

## **Ayahuasca and Globalization**

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March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011

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### *Introduction*

Curious, I open the seat pocket in front of me looking for something to read. The front cover of Delta airline's November 2010 issue of *Sky* reads "Find Yourself in India, Arizona, Peru, or Hawaii." I did my field research in Peru, so I'm suspicious—something smells of ayahuasca. An article titled "Drink Up and Look Within" spans pages 70-71. Senior *Sky* writer Steve Marsh describes his experience at an ayahuasca lodge in Iquitos, Peru, he read about in *National Geographic Adventure* (Salak 03/2006) and *The New York Times* (Isaacson 10/13/2010). The lodge, Blue Morpho, is run by a Californian man named Hamilton Souther, a blonde-haired blue-eyed master shaman with a bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Colorado at Boulder. This is surprising. Ayahuasca is a plant medicine traditionally consumed only by a number of Indigenous Amazonian peoples. A Californian ayahuasca shaman featured in a globally distributed in-flight magazine is evidence that ayahuasca is being globalized.

### *Statement of Purpose*

This essay explores the globalization of ayahuasca, a plant medicine endemic to the Amazon basin. I do not propose that ayahuasca has attained a status of 'globalized,' but rather that it is involved deeply with a continuing process of globalization. In order to show this, I describe elements of contemporary ayahuasca culture and recount the history of ayahuasca's globalization.

This is a study of a contemporary phenomenon. As such, it contributes fresh research to the scholarly bodies of work on ayahuasca, globalization and indigenous religious practices as a whole.

### *Methodology*

In order to understand the history of ayahuasca's globalization we must first explore some of the elements involved. These include: the relationship between Indigenous and Western cultures, ayahuasca itself, shamanism, globalization, and my own previous field research. I explore issues inherent in the globalization of ayahuasca such as commodification, cultural appropriation, and ayahuasca's legality. I discuss changes in the use and meaning of ayahuasca and explore implications of its popularity. In conclusion, I recount the history of ayahuasca's globalization, revisiting my hypothesis.

The information used in this essay has been obtained from sources reflecting the diversity of the subject matter. These include: personal observations and ethnographic narratives from my fieldwork in Peru; articles from peer-reviewed journals such as *Anthropology of Consciousness*, *American Anthropologist*, and the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*; scholarly reviews and anthologies; published ethnographies; articles from lay publications; formal and informal travelogues and memoirs; U.S. and international drug laws; documents from court cases involving ayahuasca; statements issued by indigenous organizations, and electronic media such as television programs, videos, and websites. Rather than separately reviewing the literature, I have embedded it within the narrative of the essay.

Anthropological studies of contemporary phenomenon benefit from drawing information from diverse sources—though articles in lay publications may be academically unsound they can be used as cultural texts, and are important in determining

the popular history of a subject. In this case, we benefit from the rich diversity of information available on ayahuasca. Even the academic world is being flooded with it: Labate (et al. 2010) comments on the addition of an Ayahuasca track to the 2010 Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) conference due to the overwhelming number of submissions on the subject.

### *Presentation of Fieldwork*

During fall semester of 2009 I attended a School for International Training (SIT) field school in Cusco, Peru with the theme of ‘Indigenous Peoples and Globalization.’ The semester culminated in a month-long independent study project, which I presented in a forty-page paper and a thirty-minute presentation both delivered in Spanish. My independent study project, titled *Chamanismo y la Globalización*, focused on the dialogue between globalization and Peruvian shamanism. The field research I conducted for the project is the inspiration for this study, and primary evidence of ayahuasca’s globalization.

For a field-based case study I spent seven days (10/11-10/18) in the Matsiguenga village of Santa Rosa de Huacaria, near to the town of Pillcopata in the Madre de Dios region of the Amazon rainforest, conducting interviews with their resident shaman Alberto Manquiriapa. His narrative exemplifies the increasingly globalized nature of ayahuasca shamanism: with the aid of the organization CEDIA (Center for the Development of Indigenous Amazonians) he has brought ayahuasca throughout Europe and the United States, performing ceremonies in locations as diverse as Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Geneva, Paris, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and Stonehenge.

Manquiriapa regularly returns home, spending most of his time in Santa Rosa de Huacaria. He is a central figure in the community, schoolteacher, radio operator, and mediator between the Matsiguenga and the world at large. He performs Ayahuasca ceremonies for both community members and foreigners. For example, he makes irregular trips up the Manu road to perform ceremonies at a hostel named Atalaya. While staying at the hostel Atalaya, both before and after Santa Rose de Huacaria, I interviewed several young adults from the United States and Europe who had consumed his Ayahuasca. All spoke highly of both him and his brew. Additionally, during my fieldwork stay, a couple from Holland came to Pillcopata searching for Ayahuasca, but, wanting a bargain, they ultimately declined Manquiriapa's price.

#### *Relationship Between Indigenous and Western Cultures*

The reality of the historical relationship between Indigenous and Western cultures contains undeniable darkness. Though the two cultures and their contemporary hybrids may come from the same origin, their relationship is like that of the biblical brothers Cain and Abel (*King James Bible*, Genesis 4:1-9). As Cain is the cultivator so is the West; as Cain kills Abel so Western people have systematically murdered, enslaved, oppressed, and abused indigenous people for hundreds of years. The globalization of ayahuasca is the globalization of an indigenous cultural practice. Ideally, the practice translates intact, contributing to the conservation of indigenous culture. But it often falls short, victim of cultural appropriation and re-interpretation. Often it offers no just recompense to indigenous peoples.

The globalization of ayahuasca treads on bloody ground, but it may have a positive effect. Global demand for ayahuasca and its shamans can generate income for indigenous peoples, while global interests in indigenous culture can inspire cultural revitalization. Financial capital from around the globe is funneled towards conservation efforts. However, cultural revitalization can be biased—meanings of indigenous are re-interpreted and re-made according to foreign desires (Davidov 2010:392). Demand for specific and culturally constructed forms of indigenous authenticity can change indigenous practices. Conservation efforts can be misguided, bureaucratically disconnected, and ineffective on the ground level.

There is a grand mystery to the cultural history of the Amazon basin. The idea that it contains only primitive tribes with diverse practices may be culturally constructed, contrary to historical reality. The rainforest is a highly dynamic environment where natural site formation processes work at an accelerated pace, quickly obscuring the archaeological record. Fortunately, some archaeological evidence has been found. Grann (2009) discusses evidence of sophisticated cultures with large, dense populations thriving in the pre-Colombian Amazon. Unfortunately, they collapsed rapidly. Indigenous populations in the Amazon were decimated by epidemics brought in by European invaders during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Luna and Amaringo 1991:9-12). In the Upper Amazonian region containing the lower Huallaga and Pastaza rivers the human population went from more than 10 million to less than 106,500 from 1654-1655 (1991:9). The nature of Amazonian civilization before the arrival of European invaders remains largely a mystery.

More recently, the social and geographical upheavals of the Rubber Boom (1879-1912) and its revival (1942-1945) caused widespread population loss and cultural change among indigenous people (Davis 1997:203). Deforestation due to logging, cattle ranching, and natural gas extraction continues to encroach on indigenous territories. Tourism may threaten the cultural integrity and traditional livelihood strategies of Amazonian indigenous peoples. It may also, however, encourage cultural conservation.

Cultural conservation is crucial. Indigenous cultures are rapidly disappearing. In Brazil, more than eighty-seven groups have gone extinct within the last century (Luna and Amaringo 1991:9). The best indicator may be the rate at which languages are becoming extinct, which the *National Geographic Society's* Enduring Voices project averages as one every fourteen days (Enduring Voices 2011).

Indigenous people are integrated into modern culture at the bottom of the social pyramid, where their cultural heritage is disregarded. Deprecating labels oversimplify their religious practices, and their central religious figure is debased by criticism.

The globalization of ayahuasca may provide some benefits to Indigenous Amazonian peoples. It propagates one of their most effective medicines, provides indigenous people with a means of income, and inspires the conservation of indigenous traditions.

### *Ayahuasca*

Ayahuasca is a psychoactive plant mixture made by a number of Amazonian indigenous peoples for thousands of years. Anthropologist Luis Eduardo Luna identifies seventy-two Amazonian tribes that use or have used it (1986:Appendix I). Naranjo



discusses archaeological evidence of ayahuasca use from a drinking vessel from the site Valdivia in Ecuador dating to at least 2000 B.C.E. (1979:121-4). Oral histories from Amazonian indigenous peoples date the practice even earlier. Creation myths from the Tukano in the northwest Amazon date it to the beginning of time (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975).

Luna also identifies forty-two different names for the ayahuasca mixture (1986:Appendix II). The most common name, ayahuasca, comes from the Quechua word *ayawaska*. Quechua is an indigenous language spoken today throughout the western Amazon and the Andes, official language of both Bolivia and Peru. In Quechua, *ayawaska* means “vine of souls” (from *aya*, ‘spirit’ and *waska*, ‘vine’). The first reference of the word ‘ayahuasca’ in Western literature comes from the Jesuit missionary Pablo Maroni in 1737 (Patiño 1963:196). Common synonyms include *yagé* in the Colombian Amazon, *caapi* in the Brazilian Amazon (Patiño 1963:195), and *la medicina* (the medicine) or *la purga* (the purge) in contemporary Ayahuasca consumption circles in Peru. The latter name, *la purga*, echoes the Ashaninka name for ayahuasca, *kamarampi*, from the verb *kamarank*, meaning ‘to vomit’ (Narby 1999:7). Members of the syncretic ayahuasca church Santo Daime refer to the mixture simply as *daime*, meaning ‘give me,’ as in the prayer ‘give me light, give me strength, give me wisdom’ (Panner 2008). Notably, while *ayahuasca* is the term most commonly used, it is also externally imposed—Quechua originates in the Andes, so names such as *kamarampi* could precede *ayahuasca* by hundreds or thousands of years.

### *Pharmacology and Ingredients*

Ayahuasca can contain a wide variety of plants. Alberto Manquiriapa's mixture contained twelve plants. Most commonly, however, it contains two, boiled together for several hours, even days. The first is a liana, or vine, known as Ayahuasca, and the second is a shrub known as Chacrana. In the Linnean taxonomic system, the liana is *Banisteriopsis caapi*, though other species of *Banisteriopsis* are also used (Schultes et al. 1992). The shrub is *Psychotria viridis*. The leaves of the Chacrana shrub and the bark of the Ayahuasca vine are used to make ayahuasca.

The two plants are a dynamic duo containing complementary chemicals. "One wonders how," writes Harvard ethnobotanist Richard Evans Schultes (1992:126), "peoples in primitive societies, with no knowledge of chemistry of physiology, ever hit upon a solution to the activation of an alkaloid by a monoamine oxidase inhibitor. Pure experimentation? Perhaps not."

The alkaloid Schultes references is N,N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT), a powerful psychoactive compound and neurotransmitter similar in structure to serotonin. It is manufactured by *Psychotria viridis*. DMT exists widely in nature and is produced by the human pineal gland during religious experiences, near-death experiences, psychosis, and REM sleep (Strassman 2001:75). Rick Strassman M.D. is the first and only researcher ever licensed to study the effects of DMT on human subjects in a clinical setting. The profound results of the study led him to propose that the DMT alkaloid provides part of the biological basis for the religious experience. He dubs it 'the Spirit Molecule' (Strassman 2001:77). As part of the biological basis for the religious experience, DMT

may be a key ingredient in shamanic ecstasy, the soul flight described by Mircea Eliade (1951).

*Banisteriopsis caapi* manufactures several Monoamine Oxidase inhibitors (MAOis), which inhibit an enzyme (MAO) made by the human body for the deactivation of neurotransmitters. The pharmaceutical industry uses MAOis as a class of antidepressant medications, prescribed regularly in the treatment of clinical depression (Thase et al. 1995). In denaturing MAO, MAOis enable the body to absorb the DMT alkaloid unhindered.

Several other combinations of DMT and MAOi-containing plants other than *B. caapi* and Chacruna can be used to make ayahuasca. One popular combination is the bark of *Mimosa hostilis* and the seeds of *Peganum harmala* (Schultes et al. 1992:139). For a comprehensive list of MAOi and DMT containing plants that can be substituted for *B. caapi* and Chacruna see ethnobotanist Jonathon Ott's *Ayahuasca Analogues* (1994).

My use of the term ayahuasca is nonspecific; it includes the standard recipe as well as its variations.

### *Effects*

Understanding the effects of ayahuasca is integral to understanding its widespread appeal. Its varying names and ingredients illustrate the spectrum of its effects, which range from vomiting to healing to visions and religious experiences.

The vomiting, often accompanied by diarrhea, can be seen as a way to expel toxins and parasites from the body. Popular author Daniel Pinchbeck, a central figure in contemporary shamanic counterculture, illustrates: "It was like I was a computer and

ayahuasca was a program performing scans and repairs. When it had done its work, I threw up—the vomiting was like the beep at the end of a program” (2002:139). From a Classical perspective, this vomiting can be understood as catharsis, from the Greek *kathairein*, meaning “to purify, to purge.” Cathartic medicine has a deep history. There is evidence of chimpanzees self-medicating for gastrointestinal infections and parasites with cathartic plants such as *Aspilia mosambicensis* in Mahale Mountains National Park, Tanzania (Huffman 1997). The chimpanzees use the plants for their visceral and physical rather than their subtle and chemical effects; cathartic medicine is visibly effective.

In popular discourse, ayahuasca’s cathartic effect translates as detox, as in *Extreme Celebrity Detox: Peru* (02/16/2005), a television show featuring celebrities drinking ayahuasca as a rehabilitative treatment. Focusing on ayahuasca’s rehabilitative effects, a French physician by the name of Jaques Mapit founded Takiwasi, a shamanic healing center, in Peru in 1992. Takiwasi uses primarily ayahuasca, alongside other indigenous medicines, in the treatment of drug addiction (Mapit 1994). Today, one in five of Takiwasi’s inpatients are from outside of Peru (Takiwasi 2011).

In many cases, ayahuasca is constructed as a medicine. Medicine, however, may be an externally imposed meaning. “Shamans in the Upper Amazon,” writes Beyer (2009:1), “do not drink ayahuasca to heal; they drink ayahuasca to get information—as Cocama shaman don Juan Curico puts it, ‘to screen the disease and to search [for] treatment.’” Writing the brew off as a medicine could deny the validity of the indigenous perspective. It also may cut one off from utilizing its full potential.

A western doctor may consider ayahuasca to be a medicine (Riba and Barbanoj 2005), but Alberto Manquiriapa considers it to be a doctor. Swiss anthropologist Jeremy

Narby willingly suspends his disbelief, taking the indigenous perspective seriously. He opens his ethnography, *The Cosmic Serpent* (1999), with the following anecdote: “The first time an Ashaninka man told me that he had learned the medicinal properties of plants by drinking a hallucinogenic brew, I thought he was joking... “One learns these things by drinking ayahuasca,” he said” (1999:1). His hypothesis is that indigenous shamans consume ayahuasca in order to communicate directly with plants themselves, which enables them to gather extensive botanical knowledge.

One explanation may be the following: the indigenous relationship with nature, explained Shuar Velasquez of the Shuar (Jívaro), comes from a subject-subject perspective, while the occidental relationship with nature comes from a subject-object perspective—thus the native defines the forest as a crowd with whom one can engage in dialogue, while the early U.S. Forest Service surveyor defined it as a resource; an object with which one cannot communicate (Velasquez 10/10/2009). In the diverse botanical complex of the Amazon a subject-subject perspective may be instrumental in information gathering. Trial and error can be painstaking, even deadly. The technique of trial and error, however, is much more acceptable to the scientific mind than direct communication with plants.

The first biomedical investigation of ayahuasca was conducted in the summer of 1993 by an international consortium of scientists from Brazil, the United States, and Finland. They studied long-term ayahuasca use in Brazil among adult members of the syncretic ayahuasca religion União de Vegetal (UDV) (McKenna et al. 1998). Their study, the Hoasca Project, yielded a variety of interesting results. Most notably, it found that long-term ayahuasca use led to an increase in the number of platelet cell serotonin

uptake sites in the user (Callaway et al. 1994). In other words, long-term ayahuasca use causes the body to naturally uptake serotonin in higher quantities. A neurotransmitter, serotonin plays an important role in the regulation of depression.

The results of the Hoasca Project provide a biomedical framework for understanding the healing experience of journalist Kira Salak, author of the popular *National Geographic Adventure* ayahuasca article. After describing deeply personal visions involving a rescue of her inner child from a pit of flames, she reports: “The next morning, I discovered the impossible: The severe depression that had ruled my life since childhood had miraculously vanished” (Salak 2006:1). This essay does not suggest that ayahuasca is a definitive cure for depression. As clinical psychiatrist Thomas Kosten states, people with depression and other mental disorders have a high risk of adverse events occurring from ayahuasca consumption (Kosten 2008:6).

In “Ayahuasca and Cancer: One Man’s Experience” (Topping 1998) a doctor and late president of the Hawai’ian Drug Policy Forum reported in the MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) bulletin that ayahuasca had caused his metastasized colonic cancer to go into remission. The next year, he followed up with a postscript confirming his health. Unfortunately, he died of the same cancer in 2003. In a similar healing narrative, but without the unfortunate ending, nonfiction author Robert Tindall describes the elimination of a brain tumor by an indigenous shaman using ayahuasca in a lodge near Iquitos (Tindal 2008: 188-193).

Though ayahuasca’s medicinal qualities are much celebrated, its visionary effects are central to its appeal. Visions appeal to the postmodern mind, trained through the dominant medium of visual information transfer to respond most to visual stimuli

(McLuhan and Fiore 1967). The ayahuasca experience is a visual, or visionary, experience.

Ayahuasca is often classified as a hallucinogen. However, in the language of contemporary scholarship, the term entheogen is preferred. From a Greek word meaning ‘generating the divine within,’ entheogen was coined in 1979 as a preferable substitute for ‘hallucinogenic’ or ‘psychedelic’ (Ruck et al 1979). Ruck (1979) criticizes the use term hallucinogen because of its *a priori* assumption that the visions produced during intoxication are illusory or false. The initial substitute for hallucinogenic, ‘psychedelic,’ carries heavy associations with 1960’s drug subcultures and artistic movements. Thus, the label entheogen takes center stage, conveying, without excess baggage, the decidedly spiritual nature of ayahuasca’s effects.

As ‘entheogen’ suggests, the visions caused by ayahuasca can have religious themes. In *Fishers of Men: The Gospel of an Ayahuasca Vision Quest* (2010:72-80), Adam Elenbass, a contemporary agent of ayahuasca’s globalization, reports seeing Jesus on multiple occasions. Elenbass is the founder of the web magazine Reality Sandwich (RealitySandwich.com), which is a hub for the contemporary neo-shamanic culture. The Reality Sandwich newsletter regularly advertises “Medicine Retreats” involving multiple-day ayahuasca ceremonies administered by indigenous shamans in eco-lodges in Central and South America. Theirs is but one tour in the greater emergent phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism discussed by Dobkin de Ríos (1994) and more recently, Fotiou (2010), Davidov (2010), and Holman (2011). The religious themes in ayahuasca visions, and the religious or spiritual nature of the ayahuasca experience, helped inspire the creation of ayahuasca religions, which I will discuss at a later point in this essay.

At times, ayahuasca visions do not feature religious symbols at all. Though the visionary experience itself may be considered a spiritual experience, some argue that the content of the visions is individually specific. Dobkin de Ríos (1994) explains that people from different cultural backgrounds or people in different geographic locations have fundamentally different ayahuasca experiences. This echoes Leary's (et al. 1964) idea that the two variables of mind-set and setting ultimately determine the nature of the psychedelic experience.

Shanon (2002), countering the hypotheses of Dobkin de Ríos and Leary, argues that many aspects of the ayahuasca experience transcend cultural and geographic differences. Certainly the vomiting is common, but there are also visionary themes, suggesting the presence of Platonic ideals or the meta-cultural psychological archetypes described by Carl Jung (Krippner 2000).

In 1999 a mestizo shaman and painter, Pablo Amaringo, published accurate depictions of the visionary world of ayahuasca in large color paintings with the aid of Colombian anthropologist Luis Eduardo Luna. Amaringo had a certifiably photographic memory and an uncanny artistic talent for painting landscapes, making his images highly detailed and potentially verifiable (Luna & Amaringo 1991). Independently verifiable details support the idea that aspects of ayahuasca's visionary world transcend culture. Psychologist Stanley Krippner (2000) discusses how the content of Amaringo's paintings was recognizable to a wide survey of ayahuasca consumers. Amaringo was a key agent in ayahuasca's globalization. He made the visionary world of ayahuasca easily accessible to the visually oriented lay public, appealing to the "see it to believe it" ethic.



### *Usage*

The use of ayahuasca has been widespread among indigenous people in the Amazon Basin for thousands of years. Tribes in which ayahuasca use has been studied most include: the Tukano, the Jívaro, the Matsigenka, the Shipibo-Conibo, and the Kofán (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975; Harner 1990; Narby 1999; Davis 1997). See Luna (1986:Appendix I) for a comprehensive list. Most of these tribes live in the Upper Amazon.

The Kofán, living in what is now the Colombian Amazon, traditionally consumed ayahuasca for many reasons. The diversity of their usage is illustrated by the following quote from Harvard ethnobotanist and National Geographic explorer-in-residence Wade Davis:

When Schultes asked the shaman how often the people drank Yagé his response suggested the question had no meaning; during illness, of course, and in the wake of death; in times of need or hardship; at certain passages in life; when a young boy of six has his initial haircut or when he kills for the first time. And naturally, the shaman suggested, a youth will drink Yagé at puberty...as a young man he may drink it at his leisure to improve his hunting technique or simply to flaunt his physical prowess. The message that Schultes received was that the Kofán took Yagé whenever they felt like it—at least once a week and no doubt on any occasion that warranted it (Davis 1996:226).

The Kofán's democratic attitude towards ayahuasca is echoed by the attitudes of other tribes, who use it to treat common ailments such as stomachache or *dolor de huesos*, literally “bone-pain,” as well as to improve hunting prowess (Patiño 1963:198).

The great explorer Richard Spruce observed that it was the “principal medicine” on the eastern slopes of the Andes (1908:438). Such a definition points toward informality and egalitarianism in traditional ayahuasca consumption. It also points toward the commonality of ayahuasca consumption in the Upper Amazon. As the principal medicine it was probably used frequently, and to treat all kinds of ailments.

Today, some Amazonian indigenous groups still use Ayahuasca in an egalitarian fashion. The Ashaninka describe ayahuasca as “the television of the forest” (Narby 1999:11). In the documentary *Other Worlds: A Journey Into the Heart of Shipibo Shamanism* (2004) French filmmaker Jan Kounen shows a Shipibo-Conibo ayahuasca ceremony in which nearly the whole tribe drinks the brew, the elderly and children included. The Shipibo-Conibo, living near Iquitos, are relatively famous for their ayahuasca. Their deep connection with it is evident in their line-pattern artwork. It resembles the kind of geometrical patterns one sees on ayahuasca, and can encode shamanic songs, or *icaros*. Thus, a trained Shipibo-Conibo person can literally sing the pattern woven into a blanket much like a piano player can sing sheet music (Luna and White 2001:82).

New forms of ayahuasca use have arisen among indigenous people as ayahuasca has been globalized. Alongside administering ayahuasca to their local communities, indigenous shamans also administer it to foreign visitors. Alberto Manquiriapa has performed ceremonies both at the hostel Atalaya and all around the world. Dobkin de Ríos (1994), Tupper (2008), also give reports of indigenous shamans administering ayahuasca to foreigners.

Three main types of contemporary ayahuasca use occur among non-indigenous people, as Tupper (2009:115) identifies them: Sacramental use in syncretic ayahuasca religions such as Santo Daime and the Uña de Vegetal (UDV); unstructured or psychonautic use by people obtaining the ingredients online, through mail order catalogues, or through local trade networks; and hybridized ritual use in cross-cultural indigenous-style ayahuasca healing ceremonies, often conducted for tourists. Considering the global membership of Santo Daime and the UDV, collectively totaling around 50,000 people worldwide, today ayahuasca may be more commonly used as a sacrament than as a medicine or as a drug.

Ayahuasca use occurs within the context of shamanism, and thus, it has a central figure, the shaman—ayahuasca professional. Though syncretic Christian ayahuasca religions remove ayahuasca from its shamanic context, shamanic use of it still prevails among tourists, psychonauts, and indigenous people.

### *Shamanism*

Shamanism may be the world's oldest religious tradition. To paraphrase Mircea Eliade (1951), the objective of the shaman is to intentionally access and affect the sacred. Ecstasy is the shaman's liminal experience. The antiquity of shamanic tradition is evident in its ubiquity among hunter-gather societies (Eliade 1951). Artifacts such as the Lion-Man of Hohlenstein-Stadel and cave paintings like the Wounded Man in Lascaux suggest that shamanic practices date to the Upper Paleolithic (Lewis-Williams 1997). The ability to generate hallucinations, writes Lewis-Williams (1997:324), is evident even in other primates, cats, and dogs. Hallucinations are a feature not only of the human but also of

the mammalian nervous system. What other mammals make of their hallucinations, or even what Upper Paleolithic humans made of their hallucinations, is the question.

Shamanism provides a framework for understanding hallucinations, and it may hold some answers.

The shaman is the central figure of shamanism, navigator of the visionary world. His ecstasy is achieved with the help of consciousness-modifying music, chants, dance, meditation, or entheogenic substances (Taylor 2005). Thus, the shamanic use of ayahuasca occurs alongside the use of entheogens worldwide. In Africa, among the Bwiti, the Iboga root has a reputation for introducing one to one's ancestors and curing heroin addiction (Maisonneuve and Glick 2003); Among the Aztecs and in contemporary Mexico, *Psilocybin* mushrooms have been used. They were brought to the attention of the American public in the May 13, 1957 issue of *Life* by R. Gordon Wasson, the late Vice-President of J.P. Morgan (Wasson 1957); the cactus Peyote, from the Nahuatl word *peyotl*, is used in Northern Mexico and the Southwestern United States (Calabrese 1997); the San Pedro or *Trichosereus* cactus is used Peru and throughout the Andes; the red and white polka-dotted *Amanita* mushroom, used by Siberian *saman* (Schultes et al. 1992), pops up in Western popular culture in illustrations for fairy-tales such as Snow White (1937). Many more entheogens are used around the world, for a comprehensive list see Richard Evans Schultes, Albert Hoffman, and Christian Rätsch's *Plants of the Gods* (1992).

Western scientists have often scorned shamanic practices, dismissing information obtained during non-ordinary states of consciousness as inaccurate. The anthropologist Robin Rood (2007:41) calls this “monophasic”—the attribution value to information

obtained only during ordinary states of consciousness. Shamanic culture, he writes, is polyphasic, attributing value to information obtained during all states of consciousness and often valuing information obtained during modified states of consciousness to a higher degree. Thus, indigenous people take ayahuasca to gather information. As the dominance of the Western scientific or biomedical perspective is challenged, so do non-indigenous people.

International trade networks and widespread access to information through press, radio, television, and the internet have enabled sacramental plants to spread outside of their original contexts, consumed by increasingly various people. Non-indigenous neo-shamans utilize traditional indigenous entheogens around the globe (Schultes et al. 1992). Often taking place within the context of shamanism, the ayahuasca experience is part of the shamanic experience. The practice of shamanism is easily hybridized due to the vagueness of the image of the shaman, and the malleable nature of the word shaman itself. The term ‘shaman’ is externally imposed, constructed in academia and popular culture and then applied locally.

### *Etymology of Shaman*

For this exercise, I will use the term ‘shaman’ to describe practitioners of ayahuasca. The abstract, popular nature of ‘shaman’ can be used to one’s scholarly advantage. It has a long history of use in academia and appeals to the widest audience. Using it in an updated context helps give it a more complex and accurate meaning, clearing some of its historical taint.

The term ‘shaman’ has been uprooted, adopted, and adapted to such a degree that medical anthropologist Micheal Taussig recently wrote, “shamanism is...a made up, modern, Western category,” after Clifford Geertz deemed it “dessicated” and “insipid” (Atkinson 1992:307). Despite their comments, use of the term has persisted.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, Russian explorers in Eastern Siberia heard and recorded the word *saman* being used among indigenous Tungusian people to describe their healers. A Hollander named E. Ysbrants Ides heard the word while accompanying a Russian embassy to China from 1692 to 1695. Three years later, he published it in Amsterdam, sharing it with Europe in his travel book *Driejaarige Reize naar China* or *Three Year Journey to China* (Laufer 1917:361).

Shaman joined a quiver of words being used by the European explorers and missionaries to describe the various indigenous religious figures they encountered during colonization. The word fit alongside ‘witch-doctor,’ ‘juggler,’ and ‘charlatan,’ and shared their taint. When explorers and missionaries first encountered ayahuasca use during the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, they called it, among other things, shamanism.

Structuring the study of shamanism within the formal study of comparative religion as a whole, Mircea Eliade published *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* in 1951. His work is the seminal work on the matter. Through categorizing worldwide indigenous religious practices as shamanic, he effectively globalized the term. It became the most commonly used word by both scholars and lay people to describe indigenous religious practitioners.

Today, local variations on the word shaman, specifically in Peru, include *curandero*, ‘curer,’ and *ayahuasquero*, ‘ayahuasca user.’ Scholars use *vegetalista* to

describe cross-cultural ayahuasca shamans of non-indigenous, often *mestizo* origin, after the anthropologist Luis Eduardo Luna defined the term in 1896. *Vegetalistas* practice a syncretized variation of ayahuasca shamanism, sometimes replacing traditional visionary tropes with Christian ones (Luna and White 2001:118). In Cusco, the word shaman is employed by tourist agencies, while *ayahuasquero*, *curandero*, and *vegetalista* enjoy more prevalent use among insiders and locals. Alberto Manquiriapa used shaman and *curandero* interchangeably, showing that the etic term also enjoys emic use.

### *Globalization*

Globalization is defined by both its economic and cultural components. On one hand it is an accelerating interconnection of cultural systems across the globe, while on the other it is economic reality of dominant transnational corporations and fluid international finance capital (Greider 1998:16).

Today's economic globalization, explains Mintz (1985:8), is built on foundations established during European colonization. European class distinctions, stereotypes, and discourses on ethnic superiority formed during colonization continue to inform face-to-face interactions today. Latent European paternalism is evident in the economic policies of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The world system, explained in Emmanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory (1974), can be understood in terms of a binary core-periphery division of nations. Developed nations at the core technologically, economically, and politically dominate the nations on the periphery. The modern world system still involves the kinds of inequalities colonialism gave rise to, but on a much larger scale (Greider 1998). Due to the international fluidity

of finance capital, global interests can converge quickly and devastatingly on local resources, often with little regard for local human populations.

The unprecedented cultural interconnection of globalization is evident in, and facilitated by, communications technologies, transnational non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and transnational cultures. Tourism, religion, and academia circulate culture globally (Hannerz 1989; 1996). Scholars of globalization such as Ulf Hannerz (1996) and Arjun Appadurai (1996:32) caution that the binary division of World Systems Theory obscures a more complex reality. Globalization inherently results in reciprocal cultural flows. Hannerz cites the popularity of reggae music, swamis, and Latin-American novels as examples (1996:222). I add the popularity of ayahuasca to his list.

Contrary to global cultural homogeny as envisioned by the eminent anthropologists Malinowski (1962:xv) and Levi-Strauss (1978:20), globalization may actually be a source of cultural diversity, and was thought to be so by Wallerstein himself (Hannerz 1989:225). Rational, scientific beliefs and practices are supposed to diffuse outward hegemonically from the core, but savage beliefs and practices also counter-diffuse in from the periphery. The fear is that they may sabotage the civilized mind—a concern evident in Dutch and British East India Company policies against fraternization or intermarriage between colonists and locals (Jones 8/10/2010).

Hundreds of years later, latent concern over going native was expressed by the popular author Joseph Conrad, with his character Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1902). Chief of Inner Station, Kurtz had given in to the jungle pressure and gone native, becoming alienated from his civilized self. The use of ayahuasca and its rising popularity



is just the kind of gone-native counter-diffusion that could be perceived as dangerous to civilized authority (Tupper 2009:121). The civilized, or latent colonial authority is challenged when new communications technologies and transnational non-governmental organizations help level the socio-cultural playing field, enabling oppressed peoples to speak, share, and organize.

Since its inception in 1991, the Internet has created unprecedented opportunities for intercultural communication, international trade, and community formation. Through the Internet ayahuasca's ingredients are distributed globally. They can be purchased on websites such as BouncingBearBotanicals.com by almost anyone with an Internet connection and a physical address. Bouncing Bear Botanicals offers *Banisteriopsis* and Chacruna grown as far away from the Amazon as Bali or Hawai'i. Information about ayahuasca can be found on websites such as ayahuasca-info.com. People looking to connect with local networks of ayahuasca consumers can visit websites such as forums.ayahuasca.com or ayahuasca.tribe.net. The Internet connects people all around the world with ayahuasca.

The famous scholar of globalization, David Harvey, explains how globalization results in a kind of space-time compression (Harvey 1999). As distant locales are linked together, culture becomes less tied to place, making easier for outside forces to directly affect local events. Tomilson calls this "deterritorialization" (1999:29). The following comment on the 2010 Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) conference in San José, California illustrates the deterritorialization of ayahuasca: "Thousands of miles from the Amazon where the vine grows," writes contemporary ayahuasca scholar Beatriz Labate, "there was evidence of a vibrant West Coast ayahuasca

culture” (Labate 2010:3). The 2010 MAPS conference added an Ayahuasca track due to the overwhelming number of submissions on the subject. Though it took place thousands of miles from the Amazon, the conference was a nexus of ayahuasca culture, with indigenous shamans and western researchers leading panel discussions side-by-side.

The export of indigenous culture may benefit indigenous people just as the export of U.S. culture may benefit citizens of the United States. McGaa, an Ogala Sioux author, writes, “if the Native Americans keep all their spirituality within their own community, the old wisdom that has preformed so well will not be able to work its environmental medicine on the world where it is desperately needed” (1990 vii). The participation of non-indigenous people in indigenous rituals may help propagate indigenous understandings of the sacred, the self, and the relationship between them. Some authors and anthropologists consider that the world may be in need of the environmental medicine of ayahuasca, and, taking a subject-subject orientation, comment alongside indigenous shamans that ayahuasca is spreading in part by its own volition (Narby 1999; Pinchbeck 2003; Tindall 2008; Elenblass 2010). The ayahuasca experience often inspires ecological consciousness in the user (Narby 1999:11; Krippner 2000). Ecological consciousness may be a good medicine for the postmodern condition. Unfortunately, as ayahuasca is deterritorialized its ties to both the Amazon and Indigenous Amazonian cultures weaken. It is often consumed without regard to its status as an Indigenous Amazonian cultural heritage.

### *Cultural Appropriation*

With the globalization of ayahuasca, cultural appropriation is a serious concern. Exported indigenous practices are often re-made and re-interpreted according to foreign desires and ideals. Indigenous practices become cultural artifacts, phased out by new interpretations. Considering that ayahuasca consumption is on the rise, the decreasing number of indigenous shamans operating in their traditional contexts is troubling. The following episode illustrates: During field school, my class visited a Queros community in the Western Amazon near Pillcopata, whose resident shaman, Joel Jahuanchi, had migrated to Cusco to find paid shamanic work. Joel Jahuanchi's departure from the Queros community is troubling, representing one of the negative effects of ayahuasca's globalization on indigenous people. Paradoxically, the spread of indigenous cultural practices can result in their loss.

Non-indigenous shamans such as Luna's cross-cultural *vegetalistas* appropriate and manipulate indigenous symbols, playing to Western images of indigeneity and establishing ethos through claims of indigenous training or heritage. Their presence does not go unnoticed by indigenous people. In 1999, a coalition of Colombian ayahuasca shamans (known locally as *taitas*), the *Unión de Médicos Indígenas Yageceros de la Amazonía Colombiana*, issued the following statement, the Yurayaco Declaration, expressing their concern about cultural appropriation:

Non-indigenous people are finally acknowledging the importance of our wisdom and the value of our medicinal and sacred plants. Many of them profane our culture and our territories by commercializing yagé and other plants; dressing like Indians and acting like charlatans.

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(Unión de Médicos Indígenas Yageceros de la Amazonía Colombiana  
1999)

The Yurayaco Declaration raises a crucial point; ayahuasca itself is being appropriated. The following incident illustrates the situation: In Ecuador, in 1986, an American bio-pro prospector named Loren Miller took an ayahuasca sample that he traded an indigenous person two packs of Marlboro cigarettes for, and patented it with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) (Herman 1999:1). In issuing Miller a patent the PTO acted in direct disregard of the intellectual property rights and traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous Amazonian people. Miller's actions caused an uproar among indigenous people in Ecuador. In 1999, the organization COICA (Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazona), which represents over 400 indigenous groups in over nine South American countries, filed, with the assistance of the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), a formal request for re-examination of the ayahuasca patent (Herman 1999:2). The PTO, acknowledging COICA's request, revoked the patent. Miller, however, exercised his right to appeal their decision. In direct disregard of indigenous peoples the PTO re-instated his patent in 2001. Though it expired in 2003, forever un-renewable according to international environmental law (Center for International Environmental Law 2011), its message was clear. Indigenous claims to intellectual property were moot in the eyes of U.S. law. It was a heavy symbolic loss, revealing the continued privilege of Colonial ideas about knowledge and intellectual property.

Since the Miller patent case, Indigenous Amazonian groups have been proactive in asserting their rights. Ayahuasca was established as a National Cultural Heritage of

Peru in 2008, with current movements in Brazil to do the same. International ayahuasca conferences with panels led by indigenous shamans have taken place across the world: in San Francisco (03/2000), Amsterdam (11/2002), and Heidelberg (05/2008), all of which were attended by Alberto Manquiriapa with the aid of the organization CEDIA (Centro para el Desarrollo del Indígena Amazónico). In Iquitos, Soga del Alma (Vine of the Soul) conferences have been held annually since 2004 (soga-del-alma.org). With open communication, foreign meanings may defer to indigenous ones out of respect for tenure, drawing on rather than replacing them.

Foreign definitions for ayahuasca including ‘sacrament’ and ‘drug’ are central to public discourse in the West, defining the opposing sides in legal battles. In the light of religious institutions it is a sacrament, while in the discourse of the state it is a drug. Within a religious framework, ayahuasca speaks to the Christian practice of communion, the consumption of a transubstantiated wafer and wine. The wine, the wafer, and ayahuasca are taken to bring one closer to God.

Under United States drug law, ayahuasca is classified as a hallucinogen because it contains the Schedule I substance DMT (21 USC chapter 13, 1970). The drink itself, however, is not explicitly regulated. The 1971 United Nations Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances arguably covered ayahuasca, but a recent note from the secretary of the International Narcotics Control Board, Herbert Chaepe, to the Chief of the Ministry of Public Health in the Netherlands stated otherwise, confirming that ayahuasca is not an internationally regulated substance (Chaepe 2001).

### *Legal Issues*

The drug policies of modern democratic states can be interpreted to deny ayahuasca use. Drawing on the obligations of modern democratic states to uphold rights to religious freedom, non-indigenous ayahuasca consumers utilize the rhetoric of sacramental use to legitimize their practice. The battle is one of ‘sacrament’ versus ‘drug.’ Legitimate sacramental use necessitates the formation of institutional religious structures, which often find inspiration from Christianity, resulting in syncretic ceremonial and doctrinal forms (Luna and White 2001:154).

On October 19, 2010, an indigenous Colombian ayahuasca healer named Taita Juan Agreda Chindoy was stopped at customs in the Houston International Airport. He was detained and formally arrested by the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) for possession of ayahuasca in its pre-made liquid form. Charged with possession and intent to distribute the Schedule I drug DMT, he faced up to 20 years in federal prison. A grassroots international support network spread through the Internet across Latin America, Europe, and the United States. Its website, [freetaitajuan.org](http://freetaitajuan.org) was created on October 24. The site helped raise over \$14,000 in donations for Taita Juan’s legal defense fund, and the charges against him were dropped on November 16<sup>th</sup> on the grounds that ayahuasca is a medicinal plant mixture used by indigenous people as a traditional medicine, not a drug that generates dependency (Caracol 11/17/2010). In this case, indigenous meanings and uses triumphed without any use of sacramental rhetoric. Though the PTO did not recognize indigenous people’s rights to the drink, the Texas court did. Not only did indigenous people win the case, they also won a symbolic victory, showing that their uses and meanings still held sway. Their victory may be due in part to

the ethos of Taita Juan. He is a certified indigenous shaman, specifically permitted by the Colombian Ministry of Health to use and carry ayahuasca.

Legitimizing non-indigenous ayahuasca use involves constructing it as a sacrament. ‘Medicine’ may be too much like ‘drug’ to be an effective stance to take on ayahuasca. ‘Sacrament’ works, referencing rights to religious freedom. Never mind that syncretic ayahuasca religions such as Santo Daime and the União de Vegetal (UDV) are less than one hundred years old, youth does not disqualify them.

Taita Juan’s legal team included a lawyer named Nancy Hollander, who in the past decade helped win the U.S. Supreme Court case *Gonzales v. O Centro Espirita Beneficiente Uniao do Vegetal* (2006). The case was filed in 1999 by the U.S. arm of the Brazil-based UDV after United States Customs inspectors seized a shipment containing three drums of ayahuasca. A subsequent investigation revealed that the UDV had received 14 prior shipments of the drink. Threatened with prosecution under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), the UDV fought back. They said that applying the CSA to their sacramental use of ayahuasca violated the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, which prohibits the government from substantially burdening a person’s exercise of religion (Roberts 2006:1-4). Chief Justice Roberts accepted the UDV’s argument, and their definition of ayahuasca as a sacrament, setting a legal precedent that allowed the UDV to drink ayahuasca in their congregations nationwide.

Santo Daime, the other major international ayahuasca church, won a district court case in Oregon in 2008, *Church of the Holy Light of the Queen v. Mukasey*. They have not yet brought a case to the U.S. Supreme Court, so their nationwide legality is

uncertain. However, unconfirmed reports from local informants indicate that a branch of Santo Daime meets regularly here in Boulder.

Legal battles over ayahuasca use have also been fought in Australia, Brazil, Italy, the Netherlands, France, and Spain. Canada has proven more respectful and accommodating. Today, confirmed branches of the Santo Dime and the UDV meet in Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, England, France, Japan, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, The Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, Spain, and the United States (Tupper 2006:299; Santo Daime 2011; UDV 2011). There are more, underground or unmentioned branches, throughout Southeast Asia, South America, and the rest of the world. I will review the birth of Santo Daime and the UDV later in this essay.

### *Commodification*

Ayahuasca's presence in physical and virtual marketplaces such as Cusco's Mercado San Pedro, and BouncingBearBotaincals.com is definitive evidence that it has become commodified. Commodities, explains Marx (1865), have a mystical character. Like figurines imbued with the power to ward off bad spirits, commodities are fetishized. The commodity fetish gives an object an exchange value vastly disproportionate to its use value.

The fetishization of ayahuasca is strong. It is attributed with miraculous power—the ability to cure any disease, even cancer or lifelong depression, make whole the fragmented postmodern self, and show the consumer a vibrant visionary reality. Offering the opportunity to “discover absolute happiness,” a two-day one-night ayahuasca tour with the shamanic tourist agency Etnika's costs US\$390.00 (Etnika's 2011). Etnikas



commodifies not only ayahuasca, but also the whole ayahuasca experience. One can buy pre-mixed ayahuasca in a plastic coke bottle for the equivalent of US\$20 in the Mercado San Pedro, but one's experience wouldn't be nearly as "authentic" as a tour from Etnikas. The huge price discrepancy between bottled ayahuasca and packaged ayahuasca tours raises an important point. The shamanic services that come with ayahuasca are equally, if not more fetishized than the drink itself.

The shaman is a fantasy, constructed in the popular imagination like the cowboy. The shaman is an icon of the Amazon as the cowboy is an icon of the West. Tourists seek out the icon, expecting him to appear in certain ways. Cowboys constructed their identities with reference to popular art and literature, tying their myth and their reality together until they became inseparable (Limerick 03/02/2011). The iconic figure's basic tie to myth facilitates commodity fetishism. Thus ayahuasca benefits financially from its association with the icon of the shaman.

Etnika's is not the only shamanic tourist agency in Cusco. Shops and tour agencies like The Shaman Shop run ayahuasca tours and ceremonies out of their retail space. At the lower end of the formality spectrum are independently organized ayahuasca ceremonies, which occur regularly. I found one flyer taped up on a bathroom wall in a popular bar. Such haphazard ceremonies may involve not only pseudo-shamans but also ill-informed consumers, which is a dangerous combination. Medical anthropologist Marlene Dobkin de Ríos illustrates the danger:

As a licensed psychotherapist, I have personally interviewed one woman for several hours who was exhibiting psychotic symptoms as a result of her multiple drug experiences and romantic entanglement with one healer in

Pullcallpa, Peru. Another woman, suffering a chronic liver ailment, continues to seek out ayahuasca experiences in Brazil despite the danger to her health.

(Dobkin de Ríos 1994:19)

Ignorant consumers and unscrupulous vendors are inevitable effects of commodification. Large potentials for profit have quickly spurred a thriving ayahuasca tourist market. In Cusco's city center one has to constantly avert one's eyes to miss an advertisement offering an ayahuasca ceremony or tour. An informant in Etnika's said that Cusco's culture of ayahuasca tourism developed only in the past ten years.

On tour brochures language such as "discover absolute happiness, find yourself, and realise that you are bigger than the universe [sic]" (Etnikas 2011) makes for widely attractive appeals. Upon arrival in the Iquitos airport, one is bombarded by marketers shouting "ayahuasca, here!" The curious consumer may be sold on the experience, unaware of its potency or the contrived nature of their 'authentic' ayahuasca ceremony.

Problems arise in indigenous communities when profit motives influence resident shamans to migrate to urban centers like Cusco and Iquitos. The brochure of Etnika's reads that it employs more than 50 shamans, saying that all their ayahuasca shamans are Shipibo because Shipibo ayahuasca culture has been highly fetishized. I met a shaman employed by Etnika's, but he was from the Q'ero, an Andean indigenous group from high in the mountains. He was keen, but focused on drinking pisco and soliciting payment for his services. I recalled one of the sad realities of urban migration; when high demand in urban centers drives up the price of shamanic services indigenous communities are often left without resident healers. The case of Joel Jahuanchi, from the Queros, illustrates this: he had migrated to Cusco to find paid shamanic work.

The discourse used to sell ayahuasca in Cuzco and Iquitos works online also. Using the website for Hamilton Souther's Blue Morpho (BlueMorphoTours.com) as a cultural text, because it is the most visited ayahuasca lodge website, Holman (2011) explores the corporate, spiritual, and exotic discourses such websites use to attract consumers. Language like "Blue Morpho specializes in shamanic workshops" and "Blue Morpho is dedicated to our clients, impressed by our professionalism and commitment to service," appeals to capitalist consumer sensibilities (Holman 2011:99). The first paragraph on the front page of the site reads:

In the heart of the Peruvian Amazon lies a place where miracles are born...As one of our former guests once said, "I went to Blue Morpho to escape ringing phones, vapid television, demanding clients, and my frantically-paced corporate existence, but I found so much more than a place to unwind. Instead, I found life."

(BlueMorphoTours.com 3/18/2011)

Dobkin de Ríos explains that the empty self of the post WWII period is soothed and made cohesive through being filled up by commodities—food, products, and experiences (1994:16). People look to commodities for transcendence, even ecstasy, regaining their lost connection to the lost sacred world through consumption of a fetishized object. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* captured the disappearing essence of the magical world, fading from Western cultural consciousness in the ontological onslaught of industrialization (Pinchbeck 2003:65). The industrial revolution mechanized the self, while the revolution in scientific thought objectified living things. Ayahuasca, with its potent visions, exotic origins, and subject-object uncertainty, offers

an organic reconnection into the magical world. Such an experience has worldwide appeal, all the more as ecological consciousness becomes the vogue.

### *History of the Globalization of Ayahuasca*

The history of ayahuasca is intimately tied with the history of globalization itself. “Globalization,” writes Hopper, “is rooted in human life: we are a global species” (2007:15). Since early *Homo sapiens* first migrated out of East Africa we have spread across the globe, taking culture with us as tools, beliefs, and practices. The scholar of globalization Paul Hopper (2007:15) labels this period the ‘pre-modern phase’ of cultural globalization, extending from the beginning of human history until 1492.

It is unknown when exactly people first started consuming ayahuasca. Tukano origin myths date the practice back to the beginning of time (Luna 2011:5). The earliest archaeological evidence for ayahuasca use comes from a design on potsherds dating to 2000 B.C.E. (Naranjo 1979).

Perhaps people learned about ayahuasca from watching other animals. In 2004, the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) released footage of a jaguar intentionally consuming the ayahuasca vine in the wild. However, whether indigenous people learned the practice from jaguars or jaguars learned it from indigenous people is still undetermined. The jaguar is often considered to the shaman’s central spirit animal, while some indigenous people claim that taking ayahuasca gives them ‘jaguar eyes,’ and jaguar-like hunting prowess (Downer 06/06/2004).

Evidence of heavy populations in the pre-Colombian Upper Amazon suggests that ayahuasca culture had ample opportunity to spread around and outside of the Amazon. It

was intentionally transported across the Andes Mountains to the Pacific lowlands of Colombia and Peru (Luna 2011:7).

Early imperial systems were instrumental in cultural globalization (Hopper 2007:17). Ayahuasca culture may have diffused through the Incan empire before the arrival of European imperialists. Their arrival in 1492 marked the end of the pre-modern phase of cultural globalization, and beginning of its modern phase, which extends until 1945 (Hopper 2007:21).

World religions were instrumental in modern cultural globalization. In the cultural globalization of ayahuasca, world religion has been involved since the start of the modern age. Missionaries came to the new world alongside European conquistadores and imperialists. The missionaries, learned in books, were also scholars and historians. It is not surprising that in Western literature the first mention of ayahuasca by name comes from Jesuit missionary, Pablo Maroni, in 1737 (Patiño 1963:196). Earlier missionaries' reports had referenced the drink, but not by its name. Their overall message was clear—ayahuasca was the work of the devil.

The diabolical definition of ayahuasca remained constant until the mid-1800s, when the English botanist Richard Spruce and the Italian geographer Villavicencio, in true post-enlightenment scientific fashion, defined the brew objectively. Accompanied by two other English naturalists, Alfred Russell Wallace and Henry Walter Bates, Spruce arrived in the Amazon in 1849. He published his report, *Notes from a Botanist on the Amazon and Andes*, in 1908, offering the Western world the first botanical description of ayahuasca. He even brought back samples of the vine, but they remained in a museum, and were not chemically analyzed until 1969 (Schultes et al. 1992:132)

Spruce sparked the globalization of ayahuasca in the academic world, but hundreds of years of literature on shamanism provided its framework. The drink, rather than a work of the devil, became an interesting subject of study. Industrial printing technologies and international trade networks enabled information about it to be mass-produced and widely distributed, increasing consumer awareness.

The rapid development of the industrial revolution in the 1800s caused high demand for rubber worldwide. The Amazon was the only known source, so global demand converged on the rainforest. The first Rubber Boom, which began in the 1850s, took place largely in Brazil. It caused massive cultural upheaval among displaced indigenous populations employed harvesting rubber (Davis 1997:302). As indigenous and foreign people mixed in employee communities, ayahuasca culture spread to mestizo populations (Küfner et al. 2007:80). Luna's cross-cultural *vegetalismo* emerged as a result (Luna 1986).

By 1920 the Rubber Boom had faded. Years earlier, writes Davis (1997:305), the Englishman Henry Wickham had successfully smuggled rubber tree seeds out of Brazil. Rubber trees were thriving in Africa and Southeast Asia. In 1910, only half of the world's rubber supply came from the Amazon. By 1918, the Amazon supplied less than one fifth of the global total, while eighty percent of it came from Asian rubber plantations (Davis 1997:307).

During World War II, the Japanese captured Allied rubber plantations in South East Asia and cut off most of the western Allies' rubber supply. The Allies again turned to the Amazon. Thus, less than twenty-five years after it was over, the Rubber Boom was revived, from 1942-1945. It caused a renaissance in ayahuasca use. The end of World

War II in 1945 marks the beginning of the contemporary phase of cultural globalization (Hopper 2007:28).

The second Rubber Boom again created conditions ripe for the spread of ayahuasca culture. The first syncretic ayahuasca religion, Santo Daime, was established in Rio Branco, Brazil in the 1940s by the Afro-Brazilian rubber tapper Raimundo Irineu Serra. Serra's religion integrated the use of ayahuasca as a sacrament in Christian-style church services, utilizing Christian-style hymns and Christian imagery. His star student Daniel Pereira de Matos established his own, similar religion in the same city soon afterwards, calling it *Barquinha*, meaning 'the boat' (Luna and White 2000:6). At their syncretic Christian ceremonies, the *Barquinha* churches often erect a double-barred cross, the second bar signifying the Second Coming of Christ (Tindall 2008:42). In 1961 a Brazilian rubber tapper named José Gabriel de Costa created the third ayahuasca religion, the Uñaio de Vegetal (UDV) in 1961 in Porto Velho.

Syncretic religions took ayahuasca out of a shamnic and into a Christian context, making it more accessible to the large majority of the urban population. Ayahuasca became more widely accepted, and the idea of ayahuasca as diabolical was rejected in favor of the idea of it as a sacrament. The use of ayahuasca as a sacrament spread in urban centers such as Rio Branco and Manaus. In the Peruvian city of Iquitos ayahuasca use also spread, but it was incorporated instead as a medicine, and within the developing tradition of cross-cultural *vegetalismo*.

While rubber tappers were busy creating religions around ayahuasca, an increasing number of scholars were busy studying it. Developments in the discipline of anthropology offered new ways to understand indigenous practices, live among

indigenous people, and report on their lives. In the 1950s, Richard Evans Schultes was on the forefront of ethnobotanical research in the Amazon. Taking Malinowski's anthropological principle of participant-observation to heart, Schultes participated in ayahuasca ceremonies on multiple occasions (Schultes et al. 1992:124-139). He also encouraged people in his social networks to try the drink, including students and colleagues at Harvard (Davis 1996:153). Wade Davis and Mark Plotkin were two of his students, and Timothy Leary was one of his colleagues; all played instrumental roles in ayahuasca's globalization. Davis and Plotkin published large amounts of work on ayahuasca independent of each other, while Leary helped prime U.S. popular culture for the drink by sparking the Psychedelic Revolution.

In 1953, Schultes helped the popular beat writer William S. Burroughs (who references Schultes as Doc. Schindler) locate ayahuasca in Colombia. One year earlier, Burroughs had offered the brew up to United States popular culture as the Holy Grail cure for his heroin addiction at the end of *Junky* (1952), and stated his intentions of going to Colombia on a quest for it. He published his grail quest, documented through letters exchanged with fellow beat writer Allen Ginsberg, in *The Yage Letters* (1963). Seeing what R. Gordon Wasson did for the mushroom with his 1957 *Life* article, Burroughs was keen on doing the same for ayahuasca. American consumers, primed by the efforts of Wasson and Leary, were hungry for the next mind-blowing indigenous plant medicine.

In academia, Mircea Eliade and Claude Levi-Strauss had been busy reinterpreting the image of the shaman. Eliade's *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* in 1951, and Levi-Strauss' 1949 essay demonstrating that the shaman was not a schizophrenic but a kind of psychotherapist, threw open the doors on study of ayahuasca shamanism.



Whereas before the plant mixture had appealed mostly to botanists, it now appealed to anthropologists as well. Reichel-Dolmatoff's 1975 study of Tukano religion and symbology contributed critical information to the growing body of academic literature on ayahuasca and Amazonian shamanism. Other notable scholarly works include: Micheal Harner's *The Way of the Shaman* (1990), which he opens with a gripping and detailed firsthand account of an intense ayahuasca experience he had during fieldwork among the Jivaro; Luis Eduardo Luna and Pablo Amaringo's visually-stimulating *Ayahuasca Visions: the religious iconography of a Peruvian shaman* (1991); Mark J. Plotkin's *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice: an ethnobotanist searches for new medicines in the Amazon rain forest* (1993); Wade Davis's *One River: explorations and discoveries in the Amazon rain forest* (1996); and Jeremy Narby's *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge* (1999). Narby has been instrumental in the past decade of ayahuasca's globalization. I attended a forum on ayahuasca he moderated in Lima, while he has otherwise been organizing teleconferences through RealitySandwich.com and funding a well-known ayahuasca lodge called Matanyacu in Peru.

While the body of literature on ayahuasca expanded, ayahuasca churches were expanding as well. Spreading outside of Brazil, they established branches in Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, England, France, Japan, Italy, Ireland, Mexico, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland (Tupper 2006:299; Santo Daime 2011). The Internet enabled them to maintain a community despite being geographically separated. It also facilitated international ayahuasca trade, allowing ayahuasca to be distributed on a global scale. Today, ayahuasca is produced, distributed, and consumed throughout the world. Anyone with an unfiltered web connection can access vast amounts

of information about ayahuasca, while its ingredients are available to anyone with a physical address.

For people without internet access, ayahuasca culture is still widely available. It is in *Time* magazine (Otis 4/8/2009), *High Times* (Razam 07/2007), the United Kingdom's *Sunday Times* (Boggan 4/7/2008), and *Penthouse Australia* (Razam 11/2006); it's on CBS radio (McKinnon and Cler-Cunningham 1/7/2008) and the BBC (Parry 1/22/2008); and it's on television: in episodes of *Extreme Celebrity Detox* (2/16/2005), traveling chef Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations* (3/22/2006), the popular *Showtime* series *Weeds* (8/25/2008), and Fox news, with Chris Kilham the Medicine Hunter (Kilham 01/05/2011). In Cusco, one only needed to walk into a bathroom at a dive bar to find an advertisement for an informal ayahuasca ceremony, folded, watermarked, and hastily scribbled with phrases like "explore your inner self," and "your soul is calling." Backpacking culture celebrates ayahuasca in television shows such as *Madventures* (2009), while websites such as RealitySandwich.com offer all-inclusive ayahuasca retreats.

In-flight magazines like Delta Airlines' *Sky* can be used as cultural texts for the culture of global tourism. Returning to our initial character of Hamilton Souther, consider the massive reader demographic of *Sky* magazine. Until United Airlines and Continental merged in late 2010, Delta was the world largest airline in terms of both fleet size and passenger numbers (Delta 2011). According to the airline's website, it runs more than 5,500 flights every day, flying people to and from to every inhabited continent but Antarctica. And on almost every single Delta flight, in the seat pocket of almost every single seat, sits a copy of *Sky* magazine, the only complementary reading beside *Skymall*

and the safety instructions card. This massive reader demographic, alongside the reader demographic of *National Geographic Adventure*, *The New York Times*, and the Blue Morpho website (the most popular ayahuasca lodge website on the internet according to Holman (2011)), may make the CU Boulder graduate Hamilton Souther the most famous ayahuasca shaman in the world. Among all available examples, the message of this one is clear: ayahuasca is being globalized.

### *Conclusion*

Ayahuasca is being globalized, but to reach the ranks of Coca-Cola and Marlboro cigarettes it still has a long way to go. Once found only in the Amazon basin, today it is distributed, produced, and consumed throughout the globe. Ayahuasca, and the ayahuasca experience, has become a commodity sold in both physical and virtual marketplaces. Cultural appropriation must be taken seriously, but with awareness that the reality is often more complex than a one-way transfer. Situating ayahuasca as a sacrament within a syncretic religion may be the best way to legalize its use for non-indigenous people. That said, indigenous uses and meanings should be acknowledged and remain primary. Aberto Manquiriapa represents hope that ayahuasca is staying true to its roots, but he also represents changes in indigenous shamanism. Ayahuasca is a powerful indigenous medicine—it may also be a good medicine for the modern world.

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