Public Abstract

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In this paper, I examine the continuing coloniality that exists in Cusco, Peru. Through examining the tourism industry, specifically looking at the subcategory of spiritual tourism, it is evident that colonial structures, most notably the colonial hierarchy of people continues. Within this hierarchy, elites continue to maintain control over the indigenous population. Separation between spiritual tourists, stakeholders in the spiritual tourism industry and the indigenous population operates on a hierarchical scale where the indigenous groups are subjugated to the bottom of the hierarchy. Contemporary spiritual tourism propagates this colonial hierarchical system through signifying what it means to be Quechua. To demonstrate this contemporary hierarchical system, I look to historical records and my own ethnographic research. Specifically, by looking at the case studies of the Centro Qosqo de Arte Native, the Civic Parade and Inti Raymi festival, spiritual retreats and treks to Machu Picchu. Ultimately, while the spiritual tourism industry signifies what it means to be Quechua, this signification does not imply that Quechua communities have no agency within this industry. Rather, individual contest and reject their signification through acts of silence, reclaiming loaded terminology and maintaining their own self-defined identity.