

“Take a Picture with a Real Indian”:
(Self-) Representation, Ecotourism, and Indigeneity in Amazonia

by

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For Dad.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses three case studies to analyze and contextualize the interface between Western conceptions of indigenous peoples and nature and community-based conservation and development schemes in the Amazon: Kapawi Ecolodge (Ecuador), Chalalán Ecolodge (Bolivia), and Posada Amazonas (Peru). It explores how three Amazonian communities represent their indigenous identity in the online marketing of their ecotourism lodges. As a methodological tool, this research identifies four characteristics of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype: the spatial, the spiritual, the temporal, and the cultural. Current ethnographic literature describing these communities is used to analyze these self-representations. This thesis examines these representations within larger academic discussions on authenticity, power and control, and the long-term viability of ecotourism as a community-based development model.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

CI	Conservation International
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIRABO	Regional Ethnic Committee of Northwest Bolivia [<i>Comité Regional Étnico del Noroeste Bolivia</i>]
COICE	Coordinator of the Indigenous Organizations of the Ecuadorian Coast [<i>Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Costa Ecuatoriana</i>]
CONAIE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador [<i>Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador</i>]
CONFENIAE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon [<i>La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana</i>]
DINEIB	National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Ecuador [<i>Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe del Ecuador</i>]
ECUARUNARI	Confederation of Peoples of Kichiwa Nationality [<i>Ecuador Runakunapak Rikcharimuy</i>]
FENOCIN	National Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Black Organizations [<i>Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas Indígenas y Negras</i>]
FINAE	Federation of Ecuadorian Achuar Nationalities [<i>Federación Interprovincial de la Nacionalidad Achuar del Ecuador</i>]
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IIC	International Indigenous Commission
ILO	International Labor Organization
INRA	Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria
NAE	Achuar Nation of Ecuador [<i>Nacionalidad Achuar de Ecuador</i>]
NGO	Non-government Organization

OPIP	Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza [<i>Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas del Pastaza</i>]
PA	Posada Amazonas
PANAMIN	Philippines Presidential Assistance on National Minorities
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
RA	Refugio Amazonas
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policy
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SPI	Indian Protection Service [<i>Servicio de Proteção aos Indios</i>]
TCO	Community Original Lands [<i>Tierras Comunitarias de Origen</i>]
TRC	Tambopata Research Center
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNWGIP	United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Peoples
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Tourism Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

[W]e spend most of our lives trying to reaffirm that we are Indians and then we encounter statements like, 'But you wear jeans, a watch, sneakers, and speak Portuguese!' ...Society either understands Indians as all made up and naked inside the forest or consigns them to the border of the big cities

(Potiguara 1992: 46).

This thesis employs three case studies to analyze and contextualize the self-representations of Amazonian “indigenous” peoples in the online marketing of their ecotourism lodges: Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve (Ecuador), Chalalán Ecolodge (Bolivia), and Posada Amazonas (Peru).¹ Building on general definitions of the stereotype of the Ecologically Noble Savage, this research attempts to come to more a specific understanding of how the Ecologically Noble Savage myth is used for strategic purposes and with what implications. This study identifies four distinct elements of the stereotype: the spatial, the spiritual, the temporal, and the cultural. Using a qualitative textual and visual narrative analysis, this research locates these four elements within the self-representations of these three Amazonian communities on their ecolodge websites. Current ethnographic literature concerning these communities is used to contextualize these representations.

This thesis argues that as these Amazonian “indigenous” peoples become further incorporated into the global economy through ecotourism development, they are simultaneously being consigned to embody a pre-modern existence. Ultimately, the objective is to highlight the complex, diverse, and at times contradictory nature of identity practices in order to challenge current Western representations of Amazonian communities, particularly within environmental discourse.

¹ The word “indigenous” is in quotations in an attempt to draw attention to the diversity and complexity of the term. As will be discussed in the literature review, the term is typically based in stereotype and its denotation may not reflect the lives of Amazonian peoples today, particularly the groups described in this thesis.

1.2 THE EMERGENCE OF THE ECOLOGICALLY NOBLE SAVAGE

In an effort to better understand the concept of the Ecologically Noble Savage, the context of its emergence needs to be explored. Contemporary understandings of the concept of “noble” and “savage” people are not historically continuous. Rather, this section argues that the rhetoric of the noble savage carried different connotations and was used for varying purposes in different historical and cultural periods.

During the sixteenth century, Spanish conquistadores travelled to the Western hemisphere in the pursuit of gold, glory, and God. As they came into contact with previously unknown peoples in the New World, Spaniards saw themselves as superior to the Native peoples: while the Spaniards were Christian and thus civilized, the native populations were uncivilized because they did not practice Christianity. Missionaries were responsible for carrying out this civilizing mission in which the Natives would be converted to Christianity, the hallmark of a so-called civilized people. Once the missionaries began converting the populations, ethnicity and class came to dominate the rationale for Spanish domination of Native peoples.

According to Ter Ellingson (2001), seventeenth century French traveler Marc Lescarbot first created the idea of savage nobility in his description of the Mic Mac people of Canada in his *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (1609). During the seventeenth century, hunting was a privileged activity among the aristocracy. Noting that the Mic Mac hunted as a way of life, Lescarbot believed the Indians were “noble” because they engaged in the noble practice of hunting, not because they themselves were noble. Instead, Lescarbot used the concept of savage nobility to weaken Native legal claims to recognition and sovereignty. Since Natives were “ancient innocents”, much like the people described in Greek myths of the golden age, Lescarbot argued that they did not have legal standing. As the French endeavored to establish and expand their influences in North America through alliances with Native peoples, particularly in the fur trade, denying Natives legal standing justified French colonization and exploitation of these people, their territories, and their resources.

Life in a state of nature did not always carry positive associations. For Thomas Hobbes, author of *Leviathan* or *Commonwealth* (1651), such an existence was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” because it lacked a strong and central governing authority.

As a champion for the absolute authority of the sovereign, Hobbes' view was a response to the sixteenth and seventeenth century wars of religion in which Hobbes argued that the King's legitimacy stemmed from a Social Contract, not from God.²

During the eighteenth century, an increasing dissatisfaction with Western culture led some people to praise what they considered to be the "natural" Native lifestyle. Native peoples, from this perspective, were seen as noble savages whose seemingly carefree and idyllic rural existence in a real-life garden of Eden was preferred to the chaos and violence of urban life. The published voyages of Captain James Cook in the South Seas offered insight into these perceived Edenic cultures.

The assertion of racial categories in the nineteenth century further transformed the concept of the noble savage. Charles Darwin's concept of biological evolution as proposed in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) was translated into the theory of cultural evolution. Theorists like Edward Burnett Tylor (1891) argued that cultural diversity was the product of different stages of development where complex forms arise from simpler ones. The evolutionary paradigm reasoned that indigenous peoples were simply present-day remnants of a primordial existence and they were placed in a transitory or evolutionary stage, meaning that their culture and identity needed to be improved upon.

John Crawfurd and James Hunt, Ellingson argues, used scientific racism as a defense of British imperialism in the nineteenth century. Crawfurd disagreed with Darwinian evolution and instead believed humanity could be separated into superior and inferior races. He argued that different races were separate species, contrasting the notion of mankind's unity inherent in Darwinian evolutionary philosophy.

The idealization of the noble savage emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century during the peak of European imperialism. During the Industrial Revolution, some saw industry as the producer of individualization and isolation that disconnected people from nature (Ellingson 2001, Rowland 2004). During this era of romantic primitivism, noble savages seemed to be untainted and unconfined by industry in contrast with modern society's restrictions.

² Hobbes argued that a Social Contract was the foundation for the state, where men forfeited their liberty voluntarily by surrendering to an absolute ruler who would, in turn, give them peace and security.

Medical and topographical literature in the early twentieth century also emphasized the dangers that tropical regions could pose to human health. Tropical medicine as a field of study emerged in the 1890s and 1900s, according to David Arnold, with the purpose of “celebrat[ing] Europe’s growing sense of mastery over the tropics and the abiding idea of tropical difference” (1996: 152). While few diseases are endemic to the tropics, the field of tropical medicine supported the European conception of a tropical Other (Arnold).

Furthermore, the hot, wet climate was believed to exist in direct contrast to the European constitution. Whites were susceptible to what was identified as “tropical neurasthenia”, a state of acute anxiety, from just being in a tropical environment. In 1927, Dr. H.S. Stannus discussed the symptoms of the condition:

Exiled from home; often separated from his family...suffering in many cases loneliness and lack of congenial society...Living amidst a native population causes him annoyance at every turn...From early morn till dewy eve he is a state of unrest...Beset all day by a sadden heat, whence there is no escape from the unceasing attentions of the voracious insect world (1927: 330).

Native peoples in the tropics, however, were supposedly accustomed to such seemingly violent living conditions, a rationale that was often used to justify the use of native labor there. Westerners believed that tropical peoples did not need to exert much physical and mental effort in satisfying their basic needs because of the abundance of their natural environment. Arnold explains, “With nature so bountiful, a surplus could only be generated from people who were naturally lazy and able to meet their needs with minimal effort” (1996: 160). In endowing a moral significance to tropical environments, the images of an earthly paradise or a hell on earth were projected onto the cultures that called the rainforest home.

As the environment came to play an increasingly important role in the twenty-first century ecological consciousness, the admiration for indigenous peoples’ connection with nature developed into the stereotype of the Ecologically Noble Savage. In what has been referred to as the Second Wave of Environmentalism (Dowie 1996), the consequences of rapid industrialization and modernization yielded intensive and unregulated pollution during the post-war years, producing disastrous consequences that most people in the

developed world only became aware of in the 1960s.³ The increasing seepage of toxic chemicals into the groundwater, the regular occurrence of smog warnings, and other notable ecological consequences of pollution transformed a previously elite environmental movement that had focused on environmental preservation to a mass movement that acknowledged human culpability in nature's destruction. Perhaps most notably, the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and its account of pesticide usage in the United States popularized ideas of environmental quality and security amongst a Western populace. The oil crisis in the 1970s also led to a questioning of the availability of resources.

A greater awareness of the impact of human activities on the natural environment during the 1960s and 1970s spawned a number of international forums designed to tackle the debate on the appropriate use of natural resources in the 1980s and 1990s. In Latin America, scientists and mainstream media publicized both the importance of the Amazon rainforest and the forces that threatened its survival. Beginning in the 1980s, global attention became focused on the South American rainforest: in late 1988, *Time* magazine devoted an entire issue to the state of the global environment with a particular focus on tropical rainforests while several television documentaries on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) like "The Decade of Destruction" emphasized deforestation in Amazonia. As the country with the most rainforest within its national borders, Brazil almost overnight was brought to center stage as environmentalists, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) pressured the country to stop the destruction. In response, international aid agencies like the World Bank cut off funding for what was now seen as environmentally unsound projects in the country. While the industrialized world was widely seen as the main culprits of global environmental destruction in the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s shifted this culpability onto the developing world (Sachs 1993).

³ Dowie (1996) sees the First Wave of Environmentalism as a movement under the influence of Judeo-Christian tradition, where man's obligation was to control his natural environment and to use its resources to bring about civilization. During the early twentieth century, environmental debates centered around preservationist and conservationist philosophies.

The combined effect of this publicity during the 1980s resulted in the earth summit of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 where more heads of government attended than any other previous UN conference (Hemming 2008).⁴ Yet, developing countries faced a triple pronged dilemma: the need to develop their own economies and societies, the need to satisfy western demand for raw materials, and the need to act as the world's agent of environmental protection in the Amazon.

This rise in Western ecological consciousness has focused international attention on the protection of the world's biodiversity. In response, certain sectors of the movement have allied themselves with the "indigenous" communities in these regions based on a perceived common interest: the conservationists operate under the assumption that these Native peoples' relations to their natural environment coincide with and promote Western environmental principles (Conklin and Graham 1995). This eco-political discourse has produced a new variation on the stereotype of the noble savage: the Ecologically Noble Savage. In this archetype, certain indigenous peoples are considered to be guardians of the environment because they are inherently conservation oriented (Redford 1990; Rowland 2004). Whereas non-traditional, capitalist peoples have caused massive ecological destruction, the traditional livelihoods of these Ecologically Noble Savages are seen as having little environmental impact and they are viewed as inherent stewards or caretakers of the ecosystems in which they live.

Some within the conservation movement have popularized an artificially constructed image of a "real" Indian: the physical embodiment of the Ecologically Noble Savage myth. Images in environmental publications and mainstream media frequently portray Amazonian Indians in headdresses, body paint, and feather ornamentation, emphasizing their perceived exoticism, naturalness, and harmony with nature (Conklin and Graham 1995). In fact, the physical body and costume are often perceived as indicators of authentic indigenous identity. In a study of representations of indigenous peoples in *National Geographic*, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins (1993) showed that

⁴ Ironically, the conference also took place on the 500th anniversary of Columbus's "discovery of America".

readers perceived clothing to be the most important marker of cultural identity. According to Conklin (1997), some Amazonian Indians used these visual symbols in order to gain political advantage: “Native Amazonians who once took pains to hide external signs of indigenous identity behind mass-produced clothing now proclaim their cultural distinctiveness with headdresses, body paint, beads and feathers” (712).

However, many Amazonian Indians do not normally fit the visual stereotype, particularly given their incorporation of Western material culture. According to Conklin (1997), every indigenous group that has had sustained contact with “outsiders” has adopted Western clothing to some extent.⁵ Because many of these outsiders view nudity as a sign of barbarity, many indigenous peoples adopted western clothing. Similarly, the Awa in eastern Ecuador adopted Western clothing in an attempt to appear as “normal as possible” in order to avoid outside hostility (Conklin). However, the contemporary conservation movement (often sectors that ally with indigenous peoples) is encouraging a more (adapted) traditional image.⁶ Symbols of Western material culture appear to not only taint this pristine image of the Ecologically Noble Savage, but they also tend to associate indigenous peoples with modern systems of capitalism and exploitation, the very forces the conservation movement is trying to combat in Amazonia. The extent to which the Ecologically Noble Savage myth conforms to Amazonian peoples’ everyday practices will be explored in this study.

1.3 DEFINING ECOTOURISM

Critics of the development industry have highlighted its numerous perceived failures (Escobar 1995; Shiva 2002; Sundberg 1998). William Russell Easterly writes,

The West spent \$2.3 trillion on foreign aid over the last five decades and still had not managed to get twelve-cent medicines to children to prevent

⁵ With contact beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and heightened with the Estado Novo’s civilizing mission established in the 1930s, Brazil’s indigenous peoples have for some time now been forced to work within the national system, interacting with government agents, missionaries, and other non-Indians and interacting within this mainstream context became necessary for their survival (Garfield 1997).

⁶ While some elements of “traditional” costume are encouraged like semi-nudity and colorful ornamentation, monkey-tooth bracelets and jaguar-tooth necklaces that are commonly sported in the Amazon are not worn: they would contradict the conservation movement’s agenda to protect wildlife (cf Conklin 1997).

half all malaria deaths. The West spent \$2.3 trillion and still had not managed to get four-dollar bed nets to poor families. The West spent \$2.3 trillion and still had not managed to get three dollars to each new mother to prevent five million child deaths...It's a tragedy that so much well-meaning compassion did not bring these results for needy people. (2006: 4)

While Easterly's poignant comment specifically refers to the Western commitment to end poverty, we cannot help but ask why development aid has failed to produce widespread improvements in economic and social conditions in the global South. Easterly and other critics of development call for an alternative development discourse to address these shortcomings. Traditionally, re-conceptualizations of development have revolved around how and what aid is distributed.⁷ Would it be more constructive to reconsider to whom development is directed towards and how the West constructs those categories of people? This study argues that social development and ecological conservation in Amazonia might be more sustainable and effective if it acknowledged the diverse identities of local stakeholder communities.⁸

In the pursuit of alternative development strategies, there has been a movement to include local people and local knowledge in decision-making, with the term "local" considered synonymous with ideas like "indigenous", "traditional", and "rural" (Escobar 1995; Fairhead and Leach 1996; N. Peluso 1992; Perz 2001). This alternative development strategy operates under the basic assumption that localized decision-making is more likely to produce socially just and ecologically sustainable outcomes whereas traditional mega-development projects have produced the opposite (Purcell and Brown 2005).

⁷ This study refers to the Millennium Development Goals as the contemporary foundation for development.

⁸ The Brundtland Commission of the UN (1987) produced what has become a widely quoted definition of sustainability and sustainable development: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Lebel and Kane 1987: 43). According to the United Nations General Assembly (2005), the three pillars of sustainability are economy, society, and environment. In this thesis, "sustainable" and "sustainability" refer to the long-term socio-economic viability of community-based conservation and development initiatives, not their ecological feasibility.

A dual need has thus emerged in Western consciousness: the need to lift millions of people in the developing world out of poverty while protecting and preserving the planet's biodiversity. Ecotourism has emerged not only as a means of development for local, often "indigenous" populations in biodiversity hotspots but also as a way for peoples in the developed world to participate in such development in their leisure time. Since 1950, the number of international tourists has increased by more than two thousand percent, from 25 million international trips in 1950 to 528 million in 1994 (Aronsson 2000).⁹ While international tourism alone generates over \$450 billion US annually, total tourism activity, including international and domestic, has an estimated worth of \$3.5 trillion US (Sharpley and Telfer 2002).¹⁰

Ecotourism offers to take tourists to seemingly pristine areas rich in biodiversity and, in some cases, introduce them to its local caretakers. For local populations, ecotourism can improve their well being by providing sustainable economic development. According to the International Ecotourism Society (TIES), ecotourism differs from other tourism in that, at its core, it strives to be culturally and environmentally responsible because it minimizes its impact on the environment through recycling and using local materials and renewable energy sources and because it benefits and empowers local people (Honey 2008).

1.4 ECOTOURISM WEBSITES

Using websites as part of online marketing strategy has several benefits: they are cost effective, they rapidly disseminate information to mass markets, and they provide an enhanced interaction with the subject matter. Tourists, in turn, are increasingly becoming not only exploratory and wealthy, but also Internet savvy (World Tourism Organization 2008).

In the marketing of such indigenous ecotourism operations, advertising serves as the means through which the tourism product reaches its intended audience. While tourism advertising disseminates images and information about a particular locale, it can

⁹ Aronsson measured the increased rate of international tourists in the period from 1950 to 1994.

¹⁰ Sharpley and Telfer (2002) estimate international tourism will generate up to \$2 trillion US per year by 2020.

also create expectations and shape the way website viewers see and understand that locale and its inhabitants. Many of these “indigenous” ecotourism lodges use the internet as their primary means of advertisement – diffusing images, video, and text to both inform the potential tourist and to motivate them.

The three ecolodge websites selected as case studies for this thesis are also unique in that these “indigenous” groups are either doing the marketing themselves or at least they have a voice in the process. What makes this different from past articulations of indigeneity within tourism development, where outsiders represented indigenous peoples, is that instead indigenous peoples have become key agents in representations of themselves.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to analyze the ways in which three Amazonian communities represent themselves in the online marketing of their ecotourism lodges and to contextualize this representation using the available ethnographic literature in order to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the potential motivations behind and the potential implications of this mode of representation. The primary research question for this study is:

- How do indigenous ecotourism lodge operators represent their indigenous identity on their websites?

Secondary research questions designed to unpack the primary research question include:

- Do these websites contain evidence of the presence of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype in the representations of their communities?
- How do the representations of these communities correspond to the historical and present day condition of these peoples?
- What are the potential motivations behind and the potential implications of this mode of representation for the purposes of ecotourism?

One of the primary sources of data for this research is the three websites for the Kapawi Ecolodge (www.kapawi.com), the Chalalán Ecolodge (www.Chalalán.com), and Posada Amazonas (www.perunature.com). These websites were visited regularly from January 2010 to August 2011.¹¹ A qualitative textual and visual narrative analysis of the websites

¹¹ While the websites for the Kapawi Ecolodge and the Chalalán Ecolodge largely remained consistent over the research period, the Posada Amazonas website underwent a

was used to locate the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype in the “indigenous” group’s self-representation. The second primary source of data is the ethnographic literature on these communities. This literature was gathered through extensive library research.

1.6 THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is organized into six chapters with this Introduction serving as Chapter One. Chapter Two reviews the literature relevant to the key concepts within this research: indigeneity, environmentalism, and tourism. This Chapter unpacks the multiple and at times contradictory nature of indigenous identity as a way of challenging homogeneous and stereotypical Western images of Amazonian peoples. It then explores the role of the Amazon in the Western ecological consciousness to understand the potential forces affecting the representation of local communities for the purpose of ecotourism. The literature review concludes with an examination of scholarly research relating to tourism with particular attention given to issues of authenticity and power and control.

Chapter Two also provides a detailed explanation of and the rationale for the methods used in this research. It includes the criteria used in the selection of these three case studies, the four components of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype designed for this research, the rationale for using websites and ethnography as subjects of research, and an explanation of how the textual and visual analysis was applied in this study.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five analyze the websites of each of the three ecolodges following the same format in each chapter. Sections 3.2, 4.2, and 5.2 locate the presence of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype within each community’s self-representation. Sections 3.3, 4.3, and 5.3 then contextualize this representation using the ethnographic literature related to these communities. In this study, the ethnographic literature serves three purposes. In Chapter Three, ethnographic literature is used to highlight the inconsistencies between the Achuar’s self-representation on their website and the historical and present day condition of the Achuar people. In Chapter Four,

dramatic change during the summer of 2011. The analysis of Posada Amazonas in this thesis was adapted to reflect the state of the ecolodge’s website at the time of publication even though a majority of the research had already been completed on the previous version.

ethnographic research surrounding the community of San José de Uchupiamonas is employed to explore the potential motivations behind the use of this particular kind of communal representation for the purposes of tourism. In Chapter Five, ethnographic research on the Native Community of Infierno is used to explore the potential impacts that the maintenance of this representation has on the on-the-ground realities of the community involved in its production.

Chapter Six presents the conclusions of this study. It summarizes key research findings and discusses the viability and sustainability of identity stereotypes and ecotourism as a development model.

CHAPTER TWO

Background and Methodology

2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter Two serves two purposes: to situate this study in the relevant literature and to present the methodology used to carry out this research. Section 2.2 presents the literature that has informed this research. It explores the role of indigenous peoples and the Amazon within scholarly discourse and Western social imagination and traces the emergence of community-based ecotourism. This Section also locates this research within discussions on authenticity and power and control.

Section 2.3 outlines the research methodology. It discusses the rationale for using the Internet in ethnographic research and introduces the three websites employed in this thesis. The elements comprising the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype are then presented. The Chapter concludes with a description of the textual and visual narrative analysis applied to each of the websites and the ethnographic sources that assisted in this research.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2.1 Scholarly Conceptions of Indigeneity

Numerous scholars, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and international aid agencies have attempted to define the term “indigenous peoples” or its synonym (Indian, aboriginal, native, First Peoples, etc.) A development guide produced by Oxfam International claims that some “useful generalizations” of indigenous peoples are their sustainable resource use, shared wealth and land, and kinship systems (Beauclerk, Narby, and Townsend 1988). Eriksen (1993: 13-14) attempted to provide a more all-encompassing definition: “[The] aboriginal inhabitants of a territory, who are only partly integrated into the dominant nation-state...associated with a nonindustrial mode of production and a stateless political system.” However, this definition identifies indigenous peoples only in relation to the state and modern society and not in and of themselves. Lee (2006) identifies two separate categories of indigenous peoples:

Indigenous I and Indigenous II. People in Indigenous I are located in the Americas after 1492, Australia after 1788 and “probably” Siberia after 1600 and have been invaded and colonized by Europeans while people classified under Indigenous II “are encapsulated...by agrarian polities in which the dominant ethnicity situates itself in one or another of the Great Traditions from which the indigenes are excluded”: the Orang Asli of Malaysia and the Montagnards of Indo-China are cited as examples (460). Lee also separates indigenous peoples from other minority groups based on their culture of band and village-based societies, spirituality, non-capitalist values, and harmony with nature. While Lee suggests two different categories of indigenous people, they are merely geographical and still reflect the prototypical assumptions of indigenous identity.

The United Nations produced its own definition of indigeneity in the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The world’s indigenous peoples,

1. Have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories;
2. Consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories or parts of them;
3. Form at present non-dominant sectors of society;
4. Are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as a people;
5. In accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal systems (Lee 2006: 458).

As a tool to define the world’s multitude of indigenous peoples, this definition is problematic because it works better in some parts of the world than in others. The notion of “historical continuity” tied to a specific territory ignores historical movements of forced relocation where indigenous communities were removed from their ancestral lands. It also ignores the mass migration of indigenous peoples to urban centers that are not their ancestral territories.

The definition of “indigenous peoples” as stated under the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) Convention 169 “Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention” (1989) argues that self-determination should be the most fundamental criteria for determining indigeneity (Posey and Dutfield 1997). The most widely used definition, however, was produced by the United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Peoples (UNWGIP) in 1996:

The existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic, and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country which they now form part, under a State structure which incorporates mainly the national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant (Corntassel 2003: 89).

This definition, however, ignores countries where indigenous peoples constitute a majority of the population, like Bolivia. It also ignores the absence of a direct conquest and that some groups have conquered others (Corntassel 2003). While these definitions are attempts to understand indigenous identity, they all have several shortcomings.

During the initial encounter period, it was easy to distinguish an indigenous person from an European. However, as these communities began to mix culturally and biologically new *mestizo* or *métis* communities formed and challenged the traditional binary opposition. While in reality the Native in American and Canadian society came to embody a multitude of identities, instead of separate and distinct biological groups, state policy attempted to reinforce the philosophical conception of the binary distinction.

In the North American development discourse, indigenous stereotypes are often used. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) defines indigenous peoples as experiencing “social and political marginalization, extreme poverty, threats to cultural heritage, and profound and disturbing human rights abuses” (CIDA 2009). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) does not even have a policy on indigenous peoples, although its goal is to ensure that USAID development projects to do not harm them (Colchester 2001). American and Canadian policies that perpetuate an imagined binary conception of indigeneity reflect a widespread Western confusion of the reality of the Native American condition. An examination of the ways in which indigenous communities are identified within the United States and Canada is useful in understanding the role of indigenous peoples in Western social consciousness.

2.2.2 Popular Perceptions of Indigenous Peoples

In much of the Western hemisphere, it is difficult for any person to claim that they are one hundred percent Native American: hundreds of years of contact with white Europeans and imported African slaves, as well as interactions with other immigrant groups, have produced a Native American population that is incredibly ethnically diverse. Yet, a large number of people continue to believe in the authenticity of the archetypal homogenized Hollywood Indian living in the teepee and wearing the feather headdress. This misinterpretation and misrepresentation has severe consequences within the development industry.

Today, popular North American stereotypes of indigenous peoples generally depict either ignoble or noble savages. Ignoble savages are often seen as alcoholics, as having super-citizen status and special (unfair) rights, and as being lazy and perpetually unemployed (Tan, Fujioka and Lucht 1997).¹² Historically, noble savages were admired for their simple technology and seemingly carefree and idyllic co-existence with the natural world (Ellingson 2001; Rowland 2004). There is also a contemporary version of the noble savage through the appropriation of Native spirituality in the New Age movement (Sandall 2001).

In the social process of identity construction, indigenous peoples in the Americas have responded to these external stereotypes in a variety of ways. Artist and Native American (Luiseño) James Luna used performance art to comment on Western society's display and representation of native peoples. In his piece *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* (1991), Luna arranged three life-sized cut outs of himself in typical Western clothing, traditional Luiseño clothing, and in a stereotypical representation of a Plain's Indian warrior (including the feather headdress). The viewer was then able to choose which Indian to be photographed with. Ultimately, Luna's performance piece sought to challenge viewers' ideas of who constitutes a "real" Indian.¹³

While Luna sought to challenge stereotypical Western images of native peoples, others have capitalized upon them. Spivak (1987) notes a process of strategic

¹² Essentialist and derogatory terms like "redskins", "chiefs", and "braves" are now even popularized through sports mascots (cf Spindel 2002).

¹³ The message behind Luna's performance art corresponds well to the argument of this research, hence the use of the piece's title in the title of this thesis.

essentialism whereby social actors temporarily accept an “essentialist” position in order to be able to pursue strategic goals. Stuart Hall (1997) also observed a similar process in the re-identification and re-definition of “Blackness” in the struggle against racism in the West. In her study of the San (Bushman), Sylvain (2006) noted that the San were responding to stereotypical identity expectations in order to secure resources and socio-economic rights. Conklin (1997) observed a similar process at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro where two Native Americans were turned away from the International Indigenous Commission (IIC) when they arrived wearing Western clothes. The following day, they returned dressed in beads and feathers and were admitted. Martínez Novo (2006) identified a case of strategic essentialism in the Baja peninsula of Mexico where day laborers accepted stereotypes of passivity and innocence in order to escape repression from the state and their employers.¹⁴ Like the diversity and complexity of indigenous identities, their response to stereotypes is equally mixed.

2.2.3 Indigenous Inclusion and Exclusion

The rise of indigenous activism within the development arena has also led many scholars to question what connotes “indigenous” advocacy. Richard Borshay Lee writes,

For some, indigenism is a cloak for separatism, chauvinism and reverse racism. While indigenous leaders appear on the world’s stage, many of the rank-and-file at home are grappling with alcohol, abuse and suicide. For some indigenous peoples, even as they make their way in the world, are undergoing processes of internal differentiation, reproducing internally the inequalities of the global order (2006: 458).

Dean and Levi (2003) argue that, for some, indigenous political advocacy renders these people inauthentic. Today, indigenous peoples often use new technologies like the Internet to advance their causes and travel on airplanes to speak at international conventions. After centuries of ethnocide, violence, and socio-economic injustices, indigenous peoples are now making demands for enfranchisement and empowerment (Lee 2006). Are these activists still indigenous people? In some cases, indigenous peoples’ involvement in the dominant system has led to accusations of their

¹⁴ “Indigenous” peoples have also resisted noble savage stereotypes. Martínez Novo (2006) witnessed the forceful rejection of such stereotypes because of the stigmatization associated with identifying oneself as “Indian”.

inauthenticity. In 1993, casino and real estate mogul Donald Trump filed a lawsuit in United States federal court claiming that Indian casinos' tax exemption was unconstitutional. Not surprisingly, Trump also feared the impact this Act would have on his own gambling business. In his testimony before Congress, he said in reference to the Mashantucket Pequot Indians, who were petitioning for tax exemption, "They don't look like Indians to me" (Rand 2002: 65).

In spite of the movement towards incorporating local people in decision-making, NGOs and other transnational advocacy networks seem to exclude peoples who do not fit their characteristics of ecological nobility. The case of the settler communities surrounding the Indio-Maíz protected area near Río San Juan in Nicaragua embodies this discrepancy. The establishment of this protected area, in which only scientific research and wilderness protection are allowed, had several consequences for the local communities. The people of Río San Juan are largely *campesinos*, or peasants, who supplement their slash-and-burn agricultural subsistence with small-scale forest extraction (Nygren 1999). When the reserve was created, these peoples' access to free land to carry out their subsistence activities decreased. Furthermore, Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) implemented at the national level made it difficult for these *campesinos* to compete in the international market. In order to mitigate potential conflict, the creation of the forest reserve was accompanied by several local development projects: between 1994 and 1998, more than thirty projects estimated at \$21 million US were implemented, including community forestry, ecotourism, and environmental education (Nygren).

Sociologist Anja Nygren sought to understand the interaction between these development projects and the locals of Río San Juan. Upon revealing her research objectives to other academics, they were confused as to why she would want to study "forest encroachers" who had been tainted by modernization:

All this shows the powerful tendency within conventional anthropology to award high prestige to those who study 'intact cultures', while granting less attention to those interested in more complicated societies and their hybrid ways of knowing (Nygren 1999: 270).

This feeling of apprehension also extended to development workers who saw local peoples as trapped within traditional modes of thought. According to one development

specialist, local peoples in Río San Juan were conformists, they lacked a sense of responsibility, they fed off of government and development aid, and they were illiterate and uneducated and thus obstructed development.¹⁵ According to Nygren, this perception reflects a perpetuation of the ecologically ignoble savage archetype and the privileging of one form of knowledge over another:

Through such a representation, the local forest-edge communities were constructed as spaces of backwardness and their settlers as maladaptive parasites, imprisoned by their superstitions. They were rendered primitive and pre-scientific, and their capacity for progress was thought to depend on the intellectual skills of the rural advisers to unveil their ignorance and instruct them from the age of magic to the age of logic (271).

Peoples of mixed ethnicity who incorporate both the traditional and modern worlds in their everyday lives, like the people of Río San Juan, are seemingly rendered incapable of managing their local, tropical environment because they are not considered the pristine “Other”.¹⁶

2.2.4 The Amazon

The Amazon has a particular role within the Western ecological consciousness. The world’s largest river basin (6,900,000 km²), Amazonia evokes images of adventure, exoticism, danger, and the unknown: a true frontier.¹⁷ About the size of the continental

¹⁵ This development advisor presented a list of “-isms” during a workshop, believing that the presence of local peoples actually obstructed development: “Lack of will to change one’s attitudes and customs (conformism); lack of initiative to resolve one’s problems (fatalism); lack of responsibility, supposition that the government and development institutions should always help (parasitism); magic traditions and beliefs (irrationalism); lack of education (analphabeticism)” (Nygren 1999: 271).

¹⁶ Settler communities, like the *campesinos* in Río San Juan, are marginalized in other parts of the world because they are supposedly inauthentic. In Brazil, rural migrants known as *caboclos* had been moving to the Amazon years before the creation of state-sponsored development schemes. The government referred to these settlements as “spontaneous colonization” and these communities were often cut-off from official development programs. Today, all “non-Indigenous peoples”, regardless of their date of arrival in the Amazon, are seen as social cast-offs. *Caboclos* are sometimes referred to as *caboclos com motoserra* or “mixed breeds with chainsaws.”

¹⁷ The Amazon is 1.5 times larger than the world’s second largest basin in the African Congo.

United States, the Amazon basin is home to more than thirty million peoples and spans nine countries.¹⁸ The Amazon's importance to both local livelihoods and global systems makes approaching the situations therein extremely complicated. The basin serves as the "Earth's lungs" or "carbon sink", absorbing carbon and emitting oxygen (Cousteau 2008; Heise 2008; Hemming 2008). In a year of normal weather conditions, the Amazon captures 560 million tons of carbon. Cutting down the forest would significantly increase global carbon levels as the act of cutting trees emits greenhouse gasses and reduces the amount of trees available for absorbing these gases (Hemming 2008). Climatologists have also linked deforestation to weather change, particularly drought. With serious drought in Western Amazonia in 2005-2006 leading to a state of emergency, the potential evaporation of a fifth of the Earth's free-flowing fresh water could pose a serious global climatic problem (Hemming).

What is the image of the Amazon that scientists, environmentalists, politicians, and even mainstream media are promoting? Werner Herzog, Academy Award winning director, writer, and actor, summarizes the prototypical vision of the Amazon in Western consciousness:

[The Amazon is] prehistorical. The only thing that is lacking is – is the dinosaurs here. It is like a curse weighing into an entire landscape and whoever goes into this has his share of this curse. It is a land that God...created in anger. It is the only land where creation is unfinished yet...There is a sort of harmony. It is the harmony of overwhelming and collective murder. And we, in comparison to the articulated vileness and fallness and obscenity of all this jungle..., we only sound and look like badly pronounced and half-finished sentences of a stupid suburban novel...We have to become humble in front of this overwhelming misery, and overwhelming fornication, overwhelming growth...even the stars up here in the sky look like a mess. There is no harmony in this universe....There is no real harmony as we have conceived it. But when I say this, I say it all in full admiration to the jungle. It is not that I hate it. I love it. I love it very much. But I love it against my better judgment (Blank 1982).

Nugent (2007) identifies three images of Amazonia: the green hell of Victorian naturalism, the hunter-gather landscape of modern ethnography, and the Amazonia of

¹⁸ In this thesis, the Amazon Basin refers to the areas in which the Amazon River and its tributaries drain. These nation-states are Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela.

Hollywood. The “green hell” image was first created during Western arrival in the Amazon when some saw the rain forest as an uncontrollable void which rendered the existence of rational understanding impossible (Rodríguez 2004). In feature films, images of gigantic plants, toxin bearing animals, vegetables, and humans are repeated. In general, Amazonia is depicted as a place where nature supersedes culture – a vast natural world seemingly uninhabited by people or only inhabited by those who exist in harmony with it. Yet, the Amazon has been a part of the global system ever since Europeans invaded it in the sixteenth century. In Western consciousness, the Amazon is often portrayed as either an untouched landscape or as nature in distress, the culprits of which are miners, loggers, and ranchers.

The notion of “tropicality” also affects Western perceptions of the Amazon. Instead of conceptualizing otherness as a relationship between peoples, David Arnold (1996) expands upon this idea with the concept of tropicality to include the relationship between people and nature. Arnold specifically focuses on the ways in which Western people conceptualize tropical environments: “Calling a part of the globe ‘the tropics’ or some equivalent like ‘equatorial region’ or ‘torrid zone’ became a Western way of delineating something cultural alien as well as environmentally distinctive from Europe (especially northern Europe) and other parts of the temperate zone” (142-3). In giving a tropical environment moral significance, images of an earthly paradise or a hell on Earth were projected onto the cultures of people that called the rain forest home. The impact of Western conceptions of the environment and Amazonia will be a point of a discussion in this thesis.

2.2.5 Tourism

Within the movement towards more localized development, tourism has emerged as a potentially viable means of community-based development. As mentioned previously, the number of international tourists has increased by more than two thousand from 25 million international trips in 1950 to 528 million in 1994 (Aronsson 2000). Aronsson (2000) links the increase in tourist travel to a variety of different factors, from infrastructural and transportation development, to the increasing amount of leisure time available, to increasing material wealth. Aronsson also highlights the elevated socio-

economic status of most of these international tourists who have greater access to such capital as to facilitate international travel.

The tourism industry has recently witnessed a growing market for indigenous and cultural tourism. Rojek and Urry (1997) note that this growing demand coincides with the movement for sustainable development, thus producing the viable niche of ecotourism. While Zeppel (2006) refers to indigenous peoples as an exotic tourist attraction, Hinch and Butler (1996) distinguish between indigenous-controlled and indigenous-themed tourism: indigenous-controlled tourism is managed by indigenous peoples but does not necessarily sport an indigenous “theme” while indigenous-themed tourism offers indigenous-owned attractions based on indigenous culture. Indigenous tourism operations may be completely owned by a specific indigenous group or they may be a part a co-management scheme, an arrangement that may reduce the likelihood of conflict by formalizing and professionalizing the enterprise (Wall 1999).

Some scholars highlight the potential for tourism to contribute to the socio-economic development of indigenous peoples. Rojek and Urry outline the positive benefits of tourism in indigenous communities (Table 1).

Table 1: Tourism’s Positive Contributions to Local Development

Area of Development	Potential Positive Contribution
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDP • Foreign exchange • Employment • Income • Poverty Reduction • Infrastructure Development
Social/Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening local culture • Self-reliance • Revitalization of crafts
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable development • Environmental management • Protected areas
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment • Self-reliance • Freedom • Image of stability and security

Source: Rojek and Urry (1997: 148).

While Rojek and Urry highlight the development benefits of “indigenous” ecotourism, others have noted its unequal economic and social impacts. Timothy (2002) cites unequal local power relations as a potential hindrance to the dissemination of tourism benefits. Using the Big Man system in the Solomon Islands as an example, Timothy notes that at the local level power can be concentrated among a leader or group of leaders and thus the benefits of tourism may never reach those in the community without access to such power, such as women and ethnic minorities. Others argue that tourism should not be used as a panacea (Sharpley and Telfer 2002). Godfrey and Clarke (2000) argue that tourism should not function as the primary economic activity of any community but rather should be supplemental to a diversified economic system.

2.2.6 Authenticity

The motivations behind international tourism, like ecotourism, appear to mimic the desire for internal reflection and an outward search for authenticity. According to Richard Handler (1986), authenticity is a Western cultural construct designed to capture the Western search for the unspoiled, the genuine, and the real. Using a structural approach to the sociology of leisure, MacCannell (1976) sees tourism as a means through which Western peoples search for an authentic “Other”. However, John P. Taylor (2001) argues that authenticity only becomes valuable if there is a perceived inauthenticity: “At the forefront of the account of the timeless and spiritually pure primitive, then, is a parallel story of alienation from nature, fragmentation, and loss” (10). Within this context, nature, tradition, and indigeneity appear authentic in contrast to the inauthenticity of Western individualism and industrialization. Cultural experiences that capture these authentic elements, like ecotourism, become valuable tourist attractions.

In the performance of these tourism experiences, Goffman (1974) identifies distinct front and back stages. While the “front” stage involves the interaction between hosts and guests (the performance), the “back” stage is implied to be a separate sphere in which the hosts prepare for and get away from the performance (the host’s real lives).¹⁹

¹⁹ The extent to which local people can separate their front region (the identity presented to tourists) and their back region (their identity away from the tourist) has been debated. In his study of tourism employment and the workforce, Crang (1997) argues that employees not only bring their identity to work, but the work also reconstitutes their

With the rise of indigenous and alternative tourism, tourists have become increasingly interested in touring this “back” stage in order to capture a more real and authentic cultural encounter. However, while tourists may perceive the “back” stage to be more authentic, MacCannell (1973) argues that this authentic experience is also staged: “It is always possible that what is taken to be entry into a back region is really entry into a front region that has been totally set up in advance for touristic visitation” (597).

In fulfilling this Western desire for authentic cultural encounters, the tourist experience becomes a commodity that is bought and sold on the market. Indeed, not only does the experience itself become a commercial product, but websites also become a marketing tool designed to sell these experiences to Western tourists. In the production of this commodity, the tension between representing an authentic ecotour experience and satisfying the needs and sensitivities of the Western tourist will be a point of discussion in this thesis.

2.2.7 Power and Control

In taking part in these community-based development schemes, this research argues that some local communities have employed a specific process of strategic essentialism, re-tribalization, whereby local peoples revitalize their indigenous identity. Indeed, several scholars have described situations in which indigenous peoples retribalized their identity in order to pursue strategic goals. Graham (2005) identifies a group of people in the Brazilian Amazon, for example, who had lost their own Native customs and languages and instead had borrowed specific cultural elements from other recognized indigenous groups in order to portray themselves as authentically “Indian”.

Some scholars argue that the use of re-tribalization has specific negative consequences. Conklin (2006) argues that the outsider’s expectation of the Ecologically Noble Savage may be unrealistic because of the potential conflict between environmentalism and indigenous self-determination. Other scholars focus on the political economy of such representations and self-representations. Morgan and Pritchard (1998) and Spivak and Gunew (1993) argue that strategic essentialism creates identities

identity. In remote ecotourism areas, the ability to separate the front and back identity makes this debate even more complex.

based on a hegemonic discourse that only reinforce particular societal relationships. While these images at the most basic level are simply representations, they argue, they are too often only read at face value and therefore perpetuate stereotypes instead of combating them (Mowforth and Munt 1998). Contrastingly, John P. Taylor (2001) uses the concept of sincerity to imply an interactive sharing of experience between tourist hosts and guests where hosts can renegotiate the meanings of such images: “The oft-repeated images too commonly found on other markers (including brochures, postcards, and other media representations) are thereby certified, duplicated, and returned with a new found validity” (22).

For some dependency theorists, this unequal nature of tourism development in the Third World is a reflection of relationships of dominance. Dependency theorists argue that the growth of Western capitalist countries is the result of their exploitation of the developing world’s resources. They also believe that Western global economic expansion established a relationship of interdependence that has left the developing world largely unable to grow autonomously and has consequently produced unequal development in these regions (Mowforth and Munt 1998). In applying dependency theory to the study of tourism, Stephen Britton (1981) contends that tourism has perpetuated these inequalities while Mowforth and Munt (1998) tie all forms of tourism into the development and expansion of capitalist modes of production.

Some contemporary forms of tourism, like ecotourism, seek to counteract these relationships of dominance. While old Fordist tourism is largely concerned with the four S’s of “sun, seas, sand, sex”, newer contemporary post-Fordist tourism emphasizes the three T’s: “travelling, trekking, trucking” (Table 2).

Table 2: Shifts in Contemporary Tourism

Old Fordist	New Post-Fordist
Mass	Individual
Packaged	Unpackaged/Flexible
S's <i>sun, sea, sand, sex</i>	T's <i>Travelling, trekking, trucking</i>
Unreal	Real
Irresponsible (socially, culturally, environmentally)	Responsible
Modern	Post-Modern

Source: Mowforth and Munt (1998: 52).

Hinch and Butler (2007) argue that indigenous tourism will increase economic independence and allow for more self-determination and cultural rejuvenation. June Nash (2006) also claims that ecotourism is a means through which indigenous peoples can resist the imposition of global capitalism while MacDonald (1997) argues that local peoples can use tourism to intensify and actively re-imagine their history and culture.

In spite of this perceived potential, some scholars believe that, at its foundation, tourism as an industry cannot escape these relationships of dominance. Dennison Nash (1989) argues that tourism only exists because of the metropolitan core that generates both the demand for tourism and the tourists themselves. Tourist demographic data support Nash's argument. According to Survival International (1995), eighty percent of all international travelers are from only twenty (mainly industrialized) countries, with fifty seven percent from Europe and sixteen percent from North America. A growing market for the romantic travel methods of the colonial period, which entice the tourist to "discover", is also evidence of a fetishistic tourist ritual where the Third World is used as the playground for the West to exercise its desire to see "unlimited wildlife, adventurous landscapes, and painted indigenous cultures" (Mowforth and Munt 1998: 76). While new forms of tourism try to provide more options for socially, culturally, and environmentally responsible travel, they may nevertheless be key agents in reproducing relationships of dominance.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

This section provides a detailed explanation of the methods used in this research and the rationale for their use. It describes the criteria used to select the three websites as case studies, establishes four elements of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype designed, and outlines both the textual and visual narrative analysis and the ethnographic sources used.

2.3.1 (Self-) Representation

In an analysis of these representations of Amazonian communities on their ecolodge websites, this study distinguishes self-representation from (self-) representation. For the Achuar, the owners and operators of Kapawi, and the community of San José de Uchupiamonas, the owners and operators of Chalalán, this study argues for the use of “self-representation”. While both ecolodges began as joint ventures, both communities have since assumed full control and ownership of their lodges. Because the Achuar and the San Josesanos are responsible for the lodge’s operations, including marketing, they are actively involved in the production of both the image of their ecolodge and of their respective communities. Therefore, “self-representation” would be appropriate in these cases.

For the Native Community of Infierno and Posada Amazonas, the terminology is slightly different.²⁰ Because Posada Amazonas is still a joint venture between the Community and Rainforest Expeditions, a private tour operator, the Community is not wholly responsible for the production of its representation, hence producing a quasi self-representation.²¹ However, while Infierno is not the sole creator of the image of its community, it is nevertheless involved in the image’s production process. If the website and other marketing portrayals present the Community of Infierno (intentionally or not) as Ecologically Noble Savages as a possible attempt to attract Western tourists, then this preconceived image among tourists must be maintained upon their arrival at Posada

²⁰ On the Posada Amazonas website and within the ethnographic literature, Infierno is referred to as a singular “Community” even though it is comprised of several sub-groups based on ethnic divisions.

²¹ Full ownership and operation is expected to be transferred to the Community in 2016.

Amazonas. If tourists felt that the Community (or their interactions with the Community) did not conform to their ecologically noble expectations, the business might fail.

This study does not claim to know whether or not the Achuar, the San Josesanos, or the Community of Infierno intended to portray themselves as Ecologically Noble Savages on their ecolodge websites. Rather, this study merely attempts to point out the similarities between these representations and the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype. While some may argue that the intentional or unintentional use of this stereotype began as an imposition, or that it continues to be imposed (directly and indirectly) via tourism markets, conservation and development discourse, or the joint partner, the representation in some respects may have become self-imposed.

2.3.2 Using the Internet

Websites serve as an interesting medium of analysis. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO 2008), information presented online is now considered to be the primary influence on the decisions consumers make in almost all major markets. The U.S. Travel Association (2010) claims that 93 million Americans used the Internet to plan travel in 2010 and most consider the Internet to be an essential or very useful tool for planning a trip.

In the marketing of such “indigenous” ecotourism operations, advertising serves as the means through which the tourism operation reaches its intended audience. While tourism advertising disseminates images and information about a particular locale, Colin Michael Hall (1994) argues that it also creates expectations. Many indigenous ecotourism ventures use the internet as their primary means of advertisement, employing images and video to both inform the potential tourist and to motivate them (WTO 2008). Benefits of an online marketing strategy include cost efficacy, the rapid dissemination of information to mass markets, as well as enhanced interaction to the subject matter. Tourists are increasingly becoming not only exploratory and wealthy, but also Internet savvy (WTO).

As a relatively new and unexplored medium of analysis, websites (and especially ecotourism websites) pose several challenges to the researcher.²² Unlike other published

²² Scholarly work produced on museum exhibitions can assist the researcher in carrying

materials, websites can change quickly and without notice, from slight modifications to redesigns of the entire site. As this research was being conducted, the website for the Posada Amazonas ecolodge underwent a major redesign approximately two months before this thesis's submission. This instability can be frustrating to the researcher, but continuous monitoring of the websites can help eliminate some of the surprise. Furthermore, little research exists on how people read websites while studies into how tourists read websites is practically non-existent. The degree to which each person's Internet competence varies also makes trying to understand how websites affect their viewers difficult.

Websites may also seem overwhelming given the abundance of images, text, links to different pages, etc. It is helpful to have a defined research plan before conducting the bulk of the research to help navigate the website. If comparing websites, selecting sites with a predetermined set of commonalities will also help isolate potential websites for research. The criteria used to select the websites used in this research will be discussed in Section 2.3.3.

2.3.3 Website Selection

The criteria for selecting these websites was developed from the methods of Dorsey, Steeves, and Porras (2004: 763) in their analysis of ecotourism websites:

- Ecotourism sites are owned and operated by local Amazonian communities that identify as “indigenous”.
- Websites have extensive information about cultures and expeditions, including photographs and text.
- Websites claim to offer eco-friendly tours.
- Ecotourism operators have received awards of recognition from international aid agencies and/or non-governmental organizations.

Given the plethora of ecotourism websites on the Internet, these four criteria were designed to isolate specific websites for the purposes of this research (Table 3). In determining the presence of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype in the communal representation, the ecolodges must be owned and operated by local Amazonian communities that identify themselves as being “indigenous” or a synonym thereof (i.e.

out website analyses, since, like websites, museums use a combination of images and text to inform a lay public.

Native), thus disqualifying ecolodges that are not owned and operated by indigenous people. In order to carry out an effective textual and visual narrative analysis, the websites must offer extensive text and photographs. The ecolodge must also claim to offer eco-friendly tours, eliminating lodges that may instead only offer cultural tourism. Including a requirement for the ecolodge’s international recognition legitimizes them according to Western sensibilities because accreditation from well-known agencies can imply reputability to the potential ecotourist.

Table 3: Selection Criteria for the Ecolodge Websites

	Kapawi Ecolodge	Chalalán Ecolodge	Posada Amazonas
<i>Lodges are owned and operated by local Amazonian communities that identify as “indigenous”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ • 100% owned and operated by Federation of Ecuadorian Achuar Nationalities (FINAE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ • 100% owned and operated by the Community of San José de Uchupiamonas (self-identified as part of the Quechua-Tacana ethnic group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ • 50% ownership and operations to Native Community of Infierno • 50% to Rainforest Expeditions, a private tour operator
<i>Websites have extensive information about cultures and expeditions, including photographs and text</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Claim to offer eco-friendly tours</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Received international awards</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Equator Prize (2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Equator Prize (2008) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Equator Prize (2002)

2.3.3.1 Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve

The Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve (Chapter Three) is situated in the Ecuadorian Amazon near the Peruvian border. While the Ecolodge emerged as a partnership between

the Federation of Ecuadorian Achuar Nationalities (FINAE) and Canodros, a private tour operator, full ownership and operations were transferred to the Achuar in 2011.

Located at the convergence of the Pastaza and Capahuari Rivers in the Pastaza province, Kapawi is also imbedded within approximately two million acres of the “traditional” and “indigenous” territory of the Achuar people.²³ The seclusion of the Ecolodge means that it can only be accessed by air on a twin-engine islander airplane and the journey itself into the Amazon can be a life-changing: “[It is a] once in a life-time opportunity to witness the majesty and the scale of the Amazon rainforest”. Once at the Ecolodge, guests are promised “a range and depth of cultural experience unmatched by any other rainforest lodges”. According to the website, the Achuar serve as the courageous defenders of their territory and use their ecolodge to offer the ecotourist “a haven of ease, good taste, and understated luxury.” While local materials and methods of construction were used, they “upgraded these in design and furnishings to appeal to the tastes and requirements of today’s traveler”.

2.3.3.2 Chalalán Ecolodge

Nestled within Madidi National Park in the Bolivian lowlands, the Chalalán Ecolodge represents “a dream come true” for the citizens of San José de Uchupiamonas (Chapter Four).²⁴ In 1995, members of the community of San José, who self-identify as Quechua-Tacana indigenous peoples, opened Chalalán as a means of retaining community members and improving the socio-economic well being of their people. The lodge’s website invites the ecotourist to abandon city life for the magical experience of the enchanted forest that has sustained San Josesanos for over three hundred years. As a guest at “one of the most luxurious places to stay in this part of the world”, the visitor will be transported to “another world” where they may discover the “magic” and “beauty” of the “enchanted” Bolivian Amazon. During their stay, guests are offered “hygienically prepared” “delicious home cooking” through the lodge’s “restaurant service” and have access to a “well-stocked bar”. While the ecolodge offers to take guests on a “journey to the center of a dream”, the lodge also serves as a “highly

²³ All quotations in this paragraph are taken from the Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve website.

²⁴ All quotations in this paragraph are taken from the Chalalán Ecolodge website.

competitive and self-sustainable community business” that provides a “comprehensive development model” for the community of San José de Uchupiamonas. In successfully combating poverty and social inequality through community-based conservation, Chalalán aims to be “*the* example of sustainable use of natural resources” in Bolivia.

2.3.3.3 *Posada Amazonas*

Opened in 1998, the thirty bedroom “rustic” lodge known as Posada Amazonas is a joint venture between Rainforest Expeditions, a private tour operator, and the Native Community of Infierno (Chapter Five).²⁵ According to the website, the ecolodge offers tourists a “true” and “authentic” ecotourism experience “without sacrificing comfort and quality”. Locally sourced materials, such as palm fronds, wood, and clay, and architectural design, like the *crisneja* palm frond roofs, were combined with the “modern expertise” of ecolodge technology in the overall construction of the lodge. While the promoters of Kapawi seem to emphasize the inaccessibility of their lodge, Rainforest Expeditions highlights Posada Amazonas’ accessibility. A two-hour boat ride from Puerto Maldonado, guests may begin their rainforest experience the same day as their arrival and as a result Posada Amazonas is advertised as “ideal for a two night introduction” to the Amazon. Unlike the Kapawi and Chalalán websites, the Posada Amazonas website is not advertised independently. Rather, it is promoted on the same web page as the other ecolodges Rainforest Expeditions manages. The challenges this format poses for this research is discussed in Section 2.3.5.

All three Ecolodges have been nominated for and have won the Equator Prize, a biennial award that acknowledges local and indigenous efforts reduce poverty through conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity along the Equator (Equator Initiative 2011). Winners of the Prize have successfully reduced poverty through conservation and sustainable biodiversity use. They have also forged partnerships with non-government organizations, governments, the private sector, etc. The winners must also show that their initiative has had a minimum of three years of success in creating lasting positive changes in local socio-economic conditions and in making positive impact on biodiversity. Furthermore, the winners of the Prize must also show how they have used

²⁵ All quotations in this paragraph are taken from the Posada Amazonas website.

conservation to empower their communities and to foster greater gender equality and social inclusion. Sponsors of the Equator Prize include, but are not limited to, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), Conservation International (CI), the Nature Conservancy, and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

2.3.4 The Ecologically Noble Savage Stereotype

The scholarly research produced on the Ecologically Noble Savage has typically described the concept in a general way. Conklin (1997) identifies Ecologically Noble Savages as “guardians of the forest... natural conservationists whose cultural traditions and spiritual values predispose them to live in harmony with the earth” (713). Redford (1990) referred to them as “ecosystem men” who were “largely incapable of altering the environment...[and] therefore lived within” their area’s ecological limits (27). Building on these general definitions, this research attempts to come to more a specific understanding of how the Ecologically Noble Savage myth is used for strategic purposes and with what implications. The objective of this specificity is to explore a concept that has not yet been completely developed and further research should address the quantity and characteristics of these elements. This study identifies four distinct elements of the stereotype: the spatial, the spiritual, the temporal, and the cultural.

The Spatial

The person or group inhabits an ecologically significant area that is in need of protection. This criterion isolates specific areas of the world where biodiversity is abundant but also threatened.

The Spiritual

The person or group has an intimate knowledge of and a connection with the natural environment. This component distinguishes Ecologically Noble Savages from other Amazonian inhabitants (ribereños, mestizos) who do not possess this knowledge.

The Temporal

The person or group has inhabited their territory and maintained their spiritual connection to the land for an extended period of time. This component again separates

the Ecologically Noble Savage from recent migrants to the region.

The Cultural

The person or group claims indigenous identity (or the equivalent) and modernity and Westernization does not explicitly compromise their traditional livelihoods, practices, and traditions. What aspects of modernity that have been adopted should not be environmentally destructive and not compromise the person or group's connection to nature. Their views towards modernity and Westernization may also largely be negative. This category distinguishes Ecologically Noble Savages from other indigenous people whose cultures have been compromised by modernity and who do not maintain the same connection to their natural environment. Indigenous peoples engaged in destructive natural resource exploitation (like the Yanomami gold miners) are an example. It also excludes non-indigenous people, like the forest-edge communities in Nicaragua described in Nygren's research.

In answering the Research Questions in Section 1.5, these four elements of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype will be located within the self-representations of three Amazonian communities on their Ecolodge websites using a qualitative textual and visual narrative analysis described in Section 2.3.5.

2.3.5 Qualitative Textual and Visual Narrative Analysis

This study's website examination employs a qualitative textual and visual narrative analysis, assuming that words and images play a role in the representation, dramatization, and shaping of society (Manning and Cullum-Swan 1994). The objective of this qualitative textual and visual narrative analysis is to locate the presence of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype in the community's representation by identifying and interpreting the ways in which this stereotype was supported or undermined in the images and text on the website. Explicit and implicit textual references to the local people and environment were identified and examined for their content and significance. The specific adjectives and terminology used in these textual descriptions were identified and their explicit and implicit connotations noted. In the visual analysis, the color scheme, subject matter, quality, size, depth, and location were identified and analyzed for evidence of the four elements of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype.

The qualitative textual and visual narrative analysis was limited to the website home page (the first page of access) and other pages linked from the home page that only require one click to access while pages within pages within pages are not considered. The home page was used as the foundation for this analysis because it is typically the most accessed part of the website and it contains an introductory exposure to the ecolodge that is meant to capture the visitor's attention. Thus, all information and graphics included on the home page are done so for maximum impact in a highly trafficked area. The goal of this technique was to locate, within the first few glances at the ecolodge's webpage, the presence of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype within the community's representation.

The website for Posada Amazonas differs from the websites for the Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve and Chalalán Ecolodge. Posada Amazonas is not advertised independently and instead is promoted on the same webpage as the other ecolodges Rainforest Expeditions manages. These three lodges include Posada Amazonas as well as the Tambopata Research Center and Refugio Amazonas, all located within the Tambopata area of the Peruvian Amazon. In order to access information concerning Posada Amazonas, visitors to the website must first access the Rainforest Expeditions main page portal and then click on the sub-title "Lodges".

Posada Amazonas, the Tambopata Research Center, and Refugio Amazonas are not only promoted collectively on the same website, the lodges are also interconnected through Rainforest Expeditions' ecotourism programs. The thirty-eight expeditions available for booking through Rainforest Expeditions generally incorporate visits to a combination of at least two of these lodges. This arrangement affects the analysis of the Posada Amazonas website: while the analyses of the Kapawi and Chalalán websites were generally contained to text and images on the main page or pages that were linked directly from the main page, Rainforest Expedition's collective promotion of its three ecolodges from one central page makes it difficult to follow this same process.

2.3.6 Ethnographic Sources

According to Geertz (1988) ethnography is a process of thick description. The ethnographer's task is to describe the conceptual structures that inform people's behavior

and ideologies and to analyze them. The cornerstone of ethnography is participant observation fieldwork where the ethnographer locates himself/herself within the study environment for an extended period of time and relies upon both observation and participation. Tools used to collect data include observation, interviewing, questionnaires, and informants. Because the limitations of this study do not allow for primary ethnographic research, secondary ethnographic research is an alternative and viable substitute. Ethnography is a valuable tool for exploring the potential on-the-ground impacts of community involvement in ecotourism.

While ethnography may serve as a valuable tool for deconstructing these self-representations, ethnographic material is not value free. This thesis does not try to situate the inauthentic against the authentic: that, while these self-representations are influenced by stereotypes and are therefore inauthentic, ethnography offers a more real and authentic perspective into these peoples' lives. Ethnographers are also affected by stereotypes and carry out their research within socially constructed analytical frameworks; indeed, the ethnographic sources used in this thesis could easily be analyzed and deconstructed for their use of stereotypes.

The ethnographic sources consulted in this study were obtained through extensive library and online research. Anthropology doctoral theses (cf Alexiades 1999;²⁶ Bathurst 2005; Ocampo-Raeder 2006; D. Peluso 2003; Stronza 2000) provided invaluable insight into the contemporary situations of the communities described in this study. Project report documents from Conservation International (1994) shed light on the point of view of the non-governmental actors involved in community-based conservation while the Equator Prize nominations for Chalalán (2008) and Posada Amazonas (Woods n.d.) revealed insight into how local peoples described their ecolodges in accordance with the Prize's criteria. Several other peer reviewed articles, books, and online government websites supplied additional ethnographic details.

The ethnographic evidence in *Trueque Amazónico: Lessons Learned in Community-Based Ecotourism* (henceforth *Trueque Amazónico*) proved invaluable to this research. The *Trueque Amazónico*, or Amazon Exchange, was a series of three five-day

²⁶ An exception to this statement, Alexiades' dissertation was completed in the Faculty of Biology.

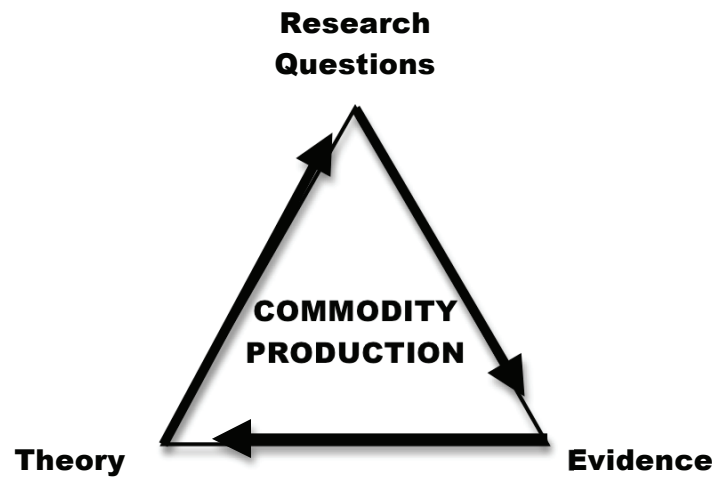
workshops held in 2003 designed to “share experiences and lessons learned in ecotourism” (Stronza 2003: 5) at three different ecolodges in Western Amazonia (and, coincidentally, the same ecolodges described in this thesis): Kapawi, Chalalán, and Posada Amazonas. The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) funded the initiative. In each of the three five-day workshops (one held at each of the ecolodges), community leaders, their private industry business partners, and non-profit conservation organizations discussed important questions concerning ecotourism and conservation (5):

- How are economic, social, and environmental benefits from ecotourism apportioned to local communities?
- What is the effect of increased local participation in ecotourism?
- What are the comparative advantages of different partnership approaches to community-based ecotourism?
- What are the obstacles to making ecotourism effective as a conservation strategy, and what are the opportunities?

The Project Team included a project director (Amanda Stronza), three field coordinators from Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia (who conducted field research for at least two months in each of the communities), and three community leaders. The field coordinators’ ethnographic research began in fall 2002 and involved 2-3 hour semi-structured interviews of at least sixty households in each community. These household representatives were asked to voice their ideas, opinions, and concerns about ecotourism while at least one person from each household was asked to draw pictures of how they perceived their community to be at present and how they would like to see their community in the future (in Ecuador, fifty-five households were interviewed, sixty in Peru and sixty seven in Bolivia). The results of the household interviews, community presentations, and discussions were synthesized into the report referred to in this study. In the absence of time and funds to conduct original field research for this thesis, the *Trueque Amazónico* provides invaluable ethnographic insight into critical questions about ecotourism impacts and the opinions of the local peoples affected by it.

2.4 APPLYING THEORY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND METHODOLOGY

Figure 1: Connecting Research Questions, Theory, and Evidence.



Relevant theories surrounding indigenous peoples, the environment, and tourism discussed in Section 2.2 were used to formulate the Research Questions in Section 1.5 (Figure 1). In particular, this literature and theory informed the production of a working definition of the Ecologically Noble Savage. Using these Research Questions, this thesis will first identify how these three indigenous ecotourism lodge operators represent their indigenous identity by applying a qualitative textual and visual narrative analysis to the ecolodge websites. This study argues that these websites commodify the tourism experience at these ecolodges. In accordance with Goffman’s theory about the “front” and “back” stages of tourism performance discussed in Section 2.2.5, these self-representations serve as the “front” stage of this commodity’s production. The ethnographic materials are then used to establish the “back” stage of the commodity production and in which ways it differs from the front stage. Having analyzed the “front” and “back” stages, this research will attempt to theorize on the motivations behind and implications of this mode of representation for the purposes of ecotourism.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Two introduced the literature that has informed this research. It explored the role of indigenous peoples and the Amazon within scholarly discourse and Western

social imagination. This chapter also discussed the emergence of community-based ecotourism, the Western search for authenticity, and the ways in which this alternative development may continue to perpetuate relationships of dependency.

This chapter also presented the methods used to carry out this research. It first clarified the meaning of (self-) representation in order to draw attention to the use of the term “indigenous”. It then discussed the rationale for using the Internet in ethnographic research and introduced the three websites employed in this thesis. The elements comprising the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype were then presented. Finally, it outlined the textual and visual narrative analysis applied to each of the websites and discussed the ethnographic sources that assisted in this research. These methods will be applied to the Kapawi Ecodge and Reserve and the Achuar people in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

The Achuar and the Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve

3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

A qualitative textual and visual narrative analysis of the Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve website reveals the apparent social production and diffusion of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype. In the promotion of this tourist product, the Achuar may use this stereotype to establish Kapawi as a credible and desirable tourist destination. Section 3.2 will analyze this projection by showing how the website fulfills each of the four characteristics of the Ecologically Noble Savage myth.²⁷ Section 3.3 will use ethnographic literature to illustrate both the apparent contradictions and the exclusions of this Ecologically Noble Savage representation.

3.2 LOCATING THE ECOLOGICALLY NOBLE SAVAGE STEREOTYPE

3.2.1 Spatial

To be considered an Ecologically Noble Savage, the people in question need to occupy an environmentally significant area requires protection. For the Achuar and the Kapawi Ecolodge, indeed for all three of the lodges and peoples described in this thesis, their location within the Amazon rain forest re-establishes pre-existing Western values and imaginations of this tropical locale. According to Nugent (2007),

Over the period of time during which Amazonia has been recognized and to some degree well understood...by a public in the West, the images and icons of Amazonia that have tended to prevail have been remarkably durable even though the world and Amazonia have changed in many ways since these clichéd views of Amazon became part of a received view (24-5).

Scientists and the mainstream media have publicized both the importance of the Amazon and the forces that are threatening its survival. The proliferation of climate change

²⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations used in this section have been taken from the Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve website.

discourse into the second decade of the twenty-first century has made the protection of this vital ecosystem even more prevalent.

The Kapawi website seems to capitalize on this pre-existing Western tropical consciousness in an apparent attempt to attract ecotourists. On the website home page, the region in which Kapawi is located is identified as “one of the most remote and well protected parts” of the Ecuadorian Amazon, so “far from the nearest outposts of civilization” that is it only accessible by plane. According to the website home page, ecotourists assist the Achuar in their mission to preserve their natural environment in visiting the ecolodge. The use of descriptors like “abundance”, “magic”, “pristine”, “paradise”, and “majesty” projects the environmental significance of both the Kapawi lodge and the Achuar territory in using language that appeals to the Western ecological imagination. The website, it seems, uses such language to reaffirm this Amazonian imagination by convincing potential tourists that Kapawi is located in, and surrounded by, the tropical forest that carries the mystique and global importance that tourists want to see.

The seemingly deliberate use of prototypical rainforest images on the website both complements and reaffirms the website’s claim of environmental significance. On the home page, a photograph of the Ecolodge is replayed as one part of a sequence of three images. The image depicts a collection of buildings, in the vernacular architecture, set against the backdrop of the forest and overlooking an “ephemeral” lagoon (Figure 2). The home page uses text to further affirm this message, explaining, “[that] Kapawi is...an award winning Ecolodge noted for its ecological design and sensitivity”. The monochromatic colors in the photograph (green and brown) also legitimize the claim that the ecolodge grounds are “an unbroken green expanse of rainforest”. The absence of signs of Western influence, from electricity poles and wires to roads, appears to not only reiterate the website’s claim of Kapawi’s remote location but also suggests that the Ecolodge’s grounds have remained pristine and have been effectively protected from the destructive influences of modernity and industrialization.

Figure 2: The Kapawi Ecolodge.



Source: Kapawi 2011a.

Another image in this sequence shows a flock of macaws in flight (Figure 3). An image of not just one macaw, but many, also implies that the area contains ecological abundance since most wild macaw populations are endangered and have even been protected in international law (Snyder, McGowan, Gilardi and Grajal 2000). The accompanying text from Achuar president Germán Freire on the home page seems to confirm this interpretation: “Our land [is] untouched by logging or oil companies and our skies covered by flocks of colorful Macaws”. The inclusion of an image of a macaw flock may imply that while a lack of protection has led to the macaw’s disappearance in other areas, they are protected and abundant at Kapawi.

Figure 3: Macaws in Flight.



Source: Kapawi 2011b.

The location of these photographs on the website's home page is significant. Not only do these two images occupy the website's central page from which all other information is accessed, they are also featured prominently: below the webpage title and buttons linking separate descriptive categories. The professional quality of these photographs suggests that the environment they capture is as valuable and pristine. Furthermore, their prominence on the home page represents the first opportunity for the site to impress its message upon the visitor: even if the visitor does not navigate beyond the main page, they are left with the impression that Kapawi is surrounded by a protected, pristine, and abundant tropical landscape. These photographs and the accompanying text on the Kapawi home page both complement and legitimize each other: while the text makes the claims, the photographs confirm them, making the website's descriptions appear more credible to the visitor. These two images combined with the textual description of the Ecolodge's environment may leave the visitor with the impression that the Ecolodge occupies an environmentally significant area and, while measures are already in place to protect the natural environment, the tourist can still assist in its protection process by supporting the Achuar and their conservation plan through tourism.

3.2.2 Spiritual

While the spatial component of the Kapawi website attempts to convince the visitor that both the ecolodge and the Achuar people occupy an environmentally significant area, the website also suggests that the Achuar possess an intimate knowledge of this environment. The text on the home page, and indeed throughout the Kapawi website, identifies the Achuar as the “indigenous” inhabitants of the area and explains that the Ecolodge rests within the indigenous nation’s territorial lands. Furthermore, this text claims that the Achuar live “in intimate harmony with nature” and that the Ecolodge “is an important part of our plans to preserve our culture and conserve the rainforest for our children and grandchildren. We want a sustainable future”. The placement of this claim of an intimate ecological connection and the Achuar’s conservation mission on the prominent home page suggests that the Achuar want to stress this notion of their spiritual connection with nature upon the visitor.

Clicking on the button “The Achuar” on the top of the home page takes the visitor to a separate page with a brief description of the Achuar people. On this page, the text appears to reaffirm the Achuar’s knowledge of their natural environment and may legitimize this claim further, explaining that “they are well-regarded for their vast knowledge about their physical environment, and are experts in land use and resource management, all of which has allowed both people and ecosystem to survive in balance.” This quotation suggests that not only do the Achuar consider themselves to be ecologically knowledgeable but that others have recognized their knowledge as well. Furthermore, their expertise in land use and resource management appears to allow them to live in harmony with their natural environment, suggesting a spiritual connection between people and nature.

The accompanying photographs seem to visualize this spiritual connection to nature. The sequence of three images at the top of the page (the same size as those on the home page) include the profiles of two Achuar men wearing feather headbands and adorned in face paint, each holding a decorative bowl near their mouths; an Achuar woman wearing earrings made of beads and feathers, painting a geometric design on an object, and a row of Achuar in a canoe navigating a river with an Achuar man in a woven bandana looking into the forest.

In the first photograph, it appears as if the two men are engaged in a ceremony: they are wearing face paint (which the website claims is reserved for special occasions), they are holding bowls near their mouths while their eyes are closed and their heads are tilted downward (Figure 4). The positioning and adornment suggests that these Achuar men are involved in a spiritual ceremony.

Figure 4: Two Achuar Men in a Ceremony.



Source: Kapawi 2011c.

A subsection of “The Achuar” webpage, “Understanding the Cosmos”, explains that

the rainforest is the Achuars’ nourishing mother...The Achuar believe in multiple spirits that give them the guide lines for a harmonic relationship with the rain forest and its creatures. Magic and healing powers are used by the shaman (uwishin), who gets his force by means of hallucinogenic plants like natem (*Banisteriopsis* sp.).

This textual explanation, linked to the concomitant photograph, suggests that these Achuar men are enacting a ritual to communicate with the spirit world and receive guidance, further affirming the spiritual connection between the Achuar people and their natural world.

Figure 5: Achuar Woman Painting an Object.



Source: Kapawi 2011d.

All or part of these photographs are either blurry or out of focus, though not so much as to distort the image completely and render them indecipherable: the photograph of the Achuar men in the ceremony is entirely blurry; the woman in the second photograph is out of focus while the ceramic is in focus (Figure 5); the Achuar man in the boat is clearly visible, but the forest into which he directs his gaze is slightly blurred (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Achuar Man Looking into the Forest.



Source: Kapawi 2011e.

The use of this technique may serve to reaffirm the Achuar spiritual connection to their natural environment. Blurring the image of the Achuar men enacting the ritual suggests that we as Westerners cannot see clearly what the Achuar can evidently see: our gaze into the ritual is blurred and distorted either because of our lack of spiritual connection to the natural world or because of our unfamiliarity with this kind of connection. While the woman in the second photograph is out of focus, we can see the object she is painting clearly: while we as Western viewers can see the product, we cannot clearly see her thought process; her knowledge of what the geometric design means and how she knows this information is unknown to the viewer. The clear image of the man in the third photograph but the slightly blurry forest suggests that while he sees the forest and we can see him, we cannot see the forest clearly like he can. This technique appears to create a separation between the Achuar and the Western visitor: only the Achuar have an intimate connection to the natural environment and can see it clearly. Endowed with this spiritual connection to the environment, it is implied that the Achuar are better apt to conserve it.

3.2.3 Temporal

While the spiritual component establishes the Achuar's inherent connection to their natural environment, the temporal element serves to confirm its historical continuity to a pre-colonial and pre-Western past. Not only do the Achuar appear to possess significant ecological knowledge, but they also have apparently maintained it over time because they are "still living as they have for generations". Both the ecolodge itself and its mission of conservation can act as means to preserve the ecological integrity of the land and the Achuar's knowledge of it for future generations: "Kapawi is an important part of our plans to preserve our culture and conserve the rainforest for our children and grandchildren".

While this text suggests the historical continuity of the Achuar's spiritual connection, it also suggests a physical connection to the land over time. Not only have the Achuar maintained their spiritual beliefs, they have also physically inhabited the forest for an extended period (the website claims thousands of years). This temporal continuity may legitimize the Achuar's status as natural conservationists and can separate

them from recent migrants to the area: even if the recent migrants have developed (or already possess) ecological knowledge, they lack a temporal connection to the land. This temporal connection also separates the Achuar from some other groups in Amazonia that may have inhabited the region for an extended period of time and thus maintain a physical connection but may have not maintained their spiritual bond or this bond may have been interrupted. Thus, the Achuar may appear to be better choices for the role of conservator because of they have lived there the longest and their spiritual connection has been constant.

3.2.4 Cultural

In order to satisfy the cultural component of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype, influences of Westernization on indigenous cultural traditions and practices should largely be absent. However, because these changes are unavoidable since the vast majority of indigenous groups have had contact with Western society, changes to their traditions and practices caused by Westernization might be portrayed as unobtrusive to the overall integrity of their cultural traditions and practices.

As discussed in the previous section, the website suggests that Achuar resource use and cultural traditions display a remarkable historical continuity, largely unaffected by the destructions of industrial modernization. Achuar use of Western clothing styles, a noticeable exception, is attributed to the influence of missionaries in the FAQ section of the website. Indeed, not one image on the website shows an Achuar in traditional clothing: most of the men wear t-shirts or collared shirts and trousers while photographs of women generally do not show their entire bodies. In spite of this change, the website assures the visitor that the Achuar still use many of their traditional accessories, that they still paint their faces for special occasions (Figure 7), and that they still live in traditional houses and use blowguns for hunting. It is within this context that the adoption of Western clothing is implied to be an involuntary minor adaptation while the essence of Achuar culture remains unchanged. Interestingly, as a practice reserved for special occasions, of all the photographs portraying the Achuar on the website, all but four show an Achuar in face paint or an Achuar involved in face painting.

Figure 7: Achuar Man in Western Clothing and Face Paint.



Source: Kapawi 2011f.

The vast majority of photographs on the Kapawi website appear to promote an image of Achuar culture that is pristine and unaffected by modernity except for their clothing, or in spite of it. As mentioned previously, there is no evidence of the destructive elements of modernization such as power lines and roads. Many of the photographs show Achuar engaged in prototypical traditional work such as ceramic painting or engaged in ritual ceremonies. There is one notable exception to this trend: a photograph of an Achuar man standing in front of a five door stainless steel oven wearing a chef's hat and apron and chopping vegetables (Figure 8). However, these elements of Westernization are contrasted with the one traditional element that seems to permeate Achuar representations on the Kapawi website: in spite of these modern elements, he is still wearing his face paint.

Figure 8: Achuar Man Preparing Food.



Source: Kapawi 2011g.

As an additional element to the cultural component of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype, there should be noticeable efforts towards cultural protection where indigenous spirituality and traditions are maintained and Western influences are rejected. The commitment to cultural preservation is promoted directly on the home page in the first paragraph of text: “Kapawi is an important part of our plans to preserve our culture and conserve the rainforest for our children and grandchildren”. In a sub-section of the page on Achuar culture, the website explicitly states this mission:

The Achuar are very clear that in their vision they do not want any extractive activity in their territory that threatens the destruction of their land and their culture. They want to preserve and be the custodians of their land and culture for their future generations and live in a sustainable way.

The absence of the effects of Westernization on indigenous cultural traditions and practices, or the treatment of these changes as inconsequential and non-threatening to the

essence of indigenous identity, combined with a deliberate commitment to maintain this cultural identity, might suggest that the Achuar are resilient and display a conviction to their way of life in the threat of outside influences. Even with contact with Western culture, their commitment to their indigenous practices and traditions will remain steadfast and the tourist need not worry that they will ever change so long as they can effectively protect their culture.

3.3 FILLING IN THE SILENCES

3.3.1 Overview

The objective of this section is to highlight some of the contradictions and exclusions of tourism development in indigenous communities in Amazonia. This study uses ethnographic literature to illustrate both the apparent contradictions and the exclusions of this ecologically noble savage representation in analyzing and unpacking the Achuar's self-representation on the Kapawi website.²⁸ The ethnographic literature produced on the Achuar people seems to contrast the seemingly static culture that the Kapawi website appears to promote because it identifies numerous changes to Achuar culture prior to the arrival of tourism, suggesting that they do not continue to live as they have for generations. This study will first address these historical exclusions.

3.3.2 Warfare and Head-Shrinking

In the post-contact era, outsiders have generally referred to the Achuar as the Jívaro,²⁹ the name for the linguistic group to which they belong, but a title that has also received an infamous international reputation.³⁰ Within ethnography, the Jívaro occupied a prominent place in scholarly examinations of warfare (Steel 1999). Indeed, the historical evidence available supports this image. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the

²⁸ The Achuar are also identified in the ethnographic literature as Achuara, Atchuara, and Achual.

²⁹ Jívaro also refers to a number of other ethnic groups: the Shuar, the Aguaruna, the Huambísa, and the Mayna.

³⁰ The Jívaro are more generally distinguished based on their location. The "exterior" or "frontier" Jívaro live on the frontier and have thus been more assimilated into the dominant culture while the "interior" Jívaro were rarely penetrated given their geographical seclusion. The Achuar are considered "interior" Jívaro (cf Harner 1972).

fifteenth century, the Jívaro had successfully thwarted two Incan military advances into Ecuador, one under Tupac Yupanqui and a later attempt under Huayna Capac.³¹ As the largest pre-Colombian empire in the western hemisphere,³² few societies evaded capture and the Jívaro's resistance to Incan conquest was unique.

The arrival of the Spanish conquistadores brought further attempts to penetrate the Jívaro territory but early punitive expeditions during the beginning of the seventeenth century generally failed. Ultimately, the Spanish transferred the undertaking to the missionaries, though they too were unsuccessful until the late nineteenth century. On a smaller scale, the Spaniards were able to cooperate with some Jívaro and they used their labor to exploit gold deposits in the region, but evidence suggests that the majority of Jívaro were extremely hostile and killed colonists and soldiers frequently. In 1599, a mass Jívaro rebellion resulted in the deaths of thousands of Spaniards and their subsequent expulsion from the region. From 1599 until the mid-nineteenth century, the Jívaro only had intermittent contact with Europeans. The Jívaro had gained a widespread reputation given their courageous resistance to conquest and earned their territory the title of *Tierra de Guerra*, or the Land of War (A.C. Taylor 1994).

The Jívaro's fierce warrior image was further solidified by their practice of *tsantsa*, or head-shrinking. For the Jívaro, *tsantsa* involves revenge, punishment, and spiritual renewal. The Jívaro feared the ghost of a dead person and believed that murder deserved immediate revenge on the person responsible. The soul of the victim required that his relatives avenge his death and, if the surviving members did not retaliate against the slayer, the anger of the vengeful spirit might turn against them. Severing the head of the enemy was meant to ensure that the deceased's desire for revenge was gratified and as a result the lips and eyes were sown to trap and paralyze the spirit.

The practice of *tsantsa* drew the attention of travelers to the region and was frequently mentioned in their literary accounts (Karsten 1935; Suárez 1904; Up de Graff 1923). Indeed, shrunken heads can be found in most of the South American collections

³¹ Ann Christine Taylor (1994) explains that the Jívaro-Candoan groups in the Southwest were indeed conquered during the Incan advance, but that the majority of the groups in the Northwest evaded capture due to the geographical terrain.

³² At its peak, the Inca Empire spanned the present-day nations of Peru and Bolivia, most of Ecuador, a large part of Chile and even into Argentina and Colombia.

of European and American ethnographic museums.³³ The Jívaro penchant for warfare and their seemingly uncivilized practice of head-shrinking meant that they were frequently stereotyped as savages. While the term Jívaro is now generally considered pejorative and the overwhelming majority of ethnic groups in this linguistic family disassociate themselves with this term because of its connotation of savagery, it is notable that the Kapawi website includes Joe Kane's *Savages* (1995) on the suggested reading list. While the Kapawi website portrays the Achuar as the courageous defenders of their territory, apart from the reference to Kane's book, this historical affiliation with warfare and head-shrinking is excluded.

The website's notable silence on the Achuar's historical affiliation with warfare and head-shrinking may play to the ecotourist expectation for *noble* savages. References to these past practices might suggest that the Achuar are still violent, uncivilized, *ignoble* savages, which contrasts the seemingly idyllic, peaceful temperament of the *noble* savages that ecotourists travel to see. An analysis of ecotourism literature suggests that the niche focuses on environmental and spiritual education, not conflict. The Kapawi website may exclude violence and warfare from the Achuar's representation in order to play to the characteristics of nobility and civility. This silence could also be an attempt assert control over their cultural identity by revising and combating negative historical stereotypes of their culture.

3.3.3 Political Activism

While the Kapawi website assures the visitor that the Achuar territory is not exploited by oil or logging companies, the context of this claim is not explored. Located in the Pastaza province of Ecuador (Figure 9), this region has come to play a crucial role in indigenous resistance to oil exploitation in Amazonia.

³³ Site visits to ethnographic museums in Western Europe and the United States seems to confirm this statement. The shrunken heads at the Pitt Rivers Museum in England, for example, were a favorite among groups of school children.

Figure 9: Map of Ecuadorian Provinces.



Source: Adventure Learning Foundation 2006.

Petroleum was first “discovered” in Ecuador in the early 1900s near Salinas on the Santa Elena Peninsula near Guayaquil (Hanratty 1991). Today, most of Ecuador’s oil comes from the Oriente, the northeastern portion of the country that consists of a 100,000 km² area of Amazon rain forest (San Sebastián and Hurtig 2004). Since the beginning of large-scale petroleum extraction in 1967, more than 2 billion barrels of oil have been extracted from the Oriente (San Sebastián and Hurtig). However, this process has been accompanied by the release of toxic waste into the environment. While the level of contamination depends on the environmental practices and technology the oil company

employs, in the Oriente, even supposedly environmentally friendly practices have been questioned (San Sebastián and Hurtig).³⁴

Oil's environmental and social injustices in the Oriente have served as a rallying point for many of the affected communities for the past two decades. More than 2,000 Quechua, Achuar, and Shiwiar Indians of the Pastaza province united in a march on the Presidential Palace in Quito in April 1992 and demanded land adjudication and self-determination (San Sebastián and Hurtig 2004). The protest gained both national and international recognition as the marchers, clad in face paint and feathers, demanded that Ecuador become a plurinational state on the five hundred year anniversary of the "discovery" of the New World (San Sebastián and Hurtig). The march on Quito was an expression of years of conflict between indigenous peoples and the Ecuadorian state and was fueled by a multitude of discontents, including the environmental and social injustices of oil extraction.

Since the 1970s, Ecuador's indigenous peoples have formed federations in an attempt to coordinate their agendas and express their concerns to the State (San Sebastián and Hurtig 2004). The largest and most politically powerful national organization, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), was founded in 1986 and is the primary Indian federation that negotiates with the Ecuadorian State (San Sebastián and Hurtig).³⁵ The three regional confederations are CONFENIAE in the Ecuadorian Amazon, ECUARUNARI in the highlands, and COICE on the coast. Within the Amazon region, the *Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas del Pastaza* (OPIP) was founded in 1978 and, by 1992, represented the majority of indigenous peoples in Pastaza (approximately 20,000 people from 148 communities) (San Sebastián and Hurtig). OPIP served as the primary organizer of the 1992 march on Quito and coordinated the protest with CONAIE, CONFENIAE, and other international indigenous rights and environmental groups. The Achuar's organization NAE (Achuar Nationalities of Ecuador) maintains its affiliation with OPIP, CONAIE and CONFENIAE.

³⁴ Environmentally friendly according to the oil company.

³⁵ CONAIE is not the only national indigenous federation in Ecuador. *La Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas Indígenas y Negras*, or FENOCIN, has more than 1,250 base organizations.

In 1993, a coalition of indigenous peoples, human rights and environmental organizations filed a billion dollar class-action lawsuit in United States court against the oil monolith Texaco (now Chevron).³⁶ The coalition charged the corporation with knowingly conducting environmentally negligent practices, the destruction of traditional cultures, and compromising the health of local people (Valdivia 2007). While the Kapawi website alludes to Achuar involvement in oil protests, the extent of this relationship is not explored on the site.

The Achuar may have deliberately avoided explaining their activism on the Kapawi website. Dean and Levi (2003) argue that some people may consider indigenous peoples' involvement in politics inauthentic. Indeed, many Native peoples today often use technology to advance their causes and many regularly travel internationally participate in conventions: in September 2010, several Achuar travelled to the Museum of Natural History in New York City for the Equator Prize ceremony. Nevertheless, the Achuar may not mention their activism on the Kapawi website in order to cater to the fetishistic tourist image of ecological nobility. Evidence suggesting that modernity may have compromised their indigenous ecological integrity, such as an in-depth knowledge of the legal system required to file class-action lawsuits, would jeopardize Western post-modern nostalgic yearnings for primordial indigenous people (Jameson 1991). According to Mowforth and Munt (1998), tourists travel to remote Third World destinations to carry out the fetishistic ritual of discovering pristine natural environments and the indigenous peoples who live in harmony with it. In this context, excluding information on activism on their ecotourism website is an effort to maintain the necessary cultural divide between Western "modern" industrialism and the indigenous "traditional" ecologically noble "Other".

3.3.4 Missionary and Western Influence

While the Kapawi website seems to imply that Western influence has only impacted their clothing choices, the website does not connect other examples of Western influence to their current practices in an attempt to convince ecotourists of their

³⁶ The approximate total was US\$1.5 billion (Sawyer 2004).

traditional and unchanging spiritual and temporal connection to their natural environment.

Missionary presence in the Achuar territory resulted in several demographic changes. Prior to the arrival of missionaries, the Jívaro typically inhabited large communal houses that contained several families (Steel 1999). Starting in the early twentieth century, the Achuar shifted from large communal housing to smaller more dispersed settlements of nuclear families (Descola 1993; Harner 1972). Beginning in the 1970s, Achuar neighborhoods were reorganized into *centros*, which centered on an airstrip or central plaza, and many Achuar willingly accepted this change in order to gain access to Western goods. The airstrip used by the Ecolodge was originally built during this resettlement period, but this particular missionary influence is not revealed on the website.

In addition to increasing contact with missionaries over the course of the twentieth century, the Achuar began to have more regular contact with other outsiders. During the late nineteenth century, *mestizo* populations initiated trade with the Achuar and other Jívaro peoples and resulted in an influx of Western manufactured goods like cloth, machetes, and hatchets (Steel 1999). The emergence of a rubber boom in 1940 further increased this contact between the Achuar and *mestizo* peoples, particularly traders.³⁷ The missionaries present in the area also facilitated the import of manufactured goods by establishing shops in the regional *centros* (Steel).

The introduction of Western manufactured goods significantly affected Achuar culture. Achuar “great men”, for example, would seize manufactured items in order to acquire more power in the community. During this period, guns were considered to be the most significant Western manufactured good introduced and they were incorporated into Achuar hunting strategies. The 1941 border war between Peru and Ecuador, however, disrupted the flow of trade and created competition over the already scarce weapons.

³⁷ In Chapter III (“My Expedition to the Achuares”) of *The Head-Hunters of Western Amazonas* (1935), Karsten claims that his expedition to the Achuar people was facilitated by a young *cauchero*, or rubber collector. The *cauchero*, he explains, often paid the Achuar for their services in clothes and linen, further supporting evidence of Western contact.

In the same period, several scholars noted an intensification in Achuar feuding that exceeded their traditional warfare pattern (Bennett Ross 1980; Steel 1999; Harner 1972; Taylor 1981). Ann Christine Taylor (1981) claims that half of adult Achuar males died in feuds from 1940 to 1960 while Bennett Ross (1980) estimates that fifty nine percent (or nearly three-fifths) of Achuar male deaths in the 1960s were the result of warfare.

Daniel Steel (1999) attributes this intensification of warfare to the fluctuations in access to manufactured goods. Because the Peru-Ecuador War made access to Western goods more uncertain, competition increased over the limited products that were available. Yet, Steel notes that the Achuar were more receptive to missionaries during this violent period as they began to resettle the Achuar into the *centros* described above. Steel also explains that many Achuar were willing to resettle (and convert to Christianity) in order to gain access these socially valuable Western goods. As a result, Steel argues that the decline in Achuar violence during the 1970s was the result of an increased number of western manufactured goods that reduced the competition and subsequent violence for these resources.

Contrary to the static imaginary projected on the website, Achuar culture has been drastically affected by contact with Western manufactured goods and many Achuar still want products like batteries, clothes, shotguns, and cartridges (DINEIB n.d.). The demographic changes beginning in the 1970s have also affected Achuar subsistence. As mentioned before, most Achuar use shotguns to hunt. However, an increase in Achuar population, the result of a more sedentary lifestyle and changes to their diet, has placed increased pressure on local animal populations, meaning that the Achuar have to hunt further from their communities. The Kapawi website may not connect other examples of Western influence to current Achuar cultural practices in an attempt to convince ecotourists that the Achuar still maintain a traditional and unchanging spiritual and temporal connection to their natural environment.

Excluding the role missionaries have had on Achuar culture may serve to satisfy the ecotourists' imperialist nostalgia by convincing them that the Achuar have what the West has lost: an isolated, pristine "indigenous" culture that has not been tainted by the negative influences of industrialization. If the website mentioned that the Achuar hunt

with shotguns, an apparent symbol of both ecological destruction and of Western industrialization, they may no longer be seen as inherent conservationists.

3.3.5 Tourism

Tourism has also contributed to, and even accelerated, cultural change. This section addresses both the positive and negative impacts of tourism development within the Achuar community. While other sources have been consulted and will be introduced in this section, a majority of evidence comes from the *Trueque Amazónico* (Stronza 2003).

3.3.5.1 Positive Developments

Some research has indicated that ecotourism has produced several positive developments in the Achuar community. Julie Marie Weinert (2008) indicates that ecotourism has improved healthcare and educational opportunities for the Achuar. She adds that ecotourism has had a multiplier effect because it has extended conservation and income benefits to larger portions of the Achuar population, citing the Achuar community members who have established supplementary revenue-making opportunities as evidence of this effect. The Achuar, she writes, “are glad to have jobs and to develop professional skills in an industry that requires protection of their natural resources” (11).

Achuar contributions to the *Trueque Amazónico* highlight some of these benefits. Some Achuar claim that ecotourism has allowed their people to preserve and strengthen their cultural traditions, such as the support and development of native handicrafts, while others claim that the lodge has helped them in their fight against petroleum development. Some have also noted an increase in communication between all Achuar communities, allowing FINAE leaders to keep in contact with all its bases. Furthermore, the lodge has reduced emigration by providing more incentives and opportunities for people to stay in the community. The reduction of outmigration is a significant accomplishment in an era when migration to the urban informal sector and even out of the country completely has become a necessary livelihood strategy for many rural Ecuadorian families.

3.3.5.2 Negative Consequences

While ecotourism has led to improved infrastructure and local livelihood opportunities, some research has confirmed that tourism has also had several negative consequences. The Achuar involved in the *Trueque Amazónico* claimed that the money from Kapawi benefits relatively few Achuar communities, especially those distant from the lodge. They also claim that, in some respects, community development has been hindered because of a lack of experience with and appropriate means to manage the funds from tourism.

Tourism's connection to the Western economy has also eroded the traditional economy as many Achuar are now less inclined to work or support each other without pay. Several Achuar have also noted that their involvement in the lodge has become very time consuming. For example, the *Trueque Amazónico* explains that the Achuar must manually maintain the 800 meter air strip, "work that never ends" (Stronza 2003: 61). Since they are the sole operators and comprise the majority of the employment at Kapawi, this leaves little time to pursue other activities such as farming or other trades: "He would like to specialize in carpentry and learn to build furniture, but as always he is very busy and [his work] does not give him the chance to do it" (155).³⁸ For many, tourism has come to occupy a more central focus in their lives.

Achuar responses in the *Trueque Amazónico* explain that tourism has caused them to be separated from their communities and their families. According to the *Trueque Amazónico*, many Achuar consider close family relations to be a central component of what constitutes a "good life".³⁹ The separation from family caused by work at the Ecolodge has been eroding these vital connections. Any time off from lodge work, generally a little over a week at a time, is spent mostly in transit since the communities are a three day walk from the lodge in both directions. Exposure to different foods at the lodge has even led some Achuar to feel ill once they consume traditional food again (Stronza 2003). While some research has shown that ecotourism has brought some

³⁸ Original Spanish text: "El quisiera especializarse en el area de carpintería y aprender a construir los muebles, pero como siempre esta muy ocupado en lo suyo no le dan la oportunidad de hacerlo."

³⁹ The *Trueque Amazónico* specifically asked the Achuar participants what they consider to be a good life, *una buena vida*. Achuar responses to this question can be found on pages 147-8 of the report.

positive developments to the Achuar people, others have highlighted several negative consequences.

3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Three has provided evidence to suggest that the Achuar's self-representation on the Kapawi website, conveyed through text and imagery, contains four elements of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype. Ethnography describing the Achuar contextualized this self-representation. The chapter argued that while Achuar participation in tourism is leading them to live in ways that increasingly diverge from the myth of the ecologically noble savage, tourism promotion by the Achuar continues to promote that very myth.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Community of San José de Uchupiamonas and The Chalalán Ecolodge

4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Like the Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve website, the website for the Chalalán Ecolodge also illustrates evidence of the social production and dissemination of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype. The promotion of this stereotype may serve as a means through which the Ecolodge can attract Western ecotourists who search for ecologically diverse parts of the world and the indigenous peoples that live in harmony with it. Section 4.2 of this Chapter will locate the four criteria of the stereotype on the Chalalán website.⁴⁰ Section 4.3 will use ethnography in an attempt to historically contextualize this representation's creation.

4.2 LOCATING THE ECOLOGICALLY NOBLE SAVAGE STEREOTYPE

4.2.1 Spatial

The Chalalán website advertises the lodge's locale in a way that engages Western academic sensibilities by providing scientific details about the Ecolodge's surrounding environment. The home page describes the area as a "Biodiversity hotspot", a buzzword frequently used in environment and conservation discourse and a term often present in the ecotourist's vocabulary. The term refers to a part of the world that contains significant biological diversity and is also under threat from human encroachment (Mittermeier, Mittermeier, Myers and Gil 1999). The application of this term and its placement on the website's home page is a potentially strategic maneuver that links the Chalalán Ecolodge to the ecotourist's pre-existing conceptions of a Biodiversity hotspot immediately when they visit the website.

The home page then qualifies the buzzword by describing the region's specific characteristics. The website explains that Madidi National Park (Figure 10) is a

⁴⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this section have been taken from the Chalalán Ecolodge website.

“prioritized conservation zone” not only because it contains “the highest biodiversity of endemic plants on the planet”, but also because it is “constantly under threat from development”.

Figure 10: Map of Bolivia Showing Madidi National Park and Chalalán Ecolodge.



Source: Lonely Planet 2001.

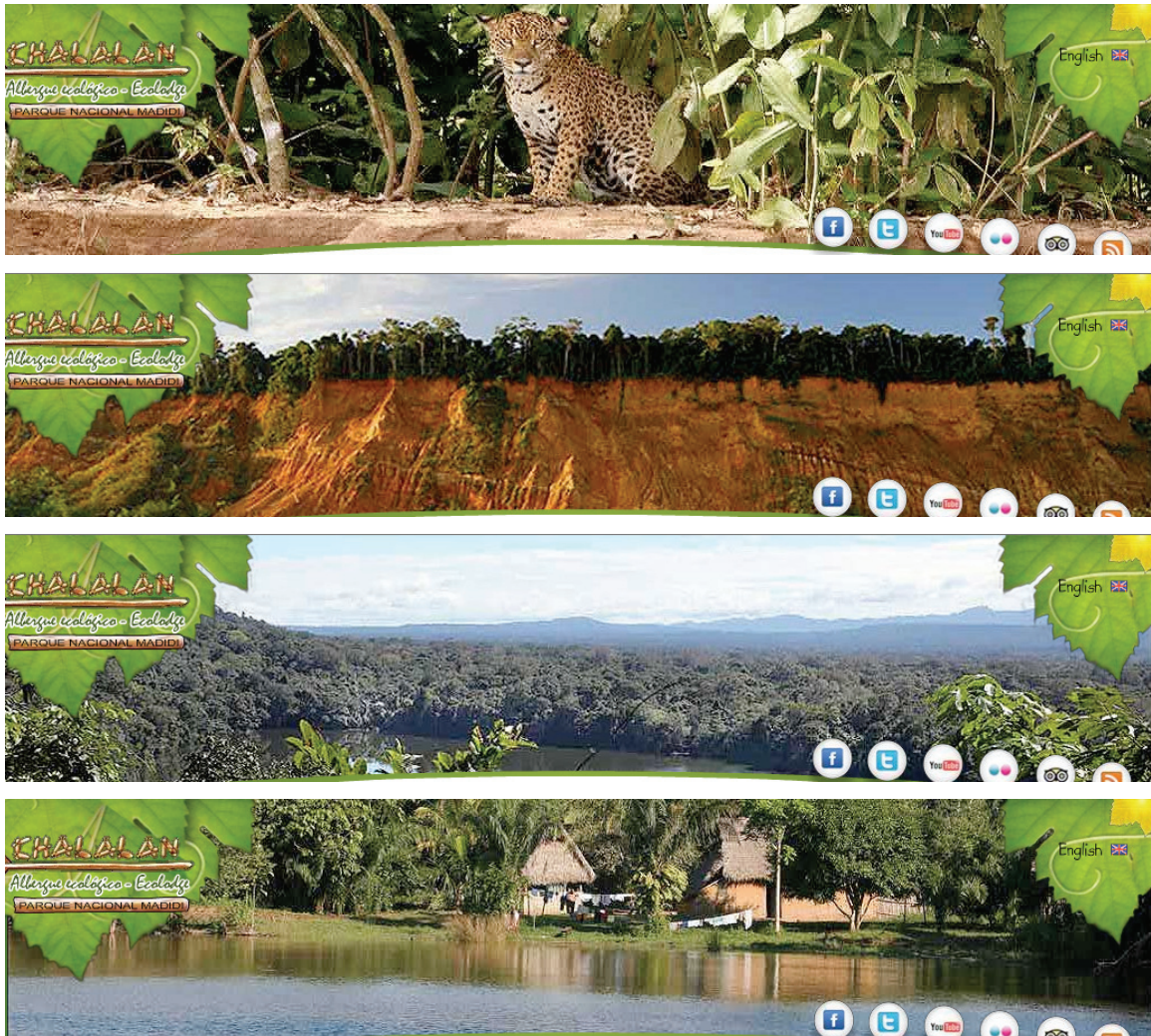
Navigating from the home page, the visitor can click on the button “Madidi National Park” under the Main Menu where further use of ecological terminology targets the ecotourist. Not only are phrases like “biological riches” and “highest number of bird species” used to describe the natural environment but these terms are also highlighted in bold text. Specific species of flora and fauna, including their scientific names, are also located in this section. The inclusion of these Latin names, environmental buzzwords, and scientific terminology seems to speak to the ecotourist in a common language that establishes a connection between the Ecolodge and the ecotourist’s ecological imagination.

While the Chalalán website may appeal to the ecotourist’s environmental logic, it also seems to engage their ecological imagination. The website home page describes the Ecolodge and its surrounding environment using descriptors like “magic”; “enchanted”; “beauty”; a “dream”. It invites the tourist “to relax and enjoy the warm breeze, the

sounds of nature and our delicious home cooking”. Enticed by these descriptions, the visitor can then click on “Chalalán Ec lodge” under the main menu for further detail. Here, the website again to use specific language to potentially evoke a sensory response: “The cabins are surrounded by virgin forest which resonates with birdsong and the cries of howler monkeys, especially at dawn and dusk”. In using scientific terminology and imaginative text designed to evoke an emotional response, the website may be appealing to the ecotourist’s practical and idealistic sensibilities. Not only does this technique appeal to a wider variety of tourists (those who might be looking for a more academic experience and those who are in search of a leisure holiday), it also increases the potential visitor pool.

The website’s use of images seems to complement and reaffirm its argument for Chalalán’s environmental significance. The overall monochromatic green color scheme, for example, reinforces the conservation theme. The home page features a slide show of six images displayed across the top of the page where four of the six photographs depict the lodge’s environment. These photographs include a clay lick, a jaguar, a landscape view of the forest canopy, and a view of Tacana style houses from the lake (Figure 11). None of the six photographs appear to be of supreme professional quality and the subject matter of some of the images is set at a distance from the viewer.

Figure 11: Four of Six Images from the Chalalán Home Page.



Source: Chalalán n.d.[a].

Consequently, the use of these images may tempt the tourist: it implies that while the photographs can offer the visitor a glimpse into the world of Chalalán, they will only be able to appreciate the full experience by actually going to the Ecolodge. Nevertheless, the subject matter of these photographs complements the website's perceived message of Chalalán's environmental significance by its apparent use of a repertoire of rainforest images to appeal to the ecotourist.

4.2.2 Spiritual

While the spatial component of the Chalalán website may persuade the visitor that both the Ecolodge and the Community of San José de Uchupiamonas occupy an environmentally significant area, the website also appears to suggest that the San Josesanos have an intimate understanding of their surroundings. The website identifies the San Josesanos as an indigenous Quechua-Tacana community that inhabits “an ancestral territory”. It explains the symbolism of the Ecolodge’s logo: identifying the river as the “sole means by which communicate with other peoples” and the oar as “what enables use to negotiate the meandering River Tuíchi to find food” (Figure 12). The text then continues to explain that the sun symbolizes the seasons and corresponding agricultural activities while the moon symbolizes “the light of hope for a new life”. This language and the logo suggest that San Josesanos have a strong spiritual connection to the natural world because they rely on it for their subsistence.

Figure 12: Chalalán Logo.



Source: Chalalán n.d.[b].

Guides at Chalalán are bilingual indigenous people from the community who use this “inherited”, “traditional knowledge” of “medicinal plants and hardwood trees, animal behavior, myths and beliefs about the plants and animals” in addition to scientific knowledge at the Ecolodge. Here, a definite distinction can be made between scientific knowledge and inherited, traditional environmental knowledge. While Western tourists may have some scientific knowledge of the tropical forest, they do not possess the traditional, spiritual understanding that the local, indigenous guides maintain. In an era when alternative development projects are promoted, mega-development projects that rely on Western expertise, according to some, have been largely unsuccessful. It is within this context that San Josesanos emerge as the viable conservators of their

environment in comparison to the unsuccessful mega-development projects that focused on Western scientific knowledge.

4.2.3 Temporal

Having located an inherent spiritual connection to their natural environment, the website also implies that this connection is historically continuous. The website claims that the Community of San José de Uchupiamonas has existed in this region of Madidi National Park for over three hundred years and that the town itself was jointly founded in 1616 by Franciscan priests and Marcelino Cusirimay, a member of the Chiquitano group. This joint venture, the website implies, was mutually agreed upon. The website appears to legitimize its communal land rights by supplying the website visitor with legal evidence of this claim. In the section entitled “The Community”, the website provides the official document numbers of its land grants and titles.

Simply saying San Josesanos inhabit their ancestral territory on the website is one thing, but providing evidence that the government of Bolivia has officially recognized the Community’s right to their land may be a more legitimate claim. In Western culture, legal written documents are socially and economically powerful because they have been authorized and recognized by authoritative entities within the social structure. In asserting indigenous rights in the Western dominated international forum where textual legal documents are becoming common valuable currency, cultures without a written language or access to such official documents are not as powerful as those that do. As a result, including reference to the official documentation supporting the right of San Josesanos to their ancestral lands can be seen as an assertion of control over their territory. It also allows them to possess a powerful social currency in the indigenous political arena.

4.2.4 Cultural

In contrast to the Kapawi website, which suggests the idealized, romantic existence of the Achuar culture intact through time, the Chalachán website highlights the societal ills of San José de Uchupiamonas. The Chalachán website implies that prior to the

eighteenth century, San Josesanos harmoniously coexisted with their natural environment:

Mr. Francisco Navi, Shaman of the indigenous population used to say ‘We live in the jungle, we eat, are healed and dressed with what the jungle gives us, we know the trees, plants, and animals that inhabit it are possessed by supernatural beings who can punish us and make us ill for reasons only they know.’

Since the eighteenth century, however, the town’s poverty and destitution caused severe emigration. The sixty families that remained by the late 1980s, the website claims, were living in conditions of extreme poverty. Logging of precious woods in the 1990s temporarily eased the villager’s economic situation but ultimately proved to be tiring and precarious. Childhood education was considered “precarious”, “mediocre” and “deficient”, not extending beyond primary school, and communal health services were also lacking since traditional medicine was the only means of curing illness. A thirty kilometer walk from the nearest town, the website states that the community existed in isolation: searching for basic necessities like soap and salt might involve rowing rafts for days. In the absence of paid jobs in the community, members were forced to travel to neighboring towns to work, returning home with necessities. The website maintains that these perceived deficiencies in the community existed prior to the introduction of ecotourism.

In some respects, the website claims that ecotourism has improved the lives of San Josesanos. The Community has made deliberate efforts to protect the area’s flora and fauna, especially in the region near Chalalán, and populations of spider monkey, jaguar, and other fauna have increased in the region as a result. The lodge now has a liquid waste treatment system, uses solar energy for electricity, and has a water purification system. The Community also now has a Women’s Organization, which holds workshops and has motivated some women in San José to expand their capabilities in handicrafts, embroidery and pastry. While the website does not explicitly link the poverty and destitution in San José to influences of modernization, it does look as if that the community’s adoption of ecotourism has solved some of the town’s development problems.

This particular description of San José de Uchupiamonas, while differing from how the Achuar are portrayed, nevertheless conforms to the Ecologically Noble Savage

stereotype. While the website implies that San Josesanos had originally maintained a harmonious equilibrium with their rainforest environment, poverty and societal ills compromised this connection for a period of time during their history to the extent where, at one point, they were forced to engage in anti-conservationist behavior when they logged precious woods to financially support their families. This dissolution of the once strong bond between humans and nature resulted in the societal problems described. Nevertheless, despite these problems, San Josesanos remained “indigenous” as evident by the continued use of the term to describe the community throughout the account of its history on the Chalalán website.

Ecotourism, it seems, has allowed the Community of San José de Uchupiamonas to reconnect with a seemingly lost (or temporarily abandoned) part of their past. San Josesanos, who “came to terms with [their] lack of development, poverty, and the government’s lack of interest” turned to “the legacy that our ancestors had left us...we decided on ECOLOGICAL TOURISM”. Ecotourism has provided economic stability that has in turn supplied the community with basic services. Chalalán has not only increased the region’s biological diversity, the website claims, but it has also allowed the San Josesanos to conserve their cultural heritage: without ecotourism, “our community, both its culture and land, would have disappeared forever”. In this particular portrayal of the Ecologically Noble Savage, San Josesanos are portrayed as indigenous people who once had a strong bond with nature, which was then interrupted by a period of poverty and destitution. Their decision to adopt ecological tourism appears to have been the singular element that enabled the San Josesanos to fulfill their mission to save their culture and conserve their environment.

Ecotourism’s ability to seemingly revitalize ecological nobility reflects post-modern nostalgic yearnings for cultural preservation. According to Mowforth and Munt (1998), the Western act of othering Third World cultures and environments is a process of reflection where dissatisfaction with so-called “modern” life motivates Western peoples to locate and preserve the cultures and places that are everything they are not. Showing how ecotourism promotes cultural and environmental conservation in San José caters to this tourist nostalgia.

4.3 THE STEREOTYPE IN CONTEXT

4.3.1 Overview

While an ethnographic analysis of the literature on the Achuar people revealed both the exclusions and contradictions involved in the production of the Ecologically Noble Savage myth, this section uses ethnography on the Quechua-Tacana people to historically contextualize the creation of that myth. The aim of this historical contextualization is to understand not only how the Ecologically Noble Savage myth might be strategically used, but to also explain the context in which it can emerge. This analysis will be applied to the ethnographic literature describing the Quechua-Tacana people, the self-identified ethnicity of the community of San José de Uchupiamonas, and the owners and operators of Chalalán Ecolodge.

4.3.2 Preliminary Background

Located within Bolivia's lowlands, the Tacana are members of a broader Tacana language family that also includes ethnic groups like the Ese'ejá, the Aroana, the Reysano, and the Cavineña (Bathurst 2005). Like the Achuar, the Tacana were successfully able to thwart Incan military advances into their territory during the pre-Colombian period. Similarly, the Spaniards also found the tropical environment of Bolivia's Amazon to be a barrier to colonization and extraction efforts. Motivated by a search for El Dorado, Spaniards entered the region but were ultimately pushed out by the *chunchos*.⁴¹ During much of this period, Tacana contact with the Spaniards was isolated to intermittent skirmishes.

During the late sixteenth century, missionaries began to penetrate the Tacana territory and, by 1620, two churches had been constructed in villages on the lower Tuichi River (Bathurst 2005). In 1716, the Franciscans established the mission of San José. Like the Achuar, missionization had a profound impact on Tacana culture.⁴² The missionaries concentrated the Tacana population into mission settlements in an effort to settle, convert and ultimately civilize them (Bathurst). In the pursuit of this civilizing

⁴¹ Savage Lowlanders (Bathurst 2005).

⁴² While the missionaries greatly changed the Tacana, their writings are nonetheless valuable ethnographic accounts of the Tacana during this period. For further information regarding the missionary contribution to ethnography, see Burton and Burton (2007).

mission, the Franciscans re-organized the villages onto a grid-like pattern and enforced nuclear households. Tacana people were also required to attend a daily mass and to cultivate a communal garden. Yet, this imposition did not result in the full adoption of Christian culture. Laura Ann Bathurst (2005) notes a syncretic combination of both Catholic and indigenous cultural and religious practices, noting that Tacana continued to maintain their houses near their *chacras* in the forest but would return to the mission for religious occasions. Bathurst refers to this synchrony as “Christianacuana”: the Tacana became Christian and in essence “civilized” while retaining their indigenous cultural practices.

Beyond relocation, missionization had a profound homogenizing effect on the region’s indigenous peoples: “It is likely that bands speaking linguistic varieties within the Tacana-language family, ravaged by diseases brought by Europeans and enduring encroachment into their lands by those seeking gold and other forest products, were collapsed into one people by mission practices” (Bathurst 2005: 48).

4.3.3 Historical Contextualization

The rubber boom (1879-1912) further impacted Tacana life in the Bolivian lowlands as they left the mission settlements to work as rubber tappers. Indigenous peoples were often selected to locate the necessary rubber trees given their knowledge of tropical forest flora. Like so many other indigenous peoples involved in rubber tapping during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Tacana were controlled by a debt peonage system known as the *habilito*. In this system, rubber barons sold tappers goods at inflated prices before the beginning of the rubber season with the expectation that they would pay off their debts through rubber collection. However, the amount they collected never matched their debts, locking the tappers into an unending employment (enslavement) cycle. With the collapse of the rubber market, the result of a number of different factors, Brazil nut gathering took its place as the dominant extractive activity in the Bolivian lowlands. This new extractive activity set the stage for the creation of independent Tacana communities by the end of the twentieth century (Bathurst 2005).

The Tacana practice slash-and-burn horticulture, maintaining their forest gardens (usually 1 to 2 hectares in size) with tools such as axes, knives, machetes, and flat hoes

purchased in town or from merchants (Bathurst 2005). They are also a very mobile people: they travel to sell their products in other markets, move to work as seasonal laborers, and travel to the nearest political center in order to collect benefits from the Bolivian state (Bathurst). Like the Achuar, the Tacana have also incorporated guns into their hunting strategies, most commonly with *salones* (.22 rifles). However, the presence of guns does not mean that the Tacana hunt recklessly – in fact, great care is taken to ensure that bullets are not wasted.⁴³ A skilled hunter in Tacana culture, demonstrated by his ability to shoot accurately, is a source of pride and social status. The Tacana also use flashlights when hunting at night. Traditionally, the inability to see the forest at night had been a limiting factor, but this imported illumination allows Tacana hunters to see animals that emerge more frequently in the darkness. Again, the ability to hunt at night does not suggest that the Tacana are over-exhausting their resources. At two dollars per pair, batteries are a relatively expensive, albeit quickly obsolete, commodity. Thus, the Tacana generally conserve their battery usage. While some conservationists may argue that the introduction of modern technology in indigenous Amazonian communities will deplete local animal populations at an accelerated rate, the Tacana incorporation of weaponry and flashlights suggests that this may not be the case.

4.3.3.1 *On Being Indigenous in Bolivia*

Indigenous politics both internationally and domestically appear to have had a profound effect on the construction of Tacana identity. The creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, with its anti-discriminatory message and its unanimous adoption in the UN General Assembly, was the landmark event for the establishment of the human rights agenda in the international community. In 1985, ILO Convention 107 specifically established indigenous and tribal peoples as vulnerable groups within the human rights agenda, assigning them to a specific category of people in need of special attention.

During the 1980s, ideologies of identity in Latin America shifted as ethnicity replaced class as the marker of distinctiveness. It was during this period that a number of

⁴³ The absence of abundant cash flow means that funds are not always available to replenish depleted ammunition supplies.

legislative efforts were made recognizing this attention shift. In 1985, the UN created the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples (UNWGIP) as a forum for indigenous peoples to voice their opinions and to communicate with government. In 1989, ILO 169 recognized indigenous peoples' rights to their own culture, language, and territory. This ideological shift affected identity politics in Latin America. Before the 1980s, indigenous peoples in Latin America were placed in a transitory or evolutionary stage, meaning that their culture and identity needed to be improved upon and state assimilation policies institutionalized this civilizing mission (Garfield 1997).⁴⁴ Within this context, being "indigenous" was considered disadvantageous. The emergence of an indigenous discourse in the 1980s, supported by many NGOs and progressive religious leaders, rattled this paradigm as indigenous peoples were given recognition and special rights. In the pursuit of such rights, ethnic federations emerged throughout South America at a rate not previously seen. In Bolivia, ethnic federations were formed throughout the country during this period.

Bolivia's ratification of ILO 169 in 1989 set the stage for the expansion of indigenous identity politics domestically. Whereas the 1980s were a period of increased ideological attention surrounding the situation of indigenous peoples, the 1990s saw the emergence of legal reforms in response to this paradigm shift. In a process funded by the World Bank, Bolivia passed the controversial INRA law (National Agrarian Reform Institute or *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria*) that simultaneously facilitated market-based land transactions while allowing for the creation of collectively controlled indigenous territories known as *Territorios Comunitarios de Origen*, or Originary Community Territories (TCOs). At the same time, the Bolivian constitution was

⁴⁴ In Brazil, the main focus of the Estado Novo Regime (1937-1945) was Brazilian national integration and the country's indigenous peoples were seen as the answer to national problems (Garfield 1997). The regime developed the Serviço de Proteção aos Índios (SPI) with the charge of demarcating indigenous lands, but its vision did not seek to preserve indigenous society as it was. Rather, the goal of the SPI was a civilizing mission; to integrate Brazil's Indians into Brazilian society, explaining "We do not want the Indian to remain Indian" (752). What was on the outside promoted as an outpouring of concern for its indigenous peoples, the government instead devised a plan to convert the Indians into productive citizens and "[make] them understand the necessity of work" (749). The appropriation of Western conceptions of indigeneity in the assimilationist policies of the Brazilian state shows the pervasive nature of this mode of thought.

amended to recognize the nation's multiculturalism. Larger ethnic federations like CIRABO (Regional Ethnic Committee of Northwest Bolivia or *Comité Regional Étnico del Noroeste Bolivia*) were formed to organize and facilitate communication between the smaller federations in the lowlands. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, these local organizations frequently allied with international actors in order to receive aid. While indigenous peoples in Bolivia gained access to power and resources through ethnic mobilization during the 1990s, in the 2000s they fought to not only protect what they had already acquired but also to obtain territorial control and autonomy.

The recognition of the status and special rights of indigenous peoples and the linking of the movement with international actors has led to the call from indigenous leaders themselves for clearer census data on the numbers of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. Indeed, as international NGOs and other agencies look for allies in other countries, specifically if their mission is to aid indigenous peoples, defining who is indigenous is essential for their practice. For governments, an indigenous definition allows resources to be channeled to specific and identified sectors. As Bathurst writes,

Identities have become justifications for entitlements, administered by the Bolivian government. Further, pressure from international funders to ensure government transparency that demonstrates effective and accurate accounting of the activities has risen. The World Bank has become conscious of its negative public image surrounding indigenous issues and has increased its attention to indigenous friendly projects, and is requiring the same of the governments with which it works. Pressure trickles up and trickles down (2005: 125).

For some, self-representation as indigenous is a strategy to regain autonomous control over ancestral territory. While a criteria for identifying indigenous peoples may seem prudent to outside actors, some ethnic groups now find themselves having to define who is and who is not part of their community in order to work with these external agents.⁴⁵ Bathurst (2005) argues that the Tacana are undergoing a deliberate process of re-tribalization in which they are strategically reconfiguring and/or affirming their identity in response to transnational discourses and in order to access power and resources. As

⁴⁵ According to Bathurst (2005: 126), "The Tacana are having to start to define for outsiders who is and who is not Tacana to gain the resources they fought for. Both the state and international organizations are asking for a concrete, clearly delineated definition in order to allocate resources."

members of the Tacana group, San Josesanos may be revitalizing their indigeneity as a way to receive local development benefits and political recognition.

4.3.4 Why Tourism, Why San José, Why Madidi

It is within this context of international and domestic indigenous identity politics that this case study of Chalalán and the community of San José de Uchupiamonas is located. As mentioned previously, local peoples and NGOs frequently formed alliances based on perceived common interests. In ecotourism, this alliance was based on a shared principle of sustainability and conservation. An analysis of the alliance between the community of San José and Conservation International provides an interesting case study to examine the possible re-tribalization of the Quechua-Tacana people in their pursuit of autonomy and economic and social development.

While Chalalán represents the most organized tourism effort in the San José community, tourism actually began near Chalalán Lake in 1992 when local leaders searched for alternative economic opportunities and decided to invest \$3,500 US in a plan to create a rustic camp accommodating 40 tourists (Conservation International 1994; Jamal and Stronza 2009). While this preliminary experience exposed the community to tourism, it ultimately dissolved because of a lack of capital, marketing, and planning resources (Jamal and Stronza 2009). While the community of San José de Uchupiamonas saw ecotourism as a way to protect their resources and territory, to create future alternative economic opportunities, and to improve the community's quality of life, errors made in the previous attempt at ecotourism meant that they would require a new strategy in the future: if the community wanted their ecotourism enterprise to be successful, they would need technical support and international funding.

Coincidentally, plans to create a new national park in the Alto Madidi Region of Bolivia's lowlands developed during the mid 1990s. Identified as a biodiversity hotspot (Conservation International 1994; Stronza 2003), and even called the most biodiverse place in the world (García and Ricalde 2001), Madidi is part of the Vilcabamba-Amboro Biological Corridor that straddles both Peru and Bolivia. In 1991, Conservation International (CI), a non-profit organization that "works with local partner organizations...to develop working models that demonstrate how people can thrive while

conserving the biological wealth of their land and water” (Conservation International 1994: 11), produced a report strongly recommending that the Bolivian government designate the region a protected area. The Alto Madidi Region was also an area of great interest to the Bolivian government. The Bolivian General Law on the Environment (1992) called for the protection of the country’s natural assets and the sustainable use of its resources. Significantly, the law also called for the participation of local populations in environmental projects, in accordance with the amendments to the Bolivian constitution establishing the country as a pluriethnic state. If international conservation organizations wanted to conduct environmental projects in Madidi, they would have to work with local populations.⁴⁶

Located within the proposed national park, the community of San José de Uchupiamonas, in turn, wanted to improve their quality of life and slow the pace of emigration (Chalalán 2008; Conservation International 1994; Stronza 2003). According to CI, the community’s objectives could be achieved if they diversified their economy through ecotourism. CI praised the “acculturated indigenous community” of San José, the area’s “original inhabitants”, for the low ecological impact that their subsistence-level farming had on their environment, which they attributed to low population density and to “the inherent ecological soundness of traditional Quechua-Tacana land-use practices” (1994: 2). However, CI felt that these traditional agricultural practices need to be improved upon and that the community needed a broader range of off-farm income generating opportunities. San Josesanos (according to CI), wanted to forgo unsustainable activities like mining and timber and curtail their wild game hunting activities in favor of raising livestock. Ecotourism, it seems, would be mutually beneficial for both the San José community and CI. In 1995, Bolivia agreed to designate 1,271, 500 hectares as the Madidi National Park, an area about the size of Massachusetts. In the same year, the community formed an alliance with CI and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) to develop the area around Chalalán Lake into an ecotourism lodge.

According to CI (1994: 4), the Chalalán Project had three main objectives:

⁴⁶ Conservation International writes, “The project would also directly complement the Government’s objectives for the Alto Madidi area of protecting the region’s world class biological diversity, while maintaining the integrity and lifestyle of the Tacana-Quechua indigenous community, the original inhabitants of the area” (1994: 1).

1. To improve the socio-economic conditions of the Quechua-Tacana community of San José by establishing small private enterprises based on the production of non-timber forest products and ecotourism and to link these activities to the conservation of the area's biological resources;
2. To contribute to the institutional strengthening of local entities in San José so that they may take over the management and ownership of the project assets from the executing agency within a 4-5 year period; and
3. To extend the successful aspects of the project to neighboring communities during the latter stages of the initiative.

While CI provided both financial and technical assistance, the IADB's support was mainly financial. In order to address the more immediate needs of the community while the ecolodge was being built, San José received \$25,000 US from the Bolivian Debt-For-Nature Swap. Because CI believed that local capacity building would determine the success of the Chalalán Project, and because they believed San Josesanos were inexperienced with entrepreneurial endeavors, the NGO brought in researchers, consultants, design and marketing experts, conservationists, and development workers to build the local institutional management capacity. In an effort to ensure long-term sustainability, and to facilitate the transfer of ownership and management, each project activity was to have a local community counterpart trained by the project staff. In addition to the Ecolodge, San Josesanos would be encouraged to develop and market "biodiversity products" like plant fibers, nuts, and tree oils that were seen as desirable on the world market. CI believed that if the Chalalán Project was successful, the community of San José would have access to basic health, education, and water services, the emigration would decline, their remaining Quechua-Tacana cultural traditions would not disappear, and Madidi would be preserved.⁴⁷ Ecotourism was the panacea for the area's development problems.

While San Josesanos saw the Chalalán Project as a mechanism for social development, CI valued the Project in terms of its potential contribution to the development and conservation industries. The NGO saw Chalalán as *the* model for community-and-conservation-based development that would set the example for similar projects in other areas and would ultimately convince people that ecotourism could be

⁴⁷ Because CI linked the success of the project to the development of local capacity, the project's failure would thus be attributed to local mismanagement and not the overall project design.

more beneficial than destructive forest extraction (Conservation International 1994). CI even thought that the Chalalán Project could be one of the IADB's most successful financial projects.⁴⁸ CI, it seems, had a deeply vested interest in the project's success, and San Josesanos had a lot of responsibilities on their shoulders.

4.3.4.1 "100% Professional Indigenous People"

In 2002, after several years of training and "capacity building", the community of San José de Uchupiamonas assumed full ownership and operations of Chalalán. A "100% profitable, autonomous, and autosustainable business", run by "100% professional indigenous people" from San José, Chalalán is a 24 bed ecolodge hosting approximately 1,000 tourists per year (Chalalán 2008). A revenue sharing model was devised whereby half of the ecotourism revenue was channeled to a community fund to be used for health and education while half of the profits were given to the shareholders (approximately 74 families) (Stronza 2003). Chalalán became the first community-owned and operated ecotourism lodge in Bolivia.

Since the creation of the Chalalán Ecolodge, the community of San José de Uchupiamonas has experienced several socio-economic and environmental benefits. Tourism revenue has been applied to small health, education, and water projects in the community (Chalalán 2008; Stronza 2003). Community involvement in the ecolodge has also grown, expanding from the origin 74 families to now encompassing a total of 116 families who occupy up to 60 direct and indirect jobs (Stronza 2003). The community also reports that some families are even returning to San José. Quite significantly, the Bolivian government has given San José land title clearance (the TCO). The legal recognition of the TCO means that the community has legal rights to the collective ownership and management of its lands and the right to participate in the use and sustainable extraction of its natural resources (World Bank 2011). Ecotourism has also contributed to the repopulation of previously endangered species within the Park while the community has become more aware of concepts like environmental responsibility and sustainability. Ecotourism, it seems, has solved many of San José's problems.

⁴⁸ CI argues that this could be the most successful because it would directly and indirectly impact 15-20% of homes in San José.

Community responses to the *Trueque Amazónico*, however, tend to contradict this perfect image. Of the 66 persons interviewed, more than half stated that they did not have *una buena vida*, a good life. When asked, “What is bad in your community?”, out of 63 respondents, forty percent cited the lack of basic services like water and electricity. Twenty one percent cited a lack of organization, eight percent said a lack of leadership, eight percent a lack of business understanding, and eight percent a lack of cleanliness. Only eleven percent believed that everything was fine in their community. Like Kapawi, respondents also said that working at Chalalán has caused them to be separated from their families and communities. Respondents also highlighted the lack of a consistent work schedule, especially during the low season. In spite of some positive contributions to local development, tourism has also not solved all of San José’s problems.

4.3.4.2 “He talked like a business person.”

While the *Trueque Amazónico* provides brief insight into the impacts of tourism, discourse analysis of this ethnographic piece provides valuable evidence of the Ecologically Noble Savage myth in action. Responses from San Joseanos and community employees at Chalalán reveal the extent to which the development and conservation paradigm may have been adopted at the local level. When asked “What makes us proud?”, Achuar and Infierno respondents cited both the ecotourism business in which they are involved and the impacts tourism has had on their community. Chalalán respondents, however, only described aspects of the ecotourism business that made them proud with no mention of their community or identity. When asked “What would we do if there were a year in which we did not receive economic benefits?”, Achuar and Infierno respondents discussed the negative impact this would have on their communities. Chalalán respondents provided a professionalized response: “We would reduce personnel, sell some shares to raise capital, diversify and promote Chalalán at a more national level...*A key concern would be ensuring the quality of the product is not compromised*” (emphasis mine, Stronza 2003: 65).

In the section entitled “Ideas gained from Chalalán”, a respondent noted, “The community is 100% competent in managing the business, and just listening to one of the community leaders, he talked like a business person” (Stronza 2003: 114). It is difficult

in much of the *Trueque Amazónico* to identify who is speaking. Representatives from Conservation International and San José were invited and at some points it is relatively clear who is speaking given the subject of the conversation. For example, the section entitled “Ecotourism Partnerships and Conservation: Key Challenges” (41), six of the eight responses focus on the deficiencies of the San Josesanos:

- Lack of a management plan for the community of San José
- Lack of environmental education in the schools
- Lack of professional preparation (through formal education, advanced degrees, etc.)
- More education for conservation, particularly through a school for guides
- Respecting and complying with rules
- Providing enough economic benefits from ecotourism so that community members can shift out of other extractive activities
- Lack of educational programs in the community
- Lack of research projects in the area

In other sections of the report, the author of the comment is listed directly. According to a Conservation International representative, “It’s fine as a [revenue sharing] model, but the communities have to learn about efficiency, or they will fall into a cycle of receiving without contributing” (62).

Both the San Josesanos' contributions to the *Trueque Amazónico* and their self-nomination for the Equator Prize seem to employ a professionalized discourse influenced by both management and conservation ideologies. Through this ethnographic literature, San Josesanos appear to portray themselves as competent business people committed to the protection of Madidi’s biodiversity through effective and efficient managerial practices. Noticeably absent from the literature, particularly the *Trueque Amazónico*, are personalized and informal contributions.

The adoption of this professionalized and detached discourse may be strategic. In order to gain access to social and economic development opportunities, the community of San José formed an alliance with Conservation International to build Chalalán. For CI, the success of the project hinged on the community’s ability to develop its entrepreneurial capacity and failure to do so would not only destroy crucial resource access for San Josesanos but also contradict CI’s ideological foundation. Because CI believes that environmental conservation allows local people to thrive, and the fact that the non-profit planned for Chalalán to set the example for similar projects in other

regions, ideologically and practically speaking, Chalalán could not fail. The adoption of the conservation and managerial paradigm is San José's attempt to prove to CI that they are a success story.

Within this context, the use of the Ecologically Noble Savage myth on the Chalalán website legitimizes the Community's involvement in Madidi's conservation. The nature of identity politics meant that indigenous groups would be given access to political bargaining power and socio-economic resources. As the external actor in this case, CI wanted to apply its community-and-conservation-based development model in Madidi and needed to locate a "community" that would adequately fulfill the role. CI's understanding of what constitutes an appropriate community in this case may also have been influenced by international indigenous identity discourses that argued that indigenous peoples were the natural conservators of the environment. San José, in turn, was looking for access to basic resources. In order to gain this access, it became necessary to produce an ethnic codification.

Chalalán's embrace of conservation-based development would not only legitimize CI's mission to prove that local peoples can thrive while conserving their natural resources, but it also legitimizes the possibility of a singular universal "global system" or "ecosystem" where all people on Earth are interdependent (Sachs 1992a: 22). Wolfgang Sachs (1992b: 108) writes,

In the face of the overriding imperative to 'secure the survival of the planet', autonomy easily becomes an anti-social value, and diversity turns into an obstacle to collective action. Can one imagine a more powerful motive for forcing the world into line than that of saving the planet?

In this context, San José's adoption of the conservation-based development agenda legitimizes calls for global action to environmental issues.

4.3.4.3 *Quechua "and" Tacana?*

In order to ally with CI, San Josesanos may have had to represent themselves in a way that appealed to Western socio-environmental principles. San Josesanos identified themselves as a Quechua-Tacana indigenous community, a hyphenated ethnicity that may be useful in an ecotourism industry that seems to search for the Ecologically Noble Savage.

The Quechua people and the Tacana people can be split to two distinct ethnic groups that have different cultural practices and historical experiences. The Quechua people are an ethnic group originating in the Andean highlands and they have had a longer history of colonialism.⁴⁹ When Quechua groups migrated into the lowlands, they came into contact with the regions inhabitants like the Tacana, the group with the largest presence in the Alto Madidi lowlands (Henkemans 2001). While the most inclusive definition of Tacana identity is that of *sangre*, or blood, the least inclusive definition restricts Tacana identity to only those who speak the Tacana language (Bathurst 2005). Because the most dominant language in these communities is Spanish, very few if any people still know Tacana. According to Bathurst (2005), the criteria the Tacana use to identify themselves depends on the context: “Native speakers would often convey a language-based definition of Tacana-ness in one context, and then change to a more inclusive definition in more formal contexts involving institutional others like governmental representatives or NGOs” (139). However, a biologically-based definition of Tacana or any indigenous identity is still problematic as birth documentation is scarce and often unreliable. According to Ariëne Henkemans (2001), of all the groups in the Bolivian lowlands, the Tacana are the most acculturated. Indeed, she argues that they are not easily distinguishable from other *campesinos* and are sometimes classified as *campesinos orientales mestizos*.

Furthermore, in the Bolivian lowlands numerous migrations to the region have resulted in mixed marriages among the different communities, producing a multitude of different ethnic hybridities. The cultural hybrid identification of “Quechua-Tacana” was strategically constructed in this context. Perhaps San Josesanos felt they could not make a case for one ethnicity specifically and so this hyphenation allowed them to be considered “indigenous” within Western social and environmental discourse.

⁴⁹ The geographic isolation of Amazonian communities kept them largely shielded from the full brunt of the Spanish conquest. After the initial dramatic population decline, caused by both warfare and disease, the highland Quechua were subjected to the *encomienda* system. The indigenous people in a given area of land were required to supply their *encomendero* with a quota of goods or services. The physical and psychological demands had profound effects on Quechua society.

It seems that the San Josesanos did not meet the criteria of the typical Ecologically Noble Savage. San José de Uchupiamonas only existed as a community for 200 years, meaning that it did not have the same temporal and ancestral connection to the land as is the general requirement for indigenous groups in Amazonia. The village's name itself links the community to its connection to Christianity, potentially suggesting the abandonment of traditional religious practices. The majority of residents speak Spanish while barely any are able to speak the indigenous language. Hundreds of years of intermarriages resulted in an ethnically mixed community, both in terms of blood and cultural practices. Elements of Western culture had been adopted, from weapons to clothing. The apparent essentialist self-representation on the website, it seems, does not reflect the multiplicity and diversity of local social realities.

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

A qualitative textual and visual analysis of the Chalachán website located evidence of the Ecologically Noble Savage in the San Josesanos' self-representation. Ecotourism, it seems, has allowed the Community of San José de Uchupiamonas to reconnect with a seemingly lost (or temporarily abandoned) part of their past, provided economic stability that has in turn supplied the community with basic services, increased biological diversity, and allowed the San Josesanos to conserve their cultural heritage. The ethnographic literature suggests that San Josesanos may be portraying themselves as Ecologically Noble Savages in an attempt to form alliances with external agents to attract Western tourists.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Native Community of Infierno and Posada Amazonas

5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter Five explores how the stereotype of the Ecologically Noble Savage may have impacted the ways in which the Community of Infierno represents its indigenous identity in the online marketing of Posada Amazonas. Section 5.2 applies the four stereotype criteria to these representations.⁵⁰ Section 5.3 uses ethnographic research on the Native Community of Infierno to explore ecotourism's impacts and to determine its viability in providing sustainable social and economic development.

5.2 LOCATING THE ECOLOGICALLY NOBLE SAVAGE STEREOTYPE

5.2.1 Spatial

The Posada Amazonas website suggests that the Ecolodge occupies an environmentally significant area that is in need of protection. Because the lodge is situated on the Native Community of Infierno's private reserve, this study argues that the Community also inhabits the same ecologically important area.⁵¹ Both the Ecolodge and the Community are located within the Tambopata National Reserve, part of the Vilcamamba-Amboro Conservation Corridor (Figure 13). Within this "titanic 30 million hectare corridor", the website explains, Tambopata contains a pristine forest with

⁵⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this section have been taken from the Posada Amazonas website.

⁵¹ The website is not consistent in its reference to Posada Amazonas' location. Some parts of the site say that the lodge is within the Tambopata Reserve while others state that it is on the edge. This absence of consistency suggests that the exact location of the ecolodge, whether or not it is specifically within the confines of the Reserve itself, is somewhat irrelevant because it is within the larger Tambopata region. The relative fluidity with which boundaries are treated on the website seems to be consistent with the view of Amazonia as uncontrollable and undefinable.

numerous bird, mammal, butterfly, and plant species. The website even provides the visitor with wildlife encounter rates at each lodge.

Figure 13: Map of Tambopata Reserve Showing Posada Amazonas.



Source: Rainforest Expeditions 1989.

Not only does the website emphasize the ecological significance of the area in mentioning its status as a National Park and providing evidence of its biodiversity through the number of species the Reserve contains, it also suggests that the Reserve is an unspoiled frontier, claiming that the area “protect[s] some of the last untouched lowland and premontane tropical humid forests in the Amazon”. Describing Tambopata as untouched and pristine is significant in two ways. This particular identification affords the area environmental significance because it sets it apart from the perceived pervasive ecological destruction in most other parts of the globe. Within this context, Tambopata is an island of ecological purity within a sea of environmental destruction: as a place that has seemingly escaped human exploitation, it becomes an area prized for its ecological authenticity. Implying that Tambopata is a pristine and untouched rainforest also offers an opportunity for humans to protect and preserve it. In this sense, Tambopata is not an attempt to reverse ecological damage but an opportunity to prevent it completely.

Tambopata becomes the playground within which Western culture can exercise its imperialist nostalgia.

The search for the pure and authentic appears frequently in the Western historical landscape. In 1971, international attention focused on news of the discovery of a Stone Age people, the Tasaday, still living as they have for generations untouched by modern society. The claim was first announced in Filipino media by the head of the Philippines Presidential Assistance on National Minorities (PANAMIN), but was brought to the international arena by American journalist John Nance. In an event described as the greatest discovery of anthropology, *National Geographic* produced an entire article on the group, complete with photographs. Although the story was a hoax, the attention it received speaks to the role of “lost” tribes and “lost” areas of the world within the Western social imagination.⁵² The Posada Amazonas website seems to appeal to this imagination.

5.2.2 Spiritual

The activities listed as part of the Ecolodge’s programs suggest that the Native Community of Infierno is spiritually connected to their natural environment. Offered as part of more than twelve different programs, the ethnobotanical tour takes ecotourists to the Centro Ñape, a “communal organization that produces medicines out of forest plants and administers them to patients who choose their little clinic”. As a community-run organization, the program implies that the local people have a specific knowledge of forest plants and the medicines they produce. The inclusion of this tour on a large number of programs suggests that an activity surrounding indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants is a desired subject among ecotourists and that they have an expectation of learning of indigenous peoples’ knowledge of their environment while on ecotours. Offering an ethnobotanical tour appears to be evidence of a recognition of this desire and also a claim that Posada Amazonas and the Community of Infierno can meet this demand.

⁵² For a good analysis on the role of lost tribes in the Western social imagination, see Stuart Kirsch (1997).

Perhaps the most striking evidence of the website's claim of a spiritual connection is the Ayahuasca Session. Ayahuasca is a psychoactive brewed drink made from the *Banisteriopsis spp.* vine that when consumed produces vivid hallucinations. Introduced to Posada Amazonas' selection of itineraries during the Spring/Summer 2011 season, the Ayahuasca Session is advertised as a Wellness and Holistic program and is prominently promoted on the Posada Amazonas website. Under the tab "Lodges", the second button from the left on the top of the main page, which lists and provides brief introductory detail about Rainforest Expedition's three ecolodges, the Ayahuasca Session is displayed under the heading of "Recommended Programs" directly alongside the section describing Posada Amazonas. Visitors to the site may also access the Ayahuasca Session by clicking on the "Tours & Expeditions" tab, one button over from "Lodges", and scrolling down to the category of "Wellness & Holistic".

Identified as "the master plant of the Amazonian rainforest" and "the most important hallucinogenic vine in Amazonian spirituality", the website offers tourists the chance to "explore an ancient spiritual way of understanding nature" with local shamans who have used the substance for thousands of years "to connect with gods and nature". Although the website admits that the ritual is not native to Ese'ejá culture, stating that it was imported from another indigenous group (likely the Matsigenka), the ceremony nevertheless seems to appear under the pretext of being "indigenous" and thus evidence of a pan-indigenous spiritual connection to the natural environment.

Within the Western social imagination, shamans communicate with the spirit world. While in some cultures the role of shaman has dark and sinister connotations, in others the shaman is viewed as a healer and their connection with the spiritual and natural worlds is praised (Suzuki and Knudtson 1992). For those looking to experience shamanism, the Ayahuasca Session at Posada Amazonas with an Ese'ejá shaman seems to offer this interaction. The use of Ayahuasca as a tourist attraction has also grown in popularity in recent years, perhaps not coincidentally with the rise of the New Age movement and those who seek alternatives from Western religion.⁵³ The introduction of

⁵³ For a brief explanation of ayahuasca tourism and an analysis of marketing it online, see Christine Holman (2011).

the Ayahuasca Session at Posada Amazonas appears to be an attempt to enter the market of spiritual tourism and those interested in the New Age movement.

5.2.3 Temporal

The Posada Amazonas website suggests that the Community of Infierno has maintained a spiritual connection with the natural world over an extended period of time. In the description of the Ayahuasca Session, the website states that shamans have used the brew “for many thousands of years” and that the ceremony itself is “ancient”. Furthermore, the website’s emphasis on the inclusion of traditional knowledge implies a temporal connection because “traditional” implies a generation-to-generation transfer and the continuation of something over time.

5.2.4 Cultural

While both the Kapawi and Chalalán websites offer specific information regarding their respective communities, such details on the Posada Amazonas website are absent. While such information is not explicitly divulged, a general idea of Infierno culture can be identified. The specific activities offered paint a particular image of the culture of the Native Community of Infierno that conforms to the cultural component of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype.

Rainforest Expeditions describes its local partner as “the Ese’jeja Native Community”. While the term “indigenous” is not used as liberally compared to the Kapawi and Chalalán websites, on the Posada Amazonas site, it seems that “native” and “local” are used interchangeably. According to Mark Purcell and J. Christopher Brown (2005), this reflects a general trend towards localization in development where there is an assumption that local and participatory oriented programs are more likely to produce socially equitable and environmentally sustainable outcomes. In 1992, The Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) sought to correct past development errors by turning top-down development programs into bottom-up processes whereby a substantial level of authority would be transferred to local actors. Principle 22 of the Report specifically states that the environmental knowledge of indigenous people and other “local communities” makes the incorporation of these

specific groups into environmental management and development crucial (Purcell and Brown 2005). Within this context, labeling the Community of Infierno as “native” and “local” seems to reflect the localization of Western development and conservation.

Not only does the Posada Amazonas website limit its presentation of information on Ese'ejá culture, the tours it offers also seem to control how and when tourists interact with the local population. Only certain parts of local culture are presented: the activities offered seem to largely be concerned with environmental and spiritual knowledge – the ethnobotanical tour, the farm visit, the ayahuasca ceremony. An activity that differs from this repertoire is the Mapacho musicians, “the official, and picturesque, music group from the community” and the high school dance group. The performance involves several high school seniors from the community performing a “well practiced representation of traditional local dances” while three musicians, the Mapachos, are playing “variations of a jolly rhythmic tune”. The high school seniors also host a bingo night. Both the musical and dance performance and the indigenous bingo are held at the ecolodge and both are meant to fund the senior prom. Here, only a specific representation of local culture is presented and in a highly controlled environment. Guests are also offered the chance to play a soccer game against the “well-adjusted rainforest kids”.

Although bingo, prom night, and soccer are not activities that are typically associated with indigenous peoples, they also do not seem to compromise their indigenous identity. It appears that their inclusion in the Ecolodge's programs is meant to entertain tourists rather than educate them. The entertainment activities (the Mapachos, the bingo game, the soccer game) are meant to contrast the educational activities (the ethnobotanical tour, the farm visit, the ayahuasca ceremony). After a day filled with intellectually stimulating activities, the seemingly lighthearted, though not authentically indigenous, activities during the evening may simply be included for their entertainment value. Perhaps a twenty-four hour truly authentic ecotourism experience for tourists is unnecessary as long as they feel there is a balance between entertainment and education, as long as the education aspect sufficiently addresses their desire to learn about ecological and spiritual knowledge.

The presence and acceptance of non-indigenous cultural elements like bingo, prom, soccer, and Western clothing in a tourism niche that seems to promote

environmental and cultural primitivism may indicate the conservation agenda's ultimate priority. The permitted inclusion of these specific modern influences is significant: while they may compromise the notion of an untouched culture, they do not cause obvious environmental destruction. While environmental groups may ally with local indigenous peoples and offer local development through conservation, changes to the integrity of indigenous culture may be sacrificed in order to conserve the global environment. If environment preservation is more important than cultural preservation, it may be more important for Amazonian peoples to be *ecologically* noble.

Even visits into the Community only involve a tour of the community hub where the shared infrastructure is located, approximately forty-five minutes downstream: the school, the store, the medical post, and the meeting room. The website, and the tours it offers, seem to censor or hide Infierno's culture. The photographs included in the album "Peoples and Communities" seem to articulate the website's representation of the Community of Infierno. Most of these photographs show local peoples, all wearing Posada Amazonas t-shirts, giving lectures on ecotourism (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Evidence of the Adoption of the Conservation Agenda in Infierno.



Source: Rainforest Expeditions 2003.

Essentially, Posada Amazonas' representation of the Community of Infierno is that of Ecologically Noble Savages: "local" and "native" peoples who still maintain their ecological and traditional knowledge but who have also drunk the conservationist Kool-Aid. Evidence of the adoption of the environmentalist agenda can be seen in the fact that in these photographs, local peoples are wearing Posada Amazonas t-shirts, showing

group conformity to a singular emblem (and idea) that represents (and promotes) community-based conservation. Further evidence lies in that the local peoples are presenting information on ecotourism to other people: they themselves have become the mechanism for the dissemination of the community-based conservation development program.

While Infierno's adoption of the environmental agenda may incorporate them into the global conservation movement, it can also be interpreted as evidence of green imperialism (Shiva 1993). Essential to this argument is the concept of fetishism. Mowforth and Munt (1998) describe fetishism (specifically the fetishism of commodities) as "a concept that embodies the way in which commodities hide the social relations of those that have contributed to the production of that commodity (be it a good or a bad experience) from the consumer (such as the tourist)" (65). Applying the concept to tourism, they write,

New forms of tourism...seek to penetrate the less visited parts of the Third World and commodify what is there...The desire to consume these strange, other, worlds that they had 'discovered' became a fetishistic ritual which tourism has maintained...It is with the stream of touristic images, the trophies of these discoveries, that fetishism is most visibly maintained (76).

Given this context, the photographs of local people in Infierno wearing t-shirts as they promote conservation-based development (the touristic images) are evidence of the conquest of conservation principles over destructive practices (the trophies of these discoveries) where fetishism (the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype) is maintained. While the appropriation of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype among indigenous operated ecotourism lodges may be seen as an active re-imagination of their culture, it can also be interpreted as evidence of the perpetuation of relationships of dominance. In Amazonian communities where the local economy depends upon the revenue generated from ecotourism, the success of the ecolodge depends on its ability to attract and retain tourists who often have ecologically noble expectations for these Amazonian peoples. Essentially, Amazonian communities like Infierno have come to rely on the Western Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype to satisfy their economic and social development needs.

5.3 POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

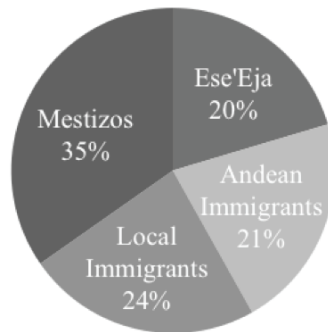
5.3.1 Overview

In Section 3.3, this study uses ethnography on the Achuar people to highlight the contradictions and exclusions involved in the production of the Ecologically Noble Savage myth. In Section 4.3, ethnography produced on the Quechua-Tacana people is used to explain the possible context of the myth's emergence. In Section 5.3, ethnographic research on the Native Community of Infierno is used to explore the potential impacts that the maintenance of this representation for the local peoples involved in its production.

5.3.2 La Comunidad Nativa del Infierno

The Native Community of Infierno (*La Comunidad Nativa del Infierno*) is a thirty-minute drive from Puerto Maldonado, the nearest regional center in Southeastern Peru's Amazon near the Bolivian and Brazilian borders.⁵⁴ Although Infierno is labeled a "native community", its approximately five hundred members are actually ethnically heterogeneous (Table 4).⁵⁵

Table 4: Ethnic Composition of Community of Infierno.



Source: Adapted from Woods n.d.

⁵⁴ Before 1994, Infierno was reachable by a two-and-a-half hour boat ride. In 1994, the Peruvian Government improved and expanded the road connecting Puerto Maldonado and the Community, greatly facilitating access.

⁵⁵ Actual numbers vary. In Posada Amazonas' Equator Prize Nomination, Infierno's population was listed as 400.

In Infierno, “local immigrants” are typically referred to as Ribereños, or people of mixed ethnic heritage, and are representative of some of the earliest migrants to the area (Chibnik 1994; Häusler 2008; Stronza 2008).⁵⁶ Ribereños originally migrated to the Peruvian Amazon during the rubber boom and later in search of timber, gold, and Brazil nuts. Andean immigrants, or *colonos*, arrived in the region in the 1980s and 1990s and still maintain socio-economic connections with their highland families and communities.⁵⁷ In Infierno, Ribereños and *colonos* are generally collectively referred to as *mestizos* (Stronza 2008).

The Ese’ija, or “true people”, are considered Infierno’s “indigenous” group. Three sub-groups divide the Ese’ija based on language and geographical origins (Stronza 2000; Ocampo-Raeder 2006; N. Peluso 2003). The “Bawaja Ese’ija” refers to the Ese’ija living in Infierno, a name associated with their historical connection to the Tambopata River.⁵⁸ While the Ese’ija were mobile hunter-gatherers prior to Western contact, connections with outsiders has resulted in sedentization, religious conversion, and market integration.⁵⁹ Over the past seventy years, Ese’ija territory has been drastically reduced, from an approximate 1.5 million hectares of communal territory to 9,558 hectares for the Bawaja Ese’ija. In Infierno today, each Ese’ija household has approximately 30 hectares of land (Ocampo-Raeder 2006).

Understanding ethnicity in Infierno, however, is much more complex than the simplified ethnic categories described above. Amanda Stronza, a cultural anthropologist who has written extensively on Infierno (2000, 2003, 2008), explains,

Families [in Infierno] are neither totally dependent on the market, nor entirely self-reliant as subsistence producers; though they are “Peruvians” who speak Spanish and practice Catholicism, many also describe themselves as indigenous, and they maintain traditional beliefs and practices. They are a community that is in-between in many ways (2000: 49).

⁵⁶ Generally speaking, Ribereños can trace their ancestry to both indigenous groups and to Andean settlers.

⁵⁷ The *colonos* are generally from Cusco, Puno and Arequipa. They maintain their socio-economic connections by sending remittances to family members and by speaking Quechua.

⁵⁸ Also spelled as Bahuaja.

⁵⁹ For an excellent account of Ese’ija contact with outside influences before and during the twentieth century, see Alexiades (1999).

This ethnic complexity, and the role it plays in relation to the production and maintenance of the Ecologically Noble Savage myth, will be addressed later.

Infierno has only existed as a community since 1976. In 1974, the Law of Native Communities legally recognized the rights of indigenous peoples to their territory and in 1976, the Ese'ejá united with the Ribereños and *colonos* to form the “native community” of Infierno. According to Stronza (2000), the motivations behind this unification differ. Some elders believe the Ese'ejá were coerced into joining with the *mestizos* in order to meet the required number of people in order to be considered for public works projects while others saw the unification as much more strategic. “Why don't we join with the mestizos so that we can have more power?” explains a young Ese'ejá leader, “Today we are all brothers, and we are all equal. The bad treatment and the naming of “the Indian” to humiliate us has finished.” “Yes, there is discrimination”, a mestizo responded, “but there is no reason to call anyone “Indian” if we are all one race” (Comunidad Nativa del Infierno, Libro de Actas, 1975 cited in Stronza 2000: 247). Uniting to form a community would thus provide everyone with access to resources. The mobilization of ethnic identity for access to power and resources in Infierno predated ecotourism's arrival, but not all members of the community saw this unification as beneficial. The ethnic tensions present during the formulation of the native community prior to tourism will be vital in our understanding ethnic relations during tourism later.

5.3.3 Rainforest Expeditions

Founded in 1989, Rainforest Expeditions is a private company that seeks to empower local communities, conserve natural resources, and to use sound business practices (Woods n.d.). The company began its ecotourism business in the Peruvian Amazon in the early 1990s, establishing the Tambopata Research Center (TRC). Years later, Rainforest Expeditions envisioned another lodge that could be used as a stop-over for tourists travelling from Puerto Maldonado to the TRC (Häusler 2008). Infierno, it seemed, was the ideal place to construct such a lodge. At the time, the Community was impoverished, collecting Brazil nuts for sale, surviving on subsistence agriculture, and depleting their natural resources (Woods n.d.). Rainforest Expeditions, with its commercial expertise, would be well suited to assist Infierno in meeting its local

development needs through tourism. Rainforest Expeditions also enlisted the support of two of its partners, Conservation International and the Wildlife Conservation Society, to provide environmental and social support (Woods).

5.3.4 Posada Amazonas

After months of “convincing” (Häusler 2008), Infierno and Rainforest Expeditions established a joint venture ecotourism project in 1996 in the form of the investment company Asosación Ke’eway de Ecoturismo. For the Native Community of Infierno, the purpose of the ecotourism project was to improve the community’s quality of life (Woods n.d.). For Rainforest Expeditions, the joint venture afforded them the possibility of commercial expansion. Infierno supplied the land for the Ecolodge in an area upriver from where most people live that had previously been designated as a reserve area before tourism had even been considered. The Community also supplied labor and local building materials. Rainforest Expeditions, in turn, oversaw the construction and design. In order to be a successful venture, the Community would need to “come with an open-minded attitude of the sorts of changes demanded by conservationists of a culture oriented towards the consumption of wildlife” (Woods n.d.). In 1996, the two partners signed a twenty-year contract that outlined both the division of profits and decision-making powers.⁶⁰ Sixty percent of profits would be given to the Community while forty percent would be given to Rainforest Expeditions. Within the Community, the profits were distributed to active individual community members over eighteen years of age (Stronza 2003). The decision-making powers were to be split fifty-fifty.

Posada Amazonas is comprised of thirty bedrooms, a lobby, a lounge, and a dining area with cathedral ceilings. Each building is open on all sides to not only allow the structure to fit in with its surroundings but to also facilitate the connection between people and the environment (Jamal and Stronza 2008). Key attractions of the lodge

⁶⁰ The ecotourism project received financial support from a number of different donors. The MacArthur Foundation supplied Posada Amazonas with a \$50,000 US, which was used to train guides and staff (Stronza 2003). In 2002, the venture applied for and was awarded the Equator Prize, \$30,000 US. These funds were used for a variety of different needs. The project also received monetary support from the Peru-Canada Fund.

include the macaw clay lick, the giant otters, and the harpy eagles (Stronza 2003). To protect this natural resource for tourism, a 100 meter protected zone was established around the birds' nests with community members responsible for its protection, even though the Ese'ejá had traditionally hunted the harpy eagles for their feathers. Hunting, timber harvesting, and farming are also prohibited on lodge grounds. Community members are employed in sixteen of the eighteen operational sectors and receive training through workshops or apprenticeships and many are also learning English. Tourism-related skills and environmental education are even being incorporated into the Community school's curriculum.

For ecotourists, Posada Amazonas provides an introduction to the rainforest's environments and local peoples, but also as a jumping off point to the more remotely located TRC. At present, Posada Amazonas receives thirty percent of all tourists traveling to Madre de Dios (Stronza and Pêgas 2008), representing approximately 5,400 tourists per year (Stronza 2003). Posada Amazonas has received international recognition from the UNDP, the International Ecotourism Society, and Conservation International and has been the subject of numerous articles in travel magazines such as *Conde Nast* and *Outside*.

5.3.4.1 "This is great for the brochure!"

For those Community members involved in ecotourism, the ethnographic literature points to a paradigm shift. Amanda Stronza (2000) explains that a capitalist mindset has not only been introduced to Infierno but that it also in some ways has been imposed upon them. Stronza explores this paradigm shift among community leaders whose conversations now include discussions of cost benefit analyses, product quality control, and marketing niches.⁶¹ The ethnographic literature also suggests a connection between ecotourism and the adoption of the Ecologically Noble Savage paradigm. Jamal and Stronza (2008) see this paradigm shift stemming from the commodification of the

⁶¹ Amanda Stronza has published extensively on ecotourism and the Native Community of Infierno, explaining the repeated use of her work. Other research on Ese'Eja ecological knowledge (Alexiades 1999) and women's identity (N. Peluso 2003) do not deal with the subject of Infierno and tourism nearly as extensively as Stronza.

rainforest where the previous practical traditional use has been transformed into an instrumental tool for conservation and commodification for sale.

Amanda Stronza (2000, 2008) presents evidence not only of the adoption of the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype in the Community, but the peoples' active appropriation of it. She recounts how Diego, who had been involved with the ecotourism operation since its inception, responded to a group of photographs:

One showed an Ese eja man in his 40s, dressed in a cushma, a traditional tunic, clutching a bow and arrow, and looking directly at the camera.

Diego declared, 'This is great for the brochure!' (2008: 251).

Diego's case shows not only what a local person in Infierno understands to be a conservation-oriented indigenous person, but also that he anticipates the tourist's expectation for authenticity. Selectively and strategically placing such an image in the brochure, which is meant to not only present the Ecolodge but also capture and convince the potential tourist, is evidence of this mentality's penetration at the local level. As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, local peoples may be actively reproducing the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype for foreign consumption through tourism.

Infierno's involvement with ecotourism has also led to reconfigurations of ethnic identity. As stated previously, Infierno is a mixed community, with mestizos, ribereños, and Ese'eja. But, since the introduction of ecotourism, some mestizos are now identifying themselves as Ese'eja: "Such a premium has been attached to Ese eja identity that even people who had not a drop of Ese eja blood, or who had never defined themselves as Ese eja, had begun to characterize themselves as native" (Stronza 2008: 252). While indigenous peoples and the Ese'eja had been assigned to pejorative categories in the past, the value ecotourism attached to this identity now makes it attractive for identity practices. Stronza recalls a specific situation where a man in Infierno who had previously made derogatory comments about native peoples began to change his tone: "This man's change of heart...occurred when he began working at Posada Amazonas in a position that gave him a tremendous amount of daily exposure to tourists. After discovering that tourists wanted to learn about his traditions as a native of the region, he found it advantageous to accommodate their perceptions of who he was" (252). Stronza also witnessed this revaluation of Ese'eja identity among community members who did not work in ecotourism.

In addition to changes in the ways in which the Community has psychologically adopted the theoretical framework of the Ecologically Noble Savage, the evidence also suggests that they have applied this knowledge to their everyday practices. Some research noted hunting and farming changes in Infierno (Woods n.d.; Jamal and Stronza 2008). Animal species that were once valued for their feathers or skins are now off-limits to hunters because the success of the Ecotodge depends on the presence of these very species for the tourist's viewing pleasure.

While local peoples in Infierno have made deliberate changes to their livelihoods in order to appear Ese'ejá to tourists, it would be prudent to also consider whether or not these ethnic differences matter to the tourists who visit Posada Amazonas. At Posada Amazonas, tourists' value of the staff's ethnic identity depended upon the staff member's position within the operation. While most tourists did not care whether or not their housekeepers or cooks were Ese'ejá, it did matter whether or not the guides, artisans, and other positions that required knowledge of local culture, were native (Stronza 2008). Positions like that of housekeeper or cook, which are general and not uniquely indigenous (and are even associated as Western), do not carry the presumption of indigenous identity. Positions communicating indigenous culture, like that of guides or artisans, carried the presumption of indigenous authenticity. Guides that could, of course, communicate indigenous culture in the tourist's preferred language.

Stronza explains that while this revaluation of Ese'ejá identity through ecotourism has led to increased ethnic pride, it has also created and exacerbated ethnic tensions within the community (Stronza 2008). In 2000, the tension mounted to the point where the Ese'ejá wanted to separate from the Community of Infierno. The consequences this separation would have for the ecotourism operation are significant and the potential collapse of the tourist industry would handicap a community that has come to depend on the industry.⁶²

⁶² Some residents are engaging less in subsistence activity because they expect to receive ecotourism profits (Stronza 2003). Such a vital dependence on this development model leads us to question its perceived sustainability.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Analysis of the Posada Amazonas website yielded evidence to suggest that the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype has influenced the Community of Infierno's self-representation. The ethnographic literature explored how Infierno's involvement in ecotourism has led to a reevaluation of indigenous identity and the penetration of the myth into local life. Ecotourism has also exacerbated ethnic tensions within Infierno to the extent that the Community was on the verge of dissolution, raising serious questions about the future success and sustainability of ecotourism as a local development model in this case.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

6.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This research indicated that the self-representations of Amazonian communities in the online marketing of their ecotourism lodges employ Western stereotypes of indigenous people and nature. A qualitative visual and textual analysis of these three case studies' websites – the Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve, the Chalalán Ecolodge, and Posada Amazonas – located evidence of one particular stereotype, the Ecologically Noble Savage, in all three self-representations.

6.1.1 Ecological Noble Observations

The Spatial

On the Kapawi website, the Achuar represent their indigenous identity in a way that seems to conform to the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype. The website describes the lodge environment using descriptors that project the area's ecological significance while appealing to the Western ecological imagination. The subject matter and professional quality of the accompanying images further reaffirms and complements this message about the Achuar territory's protected and pristine tropical landscape. Together, this descriptive text and prototypical rainforest imagery implies that ecotourism allows the Achuar to continue their mission of conservation.

The Chalalán website describes its tropical location by appealing to the ecotourist's scientific knowledge and ecological imagination. In describing the surroundings using Latin names, environmental buzzwords, and scientific terminology, San Joseanos attempt to establish a connection between their Ecolodge and the ecotourist's academic background. The Chalalán website complements this strategy by engaging the ecotourist's environmental imagination using specific language and images in its descriptions to evoke a sensory response. The combination of these techniques not only increases the potential visitor pool, but it also reaffirms the ecological significance of the lodge's tropical environment.

The Posada Amazonas website portrays its tropical location as an unspoiled frontier. Its location within a National Park containing abundant biodiversity affords the area valuable environmental authenticity, portraying Infierno and the Ecolodge as islands of ecological purity within a sea of environmental destruction. In portraying Tambopata as a place where ecological damage can be prevented and reversed, the Posada Amazonas website appeals to the Western fascination with lost tribes and lost areas.

The Spiritual

The Achuar also impress upon the visitor that they possess an intimate knowledge of their surrounding environment. Several images on the Kapawi website reinforce the claim of this connection. The website uses selectively distorted photographs to comment on the absence or distortion of the Western relationship to nature and to rationalize their role as environmental stewards.

San Josesanos project their ecological spirituality on their website through the Chalalán Ecolodge logo. In projecting this message, the logo conveys three claims: it argues that the river is the only means by which the San Josesanos can communicate with other people, it implies that they rely on the forest for their food supply, and it suggests that the sun and the moon continue to shape their subsistence patterns and spiritual beliefs. These three meanings behind the Chalalán logo suggest that San Josesanos are spiritually connected to their natural environment.

San Josesanos also separate their spiritual environmental knowledge from the world of Western science. The Chalalán website makes a definite distinction between the inherited, traditional, and indigenous environmental knowledge of the San Josesanos and the scientific, quantitative reasoning inherent in Western systems. This separation appears to justify San Josesanos' role as environmental stewards within a development paradigm that promotes the incorporation of local knowledge and decision-making.

The activities included in Posada Amazonas' ecotours show how the Ecolodge uses Infierno's indigenous ecological knowledge to attract tourists. The Ecolodge's inclusion of an ethnobotanical tour at the Centro Ñape in a large number of its programs recognizes and fulfills the Western desire and demand to discover indigenous ecological knowledge. The recent addition of the Ayahuasca Session is also a means of expanding into the market for New Age and spiritual tourism.

The Temporal

The Kapawi website further articulates Achuar identity in stating that their indigenous spiritual beliefs and their tropical locality have remained intact and constant for thousands of years. The temporal continuity of their physical and spiritual connection to nature distinguishes the Achuar from the majority of other Amazonian populations and consequently justifies their involvement in the region's preservation.

San Josesanos not only claim that they have inhabited their territory for over three hundred years, they also provide legal evidence to support this declaration. By including the official document numbers of the Community's land grants and titles, San Josesanos are asserting control over their territory. These land grants and titles allow San Josesanos to possess a powerful social currency in the local and global indigenous political arenas where legal written documents are socially and economically powerful.

In describing its lodge activities using terminology like "traditional", "ancient" and "native" that connote a generational transfer of knowledge, the Posada Amazonas website suggests that the Community of Infierno has maintained a spiritual connection with the natural world over an extended period of time.

The Cultural

Achuar cultural behavior and practices are portrayed as relatively pristine and intact. The inclusion of images showing face-painted Achuar engaged in prototypical traditional modes of work – from ritual ceremony to handicrafts – in settings where modern influences are notably absent reinforces this pristine representation. While the adoption of Western clothing may tarnish this image, the website implies that it is an involuntary minor adaptation that does not compromise the essence of their culture nor the integrity of their environmental knowledge.

The Chalalán website's historical accounts of San José de Uchupiamonas describe the dissolution of the Community's connection to their natural environment and the social problems produced as a result. While the San Josesanos always remained "indigenous", at times they have engaged in destructive extractive activities to economically support themselves. The revival of this lost ecological connection through ecotourism has since provided the Community with socio-economic revitalization. The possibility of cultural

and environmental conservation through ecotourism in San José appeals to nostalgic yearnings for cultural preservation.

Posada Amazonas' program activities control when tourists interact with the local people and what image of their culture is presented. From the ethnobotanical tour to the ayahuasca ceremony, Posada Amazonas' activities are largely concerned with presenting indigenous environmental and spiritual knowledge to tourists. The inclusion of entertainment activities typically not associated with indigenous culture, like the bingo game and prom night, provide balance to the Ecolodge's educational activities, suggesting that a constant authentic ecotourism experience is unnecessary so long as a balance is maintained between education and entertainment.

The inclusion of these non-indigenous cultural elements in ecotours at Posada Amazonas sheds on light on what may be the conservation movement's bottom line: environmental preservation is ultimately more important than cultural preservation. While these specific cultural elements may compromise the ideal of the untouched primitive, these changes are acceptable because they do not cause any obvious environmental damage. In the mission to conserve the global environment, *ecological* nobility may be more valuable. The adoption of the environmentalist agenda is evident in the photographs showing local peoples wearing Posada Amazonas t-shirts. These images show group conformity to a singular emblem and idea that represents and promotes community-based conservation. Further evidence of this lies in that the local peoples are presenting information on ecotourism to other people: they themselves have become the mechanism for the dissemination of the community-based conservation development program.

This incorporation of the environmental agenda at the local level may demonstrate an active re-imagination and revitalization of indigenous culture, but it also can be interpreted as evidence of green imperialism. In Amazonian communities like Infierno that have come to rely on the proceeds from ecotourism to finance economic and social development, this arrangement can perpetuate relationships of dominance.

6.1.2 (Mis) Representations

While the Kapawi website claims that the Achuar are living the same today as they have been for generations, ethnographic evidence contradicts this static cultural

image in pointing out the numerous changes to Achuar culture, from missionary influence on settlement patterns to the rubber boom's introduction of Western weaponry. The community's involvement in ecotourism has also resulted in numerous positive and negative changes to Achuar culture, ranging from improved infrastructure to feelings of social and familial disintegration. While the on-the-ground realities of the Achuar people show a culture that has been influenced by contact with outsiders, the representation of the Achuar on the website does not appear to reflect their current lives.

The ethnographic literature suggests that San Josesanos may be portraying themselves as Ecologically Noble Savages in an attempt to form alliances with external agents, like Conservation International, and to attract Western tourists. The nature of identity politics in Bolivia meant that indigenous groups would be given access to power and resources both nationally in the form of political recognition and internationally through connections to well-funded agencies. As the external actor in this case, Conservation International wanted to apply its community and conservation-based development model in Madidi and needed to locate a "community" that would adequately fulfill the role. San José, in turn, was looking for access to basic resources. In order to gain this access, it may have become necessary to produce an "indigenous" ethnic codification.

While the Native Community of Infierno may not have full control over its representation on the website, the community nevertheless participates in the execution of the seemingly ecologically noble ecotourism product. While indigenous peoples and Ese'ejá had been assigned to pejorative categories in the past, the value ecotourism attached to this ethnicity now makes it attractive for identity practices. There is also evidence to suggest that some in Infierno have modified their everyday practices since starting ecotourism: animal species that were once valued for their feathers or skins, for example, are now off-limits to hunters because the success of the Ecolodge depends on the presence of these very species for the tourist's viewing pleasure. However, the ethnographic literature also implies that involvement in ecotourism has led to increased ethnic strain.

6.1.3 Who is the Most Ecologically Noble?

The Kapawi website seems to put forth a stronger, more concentrated Ecologically Noble Savage image. The website prominently displays information on the value of the local environment, the Achuar's longstanding traditional spiritual knowledge and connection to their environment, both literally and ideologically, and emphasizes the traditional and indigenous cultural practices of the Achuar people. In using symbolic photographs and imaginative and evocative textual descriptions, the Achuar might be appealing to the Western socio-ecological imagination. In spite of the fact that most Achuar only use face paint for special occasions, nearly all of the photographs of Achuar on the Kapawi website show them wearing it.

The Kapawi website may present a more concentrated image of ecological nobility compared to Chalalán and Posada Amazonas for several reasons. Kapawi is the most remote Ecolodge, accessible only by plane. Chalalán can be accessed by boat and Posada Amazonas is only a forty-minute drive from Puerto Maldonado. Kapawi's isolation can therefore strengthen its claim to a more pristine environment and to a culture that has had less contact with the dominant society: the basic tenants of being ecologically noble. The Achuar also seem to have the most homogenous ethnic identity compared to San José and Infierno, a feature also likely due to the nature of their contact with the dominant society.

While the Chalalán website, like Kapawi, also gives the impression of ecological nobility, it does so using different tools. The Chalalán website may rely less heavily on descriptive text and large, high quality, and potentially symbolic images to seemingly convince tourists that they are Ecologically Noble Savages. Instead, the website incorporates more palpable, scientific details in its text.

The website for Posada Amazonas seems to give the most diluted representation of ecological nobility. Unlike Kapawi and Chalalán, the Community of Infierno only owns half of Posada Amazonas. Its private tour partner, Rainforest Expeditions, appears to be responsible for the Ecolodge's marketing and, as a result, Posada Amazonas is advertised in conjunction with the two other lodges Rainforest Expeditions operates. This relationship suggests that Infierno does not have as much control over its representation as the Achuar and San Josesanos do. Unlike Kapawi and Chalalán, the

Posada Amazonas website does not contain a readily accessible section detailing Infierno's culture, meaning that most of the evidence used to satisfy the four criteria of the stereotype was obtained through an analysis of the activities and programs offered.

Nevertheless, while the Achuar may have the characteristics that could lead to a claim of ecological nobility, the apparent use of the stereotype on all of the three websites seems to be not only a misrepresentation of local culture, but also a practice that may be inherently unsustainable. The case of Infierno, for example, has shown how ecotourism can exacerbate ethnic tensions within a community. Community responses to the *Trueque Amazónico* have also highlighted several of the disadvantages that local peoples have experienced, including less time to work on desired activities, separation from family and community, and an unequal distribution of tourism benefits. With these perceived drawbacks, the likelihood of the lodge surviving is in question.

Relying on tourism as the sole source of local development can also be dangerous. If for whatever reason the ecotourism lodge closes – trends in tourism change, the community no longer wants to participate, partnerships and funding dissolve, etc. – it is unclear how these communities will be able to meet their needs.

6.1.4 Staged Authenticity

In the pursuit of authentic ecological and cultural encounters, tourists increasingly want access to the “back” stage of the tourism experience. While ecotourists may believe they are getting a more authentic behind-the-scenes look into conservation-based development at Kapawi, Chalalán, and Posada Amazonas, this thesis argues that this “back” stage is itself a staged production. While these self-representations appeal to tourists' desire for ecological authenticity by using the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype, the ethnographic materials have suggested that these Amazonian communities' historical and present-day realities diverge from this myth. Therefore, while these ecolodge websites promote an authentic “back” stage tourism experience, this commodity is actually a staged “front” region meant to satisfy tourists' desire for authenticity.

While this ecotourism experience appeals to the Western search for authentic peoples and environments, it also needs to satisfy tourists' need for particular services

and to recognize their sensitivities. At the Kapawi Ecolodge, tourist accommodations were specifically designed to appeal to travelers' tastes and needs: each spacious room has electricity, a private bath with running and heated water, and a balcony with a view. At meal times, a skilled culinary staff (like the Achuar chef in Figure 8) can serve guests both traditional Achuar dishes and classic international cuisine. The Chalalán Ecolodge has also made attempts to make the tourism experience as comfortable as possible, emphasizing the Ecolodge's commitment to hygiene. While Posada Amazonas offers slightly more rustic accommodations (i.e. no electricity and self-serve meals), they nevertheless offer tourists an unobstructed view of the rainforest from their rooms and offer hygienically prepared three course meals. All three ecolodges offer trained bilingual guides and, of course, a well-stocked bar.

The accommodation of Western needs and sensitivities while offering authentic ecotourism experiences creates a tension in the tourism commodity's production: while tourists want access to the "back" stage, they do not want to go too native. While the tourism commodity may appear inauthentic because of the inclusion of modern comforts, MacCannell (1973) argues that tourists do not consider these "upgrades" to compromise the overall authenticity of their experience: "There is a staged quality to the proceedings that lends to them an aura of superficiality, albeit a superficiality that is not always perceived as such by the tourist, who is usually forgiving about these matters" (595). While Western tourists at Kapawi, Chalalán, and Posada Amazonas want genuine ecological and cultural encounters with Ecologically Noble Savages, they are also purchasing a commodity that needs to meet their standards for comfort.

While the "front" stages of these three Amazonian communities use ecologically noble self-representations to attract Western tourists, they have also used this staged authenticity for other strategic purposes. The Community of San José de Uchupiamonas, for example, presented themselves as an attractive and appropriate local indigenous Amazonian community partner in order to receive support from Conservation International even though the "back" story suggests that they strategically constructed this ethnicity and had engaged in less than ecologically noble extractive activities in the past. San Josesanos also mobilized their indigenous "front" stage in order to assert their land right claims (the TCOs).

The format of the Equator Prize also shows how these Amazonian communities presented this specific ecologically noble “front” stage to win recognition and funds. In order to be considered for the Equator Prize, each community must apply for nomination by answering a specific set of questions designed by the Equator Initiative: each nominee must identify the ways in which their initiative has contributed to poverty reduction, biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use, and how conservation has improved their socio-economic conditions. As a result, these communities needed to frame themselves and their Ecolodges according to the Equator Initiative’s criteria. As winners of the Prize, these three Communities successfully mobilized and applied a strategic “front” stage in order to assert power and control. Not only did their nominations prove that that they were the best candidates for the Prize, but as Prize recipients they now possess a powerful accreditation that legitimizes their Ecolodge according to Western standards and gives them an economic advantage over other ecolodges that have not won the Prize.

The use of a staged “front” region for strategic purposes has also created tension within these communities. The maintenance of this “front” stage at Posada Amazonas, for example, caused social conflict in the “back” stage of Infierno. With tensions in the Community mounting to the point where the Ese’jea wanted to separate from Infierno, some of the non-indigenous ethnic groups were concerned that the Ese’jea would take the Ecolodge business with them since it was tied to the “Native” Community. Therefore, while this “front” stage may give one community an advantage over another, it can also cause a separation within the community itself by excluding certain ethnic groups and giving preferential status to others.

6.2 REAL INDIANS?

In the Introduction of this study, a quote from Brazilian Indian writer and activist Eliane Potiguara (1992) was presented:

[W]e spend most of our lives trying to reaffirm that we are Indians and then we encounter statements like, ‘But you wear jeans, a watch, sneakers, and speak Portuguese!’...Society either understands Indians as all made up and naked inside the forest or consigns them to the border of the big cities (46).

This study posits a similar thought: If these Amazonian peoples spend most of their lives reaffirming the Ecologically Noble Savage myth in order to access resources and recognition, what are the implications for those Amazonian peoples who wear jeans, sneakers, and speak Spanish? Does society understand Amazonian Indians to be either Ecologically Noble Savages or not real Indians at all?

Is the Western search for the authentic Indian “Other” simply an expression of imperialist nostalgia: A sense of longing for what we have destroyed? Perhaps this search for the “real Indian” within community and conservation-based development excludes potential allies, like the forest-edge communities in Río San Juan, Nicaragua, and negatively impacts others, like the Achuar, San Josesanos, and those in Infierno. The narrow and unrealistic Western definition of indigeneity reflects our confusion with cultural hybridity: indigenous peoples occupy a wide spectrum: from the stereotypical to the atypical.

Social development and ecological conservation in Amazonia might be more sustainable if it acknowledged the diversity and sometimes contradictory nature of Amazonian identities and reconsidered to whom development and conservation are directed and how the West constructs those categories of people. Referring to William Russell Easterly’s development critique in the Introduction of this thesis, Western efforts to produce meaningful and long-lasting improvements for peoples in the developing world have been arguably ineffective. In an attempt to produce more beneficial results, local peoples and local knowledge have been incorporated into the decision-making process. However, this thesis has tried to show how the conservation and development industries’ continued use of indigenous stereotypes, like the Ecologically Noble Savage stereotype, that do not embrace the diversity of Amazonian identities has profoundly (arguably negatively) affected the social and economic lives of these peoples. Thus, while re-conceptualizations of development have often focused on how and what aid is distributed, questions concerning to whom development is directed and how the West construct those categories of people remain largely untouched. Consequently, potential allies in the conservation movement have been excluded, like the supposed “forest encroachers” described in Anja Nygren’s research. While alternative development initiatives have typically operated under this policy of exclusion, a more inclusive

approach towards the selection of local community stakeholders might be more apt to produce widespread social, economic, and environmental results.

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