



Collective Statement from the *Curanderos* and *Curanderas* of North Peru on the State of Conservation of the San Pedro Cactus, their Traditional Knowledge, and the Use of Wild San Pedro by Foreigners

Huachuma, or San Pedro, is a sacred plant for the Indigenous and mestizo communities of northern Peru (Tumbes, Piura, Lambayeque, La Libertad, Cajamarca, Amazonas, Ancash, and Lima). **The knowledge and traditional uses of the cactus have been declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Nation by the Ministry of Culture of Peru.** With a presence of 10,600 years in Andean cultural history, the cactus has been fundamental to the traditional medicine of ancient cultures in an uninterrupted lineage to the present.

San Pedro grows wild in the Andes of central and northern Peru, where dozens of varieties with distinct cultural relationships have been identified. San Pedro has been cultivated since pre-colonial times, and the plants grow easily from cuttings and seeds. Today, the spineless varieties are cultivated throughout Peru as protectors and guardians.

The Peruvian Ministry of the Environment considers the two main species of San Pedro, *Echinopsis pachanoi* and *Echinopsis peruviana*, to be “endangered.” Experts have known about the cactus’s conservation issues since at least 2006, although written reports of its decline date back to 1981. Despite the efforts of local and regional governments, the overharvesting of these plants continues.

The principal threat to wild plants is human overexploitation. Other important factors affecting their populations are cattle grazing and agriculture; mining and infrastructure development; and climate change.

San Pedro cacti have extremely specific water, temperature, and elevation requirements, which means that their wild habitats in the Andes are small and fragmented. From our investigations over the past 5 years, we estimate that **less than ¼ of San Pedro's wild habitats in Peru are still well-stocked.**

Currently, most of the San Pedro cactus ingested in and around Cusco is collected using unsustainable practices from wild areas in Lima and Ancash. Furthermore, these **wild stocks are the main source of exported San Pedro.** The trade of fresh plants in Peru and their dried form, commonly called “San Pedro powder” or “San Pedro chips,” exploits the Indigenous communities of these areas. With an average price of just \$3 USD per dry kilo, the cactus is being cut unsustainably while its communities of origin live in extreme poverty.



Meanwhile, historical overexploitation in northern Peru has led to the near extinction of the San Pedro cactus in many habitats, leaving traditional healers with no connection to their ancestral plants. Increasingly, they are forced to use cultivated plants or plants brought from other localities, which breaks their connection with the spirits of the land, a connection that for 4,000 years has been mediated by the reciprocal relationship with their local wild San Pedro.

Huachuma Collective (Colectivo Huachuma) is an alliance of community leaders, curanderos, and curanderas from across the endemic habitat of San Pedro, who work together to protect, conserve, and regenerate cactus populations while uplifting Andean communities economically and spiritually.

We are a Peru-based non-profit association in the process of becoming a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Our projects include donating plants to Indigenous communities, creating a seed bank, supporting elderly healers, and educating children about their cultural history with the plant. You can find our full constitution at huachumacollective.org.

1. Huachuma Collective calls on practitioners of San Pedro ceremonies in Peru and around the world to **stop using wild San Pedro and instead start cultivating the plant *en masse*** from cuttings and seeds.
2. Huachuma Collective calls on practitioners of San Pedro ceremonies in Peru and around the world to **recognize and honor the Andean communities of North Peru as the traditional guardians of the medicine**, past and present, and to **engage in reciprocity with those communities by giving back financially**.
3. Huachuma Collective **opposes the use of commercial “San Pedro powder” or “San Pedro chips,” which exploits Andean communities and does not represent a sacred harvest or an honorable use of wild San Pedro**.

The people who benefit from Huachuma have a responsibility to the plant and to the traditional peoples who have been forgotten in the gold rush of psychedelic tourism.

Signed,

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Chiclayo, Lambayeque

Jaen, Cajamarca

Pisac, Sacred Valley, Cusco

Carhuaz, Ancash

Cusco, Cusco

[In progress]



Resources:

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Links:

HuachumaCollective.org

Instagram & Facebook: @huachuma.collective

Colectivo Huachuma is a Peruvian Non-Profit Association based in Lima, registered in Public Records with RUC #20610749659.