

# Ari's Burger: Vignettes of Iquitos (Part 2)

Jimmy Weiskopf

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## Testimonio

**Cómo citar:** Weiskopf, Jimmy. (2018). Ari's Burger: Vignettes of Iquitos (Part 2). *Mundo Amazónico* 9(2): 229-241 Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/ma.v9n2.74951>

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## Abstract

This is the second of a three-part account of a visit to Iquitos at the time of the new millennium by the narrator, who lives in Colombia and has been drinking *yajé* (ayahuasca) with its indigenous shamans and for a book he is writing about the subject, decides to investigate the rituals in Peru. It is in the form of a travelogue divided into vignettes: his voyage upriver from Leticia to Iquitos, his impressions of a city which revolves around eco-tourism and his encounter with his host, Zappa, an American expatriate who exports shamanic plants and runs ayahuasca ceremonies.

**Keywords:** literature; ayahuasca; *Banisteriopsis*; *yajé*; travel; Iquitos.

## Resumen

Este es la segunda entrega de un relato en tres partes sobre una visita a Iquitos en el nuevo milenio por el narrador, quien vive en Colombia y ha tomado *yajé* (ayahuasca) con chamanes indígenas. Por un libro del que está escribiendo sobre el tema, decide investigar los rituales en Perú. Está en forma de un diario de viaje dividido en viñetas: su viaje río arriba desde Leticia a Iquitos, sus impresiones de una ciudad que gira en torno al ecoturismo y su encuentro con su anfitrión, Zappa, un expatriado estadounidense que exporta plantas chamánicas y realiza ceremonias de ayahuasca.

**Keywords:** literature; ayahuasca; *Banisteriopsis*; *yajé*; travel; Iquitos.

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Jimmy Weiskopf was born in New York, educated at Columbia College and Cambridge University, England. He has lived in Colombia for the past forty years and is a naturalized Colombian citizen. He works as a journalist and translator and is the author of *Yajé: the New Purgatory*, the definitive book about ayahuasca practices in Colombia and winner of a Latino Book Award, and *Ayahuasca Weaving Destinies*, a fictional account of his initiation in ayahuasca at a time when the Putumayo was plagued by the production of cocaine and a war between guerrilla and paramilitary armies.

### Resumo

Esta é a segunda entrega de um relato em três partes de uma visita a Iquitos na época do novo milênio pelo narrador, que mora na Colômbia e tem bebido yajé (ayahuasca) com xamãs indígenas. Por um livro sobre o qual ele está escrevendo sobre o assunto, decide investigar os rituais no Peru. É na forma de um diário de viagem dividido em vinhetas: sua viagem rio acima de Letícia até Iquitos, suas impressões de uma cidade que gira em torno do ecoturismo e seu encontro com seu anfitrião, Zappa, um expatriado americano que exporta plantas xamânicas e dirige cerimônias de ayahuasca.

*Palavras-chave:* literatura; ayahuasca; *Banisteriopsis*; yajé; viagem; Iquitos.

## Introduction

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Jimmy, the narrator, lives in Bogotá and has been drinking yajé<sup>1</sup> with indigenous healers in Colombia for several years, sometimes in the jungle but lately in Bogotá. He travels to Iquitos with the aim of learning about the rituals in Peru for a book on ayahuasca he is planning to write. His host is Balaam Zappa, an American married to a local girl, who exports the plants the ayahuasca brew is made of and hosts rituals for gringos or acts as their jungle guide. Jimmy finds Zappa to be friendly, but has doubts about his approach to ayahuasca. Jimmy dislikes his contempt for the practices and beliefs of the native healers, interest in making money out of it and arrogant attitude towards Peruvians in general, shared by the set of expatriates he belongs to, who hang out at Ari's Burger, a café in the main square of Iquitos, the Plaza de Armas.

On the night of December 24<sup>th</sup> (when Christmas is celebrated in Peru), he, Zappa and his wife visit her mother, who lives in a slummy neighborhood, but the party is depressing and Jimmy is further struck by the gap between Zappa and the exploited, uneducated mestizos he interacts with.

The following night, Zappa organizes a family-type ceremony for Jimmy at his home. Alarmed by Zappa's slapdash, irreverent cooking of the medicine that afternoon, he worries about a bad trip but the ayahuasca has no particular effect on him. However, since he has still not drunk with the local healers, which is his real purpose there and is relying on Zappa for recommendations, he doesn't voice his doubts.

The first part of this account can be read in Weiskopf (2017).

## Five

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I brought up my concern about drinking with Peruvian healers as soon as possible, since I only had a few weeks in hand.

"Pedro's the guy, you'll love him. First thing tomorrow we'll set something up".

So after breakfast we got on Zappa's Harley and rode off to another crummy neighborhood, somewhat short of town in a big dip in the terrain not far from the river, that was, for all practical purposes, a favela. I often had the queer illusion, as I wandered round such places, that all of the men folk were twins, multiplied over and over again. There was a standard physical type: the helmet of ebony hair, slightly slanted fold of the eyes, hairless cheeks and chin, and vulpine shape of the face, the apex below the ready smile completing the quizzical expression, as though they had been dumped into an incomprehensible situation and were puzzled at the very fact of being alive. And that soft manner of speech you also heard in the Putumayo, a music of self-belittlement.

I saw few cement blocks there, nor even much planed timber, but shacks of the crudest planks, some patched with cardboard and other waste materials. I had done *yajé* in Leticia/Tabatinga with skillful healers who lived in such slums, so I reminded myself that what really mattered was in the heart of the shaman and tried not to be put off by the dirt floor, chairs rescued from the rubbish heap or smell of decomposing garbage.

Roughly my age, Pedro was light-skinned and lean, and had vaguely European features. He was dispensing a liquid herb preparation to one of his patients, a toothless woman of about sixty: two youngsters that I took to be his grandsons looked on. Pedro blessed the remedy with some mumbo-jumbo, sternly whispered counsel to the woman, who looked dead scared, and then got one of the boys to fetch some dried leaves which he placed in a bag with the bottle. As the woman reached for it, he brusquely snatched it away, rebuked her again and only let go after she handed over the money. All the while, the boys hung on every gesture, as though they were observing some deep magic.

Without a word of welcome, he turned to Zappa. "Who's this gringo? Another tourist, I suppose".

"No, no, don Pedro, he's a drinker, like myself; from Colombia".

This piqued his interest and as we talked, I was reminded of some of the types I had run across in the lower Putumayo, settlers or natives who were wary of outsiders and felt they had to bait you, to see if you lived up to their *machista* standards. They were more curious than resentful and usually, if you stood up to them, in verbal terms I mean, they backed down and sometimes showed a warm heart. So, I joked along with him until we were metaphorically slapping each other's backs, and he readily agreed to host a session for us the next night, at the kiosk at Zappa's. I offered him the equivalent in *soles* of what I was paying for a session in Colombia at that time and he said that was fine.

My mission to Iquitos was finally going somewhere, it seemed. Nevertheless, I was dogged by an unease I couldn't put my finger on. Maybe it was his gaze, hard as nails. Even his laugh was ice cold, as if he were measuring me for a coffin.

Pedro came at nine the following night, with some of the boys I had seen at his place and Guy, a curt, muscular, crew-cut Frenchman with the look of a legionnaire who'd never been in the jungle before. A while later, three locals turned up, steady patients of Pedro's, humble and silent, so that with Zappa there were eight of us. Pedro got us to arrange the chairs in a half-circle before him. My hammock was up, as before, but he made me join the others.

He put on a Shipibo tunic with those black and white stick figures of their *pinta*,<sup>2</sup> and a necklace of beads with some feathers. On the table where he kept the bottle and cups he reverently placed a small crucifix and rosary. He blew *mapacho*-tobacco smoke into the bottle, whistling a little tune and then he anointed the head, arms and chest of all of us with that cologne they call *Agua de Florida*. After that, he passed the cigarette around and got us all to take a deep drag. The ayahuasca, sickly sweet, measured about half a cup. It was given to us without a word of blessing, like a glass of water.

The ceremony began, that is, a solo recital in which all attention was focused on the shaman. He recited the Hail Mary and Our Father, with a load of verses I had never heard before, and sang a number of hymns. As he warmed up, he changed to what they call "Andean" music, the traditional stuff of Ecuador and Peru. A few were in Quechua or mixed Spanish and Quechua words. There was one which caught my fancy, about a man who asks for some leaves of ayahuasca to relieve his distress. At times I sang along with him or made a wisecrack. It was a bad habit, this butting in, but the others were so wooden there was no life to the session. The *taitas*<sup>3</sup> I knew liked to have feedback and since Pedro did not object, I reckoned it was all right.

I didn't like his style but customs were different in Peru, I supposed, to start with. But after an hour had passed and it still hadn't brought on *pinta*, it became impossible to stay in my seat, because the nausea was overwhelming. Going to the hammock was against the rules, but I did it anyway. I should have been more prudent, given that disturbing stare of his.

Fighting for breath, I left when the hut began spinning and I felt bloated with lava and there was *pinta* at last: of sinister mechanical beings washed in a sickly red and moving to Pedro's chants, a jangling of tin cans at the end of a long alley.

When Zappa followed me outside, the torture intensified, as though I were connected to his purge. With the vapor of the soil like a poison in my lungs, I literally crawled twenty paces to the front door, entered the living room – an

alien cube that gave me no sense of where the bathroom was – and reached the toilet, but my legs wouldn't allow me to rise to the seat. As I grabbed the porcelain over the cistern with my arms, I felt the vomit coming on and got back on my knees again, took deep, deep breaths and put my head over the bowl. At this point Zappa came in.

Though I was woozy, in a cold sweat and irradiated by evil *pinta*, I wasn't in a panic anymore because the vine was about to do its work.

"How can you let yourself go like that, Jimmy?" he asked. "Get hold of yourself, man, it's all in the mind".

Lifting a weary head, I said:

"Leave me alone. I know what I'm doing. Hasn't it ever happened to you?"

But, no, it hadn't: the vine seemed to be a matter of positive thinking for him. If you didn't understand, as they did back home, that it wasn't your "willpower" that ruled at such times, then you didn't understand anything

The confrontation gave me a jolt that brought on the shit. Still nauseous, I expected to vomit, but hard as I heaved, it wouldn't come. Something was seriously wrong. The purge was taking too long.

When I made it back, still faint, I told Pedro that I needed to lie down.

"You should never have left the circle," he replied. "Isn't that right, Zappa?"

"C'mon, Jimmy, don Pedro knows what he's doing".

No doubt he did, but I saw a screen of maggots around the healer, following the curve of the chairs. Hissing like a snake, Pedro said that he could see the spirit attack but I had to be close for him to repel it. I started to pull myself out of the hammock and felt another hurricane of negativity. At a nod from Pedro, a kid – his son of fourteen, I later realized – put his hands under my arms and tried to steer me to my vacant seat, not unkindly, but I knew, with a thundering certainty, that my very survival depended on staying in the hammock. It was a tug of war, till I told him to get his bloody hands off me.

When I finally vomited, with a slithering bestiality, I was released from Pedro's spell. And then, when I was expecting the reward, he left, the session was over, I was wide awake, the spirits had fled and I felt bored, null and empty.

I finally slept a little in my room, until, just before dawn, in a state between dream and *pinta*, spirals of color lifted me into the sky and over the river, as though I were doing the voyage from Tabatinga to Iquitos in reverse and then to a familiar voice in Bogotá.

“You gringo fool, how many times have I told you!”

It was don Rosero, my maestro: so near, so real, I could have sworn he was in the room.

I couldn't count the nights he had told me you had to be wary of those you drink with. That the world of *yajé* is full of rivalry, envy and spite and you must be sure of a shaman before entrusting your soul to him. That a lot of times the so-called healer's only interest is not to heal but to harm. To play with your mind for the hell of it, to show you his power.

“I warned you not to drink with those others and you fell right into the trap. And this guy Pedro is *malo*! A real sorcerer, you saw it in his face and ignored the warning. Just as well I was looking after you from a distance.”

Ah, that deep rumbling voice, so full of authority! What a comfort it was!

“And your friend,” he continued, his broad notched face before me, chin down, eyes slits of anger. “This Zappa [spitting it], well, a cobbler should stick to his last”.

“Imagine learning *yajé* from a gringo, you'd have done better with a bear! Cooking that brew of his near a menstruating bitch, you're lucky you didn't go mad. Of course, nothing happened that first night, even the evil spirits were dormant. You have to wake the *yajé* up, otherwise you're only drinking water and leaves. But those shades were there, in the atmosphere, and that Pedro, he saw his chance and, wow, did he leash them on you! Didn't you see the blood in your *pinta*?”

Then he uttered a resounding laugh. It told me, as no words could, that he relished my mistake, that the vine had only given me what I deserved. And the worst of it was that I had willingly surrendered myself – a caricature of the trusting gringo. Had I been paying attention, I would have smelt the putrefaction in that shack.

Yet, in that pre-dawn reverie, there was also the satisfaction of knowing that I had ventured out on my own. “I'm sorry, don Rosero but haven't you always said that taking such risks is the only way to acquire the divine science. That you yourself got into similar scrapes, when you were drinking with different tribes in the jungle?”

“Ay, *gringuito*,” he replied in that gruffly affectionate tone which absolved me of everything.

“Yes, I was an adventurer and I'm proud of it. But I was never a bobo!”

## Six

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Guy stayed for breakfast, pissed off not only because the medicine hadn't done anything for him but also, as he now learned from Balaam, he'd been ripped off by Pedro, who, claiming that the authentic rituals were closed off to foreigners, but he'd make an exception in his case, charged him an outrageous price. Zappa, in turn, was pissed with poor me, because I had vomited. In the Putumayo, collapses like the one I had were tolerated, even approved of by the *taitas*, who wanted to show us, the hard way, that you have to purge the body to open yourself to the spirits, which was substantiated in fire every time I drank.

For Zappa, it was disgusting. "To vomit is to give way to your ego. I haven't in seven years".

But hadn't I heard him puke when I was crawling to the toilet?

"That was only some sausages I ate at the last moment and because Pedro put something weird in the brew. I might have vomited the first time I drank, then the healer said it was wrong, so I decided to stop being weak." "Decided", just like that! Well, if all he drank was *gaseosa*,<sup>4</sup> it might have been so.

Not wanting to spoil my post-purge exaltation, I wandered round the large garden and met up with Romualdo, Zappa's all but indigenous employee, who was pruning a tree. Dressed in denims, with a long-billed cap, he was content in his element of soil and sweat.

"So... you're following the path of ayahuasca", he asked, as if amused by my eccentricity. "How did it go last night?"

I was tempted to be frank, but remembered the way the Indians in Colombia agree with everything you say, so you never know where they stand. As though reading my thoughts, he gave me a sympathetic look and pointed to an overgrown corner by the back fence, where there were some thick ayahuasca vines and nascent *chacrana*<sup>5</sup> not far away. Going round the house, he then showed me a tree-like bush with a pinwheel of lavender petals, the potent *chiricaspi*,<sup>6</sup> "Señor Zappa sometimes adds this bark, too much I tell him. It can very dangerous, but he's the boss".

A tacit pact having been established, I spoke of the healers I drank with in Colombia, hinting that I wanted something more authentic than the *vegetalistas* of the slums.

"Some relatives of mine are *ayahuasqueros*. "They have this center out on the highway".

In the afternoon, unable to face the smelly marketplace, I went straight to Ari's Burger and lunched on a grilled cheese sandwich. Zappa turned up and

I joined him at the expats' table, because it was the furthest I could get from the influence of Pedro. Zappa downed one beer after another, saying he had to get the awful taste of that ayahuasca out of his mouth.

When the party broke up, we went for a stroll along the *malecón* – the promenade along the river – and a guy who was rumored to have been in the CIA came along. We sat down on a bench to enjoy the view, a broad sweep of water broken by wooded sandbars and at the furthest reach, a big ocean-going cargo ship, a throwback to days when Iquitos was the world's most inland port, I nostalgically thought, until told that it had been rusting away there for years. Behind us were the *azulejo* mansions of the rubber barons that were now hotels and boutiques, eyeless go-downs mellowed by the fading light, cavernous seminaries with superfluous parapets and nondescript buildings of timber or concrete. It was pretty in the setting sun, a Hollywood version of the languid tropics, but the whores and extra-loud music in the bars were a lesson. Wherever you looked, everything that had given this region its romance had been stolen long ago, leaving the losers in "Tommy Hilfiger" sportswear, as though they all had the same name.

They had brought a bottle of *pisco*<sup>7</sup> and reminisced about baseball and autumn leaves. A man with a deformed leg passed by and asked for alms. They made him parade it, like some marvel of nature, laughing their heads off. The beggar took this for a hopeful sign but when they got him to the point of a handout, they shouted "fuck off!"

How Zappa made it back on the bike I'll never know, but it was very late when he tapped on my window, wanting to avoid his wife and come down from a long, long day of liquor on top of ayahuasca. Despite that ugly scene, I was glad to see him. When we were on our own, he could be gentle and earnest and I remembered that some of *taitas* I knew also gave way to such binges after a ceremony.

"It's not that I like the guy," he said, "but it's a lonely life for a foreigner. Anyway most of it's an act, and..."

"And what?"

"I have to trust you on this. He's very well-connected, with the narcs, the army, the police."

"What's that to you. You're not doing anything illegal."

"Come on, this is Peru. The law's what the big shots say it is."

"A lot of people here say it's wrong for a foreigner to – quote – exploit the natural heritage of Peru, but it's only because it shows them how lazy they are. They don't like my marrying a local gal either. You know I got

busted for running sessions a while ago and had to buy my way out. I've also been involved in some protests about the environment and the drugs war. Sometimes I think I'd be better off going back to the States."

"Where you can't drink ayahuasca."

"Ah, there's the rub."

It was the cement of any friendship we had.

## Seven

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A couple of days later Romualdo took me to visit the relatives he had told me about. A forty-minute ride on a microbus left us on the roadside of a remnant jungle torn apart by cattle fields, much like the outskirts of Leticia except that it wasn't flat. When we entered the forest on the top of the hill – the first time I was in the jungle after a week in Iquitos – Romualdo dropped his "*quién sabe*" air, so I hinted at my disenchantment with Zappa and he (subtly) acknowledged it. Romualdo pointed out the *uña de gato*<sup>8</sup> vine and a tree with copal resin and I myself spotted the *pariana* whose leaves go into the *shacapa*<sup>10</sup>, but after that there was no need: the ayahuasca vines and other medicinal plants had signs on them. The terrain opened up on the crown of the hill and we reached the compound: the office – a wooden cabaña – and further on, the dormitories, screened in with mesh, with boardwalks to the toilet blocks.

Monty, the head of the hostel, showed us the ceremonial center, a simple thatched structure whose doorway was framed by an arch of two curved sections of *yajé* vine, like elephant's tusks, the longest I had ever seen. Backtracking, we went down to a muddy creek, where I bathed off my sweat, and below, a lean-to where Roberto, the healer, toothless with a stubble beard, was cooking the brew with his apprentice. There was also a gringo, who was introduced as a healer: an aging hippy, bald, with a ponytail, reading a book by that character Prechtel, who claims to have plucked the beard of a wild jaguar when he got his doctorate in shamanism from the Mayas in Guatemala. His daughter and son-in-law were beside him, talking in English, and completely ignored us.

Afterwards, Roberto explained that the center was also a wildlife reserve and its mission was to enlighten Western society about the sacredness of Nature. Monty then showed me his paintings of *pinta*, done with natural dyes on bark, with colored dots to convey its shimmering. That, the accurate botanical rendering and men made of leaves stretching upwards in ecstasy were reminiscent of that famous painter of ayahuasca, who turned out to be his uncle and I now learned that he, Monty, Romualdo and Roberto were direct descendants of a legendary *muraya*, a wizard of ayahuasca. It seemed

like a credential and when I mentioned participating in a ceremony there, Monty was enthusiastic. Just then, it seemed like the next step, predestined in fact, because of the way that Zappa had led me to Romualdo, who had led me to them. All the same, the place depressed me, something to do with the signs on the trees, mesh, flush toilets and gringos.

When I got off the moto-taxi near Zappa's house later that afternoon, a band was playing in a grille I passed every day, one that usually had only a few customers: it was for a high school graduation ceremony. Between graduates, parents and teachers, they were twenty at most, but such events get blown way out of proportion in those provincial places and it was funny to see the curious formality of speeches and awards in such a ramshackle place and suits and ties in the furnace of an Iquitos summer. But it was the song they were dancing to, which froze me like a statue as it played three or four times:

*Para bailar esto es una (bomba)*  
*Para gozar esto es una (bomba)*  
*Todas las mujeres lo bailan (bomba)*  
*Todos los hombres lo bailan (bomba)*  
*Todas las radios lo ponen (bomba)*  
*Las discotecas lo ponen (bomba)*  
*Toda la gente lo baila (bomba)*

It caught the floppy sensuality of that dilapidated rainforest so strongly that to this very day, I often hear *La bomba* in the trance, a madeleine which reawakens my epiphany on that dusty lane.

## Eight

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About the only ex-pat I liked was Jeff, a jungle guide from Florida who at least spent his time in the bush instead of bitching about the natives in an ice-cream parlor.

"Hear about that crazy Frenchman?"

"You mean Guy?"

"Yeah. Looking at him, you wouldn't think he's religious but he's ranting that ayahuasca is the work of the devil and getting this priest to denounce Balaam to the authorities". I doubted it would affect me, but since it confirmed my decision to not rely on Balaam anymore and Monty's place didn't feel right either, it put me in a fix because New Year's eve was in a couple of days and knowing that Iquitos would be as noisy as any town in Colombia, I desperately wanted to do a ceremony in the jungle.

Any doubts on that score were settled when Zappa and his wife told me that they would be celebrating the New Year on a big metal barge, anchored just off the *malecón* ('pier'), with bands, food and drink. I had a look and it was true: the floating dancehall had a stage, strings of colored lights and amplifiers that looked awesome even at a distance, so, as a long shot, I visited someone Jeff had recommended, Leslie, an American who ran a jungle tour business and, said Jeff, was much more knowledgeable than Zappa.

To get to Leslie's house, which was near Ari's Burger, I walked upriver along the waterfront and turned left on the calle Loreto. An Indian girl of about ten opened the door and gave me a warm hug! I first thought she'd mistaken me for someone else or was simple-minded, but she looked normal and was so natural about it, I then felt ashamed of myself. What was to stop us from greeting strangers like that, if we wanted to!

When Leslie emerged, the sensation of entering a special dimension grew stronger. He was so tall! And so serious as well and his indigenous wife, half his age, was beautiful, and also free of false reserve. The place seemed oddly familiar: I concentrated for a second and was back in Bucaramanga, in a friend's house with a colonial-type layout that continued well into modern times in hot-climate towns: high ceilings, glassed-in doors, enormous flowerpots, a central patio with a surrounding corridor on the upper floor.

Formerly a tenured professor of biology, he'd been led to the jungle by spiders, where, like myself, ayahuasca turned him upside down, except that he already had a career, wife and kids.

"I was always passionate about wildlife, but the only outlet for it was science, and once you're in that, there's no turning back, or so I thought until I took the medicine, experienced the reality of the spirits and realized that the values we've been taught are skewed by materialism, like our worship of technology or in my case, becoming an 'eminence' in my field.

In another sense, though, I'm only returning to what I originally wanted to do, which is to study and teach but in an *integral way*. Not taking animals or plants apart, piece by piece, down to the last molecule and then finding there is nothing there for you but some data that will impress your colleagues. But putting them together, seeing them as live beings, with a spirit which arrogant human beings share as well, much as it hurts our ego to admit it. I want to get people to understand that we must not destroy what is, in effect, our family. A few anyway, those that come down here for my tours".

From what he told me, they were at the opposite pole from the ayahuasca ceremonies sold by the touts posing as tribal Indians who sat on the curb by the Plaza de Armas. The package was based on a stay in a jungle lodge at quite a distance from Iquitos, where the clients were acclimatized through

special diets, guided walks through the forest and visits to indigenous communities, with the idea of protecting the habitat and native cultures from the contamination of our society. When I skimmed through a brochure which spoke of “healing, rebirth and the celebration of life” and a “holistic, multicultural, multidimensional odyssey”, however, I had the same squirmy feeling I’d felt at Monty’s. I didn’t want the jungle to be cleared by bulldozers and turned into cruddy cities surrounded by enormous ranches and agro-industrial enterprises either, but even less did I want it become a museum. Leave it to the Peruvians, was my belief, even if they messed it up.

In any case, I told him about my problem and later that afternoon, he introduced me to a healer who’d be ideal, he promised. Wiry, dark-skinned, with a bony face that gave him the look of an amiable weasel, Cooky didn’t say much but I sensed that he had that modesty and conviction which characterizes the true *taita*. What clinched it is that he did his rituals in a lodge he had built himself, not far from the city, but deep enough in the forest to escape the row.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> *Yajé* (*yagé*): name given in Colombia to the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine (also known as ayahuasca) and to the brew (also ayahuasca) made from it and a complementary plant.

<sup>2</sup> *Pinta* (‘painting’): visions induced by the ingestion of the ayahuasca brew.

<sup>3</sup> *Taita* (lit. ‘dad’): name given in the Putumayo region of Colombia to the healers and masters of the ayahuasca brew.

<sup>4</sup> *Gaseosa* is the local term for a soft drink.

<sup>5</sup> *Chacrana*: *Psychotria viridis* is a perennial shrub of the Rubiaceae family. It is known primarily as an additive to the ayahuasca brew.

<sup>6</sup> *Chiricaspi*: *Brunfelsia grandiflora* is native South American flowering shrub of the nightshade family (Solanaceae). It is added to ayahuasca, and it is used as a medicinal and ornamental plant.

<sup>7</sup> *Pisco* is a colorless or yellowish-to-amber colored brandy produced in winemaking regions of Peru and Chile.

<sup>8</sup> *Uña de gato* (‘cat’s claw’): *Uncaria tomentosa* is a woody vine found in the tropical jungles of South and Central America. It is known as cat’s claw because of its claw-shaped thorns, and it is used by indigenous peoples as a treatment for various disorders.

<sup>9</sup> *Copal* is a name given to a tree resin, particularly the aromatic resins from the copal tree *Protium copal* (Burseraceae), used by indigenous people as ceremonially burned incense.

<sup>10</sup> *Shacapa* is a Quechua word for a shaker or rattle made of the bundled leaves of a plant of the genus *Pariana*, used by *taitas* in ayahuasca ceremonies.

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WEISKOPF, J. (2017). Ari's Burger: Vignettes of Iquitos (Part 1). *Mundo Amazónico* 8(2): 107-117. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/ma.v8n2.67867>