

Chullachaqui

In the jungle of Peru, in the warm city of Iquitos, when I was a child and it was late at night, my mother used to come to my bedroom and tell me that Chullachaqui would come and take me if I didn't sleep early. I used to panic and hide under my blankets just waiting to fall asleep.

All my life, I have spent thinking that Chullachaqui was real and that it was the devil of our jungle. But, now that I am an adult person, I see things differently. Because, recently, I have visited the jungle after thousands of years and heard local stories again, being one of these about Chullachaqui.

And I was told that in the deepest jungle where the green color of the trees contrasts with the blue of the sky, given life by the strong rays of the sun, near a river full of fish, dolphins and crocodiles, lives a happy tribe.

A tribe with generous men, women, and children who respect their mother jungle. The people of the tribe live in absolute harmony with our mother nature, they respect every creature of the jungle. The tribe lives in short grasslands with houses made of mud and roofs made of palm leaves.

Once on a normal day near the tribe by the river, strange white men appeared. They looked humble and had good manners, so they were received warmly and happily by the tribe. The chief of the tribe welcomed them and they were given land to live in the jungle among them.

When the strangers felt comfortable and self-confident, they showed themselves as they were. Their real intentions were to take the land, cut down the trees, and sell them as wood, they also scared away animals, contaminated the water of the river, had no respect for our mother jungle and didn't care the damage they caused to the tribe and the ecosystem.

The chief of the tribe who represented his people talked to the strangers and asked them to show respect to nature and the customs; however, the intruders didn't care about the claim of the tribe. The intruders threatened them with guns and tried to kill them. The people of the tribe were unfortunate because they believed in the strangers' good intentions. In the following days, they tried once and once again to give a solution to the problem, but the intruders just kept doing the same bad things to the tribe and nature.

The people of the tribe didn't know what to do to stop the things that were happening to them. One night, they were called for a meeting to expose their ideas to solve the problem they were facing. The ideas came up and the oldest man of the tribe stood up in the middle of the meeting, by the fire, and said that he had the solution. He said that he had a friend who lived deep in the jungle and it would be a pleasure for him to help them. The chief of the tribe asked the old man who his friend was and he answered that it was his friend, Chullachaqui.

They were surprised by the announcement of the oldest man, so the chief organized a small crew to look for Chullachaqui. The following night, they went into the jungle during the darkest night, the path was scary and after hours of walking, they found a big renaco, a kind of tree in the amazon.

This big tree had huge roots, a strong trunk, and enormous leaves that inspired respect and fear at the same time. The old man felt like they were in the correct place and with a strong voice he shouted, “Chullachaqui, Chullachaqui, Chullachaqui...” The renaco trembled itself and its leaves fell down. Immediately, Chullachaqui appeared. It was an entity from the jungle that looked like a human person. He was a short strong man with big muscles, green skin, demon eyes, a big hawked nose, and a permanent sarcastic smile. His limbs were like the roots of a tree. But there was something in particular about him, his left leg seemed to be the leg of a horse. The three men that were with the old man stared at it astonishingly.

Chullachaqui asked the old man how he could help him, and he started to tell it about the problem they had with the strangers in their land. Chullachaqui responded to his requirement by nodding his head in affirmation. He told them to wait a couple of days because he had some things to do first. The crew agreed and came back home disappearing in the middle of the jungle. The following day, the crew arrived at their tribe and told the people the agreement. Meanwhile, the intruders kept on cutting down trees, killing every creature in the jungle and deforestating with no feeling of guilt.

One night from the deepest part of the jungle, an evil smile shook people. It was heard by everybody, especially by the intruders, they felt scared.

In the following days, Chullachaqui, as a magic entity that could appear everywhere, took the appearance of the strangers, and found a way to convince the intruders to follow him towards some areas of the jungle. When they noticed that it was a bad entity who was guiding them, they

shouted bad words and cursed him. But it was too late, Chullachaqui disappeared, leaving them trapped in the middle of big trees with thorns, being impossible for them to go back home without hurting themselves. The intruders thought that the people of the tribe practiced witchcraft against them, so they planned to attack the tribe with guns and machetes. When the intruders started to attack the tribe, Chullachaqui called all the animals of the jungle. Jaguars, pythons, birds, crocodiles, insects especially ants attended Chullachaqui's call and fought against the intruders', trying to protect the people of the tribe. Birds pecked the intruders' heads, jaguars scratched them all, ants stung them, and pythons strangle them. As soon as the intruders started going away, the jungle covered all paths causing the intruders to lose their way. While the intruders were running away, they heard Chullachaqui's evil laughing voice.

On the next day, the rain started falling and cured all the wounds left by the intruders. The land grew up again, animals came back, and all pollution had gone. The tribe got the life they used to have before the intruders arrived. Eventually, intruders wanted to come back to the tribe's lands again but they could not find the way because Chullachaqui had erased the traces. People of the tribe got their happy lives in harmony with nature, and they would always have the support of Chullachaqui to protect their lands. At present, sometimes, the people of the tribe listen to the Chullachaqui's evil smile and feel calm.

So, now I have another concept of this evil that protects our jungle against intruders. However, Chullachaqui occasionally takes women into the jungle and people never see them again. It is said that they become Chullachaqui's wives.

Adapted and translated By
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Figure 6. *Saint Peter's procession in Miguel Grau port*