

Recorded at the Amarun Pakcha NGO, July 2023

Translated from Kichua, spoken by Marcos, the Shaman of the Community, by the guides:

I am a doctor here. I know how to heal. I know about the snake, about the forest, about the spirits. So I can heal many people from suffering. Here we can heal many kinds of diseases, medicine is what we have here.

When you go to some places for the first time, usually some people are feeling bad, sad, or weak. We make treatments with these plants.

Ayahuasca is a Quichua name. Huasca means rope and Aya means evil spirit. We need to cook for a long time, for three-five hours. We will cook in the morning. After we prepare this, we drink this. This is spiritual medicine, we can see the past, the future, or try to see what is happening inside you and try to help you.

This is Surupanga (another plant), when we are praying and calling spirits, it is like a jungle cellphone, to communicate with them, to call them.

Amarun Pakcha guide:

A volunteer please, if some of you want to be a volunteer to take a seat and participate in the ritual

Note of the transcriber: Here the Shaman performs a ritual to ward off the evil spirits of Lina. Lina is seated in front of him, he shakes a bunch of leaves on each side of her, blows on the top of her head, and sings.

Translated from Kichua, , spoken by Marcos, the Shaman of the Community, by the guides:

This is our lifestyle.

Translated from Kichua, from another member of the Community, by the Amarun Pakcha guide: .

Now we are just showing a little bit about our lifestyle. Marco is a good shaman, when the members of the community are sick he helps them. We don't need medicine or doctor, hospitals This is what we can share with you,, also I would like to know where you live if you can share a little about that with us

Bianca

What is the meaning of face paintings?

Member of the Community (speaking in spanish):

This means life, each mark, each symbol of our culture signifies a life that we spend, that we are transcending, from childhood to growing old.

Lina

Each line is like a past life, a life that is from before you, then you born again and then you grow up

Amarun Pakcha guide:

Also, Edwin wants to share the meaning of his paintings (the face painting of Edwin Tanguila, the leader of the Amarun Pakcha ONG).

Edwin Tanguila (speaking in spanish):

This is the symbol of Amarun, Amarun means Boa (snake). Pakcha is the waterfall, so that is why Amarun Pakcha: snake waterfall. Our grandparents adored nature, the Boa, and the rocks. When the Spanish arrived, everything changed, and now we only have one god, who is the almighty god, but we also don't forget about our nature.

Patricio Alvarado

10% of the people are indigenous people (in Ecuador), we meet indigenous people. They are speaking Quichua, which is the second language in Ecuador. I would like to know this kind of language. I know some phrases, but honestly, they can laugh at me and say: "What are you talking about Patricio?", this is not my language anyway. I respect the traditions and culture of these guys and one thing we learn now is about the love that those guys have for nature, nature is divine. Sometimes when you are in the big cities, you are like "Trash is trash", and anyway, but when you are here you understand well about life and the connection with nature. This is one of the things that when we were in the waterfall, how you fell.

Can he (Edwin) explain to us a little about how the foundation started?

Edwin Tanguila (speaking in spanish):

We first joined a group of people in 2011, not knowing anything about tourism. We only heard that tourism brought money. We wanted to change things here, because people here are more dedicated to the Naranjilla plantation, and this was destroying the forest, and we wanted to conserve it.

Patricio Alvarado

Ok guys, so they started in 2011, having a general idea about tourism. Amarun Pakcha was a place from where locals come from all the places, from Coca, Quito, or Lago Agrio. You can see on the roads some banners about "Balnearios", balnearios are places with waterfalls where people can go swimming and hike around the trails. A group of people from the Wawa Sumaco community got together and thought about this project to be like a sanctuary.

Edwin Tanguila (speaking in spanish):

Around 2012 we gathered a group of people. First, we built a big hut, but without knowledge, the hut collapsed and the people abandoned the project. But I have the idea that if you join a project, you have to finish the project, I always had this idea.

Patricio Alvarado

The main social work they already did in this community was to build a hut. But a big wind came here and the house fell and all the people that are part of this kind of project felt sad and abandoned the project.

Edwin Tanguila (speaking in spanish):

This made the number of people diminish, only 3 people remained. But these 3 people walked from house to house asking for support for the foundation. In 2014, 18 people formed the tourism association. The Institutions (Government) told us to make an association, so they would help us with the projects, but this was a lie. They did not support us with tourism here, the Tourism Ministry did not help us. So again people left the project and we are left with 12 people. Until 2018 we are not able to gain any money. We are now 12 years into this project. When the tourists started to come here, from other regions of Ecuador, the 2019 COVID Pandemic started. This land where the foundation is was divided in pieces to all the partners. I thought about buying this land for us, but I did not have the funds for it.

Patricio Alvarado

The people said “Forget about it, I am not going to be part of this project”, so they tried to bring more people to the project, people did not believe it was possible to make money with this kind of stuff (Balneario), and how to make people visit this kind of spot. They feel quite bad because people did not support this kind of idea, when they started to have people here for tourism, from other provinces of Ecuador, the COVID pandemic started and all this project just fell.

Edwin Tanguila (speaking in spanish):

After the pandemic, the idea was to keep working with tourism. I did not want to leave this, even if I don't have a profit. Also to have work for the people in the community. I was also worried because it was not my land. The owner here wanted to sell the land to another lord. I was very sad about it and cried. From 18 people (in the foundation) the number diminished to 8. I asked God to help me. In the meantime, I met Byron and I asked him to at least send me two tourists.

Patricio Alvarado

So ok. One thing I forgot to mention is that they already asked the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador for supporting those guys, with projects. The Ministry asked them to create an association, and the association needs to have at least 25 people. But with the problems they have in the community, like with housing, and no people living here, people did not want to make part of the association. This is why in the end they only had 8 people. It was a coincidence because Edwin and Byron met in the middle of the road and Edwin asked for help from Byron, saying: “Hey, we have this kind of project but we don't have people coming here, how can we do it?”

Then Edwin and Byron started to work together. Edwin was thinking about trying to buy this kind of property by themselves but it was not possible because just around here they have like around 6 acres, which costs around 15000 dollars. They did not have any money to buy this kind of stuff

and the real owner of the area asked them to pay for this, or the owner was going to sell it to another person.

Edwin Tanguila (speaking in spanish):

In the year 2022, I was very sad, then I met Byron and this made me cheer up to work again. And also other people, when I wanted to change my mind other people motivated me. On 14 November (2022) the third tourist group arrived here, and I kept asking God to send someone to help me. I told them I had to pay a debt for this land and they told me they are going to help me. Also, other foundations and projects told me they are going to help me. The tourist group told me to wait 15 days until they arrive in the United States, and in fact, after 15 days the help (money) arrived. They wanted to continue helping but because we were an association there was no way of the money arriving in our account. They asked us to create a foundation, so in this way they could do money transfers. From December (2022) to January (2023), I did everything possible to formalize the foundation, and it was very fast, on 15 January 2023 the Amarun Pakcha Foundation was created.

Patricio Alvarado

Ok guys, so they started to have through Byron a few people that are interested in birding. Because Byron is native from here he knows these spots for birding. A place where you can spot the cock-of-the-rock bird is close to here. When they met, the tourists asked how they could help to preserve this place, and Edwin explained they needed to buy the land and needed money for it. So they said: "ok, we can support, not with much, but we can support with some money". Because they had this kind of association they could not get money from abroad, they should create one NGO, and it was kind of fast, they created this NGO in one month. Of course, they had to go every single day to the ministries, go to the environmental ministry, and this kind of stuff (to be able to create the NGO).

Bianca

Can we help the foundation? How?

Patricio Alvarado (speaking in spanish):

How can they help your organization?

Edwin Tanguila (speaking in spanish):

We hope they can help us to buy 5000 hectares of land. I feel sorry for nature. All this area (the foundation area) that you are seeing was a pasture. Now people are dedicating themselves more to the Naranjilla plantation. When they plant the Naranjilla, they don't destroy just one part, they destroy all the hectares as well. So I want people to change this type of work. I want to give a sustainable project to the community. So I need help to buy the 5000 hectares.

Patricio Alvarado

The question of my friend was, how can we support you? The main goal of this NGO is to get to buy 5000 hectares, which means 10000 acres, and think about the whole community. And also in helping to preserve because communities around here work with Naranjilla plantations (maybe some of you tasted Naranjilla on this trip), so Naranjilla plantations can be an option to survive but in some cases, people take off the Forest and put in its place Naranjilla plantations and that's the problem, because the primary forest is just gone because people are putting Naranjilla plantations on it, and another kind of products, Balsa wood as well, and another kind of stuff as well. So this is the role for these guys, as I know through Byron they already have some kind of support through this client from the Netherlands, this guy gave the support to buy this 6 acres of land that we are now and then connecting with other birdwatchers and some of the other kinds of clients that are interested in to preserve, so they already collected a little bit more of money and they already have 50% of 400 acres (already bought) and they still have to pay 50% more. Their arrangement to buy this kind of land is already done. And this is how they started to grow this kind of idea, through an association, through a group of people that are thinking about better days for the whole community around here.