selective process attributable to integration, yet research procedures, such as re-listening to the icaro before the interviews, and the natural dwelling within the experience participants still felt, seem to have contributed to a closer reporting of how it was lived.

The meaning attributed to the perceived qualities of the singing, the versatility that singing provides to the healer in terms of directly modeling it to the needs of the client, and the musical characteristics of the icaro itself, position this type of music as one of the richest possibilities in generating therapeutic states of consciousness in ayahuasca ceremonies. New venues for research on the healing potential of icaros as embodied songs would benefit from including EEG measurements that include both the singer and the receiver, along with spectral analysis of voice and qualitative reports of the experiences elicited in the two of them.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the use of icaros involves the cosmological understanding that they entail a spiritual healing power the healer is

prepared to relate to and can bridge to the client. The selection of the right icaro for each client follows intuitive and spiritual rules that transcend our Western understanding (Bustos, 2006). It seems clear that vegetalismo practices transcend our actual therapeutic methods in that they aim to address the intricate and delicate network of relationships, both concrete and spiritual, of which human beings are conceived to be a part. This plausible restoration of that network is conducive to a new sense of belonging and wholeness, and reframes the position of the person into a larger context, in which the concerns of the ego play a more relative role.

In consequence, what can we learn for psychedelic psychotherapy? As Walsh (1990) suggests, we should adopt a humble position where we acknowledge our relative ignorance in this field. Yet in addition, we may enrich our research approaches by remaining open to alternative paradigms of knowledge in which the holders of traditional ways dwell. There are definitely aspects of the phenomenon under study that remain in the realm of Mystery, such as the role of the natural spiritual powers sung to or transmitted to the person during the healing, particularly of the plants. Is it possible that there is a correspondence between the healing outcomes of the experience and the physical effects attributable to the plants that were invoked?

Embracing the subtle cosmological considerations of vegetalismo embodied in the healing use of icaros, and studying and translating them into Western scientific concepts is still a challenge that will have to be faced, if we remain open to the understanding that scientific paradigms, along with

worldviews, are subject to change and even transformation. As Turner (1992) points out, we may be better able to understand and apply the contributions of vegetalismo in therapeutic contexts if we are willing to train ourselves in seeing what the healers see.

CODA

Condensed, and in a more poetic narrative style, I would like to share the healing experience with an icaro I had 9 years ago, that led me to honor their power and the amazing path that made me finally undertake their journey, this study. In deep gratitude to the Great Spirit, Grandfather Ayahuasca, Madre Chacrunita, don Solón Tello, Rosa Giove, Damián, and Barbro Giorgi, held by the infinite arms of Love.

“A snake was left in your body,” said don Solón. I smiled, as I had been struggling for months after my first ayahuasca ceremony with this serpentine ascendant energy making my spine shake since then. I could feel it when it was about to show up: heat, tremors, some dizziness, a strange openness, a timeless state of mind. I was concerned. My training in transpersonal psychology helped me to frame and manage to live with the symptoms, but I couldn’t release them. Maybe don Solón was right. In Holotropic Breathwork sessions, the incisive face of a huge cobra emerged staring at me, as vividly as in a real dream. It nestled a small red snake within its body, from the place it stayed erect. The energy was blocked at my heart level and long hours of bodywork and catharsis didn’t help much to help it move freely.

Don Solón treated me twice during my stay at Takiwasi. He took some time out of his duties with addict clients, to talk to me, chant icaros, blow tobacco smoke and perfumes on me. He was singing to the snake. I knew it. I felt contained and calmed down by his solid yet soft and loving presence. I had missed the ceremony he had led that week for “outsiders,” but there was one set

up by Jacques and Rosa I would participate in during my stay. They were busy people, and I didn't have a chance to talk to them about my concerns.

That night, Rosa called me forward for individual healing. I was under strong mareación, anxious. She started singing in Spanish, very softly, very intimately, sinking as close as inside of the very heart of myself: “Abrete corazón, ábrete sentimiento” (Open up heart, open up feeling). She had found me. And the feelings opened up. Tears broke up into sobbing. Sobbing into a heart opening. A warm feeling in my heart, into visions of the omniscient presence of the Tree of Life. Nothing else existed, as it was all embracing. I was the tree but wasn't, the heart of the tree, its womb. I was born thousands of times and was reabsorbed by the Tree another thousand times. Constantly, in a never-ending sacred, unstoppable cycle of death and rebirth. It was me, yet it was everything around. Warmth, the overarching silence of organic fluids softly palpating while flowing. The Sacred Temple of Life. My humble witnessing of Life enacting me/us.

Yes. A snake was left in my body, whispering the Magnificence of Existence. It took it 4 years to find its way through my fears and woundings. Yet I finally understood there was no higher option for me than to humbly listen and to sing along.

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APPENDIX A: FORMAL MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF ICAROS
IDENTIFIED AS INTENSELY HEALING BY PARTICIPANTS

Each participant identified one main icaro as intensely healing in the recording of the ceremony where the phenomenon emerged, with highest score of certainty. In this appendix, these five icaros are described and analyzed as a group in terms of their type, lyrics, melodic, rhythmic, and expressive aspects.

Particularities present in some icaros are mentioned. At the end of this analysis the musical notation of the main musical phrases of the icaros is found, along with the full text of the icaros and their translations.

Table 3 shows a synthetic description of the icaro that was significant for each participant, including: title, type, ritual situation, time placement in the ceremony, length, number of strophes, structure and variations, tempo, meter, key and scale.

Table 3

Descriptive Synthesis of Icaros Identified by Participants

| Icaro | B | C | D | L | S |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Date | 10/22/04 | 11/20/04 | 12/09/04 | 12/25/04 | 1/22/05 |
| Title | Came Renaco | Came Renaco | Albahaca-Rosaciza-Piñón Colorado | Niño Manuelito | Ayahuasca Marirí |
| Type | Invocat./ Healing | Invocat./ Healing | Invocat./ Healing | Inv./Heal./ Prayer | Invocat./ Healing |

(cont.)

Table 3 (continued)

| Icaro | B | C | D | L | S |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Singer | Maestro Juan | Apprentice | Maestro Juan | Maestro Juan | Maestro Juan |
| Ritual Situation | Indiv. Healing | Group/end of ceremony | Indiv. Healing | Group | Indiv. Healing (requested) |
| Ritual Time | 1 h 49'12'' | 2 h 39'32'' | 1 h 18'12'' | 2 h 48'55'' | 1 h 14'50'' |
| Length | 5'32'' | 5'12'' | 5'55'' | 8'40'' | 4'30'' |
| Strophes | 16 | 19 | 10 | 26 | 15 |
| Structure & number of variations | AABCCCC (3) AABCBC (3) AABBB | ABAC DEFEFC | AABCCC (1) AACBCC (5) ABABBBB (1) | ABABCBCB (5) ABABAB (4) | AABBBC (2) |
| Motifs' Variations | A (2) B (9) C (15) | A (14) B (6) C (6) D (6) E (3) F (3) | A (12) B (11) C (35) | A (8) B (7) C (7) | A (5) B (11) C (3) |
| Tempo | = 109 | = 86 | = 91 - 78 | = 107 | = 117 |
| Meter | Simple 4/4 | Compound 5/4 & simple 4/4 | Simple 4/4 | Simple 4/4 | Simple 4/4 |
| Key & Scale | D sharp minor pentatonic | B minor pentatonic | C minor pentatonic | A minor pentatonic | C major pentatonic |

Types of Icaros and Lyrics

The icaros identified by participants are of a combined type: they invoke the spirit or spiritual manifestations of a particular plant and other auxiliary beings, and their medicinal essences, in order to bring healing to a person. Only the icaro “Niño Manuelito” invokes, praises, and prays to Christian figures in the Nativity scene, besides invoking each plant and its medicine present in the altar made for Christmas at Mayantuyacu. The healing objective stays the same. As expressed by maestro Juan, this icaro is an adaptation of a Christmas carol into the form and style of his icaros (see Appendix D). This invocatory/healing type of icaros corresponds to most of maestro Juan’s repertoire.

The lyrics are organized in strophes, supported by the icaros’ melodic structure. The number of verses in a strophe may vary within the same icaro. Among icaros, the number of strophes ranges from 12 to 26. In terms of language, these icaros incorporate phrases, words, or variations of words in Spanish, words in Quichua, and a significant amount of repeated syllables. In fact, it could be said that in between repeated syllables, phrases and words are intercalated. Some strophes are composed only of syllables. Some of these phrases, words, and syllables are described by maestro Juan as having a particular meaning and/or intention that transcends the more explicit meaning of the text (see the introduction to the lyrics at the end of this appendix). They account for the inner imagery of the healer, actions and relationships between different actors involved in that imagery, all permeated by specific intentions. The goal would be to facilitate the unification of purpose and work among actors, in benefit of the

patient. Consequently, the meaning of the lyrics seems to be informed by explicit and implicit aspects of the text.

The lyrics directly address the plants, spirits of the plants and other beings, and also the medicines they involve, and ask them to act upon the person's body. In his imagery, the healer invites the spirits first to enter the ceremonial place and dance around at the compass of the song, to move, stop, then pray, align their healing intentions with him and higher spiritual entities, and act in specific ways. Different parts of a plant are explicitly described and, occasionally, commanded to perform an action. Normally, when asking the spirits to act, the healer describes the action as if occurring in real time or in the future. He conjugates the verb in first person plural, as if performing the action together with the spiritual beings. In this way, he seems to align their intentions and actions with his.

Usually, the maestro directly addresses the person being healed. In individual healings, he calls the person by singing its name or by using the word *amigo* (friend). In this way, he seems to be both inviting and stating an intimate and reliable bond between himself and the client. Then, he introduces the person to the medicinal action that the plant does on her. At other times, the healer seems to also be addressing the group, asking for their focus and silence. The maestro states this is necessary for the spirits to perform their healing work. The use of diminutives, praises, personal and affectionate words at relating with the different actors is usual.

This style of icaros is similar to the description of shamanic song texts among the Ashaninka or Campa people, as described by Weiss (1973). The

Ashaninka shaman, in the lineage of maestro Juan, relates to spiritual entities through praises and worship, thus also suggesting his role as a priest. The maestro has also trained as an *oracionista*, meaning that he incorporates prayers as part of his healing techniques and in his icaros.

Melodic Aspects

Melodically, the first or two first strophes of an icaro are generally an introduction to the main structure of the song, where its melodic form or other melodic and rhythmic features appear simplified. The icaros end consistently with a coda. The coda has a similar melody among icaros, is markedly syncopated and slower in tempo, and finishes with longer notes and a blow.

All these icaros are in pentatonic scale, consistent with the findings of the preferred use of this scale in icaros (Brabec, 2002; Padilla in Luna, 1992) and in other Amazon songs and healing songs (Lucas, 1971; Stocks, 1979; Wistrand, 1969). Their melodic structure is usually constituted by two or three strophic forms composed by three distinct motifs. Within each icaro, the different strophic forms do not follow a pattern of distribution, except for the icaro of the Came Renaco (participant C), and may present minor internal variations in terms of combination and number of repetition of motifs. Motifs present several variations as well, melodic and rhythmic.

The motifs of maestro Juan are characterized by higher tones in A and lower tones in B and C. Often A raises and descends melodically, while B and C tend to descend or ascend more markedly. The resultant melodic motion of a

complete strophe generally alternates between higher and lower motifs, resembling a call and response style. Within these motifs, the preferred intervals between consecutive notes are of third and second, either ascending or descending. However, occasionally, intervals of fourth and even sixth are found. Intervallic distances of fourth, fifth, and sixth are more often found at the end of a motif and the beginning of the next.

The motifs of the maestro's apprentice include lower tones in A and E, and higher tones in B, C, and D, resulting in a melodic motion and style similar to maestro Juan's. As said, the melodic form of his icaro follows a standard pattern and the variations within B, C, D, and E are most seemingly due to imprecision in reaching the right note. Variations in these motifs are usually of half a tone or a tone in one or more of the notes corresponding to the basic theme. A has definitely more diversity in its variations. The preferred intervals within and among motifs are of a second and a third. Ascendant or descendant intervals of a fourth are found sometimes at the beginning or end of some motifs, or between the end of a motif and the beginning of the next. All these aspects make the apprentice's icaro structurally simpler than the maestro's, however, as a group, they show melodic similarities.

Regarding ornaments, maestro Juan uses often slurs and sometimes puts grace notes at the end of motifs. They are not present in his apprentice's icaro.

Tempo, Meter, and Rhythm

In terms of tempo, two groups of icaros are found: the first ranges within a moderato tempo, quick and steady, and the other within an andante tempo, slower. The Icaro de la Albahaca, Rosaciza and Piñón Colorado falls into this second group, yet its tempo slows progressively down from 91 to 78 beats per minute. Often, the tempo is slightly quicker or slower at the beginning of a phrase and then goes back to regularity as it progresses. Expressively, this seems to mark a new beginning.

All the icaros have a simple meter of 4/4, except for the apprentice's icaro, which starts in 5/4 and incorporates sometimes a 4/4 measure as a variation of motif E.

Syncopation is present in the majority of the icaros' strophes. It is sometimes marked by an eight dotted note followed by a sixteenth note or its reverse form, accentuated on the second beat of a measure. In one icaro, this rhythmic form presents a regular accent on the first beat. The icaro Ayahuasca Mariri does not present syncopation in its strophes, but its coda does, as well as the codas of the rest of the icaros. This use of syncopation in a simple meter resembles some traditional dances of Andean regions.

The icaro of the Albahaca is the only one accompanied by the soft percussive sound of a shacapa, a large whisk made out of green stems of the plants addressed. The rhythm of the shacapa is quick and steady, in sixteenth notes, and follows the decelerando in tempo described above.

Expressive Aspects

Besides regular accentuations and some alternations in volume, the icaros do not present distinctive expressive features. Maestro Juan's voice is soft, flowing, natural to his tenor register, yet also firm and solid. The presence of variations in motifs and phrases are most likely improvised as the icaro is sung. This seems clear at comparing the performance of the same icaro in recordings of alternate ceremonies. Tempo, volume, and length of the icaro tend to vary as well among performances. These improvised variations are also present in the apprentice's icaro. His voice is notoriously nasal, harder, and his style marked by frequent and regular accentuations.

As stated, simple and recurring melodic and rhythmic aspects, along with a slight acceleration or diminishing of tempo at the beginning of new phrases, give these icaros the impression of following a predictable pattern. The use of a similar musical phrase to end the icaros may make the used listener anticipate their ending. Interestingly, despite their apparent predictability, the amount and frequency of slight variations that are introduced make them difficult to the listener to repeat or closely follow. So, even if at a basic perceptual level they may produce a sense of anticipation, subliminally their variations may be conducive to some confusion or mental disorganization. It is possible to think of this as some kind of musical paradox, which while offering stability, allows the mind to navigate into constant new experiential territories. See the Discussion section in this study for further reflections at this respect.

Musical Notation and Lyrics of Icaros

Each icaro is presented with the musical notation of the main phrase or phrases that incorporate all the motifs in it. A transcription of the icaro's lyrics follows. The accentuations are marked underlining the corresponding syllables in the first two strophes.

Interviews with maestro Juan were conducted in order to clarify the meaning he attributes to recurring lyrics and syllables in his icaros. These meanings are described below in the form of a glossary of terms, applicable to all his icaros. The terms are organized as they appear in the icaros and not alphabetically, since that gives a better idea of the sequence of images and actions they imply. Words or phrases that are not included in the glossary are translated in italics in the transcription of each icaro. The use of the expression “ay ni,” not described by the maestro, may come from the Quechuan *ayni*, which means “retribution of benefits,” yet this is just speculative.

A remark in terms of pronunciation: the consonant “r” is sung very softly and brief, closer to a short “d” or “t.”

Glossary of Terms

Trananai and nananai

There's no translation for these words. They involved the intention of calling and invoking the spirits that bring the medicine into the ceremony, and to invite them to a ritual dance in the place. When *hai* is added, spirits already circulating in the place are encouraged to turn around and dance in rounds.

Chaya-riri

Describes the spirits entering the room. *Riri* refers to the steps taken by the spirits. When *chayaremo* is sung instead, it calls everybody to gather around the patient to cure spirit and body.

Suena-riri

Rooted in the word *sonar*, in Spanish, to sound. It's repeated several times with the intention of asking the spirits to make the medicine "sound" like a shacapa within the person's body in order to be effective and to help see and remove evil spirits from his/her body.

Calla-riri

Rooted in the word *callar*, in Spanish, to be silent. Invites everybody to avoid moving, to pay attention. Spirits need silence in order to work.

Ora-llamo

Rooted in the word *orar*, in Spanish, to pray. Invites all the spirits to pray to the gods above in order to invoke their powers. Maestro Juan refers to all gods that have existed physically on Earth and have become spiritual masters: Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Creator. All these gods and other spirits related to the work, curanderos who have passed, spirits of plants, water, air and earth work in common agreement to heal people.

Runa 'ora llamo y ni

All the powers from nature are called to be present and stay at the ceremony. *Ora* to open up, *ni* to close.

Linda/o (followed by a plant's name)

Means “pretty” in Spanish. It is an affectionate address to the plant that its spirit always asks for. During ayahuasca ceremonies more affection to the plant is offered through the ways of singing the icaros, so that it can give its medicine in exchange.

Llora, llora cogollo

“Weep, weep, bud,” in Spanish. The intention is to allow the plant to sprout within the icaro, making it grow entirely until it’s flourishing with subsequent lyrics in the icaro.

Rama y rama y tronco y ni

In Spanish, “branch and branch and trunk and *ni*.” The icaro shakes the trunk’s base and the branches, generating like a wind that comes and goes to allow movement in the plant. The *ni* aims to stop all the movement and resume the singing one more time.

Lindas flores mayayay

“Pretty flowers,” in Spanish. Means the flourishing of the plant within the person’s body. *Mayayay* aims the tears of the plant to come down into the body from the crown. That’s the icaros main purpose.

Sissa y punta

“Efflorescence,” in Quechua, and “top,” in Spanish. Refers to the top of a plant or tree.

Marirí

From the top of a tree or plant sprouts its *marirí*. It corresponds to the phlegm of the plant and to its healing spirit. Through the icaros, the *marirí* goes through a transformation in which its light moves and enters into the body of the person. It is stored in the healer's chest as phlegm and it gives him his strength and protection. The *marirí* gets activated with tobacco, the director of all plants, and some curanderos are trained to bring it into their mouths while smoking tobacco, in order to do healing suction.

Medicina ay(a)runa sí

“People of the water's medicine,” in Quechua and Spanish. Calls the spirits of the waters (*sumiruna* and *yacumama*, among others) to come and cure. *Medicina cayayay*. Its intention is to have the medicine settle in the person's body.

Para tu cuerpo y ni ma'

“Just for your body,” in Spanish. The phrase aims that the healing icaro settles firmly into the body and helps in taking out all the sicknesses of a person.

Eheheheh . . .

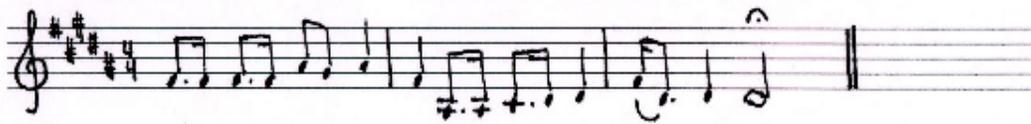
Final phrase in every icaro, with no translation. The intention of the healer is to express gratitude to every plant and spirit for their work.

Icaro del Came Renaco–Participant B

Phrase including main motifs



Coda



Lyrics

Introduction.

Trai ra rai ra rai rirí

1. Reire rende rai ri rai
 Rai ra rai ra rai rai rai
 Hay na nai nai nai na nai
 Dende riri rai ra rai
 Diri riri rai ra rai
 Dara rai ra rai ra rai

4. Lindo Came Renaco
 Rama y rama y tronco y ní
 S'ena riri rai ra rai
 S'ena riri rai ra rai
 Medicina ay'runa sí
 Para tu cuerpo y ni má'
 Amigo y ni runa sí
(friend)

Strophic Body.

Trai na nai na nai nai ní
 Hay na nai na nai nai ní

2. Trai na nai na nai na nai
 Nai ra nai rarai ra rai
 Riri riri rai ra rai
 Medicina ay'runa sí
 Chaya riri rai ra rai
 Trai na nai na nai nai ní
 Trai na nai na nai nai nai

5. Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
 Trai ra rai rai rai rai rai
 Riri riri rai rai rai
 Medicina ay'runa sí
 Ora llamu llamu y ní
 Trai na nai na nai nai ní

3. Medicina ay'runa sí
 Chaya riri rai ra rai
 Rai riri ri rai ra rai
 Hay na nai na nai nai ní
 Dende rende riri rí
 Rai ra rai ra rai rirí
 Trai ra rai ra rai rirí

6. Rai ra rai ra rai rai rai
 Rai ra rai ra rai rirí
 Runa 'ora llamu y ní
 Chaya riri rai ra rai
 Trai na nai na nai nai ní
 Trai na nai na nai nai ní
 Trai na nai na nai nai ní

7. Lindo Came Renaco
Rama y rama y tronco y ní
Hay na nai na nai nai ní
Medicina amigo
Para tu cuerpo y ni má'
Rai ra rai ra rai ra ra-ai
Rai ra rai ra rai rirí-i
Rai ra rai ra rai rirí

8. Rama y rama y tronco y ní,
Llora llora cogollo-o
Llora llora cogollo
Lindas flores mayayay
Pura medicina ay ní
Para tu cuerpo y ni má'
Ora llamo llamu y ní
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Trai na nai na nai nai ní

9. Rai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Riri riri rai ra rai
Riri riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai na nai
Riri riri rai ra ra-ai
Riri riri rai ra rai

10. Medicina ay'runa sí
Ora llamu llamu y ní
Para tu cuerpo y ni má'
Ora llamu ay'runa sí
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Trai na nai na nai nai ní

11. Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Riri riri rai ra rai
Hay na nai na nai nai ní
Ora llamu ay'runa y sí
Chaya riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Hay na nai na nai nai ní

12. Medicina ay'runa sí
Ora llamu llamu y ní
Nai na nai na nai nai ní
Riri riri ra ra rá
Ora llamo mayayay
Mayaremo ora yay
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Rai ra rai ra rai rai rí-i
Rai ra rai ra rai rai rí

13. Lindo Came Renaco
Rama y rama y tronco y ní
Medicina ay'runa sí
Para tu cuerpo y ni má'
Linda princesita ay ní
(*Pretty little princess*)
Linda doctorcita ay ní
(*Pretty little doctor*)
Linda sirenita ay ní
(*Pretty little mermaid*)
Trai na nai na nai na ní-i
Trai na nai na nai nai ní

14. Medicina ay'runa sí
Para tu cuerpo y ni má'
Amigo y ni mayayay
Trai na nai na nai na nai
Trai na nai na nai na nai

15. Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Riri riri rai ra rai
Rai ra rai ra rai rirí
Rai ra rai ra rai rirí
Trai ra rai ra rai rai ra-ai
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rí-i
Trai ra rai ra rai rirí

16. Ora llamu ay'runa sí
Chaya rere rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Ora llamu ay'runa sí
Chaya riri rai ra rai

Trai na nai na nai nai ní
 Trai na nai na nai nai ní

Coda.

Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
 Rai ra rai ra rai ra rai
 Nai ra rai ra rai ra rai
 Nai ra nai na nai rirí-i
 Nai na nai na nai rirí-i
 Nai na nai na nai nai ní

He he ehéheheh . . .
 He he ehéheheee . . .
 Ehe heeeee . . .
 (Blow)

Icaro del Came Renaco–Participant C

Phrase including main motifs

Coda

Lyrics

Introduction.

Nai na nai na nai na nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

1. Na nai na nai na nai na nai
 Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
 Naina nai na nai na nai nai
Rai ra rai ra rai ra raai rai

Strophic Body.

2. Tai ra rai ra rai ra rai rai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

3. Lindo Came Renaquito,
 Rama, rama, troncoruna
 Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
 Lindo Came Renaconi
 Sisa y punta y marirí
 Maririrí maririrí

4. Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Ra ra rai ra rai ra rai rai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai ni
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
S'enaremo', s'enaremo'
Medicina cayayayay
Cayayayay cayayayay
Chayaremo' chayaremo'
Na nai na nai na nai nai nai

5. Lindo Came Renacoini
Linda sirenita ay'runa
(*Pretty little mermaid*)
Linda princesita ay'runa
(*Pretty little princess*)
Na nai na nai na nai nai nai

6. Lindo Came Renaquito
Rama y rama y tronco ay'runa
Lindo Came Renacoini
Sisa y punta y marirí
Marirí-ri marirí-ri

7. Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai nai na nai na nai
Ra ra rai ra rai ra rai rai

8. Na nai na nai na na nai nai
S'enaremo', s'enaremo'
Medicina cayayay
Cayayayay cayayayay
Callaremo' callaremo'
Na nai na nai na nai nai nai

9. Lindo Came Renacoini
Linda sirenita ay'runa
Linda princesita ay'runa
Na nai na nai na nai nai nai

10. Lindo Came Renacoini
Sissa y punta y marirí-ri
Marirí-ri marirí-ri
Na nai na nai na nai na nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai

Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

11. Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

12. Rama rama tronco 'runa
Llora, llora cogolloni
Lindas flores mayay 'roni
Pura medicina ay'runa
(*Pure medicine*)
Nai na nai na nai na nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

13. Rai ra rai ra rai ra rai rai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Llora, llora cogolloni
Lindas flores mayayayay

14. Nai na nai nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

15. Ra ra rai ra ra ra rai rai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Lindo Came Renaquito
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

16. Limpiaremo' limpiaremo'
(*We'll cleanse, we'll cleanse*)
Mi cuerpito ayaruna
(*My little body*)
Limpiaremo' limpiaremo'
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

17. Limpiaremo' arrastraremo'
(*We'll cleanse, we'll drag*)
Todas las enfermedades
(*All the sicknesses*)
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

Coda.

18. Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Lindo Came Renaquito
Sissa y punta y marirí-ri
Marirí-ri marirí-ri

Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Nai na nai na nai na nai
Nai na nai na nai na naiyyyy

19. Na nai na nai na nai nai nai
Ra rai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai
Rai rai rai ra rai ra rai rai
Nai na nai na nai na nai nai

Eeeehhh, eheheeeeee
Eeeehhh, eheheehh, Ehehehhh,
Eheeee (blow)

Icaro de la Albahaca, Rosaciza y Piñón Colorado–Participant D

Phrase including main motifs



Coda



Lyrics

Introduction.

Strophic Body.

1. Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
traí ri rai ra rai rai rai rí
Nai na nai na nai nai ní
S'ena riri rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rí
Trairi rai ra rai rai rai

2. Linda Albahaquita y ní-i
Rama y rama y tronco y ní-i
S'ena riri riri rí
Rai ra rai ra rai rai rí
//: Hai na nai na nai nai nai
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai ://
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai

3. Linda Albahaquita ay ní-i
Rama y rama y tronco y ní
Medicina cayayay
S'ena riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai na nai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Nai na nai ra rai rai ra ra-ai
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
Trai ri riri rai ra ra-ai
Nai na nai na nai nai ní
Nai na nai na nai nai ní

4. Linda Albahaquita y ní-i
Medicina cayayay
S'ena riri rai ra ra-ai
Trai ri riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai na na-ai
Trai ri riri rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
S'ena riri rai ra ra-ai
Nai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Nai na nai na nai nai ní

5. Medicina a'yruna sí
Chaya riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rí-i
Nai na nai na nai nai nai
Nai na nai na nai nai nai

6. Lindo Piñoncito ay ní
Rama y rama y tronco y ní
Lindo Señorcito ay ní
De Los Milagrito' ay ní
Chaya remo ay'runa sí
Medicina cayayay
F(S)'ena riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai nai nai

7. Lindo Piñoncito ay ní-i
Rama y rama y tronco y ní
Suena riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Trai ra rai ra rai ra ra-ai

Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai

8. Lindo Señorcito ay ní
De Los Milagrito' ay ní-i
Ora llamo ay'runa sí
Trai na nai na nai na na-ai
Trai na nai na nai nai nai
Dai da rai ra rai rai rai
Trai ra rai ri rai riri-i
Hay na nai na nai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai

9. Ora llamo ay'runa sí
Chaya riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai na nai
Dai ra rai ra rai rai rí
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
Medicina ay'runa sí
S'ena riri rai ra rai
Ay na nai na nai na nai
Lindo Piñoncito ay ní
Rama y rama y tronco y ní
Ora llamo ay'runa sí

10. Trai rai rai rai rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rai
Nai na nai na nai nai ní
Suena riri rai ra rai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní
Ora llamo ay'runa sí
Calla riri rai ra rai
Medicina cayayay
F(s)'ena remo ora yay
Ora llamu llamu y ní-i
Nai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Nai na nai na nai nai ní . . .

Coda

Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai (2)
Nai na nai na nai na nai

Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai (2)
Nai na nai na nai na nai (2)

Ehhh . . . ehehehe . . .
 Ehhh . . . ehehehe . . .

Eheheeee . . .
 (Blow)

Icaro Niño Manuelito–Participant L

Phrase including main motifs



Coda



Lyrics

Introduction.

Medicina ay ní

1. //: Niño Manueli-ito,
 (Little boy Manuel)
Qué te puedo dar . . . (2)
 (What can I give you?)
Rosas y clave-eles
 (Roses and carnations)
Para deshojar (2) ://
 (To strip the petals off)

Strophic Body.

3. Trai na nai na na ay na-ai
 Trai na nai na nai
 Trai ra rai ra ra ay ra-ai
 Trai ra rai ra rai
 Linda mucuri-ita-ay
 Rama y rama y ní
 Tronco ay'runaci-ito-o
 medicina ay ní

2. Lindo altarci-ito
 (Pretty little altar)
 Traina nai na nai (2)
 Linda Rosa Si-isa-ay
 (Pretty Rosa Sisa)
 Lindo arbolito
 (Pretty little tree)
 Arbolito ay'ru-una-ay

4. Trai ra rai ra rai rai
 Trai ra riri rí
 Trai ra rai ri rí rí
 Trai ra rai ra rai

5. Lindo platani-ito-o
(*Pretty small plantain*)
Shaya (chaya) rere mo'
Ora llamo y ru-una-a
Traina nai na na
Lindo altarci-ito
Hai na nai na nai

6. Niño Manueli-ito
Qué te puedo dar . . .
Rosas y clave-eles
Para deshojar (2)

7. //: Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Rai ra rai ra rai ra rai ://
Nai na nai na nai na nai
Nai na nai ni ni ni

8. Trai ra rai ri ríi rii
Trai ra rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ri ríi ri
Trai ra rai ra rai
//: Nai na nai na naai nai
Trai na nai nai nai ://

9. //: Medicina ayru-una-a
F(s)'ena rere mo' ://
Rai ra rai ra ra-ai rai
Diri ra ra rai
Tiri ra ra ra-ai rai
Raira riri rí

10. Lindo altarci-ito
Brillare re mo'
(*We will shine*)
Trai na nai ni na-ai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai

11. Ora llamo ay'ru-una
Chaya rere mo'
Trai ra rai ri ríi rí
Trai na nai ra rai
Niño Manueli-ito
Qué te puedo dar . . .
Rosas y clave-eles
Para deshojar

12. //: Trai ra rai ri ríi ri
Rai ra rai ra ra ://
Linda princesi-itai
(*Pretty little princess*)
Linda doctorcita
(*Pretty little doctor*)
Linda sireni-itai
(*Pretty little mermaid*)
Trai na nai na nai

13. Trai ri riri rí-i ri
Ora llamo y ní
Chaya rere re-emo
Ora llamo y ní
Trai ra rai ra ra-ai rai
Diri riri rí
Ora llamo ay'ru-una
S'ena rere mo'
Trai ra rai ra ra-ai rai
Diri riri rí

14. Madre ayaru-una
Madre ay'runa sí
(*Mother ayaruna*)
De toditos ay'ru-una
(*of all ours*)
nosotro'y ní ma'
Ora llamo ay'ru-una
Chaya rere mo'
Trai ri riri rí-i ri
Trai ra ra ra rai
Nai ni nai na na-ai nai
Traira riri rí
Trai na nai na na-ai nai
Dende rere ré

15. San José ay'ru-una
(*Saint Joseph*)
Ora llamo y ní
Trai rara ri rí-i ri
Trai na nai na nai
//: Trai ra rai riri-i ri-i
Trai ra rai ra rai ://

16. Ora llamo ay'ru-una
Maya rere mo'
Trai rari ri rí-i-rí
Trai ra rai ra rai

17. //: Reyes Magos ay'ru-unai
(*Holy Kings*)
Ora llamo y ní ://

18. Trai ra rai ri ra-ai rí-i
Trai ra rara rai
Ora llamo ay'ru-una
Chaya rere mo'
Niño Manueli-ito
Qué te puedo dar . . .
//: Rosas y clave-eles
Para deshojar ://

19. Trai ra rai ra ra-ai rai
Riri rai ra rai
Ay na nai na na a-ay ní
Riri rai ra rai
Ora llamo ay'ru-una
Chaya rere mo'

20. Trai ra rai ri ríri
Trai ra rai ra rai
Nai na nai ni na-ai nai
Tra ri riri rí
//: Ora llamo ay'ru-una,
Chaya rere mo' ://
//: Trai ra rai ri rí-i ri
Trai ra rai ra rai ://

21. Jesucristo ay'ru-una
(*Jesus Christ*)
Ora llamo y ní
Redentor ru-ru-una
(*Redemptor*)
De el mundo ru
(*Of the entire world*)

Entero y ni ru-una
(*Entire*)
Chaya rere mo'

22. Trai na nai na nai nai
Trai na nai na nai
Tra ra rai ri ra-ai rí-i
Trai na nai na nai
Trai ra rai ri rí-irí
Trai ra rai ra rai
Ora llamo ay'ru-una
S(u)ena rere mo'

23. Linda Rosa Si-isa-ay
(*Pretty little Rosa Sisa*)
Trai na nai na nai
Trai ra rai ra ra-ai rai
Tri ri riri rí
Ora llamo ay'ru-una
Chaya rere mo'
Tra ra rai ra ra-ai rí
Trai ra rai ra rai
Trai ri ríri rí-i rí-i
Trai ra rai ra rai

24. Nai na nai na na-ai nai
Dende rende ré
Ora llamo ay'ru-unai
Nai na nai na nai
Linda Rosa Si-isa-ay
Rama y rama y tron'
Tronco ay'runa sí-i taai
Trai na nai na nai

25. Lloro, llora ay'ru-una
Lloro cogollo
Linda' flore' ay'ru-una
medicina ay ní
Trai na nai na na-ai nai
Trai na nai nai ní
Trai na nai ni ní-i ni
Trai ra rai ra rai

26. Linda Rosa Si-isa
Medicina ay ní
Lindo altarci-ito
Chaya rere mo'
Niño Manueli-ito
Qué te puedo dar . . .
Rosas y clave-eles

Para deshojar (2)

Nai na nai na nai na nai
Nai na nai na nai na nai

Coda.

Eeh hehe ehehe
Eeh hehe ehehe . . .
(Blow)

//: Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai ://

Icaro Ayahuasca Mariri-Participant S

Phrase including main motifs



Coda



Lyrics

Introduction.

1. Trai ri rai ri rai rai rai
Nai na nai na nai nai ní
Dende rende re re ré
Nai na nai nai nai ní
Dende rende re re ré
//: Nai na nai nai nai ní
Dende rende re re ré ://

Trai na nai na nai na nai (2)
3. Ayahuasca mariri-i
Mari-riri mariri-i
Medicina ay'runa sí-i
para tu cuerpo y ni má'-a
Sandrita y ni runa sí-i
traí ra rai ra rai ri rí-i
Trai na nai na nai na nai

Strophic Body

2. Trai ra rai ra rai ra ra-ai
Trai riri trai ra ra-ai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai ra ra-ai
Trai riri ri rai ra ra-ai

4. Ayahuasca mariri-i
Mariri-ri mariri-i
Rama y rama y tronco y ní-i
S'ena riri rai ra ra-ai

Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i (2)
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai

5. Ora llamo ay'runa sí-i
Chaya riri riri rí-i
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rí-i (2)
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai

6. Ora llamo ay'runa sí-i
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Dende rende rere ré-e
Rai ra rai ra rai ra ra-ai
Nai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Dende rende riri rí

7. Ayahuasca marirí-i
Marirí-ri marirí-i
Rama y rama y tronco y ní-i
S'ena riri rai ra ra-ai
Medicina y cayaya-ay
Para tu cuerpo y ni má'

8. Ora llamu llamu y ní-i
Sh(c)aya riri riri rí-i
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai ra ra-ai
Trai ri riri riri rí-i
Trai ra ra ra rai ra rai

9. Medicina ay'runa sí-i
Ora llamo llamu y ní-i
S'ena riri rai ra ra-ai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai ri rí-i
Trai na nai na nai nai nai

10. Ayahuasca marirí-i
Marirí-ri marirí-i
Rama y rama y tronco y ní-i
S'ena riri rai ra ra-ai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Dende rende rere ré-e
Trara ra ra ra rai

11. Ora llamu ay'runa sí-i
Chaya rere rere ré-e
Ayahuasca marirí-i
Marirí-ri marirí-i

Rama y rama y tronco y ní-i
S'ena riri rai ra rai

12. Rama y rama y tronco y ní-i
Llora llora cogollo-o (2)
Lindas flores mayaya-ay
Pura medicina ay ní-i
(*Pure medicine*)
Ayahuasca marirí

13. S'ena riri rai ra ra-ai
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai ri rí-i
Hay na nai na nai ni ní-i
Nai ni rindi ri ri rí-i
Nai na nai na nai na nai

14. Medicina ay'runa sí-i
Ora llamu mayaya-ay
S'ena riri rai ra ra-ai
Trai na nai na nai na nai
Trai ri riri riri rí-i
Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai

15. Medicina ay'runa sí-i
Ora llamu y llamu y ní-i
Trai na nai na nai nai ní-i
Trai ra rai ra rai rai rí-i
Hay na nai na nai nai ní-i
Riri riri rai ra ra-ai
Trai na nai na nai na nai

Coda.

Trai ra rai ra rai ra rai (4)
Trai na nai na nai na nai (2)

Eehe hehehe (2)
Ehe heeehhh . . .
(Blow)

APPENDIX B: LETTERS AND FORMS

This appendix includes the following letters and forms:

- Introductory letter to research participants
- Participant informed consent form
- Participant informed consent form for Takiwasi's clients
- Bill of rights for participants in a psychological research
- Agreements between Takiwasi and the researcher
- Mayantuyacu's certificate of conduction of research

Each letter and form is followed by its Spanish translation.

Introductory Letter to Research Participants

Date:

Dear _____ :

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study on the experience of an icaro(s) as healing during a sound-recorded ayahuasca ceremony. I appreciate the unique contribution you can make to this study.

The purposes of this letter are to reiterate some of the issues that we have already discussed and to ask for your signature on the consent form you will find attached.

This research is part of my doctoral work at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, U.S.A., and is sponsored by it; as well as being hosted and consented to by the institution and/or individual curandero who has offered the ayahuasca ceremony in which you have participated.

I am using a qualitative research model to address the question: How does the experience of an icaro as healing during an ayahuasca ceremony feel and manifest itself? This research model will allow me to describe and comprehend in depth the characteristics and meanings of your personal experience.

You have recently participated in an ayahuasca ceremony that was sound-recorded by the researcher, and you have given a positive answer to the question: “During that ceremony, have you experienced one or more of the curandero’s songs as intensely healing for you?” Participants in the study will be also asked: (a) to have taken ayahuasca 12 or more times in their life; (b) to be 21 or more years old; (c) to have not had any psychotic episodes during the last three years.

If you meet the criteria described above, please continue reading below.

You will be requested to first listen to recordings of the music of the ceremony in order to help you recall your experience, and next, to describe the experience of one of more songs perceived as intensely healing in writing and through an interviewing process. I am seeking vivid, accurate and comprehensive portrayals of how the experience was for you: images, thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and memories related to it, as well as an in-depth description of how you perceived musical features that might have stood out in your experience of the song(s) as healing during the ceremony.

This study will allow a better understanding of this phenomenon, which has been barely explored and discussed. The inquiry process opens the possibility of getting a better personal insight of your lived experience.

I appreciate your participation and your commitment in time and energy in this research. If you have any further questions before signing the release form, please ask it now. I can also be reached at (phone number) or at (e-mail address) in case of any doubt or further questions you may have later on regarding any aspect of the research.

Sincerely,

Susana Bustos

Carta introductoria para participantes en la investigación

[All translations by the author]

Fecha:

Estimado :

Gracias por su interés en participar en este estudio sobre la experiencia del ícaro como sanador durante una ceremonia de ayahuasca que ha sido grabada. Sinceramente aprecio la contribución personal y única que usted puede aportar a este estudio.

El propósito de esta carta es reiterarle algunos tópicos que ya hemos conversado anteriormente, así como pedirle que firme el formulario de consentimiento informado adjunto.

Esta investigación es parte de mi trabajo doctoral en el Instituto Californiano de Estudios Integrales, en los Estados Unidos, y es patrocinado por éste. La institución y/o curandero que ofreció la ceremonia de ayahuasca en que usted participó, apoya y está de acuerdo con el estudio.

El modelo de investigación que estoy empleando es cualitativo y aborda la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo se siente y manifiesta la experiencia de un ícaro como sanador durante una ceremonia de ayahuasca? Este modelo de investigación me permitirá describir y comprender en profundidad las características y los significados de su propia experiencia personal al respecto.

Usted ha participado recientemente en una ceremonia de ayahuasca cuya música fue grabada por la investigadora y respondió afirmativamente a la pregunta: “Durante esta ceremonia, experimentó usted uno o mas de los cantos del curandero como intensamente sanador(es)?” A los participantes en este estudio también se les pedirá que: (a) hayan tomado ayahuasca doce o más veces en su vida; (b) tengan 21 años o más; (c) no hayan tenido ningún episodio psicótico en los últimos tres años.

Si usted cumple con estos criterios, por favor continúe leyendo más abajo.

Se le pedirá primero escuchar grabaciones de la ceremonia, de modo de ayudarle a recordar su experiencia, y luego, describir por escrito y luego verbalmente a través de un proceso de entrevistas, la experiencia de uno o más de los cantos que usted percibió como intensamente sanadores. Lo que busco es un retrato vívido, preciso y comprensivo de cómo usted vivió esa experiencia: imágenes, pensamientos, sentimientos, sensaciones corporales y memorias relacionadas con ella, así como también una descripción en profundidad sobre cómo percibió ciertas características de la música que pudieron haber resaltado en su experiencia del canto como sanador durante la ceremonia.

Este estudio permitirá una mejor comprensión de este fenómeno, que ha sido escasamente explorado y tratado. El proceso de investigación le abre la posibilidad de ampliar su conciencia acerca de la experiencia que vivió.

Aprecio su participación y su compromiso de tiempo y energía en este estudio. Si tiene cualquier pregunta que hacerme antes de firmar el formulario de consentimiento informado, por favor, hágalo ahora. También, puede contármeme al (número de teléfono) o a la (dirección de correo electrónico) si tiene cualquier duda u otras preguntas que puedan surgirle más adelante, sobre cualquier aspecto de la investigación.

Cordialmente,

Susana Bustos

Participant Informed Consent Form

1. “Susana Bustos, a Ph.D. candidate in East-West Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, California, has requested my voluntary participation in a research study at this institution. The title of the research is: The Healing Power of the Icaros: A Phenomenological Study of Ayahuasca Experiences.”
2. “I have been informed that the purpose of this research is to explore the experience of an icaro(s) as healing during an ayahuasca ceremony that was sound recorded by the researcher.”
3. “I understand that my participation has no formal relation to any institution or curandero that led the ceremony, but that they are informed and consent to the main characteristics and goals of this research.”
4. “My participation will involve listening to the icaros sung during the ayahuasca ceremony, writing a report of my experience of an icaro(s) as healing in that ceremony, and identifying which icaro(s) was (were) perceived by me as healing, all of which I will do by myself. My participation also involves two tape-recorded interviews, an hour and a half to two hours long, at a mutually agreed time and place with the interviewer. In the first interview, if I was able to identify the icaro(s) I experienced as healing, I will be asked to listen to it in its entirety. In the contrary case, if I was unable to identify the icaro(s), I will be asked to listen to a 5 minutes random selection of the music of the ceremony.”
5. “I have been advised that the research does not involve any physical risk to me or predictable hazards. The only potential risk could be an emotional response

related to remembering my experience during the ayahuasca ceremony. I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer a question or to end my participation in this study at any time. If I decide to remove myself from the study I will continue with my work or visit at the institution or with the curandero without any penalty. I also know that I have the possibility of discussing any emotional response with a counselor at Takiwasi at low cost. Psych. Jaime Torres is the referral person. His telephone number at Takiwasi is (42) 522-818.”

6. “I have been informed that I will not be financially compensated for my participation. The potential benefits of the study are a better understanding of my internal experience, as well as increased personal insight.”

7. “I understand that the results of the study may be published and that my name or identity will not be revealed. I will be identified with a capital letter.”

8. “I understand that all the information collected will be held in strict confidence. Audio-recordings, transcripts and written report will be held in a locked environment to which only the researcher will have access. My name will not be on any of the materials.

9. “If the ayahuasca ceremony in which I participated was conducted at Takiwasi, my records will be left in Takiwasi’s locked research archives for possible further study once the researcher leaves the center. I understand that these records will not reveal my identity, since I will be identified by a capital letter.”

10. “I have been informed that any questions I have concerning the research study or my participation in it, before or after my consent, will be answered by Susana

Bustos (e-mail address) or by the faculty sponsor of this research, Dr. Janis Phelps at CIIS, (415) 575-6243.”

11. “I understand that in case of injury, if I have questions about my rights as a participant in this research, or if I feel I have been placed at risk, I can contact the chair of the Human Research Committee, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.”

12. “I have read the above informed consent. The nature, demands and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefit to myself. In signing this consent form, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. A copy of this consent will be given to me.”

Signature of participant:

Date:

13. “I certify that I have explained to the above participant the nature, purpose and potential benefits associated with participation in this research study, and have answered all questions that have been raised.”

14. “I have provided the participant with a copy of this signed consent form.”

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

Formulario de consentimiento informado para participantes

1. “Susana Bustos, candidata a Doctora en Filosofía en Psicología del Este y del Oeste, en el Instituto Californiano de Estudios Integrales, San Francisco, California, Estados Unidos, ha pedido mi participación voluntaria en un estudio de esa institución. El título de la investigación es: El Poder Sanador De Los Icaros: Un Estudio Fenomenológico de Experiencias con Ayahuasca.”
2. “He sido informado (a) que el propósito de esta investigación es explorar la experiencia de un icaro(s) como sanador durante un ritual de ayahuasca que fue grabado por la investigadora.”
3. “Entiendo que mi participación no tiene ninguna relación formal con cualquier institución o curandero que lideró la ceremonia, pero que ellos están informado y de acuerdo con las características principales y con las metas de esta investigación.”
4. “Mi participación involucrará escuchar los icaros cantados durante la ceremonia de ayahuasca, escribir un reporte de mi experiencia de uno o más ícaros que haya percibido como sanadores en esa ceremonia, e identificar qué ícaro(s) percibí como sanador, todo lo cual haré por mí mismo(a). Mi participación también involucra dos entrevistas grabadas de una hora y media a dos horas de duración cada una, que serán realizadas en un lugar y un tiempo acordados mutuamente con la investigadora. En la primera entrevista, si me fue posible identificar el icaro que experimenté como sanador, se me pedirá escucharlo por completo. Si, por el contrario, no me fue posible identificarlo(s), se me pedirá escuchar cinco minutos con selecciones de la música de la ceremonia.”

5. “He sido notificado(a) que esta investigación no involucra ningún riesgo físico para mí ni inconvenientes predecibles. Su único riesgo potencial podría ser una respuesta emocional relacionada con recordar mi experiencia durante la ceremonia. Entiendo que tengo el derecho de rehusar responder a una pregunta y poner término a mi participación en este estudio en cualquier momento. Si decido no proseguir en el estudio, continuaré con mi trabajo o visita en la institución o con el curandero sin ninguna sanción. También sé que tengo la posibilidad de conversar cualquier reacción emocional que pueda tener con algún consejero en Takiwasi a bajo costo. El psicólogo Jaime Torres es la persona de contacto. Su número de teléfono en Takiwasi es (42) 522-818.”

6. “He sido informado(a) que mi participación no tendrá compensación financiera. Los beneficios potenciales de este estudio son una mejor comprensión de mi experiencia interna, así como mayor capacidad personal de darme cuenta de lo vivido.”

7. “Entiendo que los resultados del estudio podrían ser publicados y que ni mi nombre ni mi identidad serían revelados. Seré identificado sólo con una letra mayúscula.”

8. “Entiendo que toda la información recolectada será conservada en estricta confidencialidad. Grabaciones sonoras, transcripciones y reporte escrito serán manejados bajo llave, de único acceso a la investigadora. Mi nombre no estará en ninguno de los materiales.”

9. “Si la ceremonia de ayahuasca en la que participé fue realizada en Takiwasi, los documentos descritos serán dejados en los archivos de investigación de Takiwasi

una vez que la investigadora haya concluido su estadía en el centro, para posible estudios futuros. Entiendo que esos materiales serán manejados bajo llave y no revelarán mi identidad, ya que seré identificado con una letra mayúscula.”

10. “He sido informado(a) que cualquier pregunta que tenga referida a este estudio o a mi participación en él, antes o después de mi consentimiento, será respondida por Susana Bustos (dirección de correo electrónico) o por el facultativo que patrocina esta investigación, Dra. Janis Phelps en CIIS, número telefónico: (1-415) 575-6243.

11. “Entiendo que en caso de perjuicio, si tengo preguntas con respecto a mis derechos como participante en esta investigación, o si siento que he sido puesto en riesgo, puedo contactar al presidente del Comité de Investigación Humana del Instituto Californiano de Estudios Integrales, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.”

12. “He leído este formulario de consentimiento informado. La naturaleza, requerimientos y beneficios de este proyecto me han sido explicados. Entiendo que puedo retirar mi consentimiento y discontinuar mi participación en cualquier momento, sin ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios para mí. Con la firma de este formulario no estoy renunciando a ninguna demanda legal, derecho o reparación. Recibiré copia de este consentimiento.”

Firma del (la) Participante:

Fecha:

13. “Certifico que he explicado al (a la) participante sobre la naturaleza, propósito y potenciales beneficios asociados a su participación en este estudio, y he respondido a todas las preguntas que se me han planteado.”

14. “He proveído al (a la) participante con una copia firmada de este formulario de consentimiento.”

Firma de la Investigadora:

Fecha:

Participant Informed Consent Form for Takiwasi’s Clients

1. “Susana Bustos, a Ph.D. candidate in Humanities with a concentration in East-West Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, California, has requested my voluntary participation in a research study at this institution. The title of the research is: The Healing Power of the Icaros: A Phenomenological Study of Ayahuasca Experiences.”

2. “I have been informed that the purpose of this research is to explore the experience of an icaro(s) as healing during an ayahuasca ceremony that was sound recorded by the researcher.”

3. “I understand that my participation has no formal relation to my treatment at Takiwasi, and that Takiwasi is informed and consents to the main characteristics and goals of this research.

4. “My participation will involve listening to the icaros sung during the ayahuasca ceremony, writing a report of my experience of an icaro(s) as healing in that

ceremony, and identifying which icaro(s) was (were) perceived by me as healing, all of which I will do by myself. My participation also involves two tape-recorded interviews, both an hour and a half to two hours long, at a mutually agreed time and place with the interviewer. In the first interview, if I was able to identify the icaro(s) I experienced as healing, I will be asked to listen to it in its entirety. In the contrary case, if I was unable to identify the icaro(s), I will be asked to listen to a 5 minutes random selection of the music of the ceremony.”

5. “I have been advised that the research does not involve any physical risk to me or predictable hazards. The only potential risk could be an emotional response related to remembering my experience during the ayahuasca ceremony. I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer a question or to end my participation in this study at any time. If I decide to remove myself from the study, I will continue to work in my program at Takiwasi without any penalty. I also know that I have the possibility of processing any emotional response with therapists at the center.”

6. “I have been informed that I will not be financially compensated for my participation. The potential benefits of the study are a better understanding of my internal experience, as well as increased personal insight and a sense of increased value to my recovery path.”

7. “I understand that the results of the study may be published and that my name or identity will not be revealed. I will be identified only with a capital letter.”

8. “I understand that all the information collected will be held in strict confidence. Audio-recordings, transcripts and the written report will be held in a locked

environment to which only the researcher will have access. My name will not be on any of the materials.

9. "All records will be left in Takiwasi's locked research archives for possible further study once the researcher leaves the center. I understand that these records will not reveal my identity, since I will be identified by a capital letter."

10. "I have been informed that any questions I have concerning the research study or my participation in it, before or after my consent, will be answered by Susana Bustos at (phone number at Takiwasi) or at (e-mail address) or by the faculty sponsor of this research, Dr. Janis Phelps at CIIS, (415) 575-6243."

11. "I understand that in case of injury, if I have questions about my rights as a participant in this research, or if I feel I have been placed at risk, I can contact the chair of the Human Research Committee, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103."

12. "I have read the above informed consent. The nature, demands and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefit to myself. In signing this consent form, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. A copy of this consent will be given to me."

Signature of participant:

Date:

13. "I certify that I have explained to the above participant the nature, purpose and potential benefits associated with participation in this research study, and have answered all questions that have been raised."

14. "I have provided the participant with a copy of this signed consent form."

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

Formulario de consentimiento informado para clientes de Takiwasi

1. "Susana Bustos, candidata a Doctora en Filosofía en Psicología del Este y del Oeste, en el Instituto Californiano de Estudios Integrales, San Francisco, California, Estados Unidos, ha pedido mi participación voluntaria en un estudio de esa institución. El título de la investigación es: El Poder Sanador De Los Cantos de los Curanderos o "Icaros": Un Estudio Fenomenológico."

2. "He sido informado(a) que el propósito de esta investigación es explorar la experiencia de un icaro(s) como sanador durante un ritual de ayahuasca que fue grabado por la investigadora."

3. "Entiendo que mi participación no tiene ninguna relación formal mi tratamiento en Takiwasi y que Takiwasi está informado y de acuerdo con las características principales y con las metas de esta investigación."

4. "Mi participación involucrará escuchar los icaros cantados durante la ceremonia de ayahuasca, escribir un reporte de mi experiencia de uno o más ícaros que haya percibido como sanadores en esa ceremonia, e identificar qué

ícaro(s) percibí como sanador, todo lo cual haré por mí mismo(a). Mi participación también involucra dos entrevistas grabadas de una hora y media a dos horas de duración cada una, que serán realizadas en un lugar y un tiempo acordados mutuamente con la investigadora. En la primera entrevista, si me fue posible identificar el icaro que experimenté como sanador, se me pedirá escucharlo por completo. Si, por el contrario, no me fue posible identificarlo(s), se me pedirá escuchar cinco minutos con selecciones de la música de la ceremonia.”

5. “He sido notificado(a) que esta investigación no involucra ningún riesgo físico para mí ni inconvenientes predecibles. Su único riesgo potencial podría ser una respuesta emocional relacionada con recordar mi experiencia durante la ceremonia. Entiendo que tengo el derecho de rehusar responder a una pregunta y poner término a mi participación en este estudio en cualquier momento. Si decido no proseguir en el estudio, continuaré con mi programa de rehabilitación en Takiwasi sin ninguna sanción. También sé que tengo la posibilidad de procesar cualquier reacción emocional con los terapeutas del centro.”

6. “He sido informado(a) que mi participación no tendrá compensación financiera. Los beneficios potenciales de este estudio son una mejor comprensión de mi experiencia interna, así como mayor capacidad personal de darme cuenta de lo vivido y revalorización de mi camino de rehabilitación.”

7. “Entiendo que los resultados del estudio podrían ser publicados y que ni mi nombre ni mi identidad serían revelados. Seré identificado sólo con una letra mayúscula.”

8. “Entiendo que toda la información recolectada será conservada en estricta confidencialidad. Grabaciones sonoras, transcripciones y reporte escrito serán manejados bajo llave, de único acceso a la investigadora. Mi nombre no estará en ninguno de los materiales.”

9. “Todos los documentos descritos serán dejados en los archivos de investigación de Takiwasi una vez que la investigadora haya concluido su estadía en el centro, para posible estudios futuros. Entiendo que esos materiales serán manejados bajo llave y no revelarán mi identidad, ya que seré identificado con una letra mayúscula.”

10. “He sido informado(a) que cualquier pregunta que tenga referida a este estudio o a mi participación en él, antes o después de mi consentimiento, será respondida por Susana Bustos, (número telefónico en Takiwasi), (dirección de correo electrónico), o por el facultativo que patrocina esta investigación, Dra. Janis Phelps en CIIS, número telefónico: (1-415) 575-6243.

11. “Entiendo que en caso de perjuicio, si tengo preguntas con respecto a mis derechos como participante en esta investigación, o si siento que he sido puesto en riesgo, puedo contactar al presidente del Comité de Investigación Humana del Instituto Californiano de Estudios Integrales, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.”

12. “He leído este formulario de consentimiento informado. La naturaleza, requerimientos y beneficios de este proyecto me han sido explicados. Entiendo que puedo retirar mi consentimiento y discontinuar mi participación en cualquier momento, sin ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios para mí. Con la firma de

este formulario no estoy renunciando a ninguna demanda legal, derecho o reparación. Recibiré copia de este consentimiento.”

Firma del (la) Participante:

Fecha:

13. “Certifico que he explicado al (a la) participante sobre la naturaleza, propósito y potenciales beneficios asociados a su participación en este estudio, y he respondido a todas las preguntas que se me han planteado.”

14. “He proveído al (a la) participante con una copia firmada de este formulario de consentimiento.”

Firma de la Investigadora:

Fecha:

Bill of Rights for Participants in Psychological Research

You have the right to:

1. Be treated with dignity and respect;
2. Be given a clear description of the purpose of the study and what is expected from you as a participant;
3. Be told of any benefits or risks to you that can be expected from participating in the study;
4. Know the researcher's training and experience as a psychologist;
5. Ask any questions you may have about the study;
6. Decide to participate or not without any pressure from the researcher;
7. Have your privacy protected within the limits of the law in California, USA and Peru;
8. Refuse to answer any research questions, refuse to participate in any part of the study or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative effects;
9. Be given a description of the overall results of the study upon request;
10. Discuss any concerns or file an anonymous complaint about the study with the Human Research Review Committee, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Sincerely,

Susana Bustos

Declaración de derechos de los participantes en una investigación psicológica

Usted tiene derecho a:

1. Ser tratado con dignidad y respeto;
2. Que se le dé una descripción clara del propósito del estudio y de qué se espera de usted como participante;
3. Que se le informe acerca de cualquier beneficio o riesgo anticipable relacionado con la participación en el estudio;
4. Conocer el tipo de entrenamiento y experiencia que tiene el psicólogo investigador;
5. Realizar cualquier pregunta que usted pueda tener sobre el estudio;
6. Decidir o no participar del estudio, sin ninguna presión por parte del investigador;
7. Tener su privacidad protegida, dentro de los límites de la ley del Estado de California, Estados Unidos, y del Perú;
8. Rehusar contestar cualquier pregunta de la investigación, rehusar participar en cualquier parte del estudio, o retirarse del mismo en cualquier momento, sin ningún efecto negativo;
9. Que se le dé una descripción general de los resultados del estudio, previa solicitud;
10. Discutir cualquier preocupación que tenga o poner un reclamo anónimo sobre el estudio en el Human Research Review Committee (Comité para la Revisión de la Investigación Humana), California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Agreements between Takiwasi and the Researcher

The President of Takiwasi, Dr. Jacques Mabit and CIIS's doctoral researcher Susana Bustos have agreed on the following points for conducting the research entitled: "The Healing Power of the Icaros: A Phenomenological Study of Ayahuasca Experiences" on site.

The researcher will be offered from Takiwasi:

- Access to the clients' files, research files, and any other information required from Takiwasi in order to facilitate the development of the study.
- Consentment to sound-record at least one ayahuasca ceremony a week.
- Permission to request the participation of its clients, therapeutic staff members and visitors, in the research.
- Logistic support in the research process, including a private office to conduct the interviews, Internet access in the center, and back-up sound equipment in case of need.

The researcher will be requested from Takiwasi to:

- Realize a 5-month stay at the center.
- Leave a copy of the research protocols and research results of Takiwasi's participants for possible further research conducted by the center. The material will be treated with standard research confidentiality—it will be locked, and no personal identification will be on it-.
- Offer 15 hours a week of clinical counseling to its clients, and/or therapeutic training to its staff, and/or participation in other Takiwasi's activities.

Signatures: _____

Dr. Jacques Mabit
President
Takiwasi

Susana Bustos
Doctoral Researcher
CIIS

Date:

Acuerdos entre Takiwasi y la Investigadora

El presidente ejecutivo de Takiwasi, Dr. Jacques Mabit, y la investigadora doctoranda Susana Bustos de California Institute of Integral Studies, han llegado a acuerdos sobre los siguientes puntos para conducir la investigación titulada: “El Poder Sanador de los Icaros: Un Estudio Fenomenológico de Experiencias con Ayahuasca” en este centro.

Takiwasi le ofrecerá a la investigadora:

- Acceso a los archivos terapéuticos de sus clientes, a sus archivos de investigación y a cualquier otra información que ella requiera de Takiwasi para facilitar el desarrollo del estudio.
- Su consentimiento para participar y realizar la grabación sonora de por lo menos una ceremonia de ayahuasca por semana.
- Permiso para solicitar la participación en el estudio de parte de sus clientes, personal terapéutico y visitantes.
- Soporte logístico durante el proceso de investigación, incluida una oficina privada para conducir las entrevistas, acceso a Internet en el centro y equipo de sonido de respaldo, en caso de necesidad.

Takiwasi requiere de la investigadora que ésta:

- Realice una estadía de cinco meses en el centro.
- Deje una copia de los protocolos y resultados de investigación con participantes de Takiwasi para que el centro desarrolle posibles futuros estudios. El material será tratado con estándares de confidencialidad de investigación: bajo llave de acceso restringido y sin identificación personal de ningún participante.
- Ofrezca al centro quince horas semanales de servicios terapéuticos a sus clientes y/o entrenamiento terapéutico a su personal y/o participación en otras actividades de Takiwasi.

Firmas:

Dr. Jacques Mabit
Director Ejecutivo
Centro Takiwasi

Susana Bustos
Investigadora Doctoranda
CIIS

Fecha:

Mayantuyacu's Certificate of Conduction of Research

Pucallpa, March 28th 2005

I hereby certify that Psychologist Susana Bustos Bischof, researcher at the California Institute of Integral Studies, in San Francisco, United States of America, has conducted the data collection phase for her doctoral studies, entitled: "The Healing Power of the Icaros: A Phenomenological Study of Ayahuasca Experiences," with master healer Juan Flores Salazar at his Institute Mayantuyacu. This Institute is located in the disctrict of Huánuco, four hours south from the city of Pucallpa, in the Peruvian Amazon.

Susana's stay was of 5 months, between October 15th 2004 and March 21st 2005. The study included recordings of icaros in ayahuasca ceremonies two to three times a week, interviews to patients about the healing effects of the icaros in their processes, interviews with the master healer Juan Flores, and personal experiential work, which included diets and diverse healing strategies with plants. The study was conducted with respect and ethical resposibility by both parties.

(Signature)
Sandra Encalada Guerra
Legal Representative Mayantuyacu

Certificado de Mayantuyacu de realización del estudio

Pucallpa, 28 de marzo de 2005

Por medio de la presente, certifico que la Psic. Susana Bustos Bischof, investigadora doctoranda de California Institute of Integral studies, San Francisco, Estados Unidos, ha realizado la recopilación de datos para su estudio de doctorado, titulado: “El Poder Sanador de los Icaros: Un Estudio Fenomenológico de Experiencias con Ayahuasca,” con el maestro curandero Juan Flores Salazar, en su Instituto Mayantuyacu. Dicho instituto se encuentra en el distrito de Huánuco, a cuatro horas al sur de la ciudad de Pucallpa, en la amazonía peruana.

La estadía de Susana tuvo una duración de cinco meses, entre el 15 de octubre de 2004 y el 21 de marzo de 2005. El estudio incuyó grabaciones de ícaros en sesiones de ayahuasca dos a tres veces por semana, entrevistas a pacientes sobre el efecto sanador de los ícaros en sus procesos, entrevistas al maestro curandero Juan Flores, y trabajos experienciales personales, los que incluyeron dietas y diversas estrategias de sanación con plantas. El estudio fue cursado con respeto y responsabilidad ética por ambas partes.

(Firma)
Sandra Encalada Guerra
Representante Legal Mayantuyacu

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PHENOMENON—

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

During the 8-month data collection phase at Takiwasi and Mayantuyacu, additional information regarding sex and age, as well as the frequency of reports of the phenomenon under study among individuals who participated in the sound-recorded ayahuasca ceremonies, was gathered. These supplementary data provide the first demographic profile of the phenomenon.

Results

A total of 37 ayahuasca ceremonies were digitally recorded. 3 ceremonies were conducted at Takiwasi by a mestizo healer, either don Lucho (2), of Cocama descent, or Orlando (1), of Chazutino descent, and Jacques Mabit. 34 ceremonies were recorded at Mayantuyacu, led by the mestizo Ashaninka healer Juan Flores.

The number of attendees to ceremonies was 239, which corresponds to 46 different individuals who may have participated repeatedly in ceremonies, 31 men and 15 women. In general, the presence of women compared to men in ceremonies showed a relation of less than 1 : 2. At Takiwasi, the presence of women was lower than at Mayantuyacu, with a relation of one woman per four men, whereas at Mayantuyacu the general orientation of 1 : 2 was found. This difference was primarily due to the large number of male clients from Takiwasi attending ceremonies.

Among individuals, the average age was 35 years. At Mayantuyacu, the population attending ceremonies was slightly older than at Takiwasi, reflecting

the younger population of men attending ceremonies at Takiwasi (31.4 years) in contrast with an older population of men at Mayantuyacu (39.4).

Table 4 presents the number of attendees and individuals who participated in the ceremonies, according to site and sex, as well as the mean age of individuals per group.

Table 4

Sex and Age of Attendees and Individuals in Sound-Recorded Ayahuasca Ceremonies by Site

| Groups by Site | Attendees (<i>N</i> = 239) | | Individuals (<i>N</i> = 46) | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------|----------|
| | <i>P</i> | | <i>P</i> | Mean age |
| Takiwasi | (<i>n</i> = 26) | | (<i>n</i> = 20) | |
| Men | 76.9 | | 75.0 | 31.4 |
| Woman | 23.1 | | 25.0 | 37.0 |
| Mayantuyacu | (<i>n</i> = 213) | | (<i>n</i> = 26) | |
| Men | 69.0 | | 61.5 | 39.4 |
| Woman | 31.0 | | 38.5 | 37.2 |
| TOTAL | | | | |
| Men | 69.9 | | 67.4 | 34.4 |
| Woman | 30.1 | | 32.6 | 35.5 |

Note. Attendees in a ceremony may be the same individuals. The median age was only considered for individuals.

Among the total of attendees to the ceremonies, intense healing with an icaro was experienced by 13 people (5.4%). The phenomenon arose 2.5 times

more frequently at Takiwasi than at Mayantuyacu. Considering the difference in number of recorded ceremonies, the phenomenon appeared more than once in each ceremony at Takiwasi, and one in five ceremonies at Mayantuyacu. No significant differences were found between men and women who participated in the ceremonies.

Table 5 presents the distribution of the phenomenon “intense healing experience with an icaro,” in terms of frequency and percentage of occurrence, among site and sex of attendees to a sound recorded ayahuasca ceremony.

Table 5

Distribution of the Phenomenon among Sex of Attendees to Ayahuasca

Ceremonies by Site

| Attendees per Sex | Phenomenon | |
|------------------------|-------------|----------|
| | <i>N</i> | <i>P</i> |
| | Takiwasi | |
| Men (<i>n</i> = 20) | 3 | 15.0 |
| Woman (<i>n</i> = 6) | 1 | 16.7 |
| Total | 4 | 15.4 |
| | Mayantuyacu | |
| Men (<i>n</i> = 147) | 6 | 4.1 |
| Woman (<i>n</i> = 66) | 3 | 4.5 |
| Total | 9 | 4.2 |

About one individual in four experienced intense healing with an icaro. The phenomenon among individuals appeared higher at Mayantuyacu than at

Takiwasi (26.9% and 20% respectively). In general, the phenomenon emerged slightly more in women compared to men, due to its higher emergence at Mayantuyacu among women. However, the amount of female attendees to ceremonies was too low to risk any conclusion.

Table 6 presents the distribution of intense healing experiences with an icaro in ayahuasca ceremonies by site, among sex and mean age of individuals. The same individual may have attended more than one recorded ceremony.

Table 6

Distribution of the Phenomenon among Sex and Age of Individuals who Participated in Ayahuasca Ceremonies by Site

| Individuals ($N = 46$) | | Phenomenon | |
|--------------------------|----------|------------|------|
| Sex | Mean Age | N | P |
| Takiwasi | | | |
| Men ($n = 15$) | 29.0 | 3 | 20.0 |
| Woman ($n = 5$) | 27.0 | 1 | 20.0 |
| Total | 28.5 | 4 | 20.0 |
| Mayantuyacu | | | |
| Men ($n = 16$) | 32.7 | 4 | 25.0 |
| Woman ($n = 10$) | 32.3 | 3 | 30.0 |
| Total | 32.3 | 7 | 26.9 |

Among the 11 individuals who experienced the phenomenon, out of whom only 5 fulfilled all the required criteria to participate in this study, two reported it twice in different ceremonies. 7 were men and 4 were women, with a mean age of 31 years old. Younger individuals experienced the phenomenon at Takiwasi

compared to individuals at Mayantuyacu. The variable sex did not introduce significant differences in general or within sites.

Discussion

Besides Takiwasi's larger number of attendees to ceremonies, there are at least two other factors that might be influencing the higher frequency of appearance of the phenomenon among attendees at Takiwasi compared to Mayantuyacu. The first is the setting of the ceremonies, and the second is the individuals' disposition towards the work (set). Given Takiwasi's target population (male addicts), the use of intense plant purges for bodily cleansing and emotional catharsis is habitual. The ayahuasca rituals usually display similar "dramatic" effects on their participants. Tobacco soaked in water, a potent emetic, is normally offered for drinking, as well as a second dose of ayahuasca for those who want it. The ceremonies last between six to eight hours, a third longer in duration than is traditional. Takiwasi's subculture explicitly validates and positively reinforces those intense experiences during the ceremonies as playing a key role in the healing processes. Therefore, it is frequent to hear clients, staff, and visitors share about how "intense" or "strong" the session was for them. So, it is possible to hypothesize that people are predisposed to have intense experiences and/or intense healing experiences. Consistent with the above, Jacques Mabit's style contrasts markedly with the mestizo healers' style of singing icaros. Jacques' singing is often extremely fast, penetrative, melodically differentiable, and of massive sound. It is interesting to note that sometimes the sole entry into a softer,

calmer, and monotone phase with the singing of the *mestizo* healers was mentioned as inducing intense healing experiences in general.

On another hand, maestro Juan's main motto is "*poco a poco*"—step by step. He normally tests the new clients' responses to the brew with low dosages, and only invites severely sick people to drink ayahuasca later on in their healing processes. He neither encourages nor discourages purging during the sessions and the frequency of purging and overtly emotional catharsis is much less than at Takiwasi. His ceremonies are less explicitly structured compared to the ones at Takiwasi, and have a more relaxed and warm climate. *Maestro* Juan also builds trusting relationships with his clients "poco a poco." His singing style follows the main musical characteristics of traditional icaros. Therefore, it's possible to hypothesize that maestro Juan's clients are less predisposed to experience intense healing but rather, a gradual healing, where intense healing experiences with icaros would emerge in similar ways.

In consequence, some of these contrasts between Takiwasi's and Mayantuyacu's approaches to healing might be playing a role in the frequency of appearance of the phenomenon within ceremonies per site.

APPENDIX D: THE USE OF THE ICAROS WITH PARTICIPANTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HEALER

Two in-depth interviews were conducted with maestro curandero Juan Flores at his center Mayantuyacu towards the end of the study. They aimed to get a general view, from the perspective of the healer, of how he recalled using the icaros for the participants when they experienced intense healing with them. Maestro Juan remembers in detail the ways he chose the particular icaros for each patient and what was the intention healing involved in them. A summary of the content of these interviews follows, along with the healing function of the plant whose icaro was sung to each participant, as described by maestro Juan during teaching sessions. The summaries are presented in first person, trying to keep the wording of the maestro within a free-style translation, with his expressed consent.

Participant B

When B arrived he needed to open up more trust. He was a little distrustful, a little closed. The maestro has to help the person to open up, so that he can develop trust towards the maestro and the icaros. Therefore, to demonstrate the work is important: that the person feels the icaro within his body and brain, his mind, everything. Inasmuch as the person is feeling the healing icaro, he is opening more, and if the person doesn't feel the icaro, he will think that there is nothing and won't open up. So, B was missing that, to introduce him to the work, the plant, and the healing icaro to open up completely and therefore, to the plants.

That's it. B started to feel the icaro and opened up trust towards the maestro, that's me, the healer.

The *Came Renaco* is the plant that opens up the person. It works in the person's body and it teaches you to open up through several spirits that dwell in it: the doctor (female), the princess, and the mermaid. Three people to help the patient to access knowledge of other realms. B was dieting *Came Renaco*. The icaros are repeated several times during ceremonies, but there is a moment when I do a whole work. It is in that moment when the patient feels the icaro. I am studying the points until the moment arrives and I say: "Today I do it." It doesn't go beyond that day because it's programmed already. That day I demonstrate many things, many icaros besides the healings.

Came Renaco

The *Came Renaco* is a parasitic, strangler vine, which grows embracing another tree until it fully envelops it and ends looking like a tree itself. Preparations of *Came Renaco* are used to heal damaged articulations, bone fractures, and inner scars in women who have given birth.

Participant C

One thing is to say: "I will study" and another is not to say one needs also healing. Since the time C came back here for the second time telling me he wanted to study with me, I knew he needed healing work. I told myself: "Well, let's go for it." What he needed was to open one more door he was missing. He

knows a good amount, but he was missing one more door to broaden his knowledge, his studies, to look by himself, to go out, to be in that place his thoughts were in through the power of the ayahuasca. And the moment came one night when we drunk. I was singing and when I stopped B [maestro Juan's apprentice] started singing. The strength was coming, coming. In that moment C has felt the healing icaro himself, all being together. If I give the strength, which is the transmission of the strength of the ayahuasca itself, B sings. Think of it as if I was singing myself through him. Well, that's how it is. C started to open up more, to feel himself more, more, more. Only then he said: "I've found what Susana (the researcher) was looking for. Now I can tell." Because before that he was closed. He didn't say anything. He was very hard. So, with the healing icaro we opened him up, we opened his heart for him to be able to speak.

Came Renaco

Refer to participant B.

Participant D

In these cases one utilizes the shacapa that has *Albahaca*, *Rosa Sisa*, and *Piñón Colorado*. The three plants have the strength to make the person flourish, and in addition, the *Piñón* cleanses the body, the depression. The *Albahaca* is to make flourish the purpose of the person, her brain, her crown, her skin. So, the work is given as a whole. That is the healing work that D has felt in her body. The icaros of the three plants are there, together with the shacapa.

I used it because I saw during the ceremony she was a little desperate and needed to do work with those plants. At some point I felt that the spirits were telling me: “You have to do this now.” Sometimes things are not planned and all of a sudden they tell me: “This is missing, you have to do this and this,” and I have to follow their orders. The higher I work with the spirits, the more I get in touch with their orders and have to follow them. So, I went out [of the ceremonial place] and prepared the plants for D. That is done with much care and ritual in order that the plant itself comes and does the work with the person, with the icaro for the person. I did the general cleansing of her body and D felt the healing icaro. That’s how it was. She still needs work. Her stay was too brief but she has already started her healing and feels calmer. She’ll possibly come back for a longer time, more prepared, but her healing has already begun.

Albahaca, Rosa Sisa, and Piñón Colorado

Albahaca (*Pichana Albahaca*=*Hyptis mutabilis*), a variety of basil, is used to cleanse the senses and all functions connected to the brain. It helps attention, concentration, memory and sharpness of mind. *Rosa Sisa* (*Tagetes erecta*) is a small plant with yellow-orange flowers. It acts as an emetic when taken as a medicine. It is utilized as a cleanser of evil spirits, and for protection of the whole body, along with *Piñón Colorado* (*Jathropa curcas*). The *Piñón* grows as a small tree or bush, has purple leaves and fruits, therefore, it is associated to *El Señor de los Milagros* and to His favors.

Participant L

When L arrived, I studied him, and I found out he was a little stiff. Little by little he started working, because he was here for a long time, and began to open up. Well, he was under study, and the night we drank, while in the concentration, I could see it was as if he was lacking something within himself. So, I started to search for the icaros. I was singing several icaros related to El Señor de Los Milagros, because that month was devoted to Him, and the altar was also there [in the ceremonial place]. I was looking to touch him in the right place and it was a little difficult to find the right icaro for him but in an instant, I looked at the altar and the icaro came, the way of making it. I started adding words and modeling it according to what was set in the altar: Rosa Sisa, mucura, plantain, Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Jesus Christ, redeemer of the ill. I was concentrating on giving it the right tone to make the healing icaro in that moment. So, everything came in the moment, all the information, so it got transformed into a healing icaro for L, an icaro of joy. L was not in individual healing, but the work was circling around in the group and little by little it starts coming to people. I felt the icaro was taking L well, as he started softening.

It was a gift for his body, or his soul, or his spirit, because he needed it: he was experiencing the lack of unity in his family, and he felt a positive power through the icaro, a healing. It was something new he had never experienced before in his life. That is the strength of the icaro: the healing change it gives to a person.

The ayahuasca gives me all the strength when it comes buzzing, and then all the information comes, the words, the tone of voice, and I can make up the icaros instantly. That happens when I elevate myself more in order to do a healing work. It's not my person who works, but the spirits who enter my body and start singing through my person who do everything, so you feel different voices coming through me depending on the spirits: one day is one, one day is another. The most important thing is that the icaro resonates, to give it the right timbre, the right balance, because if not given, the patient is not going to feel the vibration involved in the work. Therefore, it is within the icaro's vibration that the spirit does the work.

El Señor de los Milagros and the Icaro Niño Manuelito

The Lord of Miracles is Peru's main patron. In the seventeenth century, a strong earthquake destroyed most of Lima, the official center of the Spanish kingdom in Latin America. In the basement of one church, an intact painting was found, showing the image of a crucified Christ accompanied by two disciples. Since then, the image is revered and prayed to for life changing miracles. The Lord was asked for support some years ago, when the maestro lost his trail within the jungle and got lost for six days. He came out safe, though starving, and his partner and he committed to celebrate a *velada* in honor of the Lord once a year, for six years. A *velada* is a ceremonial meeting that lasts all night, where people from the community are invited to gather around an altar with the image of the Lord of the Miracles. A priest opens and closes the *velada*. During the night,

particular music is played by musicians, with high pitched flutes and handdrums, while people dance facing the altar in a sequence of rows. The first row salutes the altar with bows and handkerchiefs and then goes back in the line. Eating, drinking and socializing are part of the velada. The maestro brings in the presence of the Señor de los Milagros through his icaros mostly in strong healing sessions. Maestro Juan also relates His presence to the plant called *Piñón Colorado* (*Jathropa curcas*), which has a similar purple color than the one the Lord is embellished with when venerated.

Little Boy Manuel is the healing icaro that was central in L's experience. It venerates and offers gifts to the presence of Christ as a baby in the Nativity scene. It was sung in the ceremony on Christmas day, and it is an adaptation into an icaro from a traditional carol sung in the jungle area.

Participant S

S's treatment has been a process of about two years. She always was feeling a little bad but I was always helping her with the healing. The day of the ceremony she told me she wanted to take the ayahuasca but I saw her a little tired and I said no. As she insisted, I told her she was going to take just a little because I had a very special preparation that night. I had cooked the trunk of the ayahuasca, which symbolizes the highest strength, it is where it gets the whole strength of nature. She answered she wanted the healing that night, to receive the strength of the ayahuasca. And that night we drank. When the mareación came I started concentrating on all patients. All the spirits were already present, and as

every curandero does, I asked her, as part of my family, to come first to cure her. I called on the ayahuasca because it was primarily a work for her, a general cleanse for her body.

She had worked in places where lots of witchcraft was done and she had received something inside her body that was there for a long time. During these two years of treatment I knew she felt occasional bites in her foot but from the outside you couldn't tell, I thought it was just a simple pain and didn't take a strong stance towards it. But that night with the plant and with the strength of the ayahuasca I became aware and she did as well first, that it was the fishbone she had inside. She was able to take it out and we studied it later together: it was the fishbone of the *raya* or the *badre*. I blew tobacco again on the scar and it was done. That night she felt the spirit came out of her body. And it seemed so, because I could see the fishbone. It was a team work because the ayahuasca itself was in her body as well as in mine.

It was a work of sorcery that starts little by little weakening the body. So, the body begins to fall, and the spirit follows, day by day, smoothly, the decay. Finally the person cannot walk when she is already in severe condition, which makes the treatment difficult. When there is a discharge of the evil spirit the void always remains and the body gets very vulnerable. Sickness enters easily and the body suffers a reaction. That happened to S and her state begun to get more complex and severe, but I was coming and going in order to give her strength and healing, spiritually as much as physically. In this case, I also supported her with

Occidental medicines, with which I have been working for many years. I worked with both medicines together on her.

Ayahuasca

A vine (*Banisteriopsis caapi*), considered masculine, that gives willpower and direction, whose name is translated “the vine of the spirits.” It has the function of carrying the spirit of the *chacrana* (*Psychotria Viridis*), a female plant, the Queen of the Forest. Together, they teach about death, help in diagnosis of sicknesses, and elevate the person to have contact with and to learn from spiritual realms, including the natural world. They can be dieted separately, and their functions are primarily protection and cleansing of the body, as well as teaching.

Author Note

The raw data of this study and their analysis are available for interested researchers by directly contacting Susana Bustos at sanaikar@yahoo.com .