PART TWO

LOCAL LIVELIHOODS AND TOURIST ENCOUNTERS
For the past fifteen years, women from the mountain communities of the Pisaq district have been coming to the village on market days so that tourists can take their pictures. These women (sacamefotos) pose as ‘authentic’ people who present a certain, essentialized aspect of the cultural heritage. By using certain cultural presentations and artefacts these women try to make some money to improve their living conditions and to send their children to school in order that they will have a better future than their mothers. In this paper, I analyse how these comuneras¹ present themselves to tourists (‘frontstage’) and the processes that occur when tourists are not around (‘backstage’). At the local level in Pisaq, there is a lively discourse surrounding these sacamefotos, which is very important to the system of giving meaning for both Piseños² and sacamefotos.

Another interesting phenomenon in this region is that nowadays women from the mountain communities sell their weavings (tejidos) directly to tourists instead of selling them to Piseño market dwellers, as they did in the past. These tejedoras (weavers) are quite successful but the question is whether their performance on the frontstage contributes to better living conditions and higher self-esteem. The aim of this article is to provide an insight into the societal consequences and cultural outcomes of tourism in a Peruvian Andean context. The article is based on an analysis of sacamefotos, tejedoras and tejedora-sacamefotos at the two most visited tourist sites in Pisaq: the marketplace and the ruins.³

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¹ People from the mountains communities are called comuneros (males) or comuneras (females).
² The inhabitants of Pisaq are known as Piseños (males) or Piseñas (females).
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