Introduction

The following pages contain knowledge that has been entrusted to its authors by a small handful of medicine men who reside in the upper basin of the Amazon Rainforest. Passed down word-of-mouth for thousands of years, without any written account, these doctrines are considered sacred by those who keep them, and are not passed along lightly to any interested party. Throughout the course of creating The Sacred Science documentary, we the filmmakers have grown to know and deeply respect these men, and it is through our mutual goal of spreading this knowledge for the good of all that we have been permitted to share that knowledge through our own mediums.

The film itself tells the story of eight patients, from all walks of life, suffering from a range of chronic illnesses, as they travel to the Amazon rainforest to undergo an ancient and powerful system of healing, with the guidance of a group of dedicated curanderos. Their stories are moving, provocative, and telling of the physical and psychological challenges that we all face in our lives, as well as the solutions that traditional Amazonian medicine can offer. This eBook is meant to serve as a supplement to those stories, in order to provide further background information on the various plants and rituals the audience will witness in action, as well as deeper insights into the spiritual belief system and methodology behind the jungle medicine being practiced.

It is with great joy, but also with great humility and respect, that we pass these stories and wisdom along to you, the readers and viewers of the film. Our hope is that through our work, you will grow to understand and appreciate these ancient cultures as we have, and together we can all do our collective part to preserve that understanding and appreciation for future generations around the world.
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What is the Sacred Science?

In Amazonian culture, there exists a very ancient healing tradition that, at its most basic level, utilizes a panacea of medicinal plants. This practice has been cultivated over thousands of years, evolving as various tribes lived and thrived throughout the different regions of the South American rainforest. The elders learned to use specific plants to heal all manner of illness, and through a very deep, intimate understanding of their immediate jungle surroundings, a symbiotic relationship was formed between man and nature. The tribes were healed, nourished, and guided by the plants, and in turn, these communities nurtured the forests and became keenly aware of each plant’s healing properties. In this manner, the medicinal plants have been an ever-evolving foundation of these cultures for millennia. This ancient tradition works with both plants that are seen as strictly medicinal - those that work solely on the physical level and can occasionally have psychological benefits - as well as with those that are considered spiritually sacred. Western medicine categorizes these plants as “entheogenic”.

The Curandero: Doctor, Teacher, Spiritual Guide

The medium through which this communication travels most strongly has been, since the beginning of the region’s recorded history, a tribe’s curandero, or medicine man (also known as the shaman, a word that actually originated in Siberia, but is applicable to the role that is present in indigenous tribes around the world). Unlike more developed, modernized cultures, in which a person’s doctor, therapist, and priest or spiritual advisor are separate people and separate aspects of society in general, the curanderos singularly serve all of those functions within a given tribe or community. This man or woman makes it his or her life’s purpose to serve other fellow human beings, and to also act as a guardian of sorts for the local forest and the plants from which they derive their remedies. The curandero remains dedicated to acquiring new wisdom and knowledge about the rainforest plants
and their properties, as well as to a broad array of other healing techniques and rituals, offering his or her services to those in need, and in return takes only what is required for the basic sustenance of his or her family. Rather than being driven by salary, public recognition, career trajectory, or fear of lawsuit, the curandero’s only motivation is a genuine desire to heal. Some feel that this method is superior to occidental health care because it allows the curandero to invest more deeply in each patient, and to address the underlying problems behind the illness, rather than giving a diagnosis or prescribing treatment based on a single visit.

The Interconnectivity of Body & Mind
Another cornerstone of traditional Amazonian healing is the focus on a patient’s spiritual and mental state, in conjunction with his or her physical well being. While Western medicine tends to treat the body and mind as separate entities, a curandero will consider a person as a whole, with physical, spiritual, and psychological aspects all affecting one another on a profound level. Stress and diet in particular are considered supremely influential factors on the state of the human body, as are more deep-seated psychological issues such as guilt, shame, and long-repressed sentiments that can continue to plague a person long after the immediately apparent emotional distresses have subsided. Often times this manifests in other unforeseen forms. These ailments could reveal themselves as moderate inconveniences like stress and high blood pressure, or in more serious ways, such as stomach adhesions, tumors, or other full-blown chronic illnesses. To an Amazonian medicine man, simply treating symptoms on the surface level is a superficial and ultimately ineffective way to address a patient’s illnesses, even if at first glance it appears to be strictly physical. Only when these deeper spiritual and emotional issues are confronted can the true healing begin.
Lineage of Direct Transmission

One of the unique components of Amazonian culture is that no written language is used to transfer this knowledge from one generation to the next. Everything that today’s curandero knows has been passed down word-of-mouth, from curandero to apprentice for thousands of years — a phenomenon commonly referred to as a “lineage of direct transmission”. Some historians and scholars of indigenous cultures and medicines might consider it unfortunate that there exists no written account of these mysterious practices and their origins; however, many of today’s curanderos would disagree. Indigenous masters feel it is crucial for an apprentice to receive the full transmission from his or her teacher, rather than simply conducting his or her own independent study. A master’s personality, mannerisms, tone of voice, and nearly every other aspect of the shamanic teaching method is to be learned and replicated. Hence the term: “direct transmission”. When a curandero departs for the spirit world, he has passed on his teachings and hence the teachings of the lineage of shamans before him, to his surviving apprentices. They in turn, carry the same responsibility of bestowing this knowledge onto their future pupils. This living knowledge of the healing plants of the jungle and their corresponding rituals is in many tribes referred to as *La Ciencia Sagrada* or “The Sacred Science”.

Photographed by M. Zulauf

Chief of the Jagua’s
**Icaros: The Curandero’s Healing Songs**

A key aspect of traditional Amazonian healing is the use of spiritual melodies and chants. These songs, known as *icaros*, are used in almost every aspect of the curandero’s healing method, and are often sung in conjunction with other practices, including hands-on healing methods, the application of herbs and scented oils, and the playing of indigenous musical instruments.

It is said that by singing an icaro, a curandero is able to connect directly with the spirit realm, which allows him or her to more deeply assess a patient’s illness, bring on or intensify the effects of visionary medicines like ayahuasca and San Pedro during ceremony, ward off evil or negative presences, and a wide range of other abilities. In many instances, singing or chanting an icaro allows a curandero to enter a trancelike state, in which he or she can sense and manipulate energies that are vital to the healing process.

The lyrics of an icaro vary from song to song and from healer to healer, and can include words sung in a variety of styles and tongues. Curanderos of indigenous South American descent often employ a loose combination of Spanish and native Quechuan, but healers from different parts of the world can transpose songs into their own language. Due to the influence of European conquistadors who colonization much of South America in the 1500’s, some curanderos are known to mix traditional shamanic invocations with elements of Christian spirituality, such as calling on Christ and chanting biblical phrases. Regardless of the curandero’s worldly background, what is truly important is the healing intent behind each icaro.

Each curandero has his or her own unique repertoire, and some of a healer’s songs may come from the master under whom he or she apprenticed while learning his or her craft. However, many of a curandero’s icaros are said to come from the teaching plants...
themselves. These mystical melodies often present themselves in dreams or during sacred ayahuasca and San Pedro ceremonies in what is considered a rite of passage for the healer. A curandero’s icaros are an extremely sacred and personal part of his or her own method, which is why singing these allows him or her to connect with each patient and the healing spirits on a much deeper, much more intimate level.

Don Edwin sings an icaro during a Chiric Sanango ceremony.
Alone in the Jungle

One belief that cannot be overstated in the world of Amazonian medicine is the power of solitude. Traditionally, a curandero will place his patients in complete seclusion from society and from one another, breaking only for daily healing visits and the occasional group ceremony. Typically this occurs in an enclosure known as a dieta hut, a small structure just large enough to house a patient and his or her bed and simple belongings. The hut often has open walls (perhaps covered by a screen or mosquito netting,) in order to allow the jungle’s therapeutic presence to dominate the healing setting.

This time alone in the jungle is a crucial tool in the curandero’s arsenal, and can be considered a backdrop for the necessary spiritual and psychological transformations to take place. Those local to the more remote regions of South America will undoubtedly find benefit in being surrounded by the presence of the rainforest without the distractions of their familiar community. However, the experience is especially profound with patients that are totally uninitiated in the conventions of jungle living.

Throughout much of the occidental world - and specifically in the United States - a hectic, cluttered lifestyle, fraught with superficial tangents, is often the norm. Developed society tends to place emphasis on things like fashion trends, career competitiveness, material possessions, and the distracting allure of gadgets like mp3 players and cell phones, rather than (or possibly even in place of) the pursuits of happiness, compassion, and understanding. When presented with a patient who has been embedded in this lifestyle, a curandero’s first priority is often to separate him or her from these toxic diversions.

For many patients, this isolation can be incredibly jarring and uncomfortable at first. Technology and constant social connection can become crutches for those living in the developed world,
allowing one to escape unpleasant sensations and emotions at the click of a button. When these diversions are removed entirely, forcing the patient to sit and face their own inner turmoil and conflict without interruption, they will be able to recognize the true nature of their inner demons, and thus provide a clearer path to health and spiritual well-being. The curandero and subject can work together to overcome these mental and psychological roadblocks, and throughout the healing process, the isolation and immersion in nature continue to provide a soothing, therapeutic environment, unclouded by any outside interference.
The Healing Diet

The plants, grains, and fish below comprise the standard diet given to the patients in the film. With a few exceptions, this nutritional protocol is quite common throughout the upper Amazon basin, as well as parts of the Andean mountain range, with regard to traditional plant healing. It should be noted that this list does not include any spicy, salty, or bitter foods. It is generally held that potent foods with too much spice will interfere with the subtle energies of the daily medicinal plant regimen; accordingly, the preferred diet should be bland but nourishing.

In preparation for a healing ceremony, this diet becomes even more simple. Patients are given only quinoa, green plantains, and in some instances, a very simple protein (such as bocachico, a small fish native to many tributaries of the Amazon River), without any salt or seasoning whatsoever.

**Quinoa:**
*Synonyms: Chenopodium quinoa*

This Andean grain has incredible nutritional value. Quinoa is one of the only grains that provides a full source of protein. While it doesn’t grow in the Amazon, Quinoa is quite common in the region’s healing diet due to its abundance in the neighboring Andes Mountains to the west. The “super grain” gets its name from the Quechua word ‘kinwa’.

**Cacao:**
*Synonyms: Cacao theobroma, Chocolate, Cacaoyer*

Long before Columbus and Cortes set foot in the Americas, the civilizations of Central and South America were cultivating the
seeds of the Theobroma cacao tree. During one of his campaigns in Mexico, Cortes observed that the local Maya brewed a delicious chocolate beverage made from these seeds, and decided to send some back to his king in Spain. The Spanish then refined the seed into what is now commonly known as chocolate.

In its raw form the cacao seed is densely nutritious, containing high concentrations of sulfur and magnesium, among other minerals. The phenylethylamine contained in cacao produces strong and enduring sensations of elation and happiness in the brain. Another common effect of cacao is an enhanced ability to focus for prolonged periods of time.

In many ways, the history of cacao in the Americas symbolizes the deep understanding that the indigenous cultures had of the plant kingdom that flourished around them. Chocolate is just one of the many horticultural innovations that Europe borrowed from a civilization they considered “savage”. Cacao was so cherished by certain kingdoms of Central and South America that it was used as currency, sometimes in place of precious metals, due to its unique ability to either be traded for goods or consumed as a product in and of itself.

**Acaí:**
*Synonyms: Euterpe oleracea*

Deep red and delicious, this berry has made headlines over the past few years for its high concentration of antioxidants. The acaí berry is a major part of the Amazonian diet and in certain Brazilian tribes, the acaí palm (from which the berries are harvested) is known to sometimes provided over 40% of the community’s caloric intake.
Green Plantains:
Synonyms: *Musa acuminata*

A relative of the banana, the green plantain grows abundantly throughout the jungles of South America. The main discerning feature of the green plantain is its starchy texture and lack of sweetness. *For safety purposes, plaintains should be cooked.*

Bocachico:
Synonyms: *Prochilodus nigricans*

Named after its “cute mouth” (the phrase being the translation of its name), this small fish is native to the small rivers and tributaries of the lower Amazon Basin, and is the only source of animal protein permitted by the curanderos in the healing dieta. Usually prepared over an open fire, the bony bocachico is considered sacred by many native South American cultures.

Sacha Inchi Oil:
Synonyms: *Plukenetia volubilis, Sacha Peanut, Mountain Peanut, Inca Peanut*

The indigenous people of the Amazon have been cultivating the Sacha Inchi seed for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The superfood is rapidly gaining popularity in the Western world because of its unusually high levels of essential fatty acids — Omega 3 (48%), Omega 6 (36%), Omega 9 (9%), and protein (27%). Because of the low intake of animal protein in the traditional Amazonian healing diet, Sacha Inchi is used to supplement these essential components of human health.

Miel de Abeja:
Synonyms: *Honey*

Although we often take it for granted as a commonly available foodstuff, honey is considered an extremely sacred substance in
many cultures across the globe. The collection of honey for human consumption dates back thousands of years, to well before the emergence of the Greek and Egyptian civilizations. Its benefits, both physical and spiritual, are well-documented in religious texts, including the Hebrew Bible, the Koran, the New Testament, and numerous others. Not surprisingly, the indigenous healers of the Peruvian Amazon are privy to these beneficial effects, and have been implementing *miel de abeja*, or bee honey, in their treatments since the start of their recorded history.

**A quote from the Koran pertaining to honey:**

“And your Lord inspired the bee(s), saying: ‘Take your habitations in the mountains and in the trees and in what they erect. (68) Then, eat of all fruits, and follow the ways of your Lord made easy (for you).’ There comes forth from their bellies, a drink of varying colour wherein is healing for mankind. Verily, in this is indeed a sign for people who think.”

**Noni:**

*Synonyms: Morinda citrifolia, Great Morinda, Indian mulberry, nunaakai, dog dumpling, mengkudu, apatot, Kumudu, pace, beach mulberry, cheese fruit*

Although it originated on the volcanic islands of Polynesia, Noni is extremely abundant in the Amazon and is a staple food of the diet there. The pulp of this pungent-smelling fruit is where the true nutritional benefit lies, containing substantial levels of vitamin C, iron, niacin, and potassium. The strong odor given off by a freshly opened Noni has given it the nicknames of “cheese fruit” and “vomit fruit”.
The Sacred Plants

While most of the following plant medicines have the ability to affect the body on a physical level - with some being extremely powerful and potentially dangerous - special respect and reverence is also placed on them for having a profound connection with the spirit world. Some act as conduits through which a curandero can connect with a patient or a healing energy, while others possess their own unique spiritual aura and are revered by the Amazon’s indigenous cultures, almost as deities. Their usage as medicinal agents is almost always accompanied by a ritual of some sort, whether it be as simple as a song, or as involved as a ceremony for which one must spend days or even weeks preparing.

The use of these plants is not to be taken lightly in any regard, and the proper preparations and precautions must always be observed. If one is considering entering into a healing process with any of these sacred and respected remedies, the authors must insist that they do so only under the careful guidance of an experienced curandero.

Ayahuasca:

*Synonyms: Banisteriopsis caapi, Yaje, La Purga, Abuela, Grandmother, Spirit Vine, Vine of Death,*

*Associated Animal Spirit: Snake*

*Patient(s) administered: All*

Used for thousands of years by medicine men across much of the South American rainforest, ayahuasca is considered the cornerstone of many (if not most) Amazon healing methods. Viewed within indigenous folklore as “the mother of all plants,” the potent herbal mixture is actually a combination of elements. Its main ingredient is the Banisteriopsis caapi vine, which contains several
powerful MAO (monoamine oxidase) inhibitors. When combined with any of several other plants rich in the psychedelic compound DMT (most commonly the shrub Psychotria viridis, commonly known as chakruna) and boiled as part of a ceremonious preparation ritual, the vine creates an extremely potent psychoactive brew with a vast array of applications in the canon of South American shamanic remedies.

The preparation of this mystical plant brew suggests a riddle in itself: the plants typically used to prepare ayahuasca are native to virtually opposite ends of the jungle, hundreds of miles apart, and anthropologists are still baffled as to how these ancient and seemingly primitive tribes had the insight and botanical knowledge to locate, identify, and prepare them to create something so precise and powerful. There are several legends told among the tribes regarding this mystery. One of the legends speaks of an old king who lived in the rainforest, bringing great healing and wisdom to his people. When his time came to die, he told them that upon his burial, two plants would sprout from his tomb, and if cooked together, they would reveal the same healing and wisdom that he offered throughout his lifetime. Unfathomable as this legend may seem, the true origin of ayahuasca remains just as mysterious to this day.

A dose of ayahuasca can range from a teaspoon to several cups, depending on the weight, age, physical fitness, and overall experience of the patient. The mixture has an extremely bitter taste, and given the high alkalinity of its compounds, acts as a powerful cleansing agent in many respects. As the body digests and absorbs the brew, it can often cause a very thorough purging of the digestive system, either through diarrhea or intense, frequent vomiting spells. However, there are many instances in which a patient will not purge at all. Perhaps the brew’s best-known property is its ability to induce sustained, lucid, dream-like psychedelic visions. The intensity of these visions can range from mild to extremely powerful and disorienting, but each ayahuasca dose produces a
different effect, and each participant experiences his or her own unique results.

The brew is meant to be consumed as part of a highly sacred and secretive ceremony, led by one or several experienced curandero. Each patient must spend the preceding day preparing for this event, both in their diet and their mental and spiritual state. These rituals can involve anywhere from a single patient to a large group of twenty or more, depending on the circumstances, and are typically conducted at night inside of a simple enclosure known as a maloka. Each curandero employs their own unique elements to the ceremonies they oversee, which can include group sharing and interaction, icaros (or spiritual songs), and individual visits.

However diverse the specific methods may be, a common aspect of these ceremonies is the use of the brew’s psychedelic effects, sometimes referred to as a spirit journey, to access a patient’s subconscious in a very direct and deliberate way. By working in this shared dream state, a skilled curandero is said to be able to reach his patients in a much deeper, more perceptive way, and the interaction can produce dramatic spiritual progress, sometimes in a single ceremony.

The ritual has been described as being jarring, overwhelming, and sometimes even terrifying, and likened to an induced near-death experience. This could explain the literal Quechuan translation of the word ayahuasca, which is “The Spirit Vine”, or “Vine of Death.” However, the experience is also known to have a firm, nurturing, feminine aura, which is why ayahuasca is widely referred to by the curandereros of South America as “Grandmother.”
San Pedro

*Synonyms: Echinopsis pachanoi, Abuelo, Grandfather, Mescalito
Associated Animal Spirit: Puma
Patient(s) administered: All*

San Pedro is a multi-stemmed, columnar cactus that grows in the mid-altitude range (between 1500m and 3000m) of the Andean mountain range, primarily found in Peru and Ecuador, and can grow up to 20 feet tall. Like ayahuasca, the plant is rich in a multitude of alkaloids, and thus is known to create a hostile environment within the systems of the human body for cancer and other chronic illnesses. The best-known of these alkaloids is mescaline, a powerful psychedelic compound also found in a related cactus, peyote, (which explains that plant’s handle throughout Native American spiritual folklore, *Mescalito*.)

There are several ways to prepare the plant for consumption, but a common method is to slice the cactus width-wise into thin medallions, after which it is chopped, boiled, and dried into a fine powder. The use of San Pedro in spiritual ceremonies and shamanic practices can be traced back over 3,000 years, and while originally a tradition of tribes indigenous to the Andes, it has been incorporated as a ceremonial teaching medicine in many diverse regions of South America - most notably in the Amazon rainforest.

A standard dose of San Pedro is typically about 5 grams of dried powder (roughly a tablespoon), and the experience can last between 10 and 12 hours. The medicine’s effects vary with dosage and from person to person, but can generally be described as a vivid, illuminating state of altered consciousness. This can be accompanied by hallucinations of sight and sound, which range from being mild to relatively intense, and a wide spectrum of heightened emotions.

While ayahuasca is administered in nighttime ceremonies and is typically a solemn experience, San Pedro ceremonies take place...
during the day, and tend to take on a much more mobile, active nature. Patients can engage in interactive activities and exercises to heighten and engage the effects of the medicine and its influence on the consciousness. When a participant or group is taken under the care of a shaman for a period of time, the two teaching medicines are often used in rotation to complement one another and the other plant medicines being administered. Where ayahuasca is referred to as “grandmother” for its stern, nurturing aura, San Pedro is known as “grandfather” for its more playful, active temperament.

**Toé**
*Synonyms: Brugmansia Suaveolens, Datura*  
*Patient(s) administered: Nicola*

Toé is an extremely powerful and potentially deadly plant used by the Amazon’s healers in a variety of applications. Its healing properties have been used to control Parkinson’s disease; alleviate painful wounds, burns, rashes and swelling; or as a treatment for asthma and bronchitis.

The toé plant contains the plant world’s highest alkaloid concentration, as well as a highly potent dose of scopolamine, resulting in intense and prolonged psychoactive experiences upon consumption. It is typically administered sparingly and in small, controlled doses, as improper use can result in irreversible mental damage or death.

**Chiric Sanango**  
*Synonyms: Brunfelsia uniflora, Manaca*  
*Patient(s) administered: Nicola, Melinda*

Chiric sanango is a flowered shrub used by curanderos to treat many conditions, and in many forms. Consumed in root teas and
mixtures or applied topically, the plant houses several chemicals with strong medicinal properties; most notably manaceine and manacine, which stimulate the lymphatic system, and scopoletin, a phytochemical that has shown to possess antitumor, antifungal, and antibacterial qualities. It has been patented in the U.S. for its ability to inhibit production of nitric oxide in the body.

Chiric sanango can be toxic in large doses and can produce temporary but sometimes intense sensations in the body, including chills, tingling, and sedation. It is highly respected by the Amazon’s curanderos and its usage comes with careful preparation and dosage.

Coca

*Synonyms:* Erythroxylum coca, Erythroxylum novogranatense  
*Patient(s) administered:* All

The coca leaf has been chewed and brewed by the indigenous peoples of the Andean mountain region for centuries. Contrary to the popular belief that it is highly toxic and chemically addictive, (perpetuated in no small part by its powdered, synthetically processed counterpart), the plant in its original form is virtually harmless, and provides many health benefits as a mild stimulant.

The method by which the coca plant is chewed is called *acullico* and involves packing a number of leaves between the cheek and gums, sometimes together with an organic alkaline substance. The goal is to gradually extract the active ingredients from the leaves into the pores of the mouth. The chewing of these leaves is known to stave of hunger, fatigue, and altitude sickness. Various legends speak of Andean villages surviving solely on coca leaves and water in times of famine. Coca is often credited for the resilience and stamina for which the remote tribes of the Andes are so well-known.

Coca is often used medicinally as an anesthetic and analgesic to
alleviate the pain of headache, rheumatism, wounds and sores. It has also been used as a painkiller for more extreme physical trauma like broken bones and childbirth, and the plant’s high calcium content makes it very popular for treating weak or damaged teeth. Coca also constricts blood vessels, making it extremely effective in slowing internal or bleeding. Studies have shown coca to be a beneficial treatment for ulcers, asthma, malaria, and overall longevity.

Mapacho
Synonyms: Nicotiana rustica

Mapacho is a tobacco plant that is cultivated and employed ceremoniously by almost every tribe of the Northwest Amazon during their ceremonies and other spiritual practices. Known as dé-oo-wé to the Witoto and ye’-ma to the Tariana, Mapacho is used for much more than simply smoking.

The tobacco leaves can be crushed and applied topically to disinfect wounds, reduce the inflammation of boils, heal sprains, and is even believed to prevent baldness. A juice can also be brewed from the plant to treat snake bites, chills, and clear parasites. As in most indigenous cultures of the Americas, tobacco is extremely sacred to the Amazonian tribes and is celebrated as one of the most powerful plants in the natural world.
The Medicinal Plants

The Amazon jungle is considered home to the world’s widest array of natural remedies. With over 40,000 known species of plants, this region of South America holds countless healing secrets, most of which have never been studied by Western science. The indigenous curanderos of the rainforest have spent thousands of years creating a word-of-mouth database of plants possessing medicinal qualities, and wield this encyclopedic knowledge with great precision and efficiency to treat all manner of ailments, from common toothaches to arthritis to cancer.

Many of these plants are available through various organic stores and websites. However, you should always consult with an experienced healer or holistic health expert before ordering or using any Amazonian medicinal plant, whether listed below or otherwise.

**Tahuari / Pau D’arco**

*Synonyms: *Tabebuia rosea  
*Patient(s) administered:* J.D.

A tree that is widely dispersed throughout South America, tahuari is a powerful immune booster that is traditionally used as an anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, and anti-parasitic agent. The bark of the tahuari is used to treat ailments such as urinary tract infections, diabetes, respiratory problems, ulcers, rheumatism, and in some cases, even cancer.

**Copaiba**

*Synonyms: *Copaifera, Jesuit’s balsam  
*Patient(s) administered:* Jessica

Copaiba, a tall, dense tree that grows abundantly in the tropics of...
South America, is used topically as a reliever of pain and inflammation, and as a disinfectant. Typically, the tree’s resin is harvested by drilling holes into its trunk and collecting the deposits that drip out, similar to maple syrup. Each tree yields an abundant amount of this resin - about 40 liters each year - without losing health or sustaining permanent damage.

Copaiba functions as a topical remedy for all manner of skin pain and irritation, from insect bites and rashes to various skin disorders, such as gonorrhea and psoriasis. It can also be ingested as a treatment for internal inflammation from urinary tract infections, stomach ulcers, swelling from Crohn’s disease, and other such symptoms.

Ajo Sacha
Synonyms: Mansoa alliacea, Pseudocalymma alliaceum
Patient(s) administered: All

Native to the Amazon Rainforest, this shrub-like vine gets its common name, ajo sacha, meaning “false garlic” in Spanish, from its strong resemblance to garlic in smell and taste. In fact, it is often used as an edible spice because of these qualities. Due to its pleasant, bright green appearance, it is also a common addition to decorative home gardens, both in South and North America.

In terms of its traditional medicinal uses, the plant is considered to be an anti-inflammatory treatment for all matter of general aches and pains, and is often used in conjunction with other herbal remedies in a poultice, or medicated bandage that is applied topically to a wound or external abscess. It can also be consumed as a decoction, or tea, and due to the antirheumatic and antimicrobial compounds in its bark, is a common remedy for arthritis pain, inflammation, bacterial infections, cold and flu, and even pneumonia.
Uña de Gato

Synonyms: U. tomentosa, Cat’s Claw
Patient(s) administered: Melinda, Gretchen, J.D., Jessica

With distribution across many areas of Central and South America, this large vine often grows high into the rainforest canopy, and gets its “Cat’s Claw” handle from the large thorns that grow along its length. While evidence suggests that Peru’s Ashaninka tribe has been using the plant the longest - at least 2,000 years - many other indigenous tribes are known to have used it.

Una de gato is known to be a powerful stimulant for the immune system, and thus has a wide variety of applications, from treating stomach illnesses to controlling inflammation of the digestive system and internal organs. Several tribes have also been known to use large doses of the plant as a form of contraception. A regimen of controlled consumption during periods of menstruation can cause sterility for several years.

Chuchuhuasi

Synonyms: Maytenus ebenifolia
Patient(s) administered: Gretchen, J.D.

The bark from this massive canopy tree can be used either for a decoction or a tincture, and has been used by many indigenous Amazon tribes for hundreds of years. It can be found growing canopy-height in rainforest regions of Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

Chuchuhuasi can be used in two ways: it can be combined as a synergist with other medicinal plants, or it can be used on its own to treat a variety of illnesses. It is considered to be an excellent remedy for rheumatism and arthritis, and can be used to relieve
all manner of general aches and pains, from muscle soreness to menstrual pain. When the chuchuhuasi bark is combined with sugarcane rum, it is also often sold as a popular jungle drink.

**Abuta**

*Synonyms: Barbasco, Cissampelos pariera*

*Patient(s) administered: J.D.*

Abuta is a tough, woody vine native to the jungles of Peru, Brazil, and Ecuador. Because of its lush leaves and large, inedible berries, the plant is often incorporated into decorative South American gardens. Western medicine has conducted extensive research into the alkaloids contained in the Abuta vine, most notably tetrandrine, which has been found to be effective as a pain reliever, muscle relaxant, and anti-inflammatory agent.

Given its reputation for being effective for women’s ailments in particular - including relieving menstrual cramps and excessive bleeding, as well as pre- and postnatal pain, and increasing fertility - many in South America refer to it as the midwives’ herb. It also has a wide range of other applications, from relieving digestive problems and internal bleeding, to use as a diuretic and analgesic. Virtually every part of the plant can be used.

**Aloe vera**

*Synonyms: Aloe barbadensis, True Aloe*

*Patient(s) administered: Jessica, Gretchen*

Aloe vera, a species of succulent plant, is one of the most widely used herbal remedies in the world, having been used both in its original, organic form, and as various synthetic extracts, for nearly two thousand years of recorded history. The species has been theorized to be native to the Mediterranean, though conflicting theories exist as to its original distribution. It has traveled across
Aloe vera has a gooey, slimy sap that can be scraped or squeezed from its porous leaves. The sap can be applied topically (by itself or as part of a mixture or poultice with other plants), for a variety of skin ailments. This clear, gel-like substance is known for having a cooling, soothing quality, and some research has shown it to be effective in accelerating the healing of wounds, rashes, and burns. Though it has a strong bitter taste, the sap or pulp made from the leaves can also be ingested as a powerful laxative. In recent years, aloe vera, sometimes referred to simply as “aloe”, has been synthesized in an array of forms within the cosmetic industry, including as a moisturizing agent for various creams and soaps.

**Sangre de Grado**
*Synonyms: Croton lechleri, Croton salutaris, Dragon’s Blood, Patient(s) administered: Jessica, Gretchen*

This moderate- to large-sized Amazonian tree has a thick red sap, which explains its name, translating literally to “blood of the dragon” in Spanish. This sap can be condensed into a resin, which has become one of the most commonly used natural remedies in all of South America, and synthesized versions of the resin have found their way into medicine cabinets around the world.

Sangre de grado can be used externally to treat skin injuries and conditions. Its biologically active lignan and alkaloid compounds, as well as its dense consistency, make it an excellent way to seal and protect scrapes, cuts, wounds, rashes, and insect bites, and accelerates healing in all of these conditions. The resin can also be consumed as a remedy for ulcers and internal inflammation, and is often associated with relieving diarrhea and other digestive...
symptoms associated with Crohn’s disease, cholera, and even AIDS.

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**Clavo Huasca**

*Synonyms: Tynnathus panurensis, Clove vine*

*Patient(s) administered: All*

A large vine that grows high into the canopy of the Amazon rainforest, clavo huasca gets its name (“clove vine” in Spanish) from the clove smell given off by the trunk, leaves, and tiny white flowers that sprout from the plant. Clavo Huasca is a very popular herbal remedy throughout South America and the world, known principally for being an aphrodisiac for both men and women, and a folk remedy for men’s impotence. One famous concoction involving the root is known as “Rompe Calzon”, which translates roughly in Spanish to “Bust Your Britches”.

Clavo huasca is known to be effective in several other applications, as well. Given its analgesic properties, a tincture made from the vine is commonly used to relieve pain from rheumatism and arthritis, muscle aches, and even fever. The sap from the plant’s root can be used to soothe toothaches. It is sometimes included as part of the traditional ayahuasca brew, due to its ability to soothe the stomach and regulate the digestive properties. Since ayahuasca is known to induce strong vomiting, diarrhea, and overwhelming nausea, clavo huasca can be employed to counteract or soften these effects.

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**Graviola**

*Synonyms: Annona macrocarpa, Guanabana, Soursop, Brazilian paw paw*

*Patient(s) administered: Melinda, John*

Sold in South American markets as the edible fruit guanabana, every part of the graviola tree is used in traditional Amazonian
medicine, each with its own healing properties. It has been the subject of much Western study for its antitumor and anticancer potential, as well as for a slew of its other healing properties.

The plant’s leaves, stem, bark, and seeds contain a novel set of chemicals, known as “annonaceous acetogenins”, that have been tested and proven to be toxic against certain types of cancer cells, while leaving healthy cells untouched. Its fruit has been shown to kill worms and other intestinal parasites, while the oil from its fruit and leaves can be mixed with olive oil to treat arthritis pain.

Amazonian Clay
Synonyms: Montmorillonite, Pascalite, Bentonite, Patient(s) administered: Melinda

Certain kinds of earthy, absorbent Amazon clay are known to be rich in minerals and extremely beneficial in alleviating a variety of internal digestive conditions, ranging from food poisoning and allergies to viral infections and stomach parasites.

Fossil records of primitive Amazon tribes show that clay was consumed to treat common stomach conditions, and its use continues today to enhance enzyme production and absorb harmful toxins in the body.

Chanca Piedra
Synonyms: Phyllanthus carolinianus, stone breaker Patient(s) administered: Gretchen, John

Rich in phytochemicals and widely known for its ability to eliminate gallstones and kidney stones, this small herb is capable of treating a variety of stomach and liver conditions. The indigenous peoples of South America have used chanca piedra to treat hepatitis, jaun-
dice, UTI’s, dysentery, prostatitis, and liver cancer, among many others.

Due to its wide range of applications, the plant has been the subject of much Western medical research, and has been proven in numerous studies to be effective in the treatment of a variety of common ailments, leading to its availability in recent years in many pharmacies across South America.

**Pampo Oregano**
*Synonyms: Scientific classification unknown, Patient(s) administered: Juan*

This flowering shrub grows in the tropical regions of Central and South America, often close to rivers and wetlands. The essential oil of the pampo oregano is used to alleviate symptoms of depression, hysteria, dizziness, and epilepsy. It has also been used to treat heart palpitations.
A Note From the Authors/Filmmakers

*The Sacred Science* documentary was conceived and created out of a profound sense of wonder and curiosity, and the opportunity to learn and participate in these ancient practices has been an incredible, once-in-a-lifetime experience for every member of our crew and extended team. However, another major motivating factor behind this project has been a genuine desire to spread this knowledge, and to give the familiar and the uninitiated alike an unprecedented glimpse at these revered healing traditions, which have remained hidden from the vast majority of the world’s population for centuries.

We hope that the documentary, this eBook, and our website (www.thesacredscience.com) will spark your interest and curiosity as the curanderos first sparked ours. We will be updating the website regularly with new media and resources to serve as an interactive hub for Amazon healing information.

This is only the beginning!

Un abrazo,

*The Sacred Science* Team