

HUACHUMA MESADA

A Journey Beyond Fearlessness

By Aubrey Marcus



I traveled to the Peruvian jungle to experience the 4000 year old consciousness technology of the Chavin people. What I encountered went far beyond anything I could have imagined. Recounted here is the daily log of my journey which takes me beyond fearlessness, through my own death, and into alignment with my mission: Para el bien de todos.

Day 1 - Welcome to the Jungle... You're Gonna Die

I woke up after a sleepless night in Lima at 6:15am. The smell in the air and the familiar breakfast tickles the neurons storing the memory of my past Peruvian adventures. But I am exhausted. I have slept only a handful of hours in the last three days, the result of a gut-busting sprint to get my affairs in order before unfettering my consciousness to explore the cosmos. Certainly the separation from my beautiful life partner of two years didn't help matters either. We wrap breakfast and I am acutely aware that despite being defacto leader of this band of heroes, including my spiritual brother and mentor Dr. Dan Engle, I am the most in need of the experience we are about to undertake.

I straggle through the airport, managing a smile at the strange beaurocracy of things in Peru as I am shuffled from one walkway to another one, for no sensible reason at all. The flights take place without incident, though despite extreme fatigue I was only able to nod off for a few moments. My shoulders are so wound up from stress my neck fatigues quickly even on the best neck-pillow my crisp Greenbacks could buy.

We arrive in Iquitos, and the foreign yet familiar sight of a jungle airport greets me. Outside of the baggage, we are met by Don Howard – Our Shaman and guide for the experience. Don Howard is a kind and warm spirited man, with white flowing hair and a smile that belays his 50 years of service to the spirit of the plant medicines. Mitch Schultz, director of DMT The Spirit Molecule also joins us along with his ace camera operator who will be documenting the experience. Rounding out the crew is Dan's sister Megan, a fairy spirit in human costume, and the great extreme adventurer Donald Schultz who will be manning a camera. We hop in a taxi and start the trek to the retreat center.



Don Howard - Choque Chinchay

After seemingly an hour of driving through an angry swarm of motorbikes and Tuk Tuks, as they would be called in Thailand, we arrive at the boat that will liberate us from the jungle of developing capitalism and deliver us to green bosom of Eden.

The boat ride is refreshing and peaceful, very unlike the raucous waters in the upper amazon that I imagined to be teeming with scales and gnashing teeth. I discuss the nature of Huachuma (San Pedro) with Don Howard, and soak up his deep reverence for the work. We arrive at the center and the welcome sight of complete serenity. However despite the tranquility and abounding water, the heat is sweltering at mid day and not a fart of breeze cuts through the moist blanket of air. We meet the radiant faces of the rest of the group, fresh off an Ayahuasca dieta. I am quiet, unable to shake the heaviness of fatigue and stress that clings to me like wet wool. Nonetheless my mind is clear and my intention is peaceful.



It is not until later at dinner that I face my first test. One of the guests casually mentions that two people he knows have contracted malaria while working at this very center. I was aware of the potential risk in coming during the rainy season, but this information cuts deep into my fear center. I battle the panic growing in me-- screaming for me to get up from the table, douse in bug spray like a sinner in holy water and plan the next flight out. This is a test of my resolve.

“A deep sense of loneliness has fallen over me, accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness that extends far beyond humility. I am impossibly small in this world, and acutely aware of how disjointed I feel from the environment. Lathered in essential oils to keep away the bugs, sweating profusely from the humidity, I feel truly at odds with nature.”

In every great story the protagonist must be willing to face adversity. The fear of psychic death no longer stirs me, but the fear of suffering a slow and protracted illness is an open nerve. Am I willing to do what it takes for my highest self? Am I willing to commit to what I have started, for the sake of my life mission? All I can do right now is take a deep breath. (Breathing deeply). And say the words – I am.

Day 2 - Pre-Ceremony

As I lay in bed the words from Jeremy Narby in “Intelligence in Nature” go through my head; “The Jungle plays loud at night.” It is not only the sound of the cicadas and the passing thunderstorms but the volume of my own mind. There is an old aphorism that the work with a medicine plant begins as soon as you set your intent to experience it. I can feel that happening now. A deep sense of loneliness has fallen over me, accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness that extends far beyond humility. I am impossibly small in this world, and acutely aware of how disjointed I feel from the environment. Lathered in essential oils to keep away the bugs, sweating profusely from the humidity, I feel truly at odds with nature.

I force my eyes to stay closed, and focus on my breathing. I whisper thanks to my dear friend and ally Porangui for helping me deepen my connection to breath. I visualize my breath traveling down the front of my body, expanding my lower abdomen and recycling up my spine and out the top of my head. Fleeting visions float through the emptiness in perception, too ephemeral to grab. Then something pops into my head, like a whisper from a divine ally. “Trust the mud”. “Trust the mud.” With that final thought I drift off into another restless but persistent sleep.



Morning comes and I groggily make my way over to the breakfast area for my last meal of the day. Today is our first ceremony, our first Mesada. I am ready. I am more than ready. The familiar feeling of nervous anticipation before a medicine journey is markedly absent. Just as when you are truly sick there is no fear of the needle prick when blood is drawn, I am not anxious in the slightest. It has been two years since my last serious medicine work, and I am carrying the weight of a beautiful but heavy climb. I need this.

Day 3 - Water Mesada

To give words to the indescribable and condense to a page a lifetime lived in a single day. That is the task of this Huachuma mesada initiate, and I will do my best to keep my clumsy words out of the way of the truth of it!

The Grandfather medicine, a 4000 year old Chavin tradition, kept alive by one of the last living medicine keepers, the embodiment of Grandfather energy. We enter the Mesada maloka, a towering hut in the jungle with a sprawling altar in the shape of an Andes cross. Skulls of medicine men and jaguars mix with the sacred whistling vessels of the coast, some of the earliest 'consciousness technology' still actively preserved. The feeling of anticipation I thought I wasn't going to feel, rushes through me as I realize that this is different than any medicine I have encountered. But more than nerves, I am excited. After a few opening words Don Howard makes eye contact with each of our circle, before pouring a unique amount of Huachuma, a thin ruddy liquid, into a communal cup from the annals of antiquity. When he looks over at me, I can't help but give him a huge smile, beaming from my heart. He smiles with the wisdom of millennia and pours. Then he pours some more. In front of me is a full cup, a seeming 6-8 oz. I steady myself at the altar and then in 5 or 6 huge gulps I drain the surprisingly mellow liquid into my stomach cavity.

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Casually, without unnecessary production or theatre he asks that we gather our things for a boat ride and a hike into a jungle. We are going to deliver some mosquito nets to an indigenous tribe some 45 minutes up river.

"WHAT!" Now I really know we are in for something different. I assumed that this meant this might be a mild medicine. Wrong.

As a chatty group gathered on the landing of the boat docks, Dr. Dan noted to Don Howard that this was a very social medicine. He smiled kindly and said with foreshadowed benevolence "For now. But there are many phases. It is a lifetime lived in a single day."

I didn't really understand what that meant, but during the canoe ride I noted alternating waves of nausea and a tickling energetic euphoria creeping over me. By the time we docked on an indiscriminate muddy slope, I was radiating like a luminescent lightning bug. Coils of what can only be described as orgasmic energy spiraled up and down my spine. As an experienced psychonaut this was somewhere in the realm of psilocybin meets the mother load of the purest MDMA on the planet. My breath was light and free, laughter was effortless and every second was an eternity of present moments.



The first scouts we encountered on our friendly invasion were a few bare chested children in brown skirts with happy eyes. Their lively animated spirits fit perfectly with the mood of the group. There were no adults and children any more, there were just playful spirits. We made our way to a hut where the tribe displayed some of their hand made crafts that we could purchase to support their livelihood.





40 year old kids continued to play with the 4 year old kids, and the rest of us alternated between uncontrollable hilarity, and trying to shop while pretending we weren't having an energetic orgasm. I don't think we did a very good job pretending!



All my old fears and concerns weren't solved, they were just meaningless. I understood that my anxiety of 'the mud' (malaria, mosquitos, bugs, oh my!) were just me failing to realize that I was the mud too! Those organisms are in me and around me like the water itself, and while sometimes they may get out of balance, the body can find ways to bring

the harmony back, as long as it is conscious. I remember receiving a small jungle banana, and it was a feast worthy of a king. The embrace of an old friend had the electricity of the touch of a new lover. If someone would have dropped a solid beat, ecstatic dance was a in the aether. After hours that felt like a joyful millennia, we packed back up into the canoe to travel the rivers home at dusk.

And so the medicine began to change. The reflections on the water blended into the empty spaces of tree and sky and it felt as if we were floating along the divide between water and air. It was a visual metaphor of the principle of non-duality. From that vantage of the canoe, the perspective of spirit, there was no real difference between the elemental forces. And yet from the perspective of life there was indeed a difference. A phrase got stuck in my head, that I'm not even sure I understand fully yet. I kept saying over and over to myself, 'Life is the ecstasy of dichotomy.'

Visions of teeming creation, with tickling flagella and centipede fibers danced in my mindscape, morphing slowly into a luscious, seductive understanding of the feminine. Slippery, moist, fleshy, barbed, pungent... One moment I would be following the skin and tentacles of an octopus and the next amber-eyed women with long venomous nails would beckon me in with a lascivious smile. This was the reverse polarity of the masculine, irresistible to both man and spirit.

When we arrive an hour later at our dock, I realized we had been silent for an hour when my friend Daniel commented "That was like the best sex I've ever had."
Our laughter broke the enchanting spell.



Upon returning to the Mesada maloka, the ceremonial hut – a tempestuous tranquility had settled over the group. As we waited for a few stragglers, some of whom were purging violently, it occurred to me that I would like to smoke some Mapacho. Mapacho

is like a humongous joint you smoke like a cigar that is rolled with fresh native tobacco, of a different species than what we cultivate in North America. I had an intense feeling that I couldn't just grab the mapacho without giving something back to the altar so I dug through my bag. I found a cinnamon stick I use for incense. This was a fair offering. I placed the cinnamon stick on the altar and retrieved my jungle cigar.

My next challenge was that I needed to light the mapacho. There were ample candles on the altar, but somehow once again I felt compelled to offer some form of reciprocity for taking the fire. As clear as if it was a human voice, the altar responded "We give you fire, you give us smoke." Seems like an even trade. I asked permission and lit part of the mapacho on a candle to my left and took my first puff of smoke. It was incredibly satisfying. Without thinking I went to light the stick further from a different candle and inexplicably the smoke rose right into my eyes, stinging aggressively. The voice returned, "Even when it is fair, remember to ask permission. And if you have nothing tangible to give, your gratitude is enough."

The Mesada just gave me my first lesson in the *principle of reciprocity*.

As Don Howard once again took up the center of the room, I couldn't help but look on with admiration at the impeccability of his wisdom, character and intent. I had never known either Grandfather in my life, both of them having died before I was born, so I never really understood the sacred Grandfather energy. I had always felt that I was smarter than the older generation, and I could catch myself trying to manage the situation internally. But there was a much deeper wisdom in Don Howard than I possessed, and he understood the way of things in a way that I couldn't comprehend. Every item in the altar had a place, just like every tradition he was keeping alive. He made a little joke to ease the tension, as comfortable in these magical waters as a dolphin in the sea. We each rose to take a turn blowing the harmonious whistling vessels of coastal Peru, and though the whistle I chose was modest in form, it carried the highest note of the cacophony. There was a lesson in that too I suppose.



The last part of the formal ceremony was involving a liquid snuff preparation, poured into a hollow end of a stake called a cingato. I hopped up first to give it a try and Don Howard explained the idea was to snort the liquid in each nostril then hang on to the stake for the ride to come. He called the liquid clarity, but it burned like holy fire. As the pain

subsided I cast my eyes over the altar and up to the heavens. On the stake was depicted the union of masculine and feminine, and beneath it, a heart. I realized only the lightest touch was needed to keep the point of the stake in balance. I told the mesada that I would protect it. It whispered back that it would protect me as well.

We closed the ceremony and prepared for a feast. By this point I could still feel the relentless coils of energy, but the visions had ceased enough to manage two plates of food. We sat for hours and listened to stories of Don Howard's youth. An early test from a beautiful enchantress, the social order of the Chavin and the rise of the Inka nation.

When I returned to my room, the most challenging part of the medicine had come. The comfortable rush was gone, and I felt a frantic anxiety grasping for some semblance of order. I tweaked a muscle in my neck straining to stretch, then chastised myself for the foolishness. Why do we always push so hard when the lightest touch is necessary? In the end, I was able to surrender to sleep. A final lesson in Trust.

Morning breaks on day 3 and a tentative but airy peace persists. I am looking forward to a day of quiet integration as the rain falls slowly in melodic drops around me.

Day 4 - Pre Ceremony

It was a long night of clammy sweat, as my body is going through some gnarly detox symptoms. No sugar, no dairy, no wheat and powerful plant medicine is a strong cleanse. Nonetheless, I'm looking forward to another encounter today with the great teachers - Huachuma and the Mesada.

Day 5 - After The Earth Mesada

The path with heart is not a linear progression. Tension builds in certain chords of identity with little observable change. With fishing hooks embedded in your psychic sternum, you are fettered like an anchor line on a hot air balloon. As you increase momentum the stress on these anchors builds and the ropes begin to fray. You are no longer satisfied with your level of consciousness, or the actualization of your potential. At this point one of two things happen. You can turn down the fire, and settle in to a more comfortable elevation where the pain of those hooks is less restrictive. Then you find ways to numb the sadness-- drugs, alcohol, distraction, anger, and masturbation (including ego masturbation with a carousel of new sex partners). Or alternatively you cut the chains, turn up the burner and test the heights possible for your spirit.

Of all the medicines I have done, Huachuma has been the most challenging and the most rewarding. To describe what is happening right now internally is flirting with making mundane a sacred personal process. But I am committed to the greatest good. "Para el bien de todos" is the spirit of Chavin, the origin of the Huachuma Mesada.

As we sat in the ceremonial circle prepared to receive the cup that would launch us into the Earth Mesada, the thought of drinking the brew was almost incomprehensible. I watched everyone go in front of me, and found myself gagging involuntarily. Nothing puts a damper on a ceremony like projectile vomiting over the sacred mesa! When the friendly wizard Don Howard turned his gaze to me, I couldn't help but break into another smile. There was no turning back.

It was horrible, as expected. My body desperately wanted to reject it, but I warriored it down. I sat back into my place and settled into a trance of anticipatory peace. Then it was once again time to gather our things and head to the boats.

On a scale of the most challenging boat rides I have ever been on, this was a 10, topping the previous record of a fishing adventure in Fiji that turned into a seven hour roller coaster on stormy seas. The nausea was almost unbearable, and the sense of ecstatic warmth that accompanied the feeling in the Water Mesada was notably absent. Not only that, but spray from the brown Amazon river teeming with Protozoa I had cataloged from a few episodes of "Monsters Inside Me" hit the wind at just the right angle to completely douse my face. I might have tried to puke over the side, but surely a full gulp of the water would have been my reward. So I sealed my lips tight and closed my eyes. I don't know if any parasite monsters like eyeballs but I tried to keep my eyes shut as well. That didn't help the nausea. So for 45 minutes I held on in full facial lockdown. Nothing coming in, nothing coming out. After passing by the other side of Iquitos we arrived at the landing

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site and were greeted this time not by a friendly child but a group of pigs and rotting noni fruit on the ground. Have you ever smelled rotten noni? If not, imagine vomiting a cheese fondue feast and then putting it in the microwave to release full aroma.

As the mosquitos nipped at us, we started a trek through the forest. I began to notice that many of the others were entering states of relative peace and elation. I was just miserable. Because of my pain I noticed I had very little empathy or care for the environment around me. This was my first great lesson.

“When we suffer, joy and empathy become boarded shut like windows in the ghetto. We care about ourselves alone, and simply seek a respite from the anguish. Fear, the thought of future pain, operates on the same mechanism.”



Too many of us are suffering. When we suffer, joy and empathy become boarded shut like windows in the ghetto. We care about ourselves alone, and simply seek a respite from the anguish. Fear, the thought of future pain, operates on the same mechanism. I begrudgingly thanked the medicine for the lesson, but it didn't really change much in my mind. It was one foot in front of the other on a long muggy trek. Finally we make it to a clearing where we are greeted by the friendly shining faces of another indigenous tribe.



My companions were oozing with elation. Megan, a blissful soul, who is two wings short of a woodland fairy and one flipper short of being the Little Mermaid was off in the deep woods exploring the earth, making friends and finding treasures. I shifted from side to side nervously, trying to keep the mosquitos from landing.

But one thing kept going through my head, 'just trust'. It was the primary lesson from my last journey. The tribe brought out some fruit, and I managed a bit of a bite. I succeeded and was greeted with the sweet and sour succor of a jungle pear fruit. I set it down though, nervous about how it was washed. Fear with a capital F was running rampant.

As time wore on in the jungle I felt increasingly like an alien compared to my mud-loving companions. The warm feelings were still largely absent but at least the nausea was subsiding. I found a tree with an enticing wedge about 5 feet up. I had a strong urge to climb it. But on a nearby nook was a menacing looking spider with long knuckly legs. I backed away. But something told me I should climb it. I needed to climb it. It felt like a test. I navigated my strategy for almost 10 minutes, and then in one heave I launched myself up. It required minimal effort and I was 5 feet up into the canopy. At that point my first shift had begun. I had passed a test.

The difference between Huachuma and any other medicine is that it is an active teacher. It gives you wisdom and then immediately requires you to put it into action. When you do, you are rewarded. When you do not, you are punished. It is the stern love of a father. I felt the growing sense that what was happening was a rite of passage. We walked back up to the clearing where the natives had gathered in their traditional finest to join us in some dance. Their bare feet slapped on the moist clay of the ground, and their shiny voices echoed to the heavens. I wanted to take my shoes off, unbutton my shirt off and jump in with them.





But I didn't. I was worried about the mosquitos biting my feet. I ended up getting drug into the circle, but I never took off my shoes to feel the earth beneath me. I failed that test. I knew I failed it, but it wasn't until later that I realized that the mosquitos had been biting me through the vents in my shoes anyway that I really knew I blew it. But as a good father would, I was shown love even after my failure. One of the cutest, most radiant children in the tribe came over to give me a hug. She had a couple of handmade bracelets for sale, and I bought them both.

“Her hair was the desert, her heart was the magnetic core, her loins were the jungle. Machines drew out her blood like a macabre surgeon, spilling petroleum into the fire, and plastics melted in caustic piles on her skin.”



We said goodbye to the tribe, and to be honest I was thankful. I got barely a passing score on the heart of the jungle test, but I had learned some lessons, and got out alive. By the time we were packed back in the motor canoe, it was dusk. I put on my headphones and buried my head in my hands. That was when the visions came.

I saw a demonic silhouette, surrounded by a dozen fires. My reaction was to open my eyes, look at the river, dispel his image. But I had enough experience in visionary waters to know I needed to see this through to the other side or it would haunt me forever. The demonic face left and in its stead was the presence of the Earth mother, or Pachamama as the locals would say. She was kind, wise, loving, and powerful. Her hair was the desert, her heart was the magnetic core, her loins were the jungle. Machines drew out her blood like a macabre surgeon, spilling petroleum into the fire, and plastics melted in caustic piles on her skin. Her breath was filled with choking smog, and she looked up at me with a sorrowful face. It brings me to tears right now even writing about it. I asked her how I could help. She showed me very clearly what I needed to do.

I saw a bunch of people like automotons, unaware of their actions, aimlessly wandering about like wind-up toys. When I touched them white lights turned on in their heads. And then when they touched someone white lights turned on in their heads respectively. It was creating a domino ripple. Finally the whole world was covered with these enlightened beings, who all sat down cross legged together. She whispered the words to me, "We do not have an environmental crisis, we have a consciousness crisis. You focus on the consciousness, and I'll handle the rest." There was a power in her voice that left me no doubt that she was going to handle her part of the agreement. I swore a solemn vow that I would do my best own up to mine. She smiled subtly, and departed. The concept reminded me of something that my friend Amber Lyon told me. "In order to spread light, you can't just try to bring awareness to the darkness, you have to shine light on the light." The cockroaches will always find a way to scurry away until you dry up the source. And the source is ego, suffering, and unconsciousness.

We arrived at the docks. Still reeling from the vision I did my best to clean up before the candle lit night ceremony in the maloka. The water pressure was out, so I had to take a soapless cowboy shower.

Once inside the maloka, the inner warmth I had remembered from previous nights had returned. Don Howard was quiet. Everyone was quiet. He was gathering strength. He pulled his chair a few inches closer to the beaming embodiment of youth, bliss and femininity, Megan. He didn't look over at her, he just sat still. Watching them sitting there I knew that if they were in charge of everything in the cosmos, all would be right. I beamed a smile, imaging that world where I could lay down my sword, and spend a lifetime swimming, dancing and making love. There would be no need for the warrior, unless he wanted to play. But that is not our world. And I have a vow to keep.

Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to know Gandalf? To sit and hear his stories and watch him perform his white magic? I can tell you what that is like. One by one or in pairs he called us up to the mesa, whispering a few words laced with his ever-present humor, to perform his most sacred healing rights. With feather, rattles and mapacho, I saw him do the things that one reads of only in the story books. I watched Dan and Megan form an eternal bond of protection and balance that would span for infinite lifetimes.



I watched the visceral shedding of a brother's ego. I watched the darkness of depression lift from the soul of a beautiful Scandanavian goddess. And when it was my turn, I walked up and faced the Mesada where he said something that I will never forget.



“You are pure Chavin brother, heart to heart.” He fluttered his feather over my chest, and the shell on my heart begun to crack. My breast swelled with love and started to ascend to the heavens. My heart kept rising as the rhythm of the feather and the rattles kept building. The warm pressure of smoke and the breath of intention seemed to penetrate

through my back even as it seeped around my arms. Finally my chest had risen so high that I had to turn my gaze upwards. The rattling ceased, and I stood there in front of the great spirit, with an ancient but timeless message. Lead from the heart.

Day 7 - Air Mesada – Final Ascension

I am one day old today. And for having died last night I feel pretty good all in all. The second cup of jungle coffee this morning was a questionable decision, but as soon as my head stops swimming I'm sure I'll be no worse for wear!
Where do I begin...

It all started with the mischievous smile of Gandalf, who poured me a cup brimming to the top with Huachuma. It ended with me snorting a compound called Willka a natural N,N DMT, Bufotenin and 5-MEO DMT combination out of a knuckle bone snuffing tube from Chavin that was used for this very purpose over 3,500 years ago.

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That's when I crossed over to the other side, held my Grandmother's hand and then returned to my body as a better human being. Heraclitus said “No man ever steps into the same river twice, for it is not the same river, and he is not the same man.” While that is sentiment is true, I can even more confidently say that no man ever does the Huachuma Mesada twice, for it is not the same Mesada, and he is not the same man.

Of all the great medicine teachers– Ayahuasca, Iboga, Psilocybin, DMT, MDMA there have been none as powerful and transformative as the combination of Huachuma and Willka. So now my task is to put words to the ineffable!

After imbibing a brimming cup of Huachuma we gathered outside to prepare for a long hike on the 200 acres of protected rainforest here at the BioPark. I played a few tunes on my flute while we waited, pushing through the self-consciousness of my newly acquired musicality. My companions were very sweet with their compliments, but I knew that the intention was a lot better than the quality of the sound!

Even though I had taken almost double the amount of medicine from the previous Earth mesada (which was the hardest medicine journey I have ever taken) I buzzed with confidence as the energy started to rise. I vowed I was going to pass all of the tests that Huachuma presented this day. I told myself I wasn't going to get nauseous. My body listened, and the first test was only 5 minutes into the hike.

A 4 inch, jet black jungle millipede with a hundred spindly legs was crawling along the trail. I pointed it out and our native guide picked it up. For anyone who knows me I respect the creepers, but I HATE touching them. Except I knew this was a test. Well shit. I extended my own hand to allow it to crawl on me. I didn't flinch, I wasn't afraid. Its legs tickled my skin and I let it crawl up my arm before Dan put his hand out to partake in the experience. Immediately I felt a warm oxytocin rush as my cosmic Grandfather Huachuma smiled and gave me an 'atta boy!'



The second test came in the form of another cacao pod that had materialized. Freshly split open, the embryonic cacao seeds were covered in a sweet filmy placenta and my hands were anything but clean. I ran my fingers under a quick splash of water and dug my digits into the Avatar fruit. I scooped it, plopped it in my mouth and chomped down on the Mother's bittersweet treat. The theobromine, electrolytes, and antioxidants were received were like a surprise birthday party for my tastebuds, and danced nicely with the Huachuma. I had passed the second test.

At this point I become aware of the theme that was to take form over the course of the day. **Life is a series of choices. We have the ability to choose for better or worse, and there is not necessarily one right choice. There are just a million different options—it is our sacred power to shape our reality.** As we continued our long march to the sky deck, the snake whisperer Donald Schultz spotted the tail of a snake. He identified it as non-venomous and seized it with a lightning strike, pulling it from the brush. Incredibly, in the snake's mouth 8 inches deep in the gullet (with 16 inches of the tail still dangling), was one of the deadliest vipers in South America. Donald released the snake so that it wouldn't regurgitate his deadly feast. The symbolism of this was not lost on the group.

As dusk started to pull its cotton blanket over the sky we came into view of the great clay sky deck with a 360 degree view of the jungle, the Amazon river and the heavens. An ancient Lanson was buried in the center, much like how it had been at the ancient temple of Chavin.



I took my shoes off. The leaves and mud sent small ecstatic pulses through the soles of my feet. It was a very sacred place. The medicine was in full bloom, making it difficult to contain the bursting vibrational energy moving through our body. I found a spot on the deck and lay down on my back to ponder this growing sentiment about choice. Four great animal teachers were on their way.

The first was an ant crawling toward my shoulder. Instinctively I sat up sharply, pulling me from the trance. Then it occurred to me that I had just allowed this tiny, ubiquitous, and largely benign creature to make me – a 185 lb sentient human, move. I realized how many other inconsequential things I allow to color my experience--Thoughts, fears, superstitions. If you allow an ant to have power over you, then you are truly no more powerful than the ant! The ants of life will always be able to sway you from the path of most integrity, and highest bliss. I lay back down with a smile and the ant scurried off, completely terrified by the shockwaves of the giant in its midst.

I rose up from the ground, excited by my new great teaching, and continued to ponder choice and free will as I looked at a blooming bobinsana tree on the edge of the deck. Out of nowhere an iridescent emerald hummingbird buzzed up to the most perfect blooming flower, dipping its beak in to get some nectar. This was my second lesson about choice. We can choose to be like the hummingbird, drinking the nectar of life's experiences or lament how hard we have to make our little wings flap to get there.



I was on a roll. Smiling I went for another lap around the deck. I caught sight of my brother Dr. Dan, and as per usual he was locked into a powerful and lively connection with Source. If I ever thought he was a master before, the last week left zero doubt. Then it occurred to me that maybe I should relinquish the reigns of leadership, and just follow him. He seemed to have the best connection to the Universe and was impeccable in leading with his heart. This thought made me a bit forlorn, as I was particularly attached to the idea of being captain of the helm. As I chewed on the release of that attachment, I reminded myself of the saying of Chavin, “Para el bien de todos” – For the good of all. If that was truly for the good of all, I decided I would do it. I released my attachment to any proverbial throne of any kind, and with a sigh looked off into the nearby treescape. There two yellow breasted songbirds settled into adjacent branches. One branch was higher than the other by about two feet. I anthropomorphically identified the songbird on the top branch as the leader. Then for no good reason, the songbirds switched branches. Aha... Epiphany. The songbirds didn’t care who the leader was, and nor should we humans. There was a reason that the Chavin had no hierarchical power structure. The best idea, for the good of humanity naturally leads. The rest is just ego.

I was flying now. While the crescendo of recent teachings gelatinized Don Howard asked me to kneel to receive the mapacho on my crown. My fourth animal teacher was on the way. Only this time it would arrive from within. Crouched down overlooking the jungle, a transformation begun. My muscles twitched with electricity. My toes curled into the clay. My vision and hearing grew sharp. A low growl rumbled in my gullet. I could feel a visceral surge of invincibility emanating from my chest. The mosquitos didn’t matter, I was afraid of nothing. I closed my eyes tightly and took a breath, filling my body with every spectrum of light. For a few moments, I was a jaguar.

This led to my greatest revelation. The reason the jaguar was honored by the Chavin as the most spiritual being in the hierarchy is because the jaguar is fearless. And only when you are fearless can you make the consistently impeccable choice to follow a path with heart. It was not until I had momentarily shed my fears that I had this immaculate freedom. It was the single most empowering feeling of my life.

So there I was, for the first time ever on the bleeding edge of free will. I understood that one of the most detrimental ideas ever to materialize in the human meta field was that of determinism. Whether the culprit is God, genetics, neurology, environment – when you convince a human they have no free will, you rob them of their most sacred gift. You convince them they are nothing more than a leaf at the mercy of a breeze. Once convinced, that is exactly what they are. Without the absolute freedom of choice, one will never achieve the potential of their highest calling. This was the lesson of the rainbow Jaguar.

“As I chewed on the release of that attachment, I reminded myself of the saying of Chavin, “Para el bien de todos””



I tested this newfound fearlessness when confronting the growing swarm of mosquitos that surrounded us. They were thick and aggressive like piranhas on a bloody pig. Instead of going into full panic, in jaguar mode I decided when to swat and when to relax. The mosquitos were not going to rob me of that choice. Right before I decided to head down the hill on my own, Don Howard invited us to get cleaned up and meet him back at the Mesada.

After rinsing off I took a damage report of my blood donation to Pachamama. It looked to be about a dozen new bites. My total was somewhere around 30 now but fortunately the medicine prevented them from itching. I returned to the Maloka and took a seat. It was time to snort the Willka – which is translated into English as ‘The Sacred’.

The way Don Howard had described it, within 5 minutes or so you would start your journey ‘home’. You would feel a fire fill your nostrils, you would purge, and then you would cross over to the other side. We would go to our room in lie in total darkness. I steeled my nerves, and whispered the old Native American words, “Today is a good day to die.” That made me smile. Don Howard called me up and showed me the ancient tray and snuff tube. It had been used for exactly this purpose over 3500 years ago in Chavin, and continued in secret traditions until it found its way home, to the last Chavin master. The tube was hollowed down the length of the bone where human marrow once thrived, and for once I was happy for my big Gypsy nose.

“I placed the knuckle into my proboscis, lowered my head and snorted like I was James Brown. Quickly into the other nostril, and then I leapt up like I had been struck by lightning. Both nostrils now plugged with burning powder I trembled and shook like the Highlander receiving the essence of a vanquished foe.”



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What transpired next I promised myself I would not fully recount. So without violating that oath, I will color a bit within the lines. A web of energy, not unlike what I had seen in other DMT trips spread over me. Only it was thicker, deeper. It permeated me fully. I gradually became aware I could no longer feel my body unless I drew direct attention to it. My head started tingling as it had in my most epic Ayahuasca journey and then a jellyfish of phosphorous light floated through me.

Deep through the other side of the wormhole I started to make contact with entities. I repeated the mantra, “Para el bien de todos.” They were mostly quiet, curiously looking at me like a stranger in a neighborhood dive bar. Since no one wanted to chat, I asked for my Grandmother. She came with a warm smile, and the voice I remember through the ages. I opened my left palm, and she extended her hand and squeezed it. For a few minutes we just held hands and talked. Eventually we said goodbye and I continued my journey. I released myself from all attachments, cutting them away with breath and the Ha’oponopono radical forgiveness. I even released my attachment to remember what was happening. I expunged myself from existence and drifted untethered into the void. Over the next 20 minutes I would slowly reassimilate back into my body. As I started the journey home, a song came to my lips. It was not my song, and I had no choice but to sing it, until a muse with a gown like diamonds scattered on blue velvet held her finger to my lips.

Returning to my flesh was like driving a spaceship for the first time. I wiggled my toes, I checked on my bones, my lungs, my heart, my brain, and my throat. I remember flapping my tongue about madly, quite amused with that quirky appendage! Once mostly re-embodied I walked back to the Mesada. I was the first one to return.

After some time, Don Howard asked if I wanted to sit in his chair. He told me it had a special viewpoint. I noticed that the Lanzon, the ancient stone icon at the center of the mesa had merged with the Estela Raimondi tapestry behind it. But something else more profound was happening. Once again, beyond explanation, my heart anchored to the Lanzon. This icon magically transformed into the absolute center of the universe, and my heart, the absolute center of my being. They merged as one. At once the very same, yet completely different. I don't know how else to explain it, and I realize it doesn't make much sense! Thus is the nature of the ineffable.

I sat back down in my seat, and pulled out a mapacho. As I puffed my first rings as a new human, I felt that sense of invincibility return from on the skydeck. Only now it was much stronger. Supernaturally, the way the paper was burning around the tobacco, a lit ember fell naturally to the ground. Without thinking I casually picked it up and put it in the water. I didn't expect it to burn, and it didn't burn. But the ember was red hot. This gave me an idea. I wanted to test my invincibility. I puffed the end of the stick until it was bright orange, and drew a line across my palm. No pain, no burn. I drew another line with the same result. Only the black mark from the burnt carbon remained.



I started to think about what I was doing and then went to make a dot instead of a line. For whatever reason that motion caused me to flinch, and the ember burned like hell! So this was how some people can walk on hot coals and remain unharmed while others cannot. The power of belief was stronger than I had ever fathomed. I continued the

practice on my right hand and executed correctly. I then understood why the Aztec priests would stick a stingray spine through their cock. It was to prove their fearlessness and invincibility. I smiled, knowing that I had absolutely no interest to take the game to that extreme! Eventually the candles burned out and we exchanged hugs with the group.

And so the rite of passage, and my journey through middle earth was complete. I stayed up late into the night with my companions, celebrating with food and planning what was to come.



Day 8 - Return from Middle Earth

Twenty minutes from departure now and a full night of rest under my belt-- I feel strong. Yesterday on 3 hours of sleep my mind once again regained some traction over my consciousness, but with sleep and the hugs of a few sloths and an anaconda I regained my clarity of purpose. I have lost over 10lbs in the last 2 weeks, but added an immeasurable amount of spirit. My body still tingles from countless mosquito bites, but my excitement to bring home the hard won treasures of this conquest overshadows the discomfort. I am not the man that showed up to the jungle. I will never be that same man. I know that the mind and Resistance is plotting its revenge... But down here powerful allies will always be waiting. I am ready for whatever comes next. Its renaissance time, and Chavin is rising once again.