

The World Ayahuasca Diaspora

Ayahuasca is a psychoactive substance that has long been associated with indigenous Amazonian shamanic practices. The recent rise of the drink's visibility in the media and popular culture, and its rapidly advancing inroads into international awareness, mean that the field of ayahuasca is quickly expanding. This expansion brings with it legal problems, economic inequalities, new forms of ritual and belief, cultural misunderstandings, and other controversies and reinventions.

In *The World Ayahuasca Diaspora*, leading scholars, including established academics and new voices in anthropology, religious studies, and law fuse case-study ethnographies with evaluations of relevant legal and anthropological knowledge. They explore how the substance has impacted indigenous communities, new urban religiosities, ritual healing, international drug policy, religious persecution, and recreational drug milieus. This unique book presents classic and contemporary issues in social science and the humanities, providing rich material on the burgeoning expansion of ayahuasca use around the globe.

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The World Ayahuasca Diaspora

Reinventions and controversies

**Edited by Beatriz Caiuby Labate,
Clancy Cavnar, and Alex K. Gearin**

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To Erik, Des and their garden.

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Foreword

Ayahuasca in the twenty-first century: having it both ways

The genie is out of the bottle, tweeting about the next shamanic bodywork leadership seminar, and the bottle; well, check and see if it isn't in the back of your fridge by the vegan TV dinner.

Who would have ever imagined that ayahuasca, the enigmatic jungle potion William S. Burroughs once referred to as “the secret” (Burroughs & Ginsberg, 2006 [1963]) and whose very botanical identity was a matter of debate through the mid-twentieth century (Schultes, 1957) would, within a matter of decades, become a household (or at least, yoga-mat) word; the subject of hundreds of scientific, anthropological, and medical studies; a magnet for international tourism; the motor behind a global religious diaspora; and the victorious plaintiff *in absentia* of an historic Supreme Court case?

The rhyme “herbal brew”/“bamboo” in Paul Simon’s 1990 ayahuasca-inspired song “Spirit Voices” already rings of kitsch, but there is still something, if not fresh, then at least compelling about Sting (2005, p. 18), in his biography *Broken Music*, revealing that “ayahuasca has brought me close to something, something fearful and profound and deadly serious.” But by the time Lindsay Lohan confides to a reality TV host in April of 2015 that ayahuasca helped her “let go of past things . . . it was intense” (Morris, 2014), Burroughs’s “final fix” has finally entered the realm of cliché.

How did this happen? What is the special appeal of this bitter Amazonian brew in the post-post-modern global village toolbox of self-realization? How has it fared in the bustling marketplace of New Age spiritual entrepreneurship and on the battleground of the War on Drugs? And what does it all mean for the multiple, religiously and socially diverse, communities and individuals who consume ayahuasca, as well as various ayahuasca-like analogs, around the world?

We can think of the global ayahuasca expansion of the past two decades as a kind of second wave to the psychedelic revolution, following upon that other, “fantastic universal . . . inevitable . . . high and beautiful wave,” Hunter S. Thompson describes as cresting in the mid-1960s only to crash so quickly, and so disappointingly:

So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost *see* the high-water mark – that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back.

(Thompson, 1998 [1971], p. 68)

Many of those who sought out ayahuasca in the Amazonian rainforests in the 1970s and 1980s were indeed spiritual orphans, in some sense, of this failed revolution that, though inspired by natural psychoactive substances and indigenous medico-religious rituals of the Americas, relied heavily on synthetic substances like LSD and mescaline, often consumed in informal or recreational, rather than ritual, settings. In its initial expansion, beginning in the 1980s, ayahuasca came, first, to non-Amazonian urban centers in tropical countries, and later, to dozens of countries across the globe, in much the same form as it was consumed in its place of origin. Traditional practitioners and religious groups still export ayahuasca, brewed from the rainforest vine *Banisteriopsis caapi* and the dimethyltryptamine (DMT)-containing shrub *Psychotria viridis* and related species, to adepts in many world countries, who risk and sometimes face prosecution under international controlled substance laws. Freelance enthusiasts operating at the fringes of legality may also obtain raw ingredients and make their own preparations.

But, due to chronic problems of supply, transport, and storage, not to mention legal restrictions, a growing number of people have experimented with various ayahuasca analogs, using alternative plants or pure pharmacological substances (“pharmahuasca”) with essentially the same chemical constituents, to produce brews that have similar experiential effects, at least according to some enthusiasts. And yet, by all indications – and despite the myriad contexts of international use, from commercially adapted indigenous rituals in ecotourism lodges in the Amazon to weekend workshops at yoga academies around the world – the ayahuasca diaspora seems to have resisted what Thompson and others saw as the recreational denouement, hedonistic failure, and political marginalization of the 1960s psychedelic revolution. Instead, wherever it is used, imported, or reinvented, ayahuasca seems to quickly, almost automatically, elaborate around itself a protective cloak of ritual and social control, from the Christian-influenced doctrines of Brazilian ayahuasca religions to the idiosyncratic neoshamanic ceremonies emerging in North America, Europe, and Australia. Whether this is due to a changing social milieu of use, or something about the ayahuasca experience itself, remains to be seen.

Setting aside the hype, and respecting the cultural and individual variability inherent in such powerful subjective states, one constant element of the ayahuasca experience, attested across different cultures, spiritual traditions, and personal backgrounds, is its ability to propitiate encounters with radical otherness. Speaking myriad languages, through dozens of religious and spiritual idioms and within infinite possibilities of individual variation, ayahuasca drinkers across the globe have described visions of celestial landscapes beyond comprehension and encounters with awe-inspiring, alien intelligence that alternately tantalizes and terrorizes them with healing and bodily degradation, spiritual salvation and ego disintegration, ecological wisdom and universal apocalypse.

The ayahuasca experience defies ordinary notions of causality, space, time, and logic. Indeed, in its intensity and fundamental strangeness, the ayahuasca experience can feel like the cognitive equivalent of the far side of a black hole, spewing out new space-time tunnels and parallel universes with utter disregard for the laws

of cognition, if not of physics itself. It is perhaps the very intensity of the cognitive, bodily, and spiritual disassociation produced by ayahuasca that calls so desperately to the structuring powers of ritual, ideology, and social control to impose order, provide meaning, and even extract advantage from the boiling foam of ecstasy.

Trance associated with altered consciousness of all kinds is characterized by symbolic visual imagery and nonlinear thought processes that can result in revelatory insights or intuitions about self, others, nature, and the cosmos (Winkelman, 1986). Gregory Bateson's (1972) cybernetic theory of mind sheds light on the adaptive functions of trance and altered states. In his reformulation of Freud, Bateson suggests that, for reasons of sheer economy, mental processes that are repetitive or that surpass the boundaries of the individual self become "sunk" into the subconscious. Bateson (1972) views art and certain kinds of religious beliefs as serving a corrective function, allowing integration of the narrow, individual consciousness with larger circuits of mental process, including collective and environmental "ecologies of mind." In the light of Bateson's theories, psychoactive plants like ayahuasca can be seen as tools for loosening up mental processes, blurring ego boundaries between individuals and their larger social and ecological context (Shepard, 2005). By amplifying the unexpected, nonlinear associations of the subconscious, this "ecstatic mode" of consciousness allows for the perception of new patterns and relations among things, experiences, and events.

Although trance states emerge for the individual through specific alterations in brain function, these personal experiences become framed and imbued with meaning by the social group, often in a ritual context. Victor Turner's (1974) classic writings on ritual, structure, antistructure, and the countercultural movement of the 1960s provide a framework for understanding what several authors call the "re-traditionalization" of ayahuasca (Labate & Cavnar, 2014). For Turner, people participating in rituals occupy a *liminal* or transitional social state, clearly distinguished in space and time from ordinary social life. During ritual, social structure is temporarily suspended and replaced by an undifferentiated *comunitas* of equal individuals who share a mutual sense of identity and belonging. The social distinctiveness of ritual is accompanied by a distinctive cognitive state in which ordinary logic is suspended and replaced by the nonlinear, inductive, combinatorial logic of symbols. Thus, ritual itself represents a kind of altered state of consciousness that, when amplified through trance techniques or the use of psychoactive substances, only reinforces the social, spatial, and temporal distinctiveness of the ritual state (Shepard, 2005).

Though he began his work studying rites of passage in a Zambian village, Turner realized that these concepts could also be used to understand the social upheavals of the 1960s. Although serving to maintain the functional stability of "institutionalized and preordained" social structures, liminality and *comunitas* can also emerge in moments of "radical structural change" (Turner, 1974, p. 248). The difference, for Turner, is that institutionalized rituals, when they conclude, facilitate the orderly return of individuals from liminality and *comunitas* back into the social order, whereas revolutionary and countercultural movements attempt to create permanent liminality: not a passage, but rather a constant state (1974).

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Perhaps ayahuasca is the contemporary world's way of having it both ways; of being both traditional and modern, ecstatic and scientific, heterodox yet messianic, transgressive but safe and (eventually) legal, altruistic and selfish. It is precisely around this set of contradictions – or dialectics, or challenges – that the current volume is organized. Moving beyond the ethnological purists' snubbing of neo-ayahuasca practices as mere drug tourism, and yet also avoiding the intellectual pitfalls of naïve enthusiasm, the authors in this volume apply the classic tools of critical sociocultural analysis to the universe of the global ayahuasca diaspora. The chapters present a multitude of voices, from "Aussie-huasca" (a native Australian analog) enthusiasts hoping to save the planet from the evils of capitalism, to indigenous Amazonian communities torn apart by rivalries and economic disparities brought on by the "ayahuasca boom." Though sympathetic to this diversity of experiences and opinions, the authors take an unblinking look at the legal and social conflicts and ideological contradictions produced as indigenous shamans and Brazilian ayahuasca churches have entered the global marketplace of New Age spiritualism. Contributions discuss troublesome emergent issues, including the commodification of ayahuasca practices, the reconfiguration of shamanic worldviews to attend to the modern self-as-project, health and safety concerns (drug interactions, ayahuasca-related accidents, sexual harassment), legal disputes, the "bureaucratization of enchantment" in ayahuasca religions, and the sanitization of darker aspects of traditional Amazonian shamanism, such as witchcraft and attack sorcery.

Will the "re-traditionalization" of global neo-ayahuasca ceremonies provide adequate social controls and ideological coherence to ensure that this "second wave" psychedelic revolution doesn't crash and dissipate somewhere between the headwaters of the Amazon and the Great Barrier Reef? Will the contradictions of the modern self and the temptations of capitalism undercut the radical vision of individual and planetary healing that some neo-ayahuasca enthusiasts prophecy? Will ayahuasca become another battlefield casualty in the global War on Drugs, or will legislation evolve to protect ayahuasca as a religious sacrament, as a medicine, as a tool of experiential freedom? We don't yet have all the answers to these questions, but the authors of this book are on the crest of the wave, and if anyone can see ahead to the far shore, it is they.

Glenn H. Shepard Jr.
Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi

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Introduction

The shifting journey of ayahuasca in diaspora

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Ayahuasca is a psychoactive brew that has been historically used by indigenous and mestizo Amazonians for shamanic purposes. It is typically constituted by boiling the vine *Banisteriopsis caapi* with the shrub *Psychotria viridis* – two plants that contain sets of chemicals that are a “match made in heaven.”⁴ Many books and articles on the topic of ayahuasca begin with a similar opening statement, and while the statement is not necessarily incorrect, it often reflects a longing for the standardization of both the “ayahuasca” brew and for a research topic that can be demarcated and objectified into the field of “ayahuasca studies.” Defining “ayahuasca,” however, is challenging. This is because there is very little research on the ethnobotanical aspects of these plants (although it is most probable that a variety of both the *Psychotria* and the *Banisteriopsis* species are, in fact, used in any ayahuasca preparation), and because many other plants from different species native to different continents and ecologies can be added to the mix. Also, in contemporary times, “ayahuasca” is composed of many different cultural and religious practices around the globe – including, among indigenous shamanic complexes, several Brazilian ayahuasca religions, neoshamanic New Age groups, and therapeutic and tourist centers.

Ayahuasca brews typically consist of vines and shrubs native to the Amazon jungle, yet, in recent years, these plants have, in some instances, been substituted with desert plants from Australasia and the Middle East, the root of a shrub from North America, and, among other phytogenic sources, a species of grass that is widely distributed across the globe.⁵ While ayahuasca is typically considered a drink, the Piaroa have prepared and consumed ayahuasca in the form of a snuff (Rodd, 2002), and, with recent innovations in Australia, ayahuasca has been prepared into “smokeable ayahuasca” (Graham St John, Chapter 7 in this volume). In the early years of the twenty-first century, chemicals found in ayahuasca were synthesized or extracted and put into gel caps labeled “pharmahuasca” to be consumed at psychedelic electronic music festivals in Western societies. Ayahuasca goes by many different names, including *caapi*, *daime*, *natem*, *vegetal*, *yajé*, and more recently, *aya*, just to name a few. Depending on its context of use, ayahuasca may occasion ecstatic visions of different spiritual figures and places, from jaguars and Jesus to aliens, Persian palaces, and hyper-technological worlds.

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The chapters in this volume illustrate and explain the complexity of ayahuasca and its global dispersal while focusing on questions of cultural reinvention and controversy. More specifically, the book includes research that broadly examines ayahuasca use around the globe in terms of processes of modernity, economics, and legality. Chapters variably and ethnographically focus on popular milieus in Australasia, Europe, North America, and South America. The widespread geographical dispersal of ayahuasca use across Amazonia and the South American continent during the last two centuries, and its continuing spread to multiple corners of the world during the last three decades, warrants this compilation of a volume on the ayahuasca diaspora. In discussing an ayahuasca diaspora, we can better describe ayahuasca's global dissemination, transformation, and outreach that account for the various different diasporic elements that each context provides. The thrust of the volume thus includes topics on how ayahuasca groups and practices are linked through material and symbolic flows and constructs, and how the use of ayahuasca has transformed, been constrained, and persisted or flourished in new social and cultural settings.

This book emerged from an interdisciplinary conference entitled AYA2014,⁶ The World Ayahuasca Conference, held in Ibiza in September of 2014. The event represented a significant moment in the world ayahuasca diaspora. It pooled together 650 people from 60 different countries, including 40 scientific, legal, and public policy experts; some indigenous shamans; key figures from nodes of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions; neoshamans and therapeutic “facilitators”; and representatives from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with interests in ayahuasca and psychedelic substances. With UN-style live translation in three languages – English, Spanish, and Portuguese – and voices from across continents sharing knowledge in the form of lectures, talks, musical performances, and discussions, the event was a vibrant gathering that generated multiple connections and knowledge. This book aims to materialize some of this to the field of ayahuasca studies.

Using an analytic diasporic framework allows us to examine a practice that exists in different forms and in many different societies, cultural groups, and religions. In the twenty-first century, globalization, transnationalism, and the flow of people, goods, and information around the globe have intensified to such a degree that classic social science concepts are under continual revision, and, in some cases, particular terms and conclusions are banished to the annals of history. For instance, the idea of a bounded, rooted culture or community operating in isolation with an organic system of social relations struggles to have any utility in today's world of high-speed Internet connection, temperamental global markets, rapid environmental changes, and unprecedented mobility and travel. In this highly interconnected humanity, people are not simply more connected across time and space, but also local experiences are increasingly influenced by conditions, forces, and symbols linked to events on different sides of the globe (Kearney, 1995), in what James Clifford termed “entangled tensions” of relationality (1995, p. 306). The diasporas of today are embedded in complex globalisms and have summoned a pluralism of definitions, given the array of translocal modes of existence on the planet.

Traditional concepts of diaspora, often exemplified by the history of Jewish mobility across Europe, were based upon notions of displacement and dispersal, myths and memories of the homeland, alienation in the host society, ongoing support of the homeland, and a “collective identity importantly defined by this relationship” (Clifford, 1994, p. 305). Such a universal categorization proved problematic, however, when varied “homelands” could be remembered and mythologized, and the ongoing support of, or discourse about, returning “home” was not a necessary prerequisite. Around the globe, some cases of population displacement and dispersal have involved some of the above-noted diasporic elements, but not others. The intense amount of movement of people and goods around the globe during the last few centuries has prompted Clifford and others to argue, “in the late twentieth century, all or most communities have diasporic dimensions” (1994, p. 310). The complex global context of ayahuasca use, we argue, is an exemplar of the contemporary diasporic moment.

This introduction chapter provides a short overview of the topics and research covered in the book, and includes a brief synopsis of the mobility of people, goods, and ideas that have carried the visionary flame of ayahuasca use. This synopsis covers significant crossroads in the histories and events by which ayahuasca use has been transformed, innovated, and expanded. To this end, we consider indigenous and mestizo cultural logics of ayahuasca use and highlight their relationship with the Brazilian ayahuasca religions, the networks of ayahuasca lodges and groups associated with tourism and New Age neoshamanism, and the academic milieu of researchers studying ayahuasca; these contexts should not be considered as exclusive or diachronic.

The dispersal of ayahuasca use across parts of South America and the globe has not necessarily been associated with forced displacement of peoples who erect a “home away from home.” But, in many cases, myths of origin tied to the Amazon jungle have helped constitute the identity and legitimacy of ayahuasca groups. The dispersed nodes of ayahuasca use beyond the Amazon have often shared types of social alienation and stigmatization in the host countries and settings due to issues related to international drug regulations, legal persecution, highly moralized discourse on “drugs,” and cultural stigmatization. In sum, while the global nodes of the ayahuasca diaspora are not necessarily based upon lost rootedness and experience of “displacement,” they are, in many cases, “out of place” in the host countries or cultural setting. Before examining in more detail the “out of place” dynamics of ayahuasca groups in Europe, North America, South America, Australasia – or outside the Amazon jungle – it is useful to examine how the history of ayahuasca use in Amazonia has been associated with forms of displacement in indigenous settings.

Since approximately 3000 BP, vast trade routes have connected indigenous groups in the Amazon Basin, Pacific coast, and the Andes (Renard-Casevitz, Saignes, & Taylor, 1988), and several anthropologists and other researchers have suggested that ayahuasca use dates back to this period (Furst, 1976, p. 45; Narby, 1998, p. 154; Luna & White, 2000). These suggestions, however, have not been corroborated in the broader literature on Amazonian archaeology and ethnohistory.

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Ancient Amerindian diasporas, including those of the Arawakan language group that constituted “one of the great diasporas of the ancient world” (Heckenberger, 2002, p. 99), traded hunting equipment, baskets, jewelry, foods, and medicines (Alexiades, 2009), but there is no evidence of ayahuasca trade or use.

Today, ayahuasca use constitutes central forms of shamanism for many Arawakan and other language groups of Western and Southwestern Amazonia (Virtanen, 2014). Research conducted by Gow (1994), Alexiades (2000), Pantoja & Conceição (2010), Brabec de Mori (2011), Saéz (2014b), Shepard (2014), and others has suggested that many indigenous groups who use ayahuasca have adopted it during the last 150 years, coinciding with the boom of the rubber-tapping industry and other channels of exchange. Undertaking a linguistic analysis of songs and associated terms performed in ayahuasca sessions across parts of Western Amazonia, Brabec de Mori (2011) suggests that indigenous groups south of the Peruvian jungle city Iquitos appear to have adopted ayahuasca as recently as the last 100 to 150 years. Similarly, Shepard (2014) explains that ayahuasca brews that include *Psychotria viridis*, which has become typical of ayahuasca brews in Western Amazonia and elsewhere, only became a part of Matsigenka shamanic practice 50 years ago.

The anthropological and archaeological research that points to a much more recent history of ayahuasca use across Upper and Western Amazonia challenges the myth of primordial origin found in some scientific research and in common-place belief. This myth reflects narratives that circulate in numerous ayahuasca groups around the planet, and, as Shepard (2014) explains, the studies that debunk notions of ancient origin may appear heretical to ayahuasca drinkers from different backgrounds. While some ayahuasca drinkers in Western societies are familiar with many scientific concepts about ayahuasca – including its chemical composition, metabolic action, and therapeutic effects – one wonders if the lack of research addressing the historical origin appears to relate to a longing for ayahuasca to be “more legitimate” in the social milieus in which ayahuasca is criminalized and pathologized. In any case, the mythologizing of an “ancient homeland” – the Amazon – seems to be common for both consumers and researchers in the global diaspora of ayahuasca.

During the 1800s, the colonial extractive industries of Amazonia were involved in devastating levels of depopulation and extensive changes to indigenous social organization, generating a “massive displacement of people [and] decimating and dismembering some indigenous societies while promoting certain forms of inter-ethnic exchange and mixing in others” (Alexiades, 2009, p. 23). The provincial Brazilian government employed military forces and violence in an attempt to coerce indigenous peoples and impose tax systems on trade materials such as manioc cereal (Weinstein, 1983, p. 22; Wright & Hill, 1986). The tax system failed; however, by the 1850s, the rubber-tapping industry had skyrocketed. Indigenous peoples were forced in large numbers into labor camps to extract rubber for the burgeoning international market (Weinstein, 1983, p. 122). By the late 1850s, large-scale forms of resistance from Arawakan, Tukanoan, and other indigenous groups of the area were manifesting in the form of dance festivals,

song ceremonies, and other rituals. This rapidly transforming context of indigenous Amazonia marks the period when ayahuasca use appears to have dispersed throughout Upper and Lowland Amazonia.

Among the transformations in indigenous social organization during this period, millenarian jaguar-shamans that drank ayahuasca and similar psychoactive substances traveled to indigenous groups atomized during post-conquest dissolution and led key movements of resistance to colonial domination. The millenarian jaguar-shamans represent an early example of ayahuasca being involved in a vast and complex network of indigenous mobility.⁷ Contemporary research of indigenous forms of ayahuasca appears to suggest that one of the reasons ayahuasca was used by millenarian jaguar-shamans may be related to the maintenance and materialization of social relations between indigenous polities.

Vast trade networks associated with shamanism that connected Western and Upper Amazonia and the Andes have been acknowledged to exist from ancient times up until today (Freedman, 2014, p. 134). Shamans traded knowledge, power objects, and medicines in complex political networks. Mobility has been associated with Amazonian shamanism to such a degree that the distance a shaman has traveled is considered equivalent to his or her shamanic power (Freedman, 2014, p. 135). In parallel to this ethos of traveling, political mediation and diplomacy have been associated with how ayahuasca rituals may help to “materialize alliances” (Virtanen, 2014, p. 65) between different social groups. Ayahuasca shamans are masters of alterity and typically attain powers and abilities to transform into nonhuman beings, and to mediate forces between people and between humans and mythological beings. Virtanen (2014) explains how this dynamic is present in intergroup ritual encounters between different indigenous groups where new political relations may be generated.

Similarly, indigenous ayahuasca curing sessions have involved ecstatic visions, performances, and social interactions in which disputes internal to communities and families have been emphasized and played out. Indigenous ayahuasca healers are typically described in morally ambiguous terms and given ascribed magical abilities to both heal and harm or kill (Whitehead & Wright, 2004). The ambiguous and provisional powers of shamans are due to a structural relationship between healing and sorcery in which the act of healing depends upon returning a spiritual attack to an accused sorcerer. This ambiguity may be accompanied by ambivalence on the side of the patient and his or her family as to the abilities, intentions, and politics of a particular shaman (Brown, 1988). The powers of shamans appear to reflect the provisional nature of social life such that healing and sorcery accusations involve “very real microconflicts among neighbors, kin, and rivals over knowledge, power, and economic resources” (Saéz, 2014a, p. xx). These powers, and the “equivocal political status of shamans” (Brown, 1988, p. 104), have invested a dynamic mode of social control in Amazonian shamanism in terms of both internal and external group social relations. Furthermore, Townsley argues that Yaminahua ayahuasca practice “emphasizes ways of knowing rather than a system of things known” (1993, p. 126). He argues that the techniques of shamans – which include a sort of “twisted language,” magical songs, and spirits of artifacts

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(such as outboard motors and radios) – are flexible in ways that have allowed shamanism to flourish in times of radical social and cultural change. Controversy and reinvention, in the form of ambiguity, ambivalence, and intergroup ritual encounters, have been central to the logic of Amazonian shamanism for as long as ethnographic thought has existed (see also Labate & Cavnar, 2014).

The social and diplomatic or mediating quality of Amazonian ayahuasca shamanism has extended to relations between indigenous and nonindigenous peoples in a variety of ways. Examining historical accounts of British rubber barons committing violent acts and terrorizing indigenous peoples in the Putumayo region of the Colombian Amazon, Michael Taussig (1987) illustrates how shamans internalized colonial projections of “wildness” and “mystery” and provided healing rituals to peasant colonists. From the encounter between indigenous Amazonians and colonial settlers, a third identity, that of the *mestizo*, emerged in parallel with “vegetalismo” shamanism – a key complex of ayahuasca use in parts of Amazonia. Vegetalismo shamanism combines Catholic elements with forms of indigenous animism centered on cosmologies of plant-spirits, and has represented a mediating cultural zone between peoples of the forest and the city (Gow, 1994), and in a transnational context (Labate, 2014).

One thousand kilometers southwest of the Putumayo region where Taussig was researching, and where some researchers hypothesize ayahuasca use began (Brabec de Mori, 2011, p. 24), an urban ayahuasca religion was born out of the decline of the rubber-tapping industry in 1930s Acre, Brazil. Combining elements of Catholicism, African religiosity, European esotericism, and indigenous shamanism, the ayahuasca religion Santo Daime began with a descendent of African slavery, Brazilian rubber tapper Raimundo Irineu Serra, or “Mestre Irineu.” Santo Daime was formally established in 1945, gained government recognition in 1971, and, by the end of the century, had spread to urban centers across Brazil, to other South American countries, and to Europe and North America (Cemin, 2010; Labate & MacRae, 2010; Labate & Jungaberle, 2011; Dawson, 2013; Labate & Assis, Chapter 3 in this volume).

Concomitantly, another Brazil ayahuasca religion comparable in size, the União do Vegetal (UDV), underwent a somewhat similar dispersal and expansion (Labate & MacRae, 2010; Labate & Jungaberle, 2011). The two religious organizations are the largest social bodies of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions that may be conceptually linked by a range of factors, including historical trajectories and a particular combination of certain cultural and religious sources (Goulart, 2004).

In the expansion of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions across South America and the globe, Acre, a state in Brazil on the edges of the Amazon jungle, represents a kind of religious “homeland” and provides actual and symbolic flows of diasporic elements, whereby people and ideas undergo psychic and geographic “pilgrimages” (Soares, 2010, p. 71; see also Labate and Assis, Chapter 3 in this volume). Until recent decades, the Brazilian ayahuasca religions dominated the public debate about ayahuasca in Brazil, in which they sometimes evoked notions of indigenous ayahuasca practice as a source of legitimacy and authenticity (Labate & Coutinho, 2014, p. 191). However, over the last several decades,

various indigenous ayahuasca practitioners and groups have increasingly been participating in urban networks and have been active in public debates (Labate & Coutinho, 2014, p. 191). A relationship that flows two ways has emerged between the indigenous “homeland” of ayahuasca use and the urban environments of ayahuasca use across Brazil.

Since the early 1980s, parts of the Peruvian, Ecuadorian, Colombian, and Brazilian Amazon began to experience an increase in what has come to be termed ayahuasca tourism; spiritual, shamanic, or medical tourism; and ethnotourism (Winkelman, 2005; Davidov, 2010; Fotiou, 2010; Labate & Cavnar, 2014). Seemingly related to neoshamanic elements of the 1960s counterculture of Western societies (Atkinson, 1993; Znamenski, 2007), the nascent ayahuasca tourism industry is centered on an encounter between sick, spiritually thirsty, or culturally curious Westerners, and local or sometimes “gringo” ayahuasca shamans. Considering the development of ayahuasca shamanism in the context of tourism during the first decade of the twenty-first century, Freedman (2014) examined changing aesthetics in two emergent forms of this intercultural situation: the ceremonial *maloca* and the shaman’s ethnobotanical garden. Both the *maloca* and the ethnobotanical gardens have become part of a generic model of “ayahuasca shamanism,” and represent means by which locals relate to a new and economically powerful “ethnic group”: the transnational tourist.

Many of the ayahuasca tourist lodges in Amazonia are funded and organized by citizens of the United States, France, Australia, or a number of other Western countries. We suggest here that the imported industry represents a kind of “tourism diaspora.” In this diaspora, certain myths of the “homeland” are factors in the ecstatic and healing experiences of ayahuasca tourists. Fotiou (2010) and Gearin (Chapter 6 in this volume) have indicated forms of cultural rejection and critique of Western culture in the healing ideologies of ayahuasca tourists and neoshamanic practitioners. The people who left the West to open an ayahuasca lodge in the Amazon are providing a service to consumers of re-mythologizing their original “homelands” in the form of ecstatic healing experiences conducted by local shamans.

The new standardized spaces of the tourist lodges provide certain means by which the age-old diplomatic logic of ayahuasca shamanism managing networks of people is being altered and refined into a service based on logics of industrial tourism for transitory visitors from around the globe. As argued by Gearin (Chapter 6 in this volume), cultural differences between shamanic tourists and ayahuasca shamans are being invented in the “culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 14) that constitute the transnational circuits of ayahuasca tourism. Given the influx of international consumers and the sudden increasing amounts of money associated with ayahuasca tourism in places such as Iquitos, Peru, the *maloca* and the ethnobotanical gardens represent cultural inventions or proliferations of inventions linked to global representations of shamans.

Similar to stories of tales and “pintas” (ayahuasca visions) being shared among indigenous peoples in the Putumayo region of Amazonia (Taussig, 1987), images

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and text in media articles on ayahuasca in *The New York Times*, *Men's Health*, and *The Guardian* circulate the globe of (potential) ayahuasca drinkers. These media images and stories help constitute the imagination and scale of people who visit ayahuasca malocas and ethnobotanical gardens in Amazonia, and those who become interested in the Brazilian ayahuasca religions, and represent global influences in the reinvention of ayahuasca use. The “international ayahuasca community” context involves events and news published in the media in London, São Paulo, or New York that may impact intercultural encounters and flows of people and information to ayahuasca tourist lodges or to Santo Daime or UDV churches. The Internet forums on ayahuasca.com, which include 18,500 registered members, and the social media Facebook group “Ayahuasca World,” which hosts 43,000 members, represent informal platforms of exchange that are intensifying global dynamics of the world ayahuasca diaspora. The online forums and groups include regular exchanges of information and reflections on “how to” practice ayahuasca, advertisements for retreat centers and groups, political debates relative to ayahuasca branches, and the sharing of art, music, and performative media.

This global knowledge or information system of formal and informal media has been paralleled by an interdisciplinary network of academic researchers, advocates, legal representatives, NGOs, and activists of ayahuasca. To consider, for one moment, this global context with a loosened imagination, the ultimate nexus that links the energetic and dynamic group of people at the AYA2014 conference (from which this book emerged) and ayahuasca drinkers around the globe is the ecstatic spaces that drinking ayahuasca occasions. The journey, or ecstatic flight, in ayahuasca ceremonies is often described – in indigenous contexts, the Brazilian ayahuasca religions, and New Age scene – in terms of disclosing ultimate truth, a hidden universe of causation and being in which the “authentic” or “real” is revealed. Whether drinkers are driven by a sense of “displacement” in the world or an attraction to ecstatic embodiment and social or natural communion, whether they are driven by desires to use the hidden world to their own advantage, whether they simply want to escape from this world, or whether they are driven by economic gain, ayahuasca reveals a world in transformation. With this in mind, it can be considered that all ayahuasca drinkers are, in some sense, residents of an everyday “diaspora” of the luminous ecstasy of the brew. Ayahuasca is an ultimate agent of metamorphosis, akin to the greatest tools of any rite of passage, past or present, that reveals and transcends the limits of the human experience to the “Other.” And, at the same time, as illustrated in this book, the brew is transforming and being transformed by the limits of its own existence with regard to legal systems and to its dispersal to varied cultural and social settings. This volume provides a series of new research that highlights key anthropological and sociological features of the expanding and changing use of global ayahuasca in the early twenty-first century.

In the opening chapter of the book, sociologist of religion Andrew Dawson undertakes a bold investigation of dynamics of detraditionalization and retraditionalization with regard to the major currents of ayahuasca use outside the

Amazon region. The chapter works as a valuable general introduction to the spirit of this book, that there is a “world ayahuasca diaspora” that somehow unites different modalities under one general umbrella. Considering the constitutive role of globalization, marketization, and modernization in the reinvention of practical and symbolic dimensions of ayahuasca use outside its “traditional” contexts, Dawson adds theoretical gristle to sociocultural explanations of guiding principles of ayahuasca expansion. The simple idea that modernity is annihilating traditional ways of social and religious life is tackled critically, and the dynamics of ayahuasca retraditionalisation are considered in relation to aspects of modern subjectivity. The author demonstrates how notions of instrumental self-realization, meritocracy, relativism, the sacralization of the self, and other modes of subjectivity linked to modern social forms reveal how the reconfiguration of ayahuasca use in Australasia, Europe, and North America is geared toward needs typical to modern, urban-industrial existence.

In the second chapter, anthropologist Rosa Virgínia Melo provides a detailed ethnographic analysis of UDV’s ritual and myth, providing an important contribution to the very sparse literature existing on this Brazilian ayahuasca religion in English. Outlining processes and structures of ritual practice, the author examines conventions of ecstatic trance and reveals a “bureaucratization of enchantment” in social relations defined by the rituals. Similar to Dawson’s chapter on the retraditionalisation of ayahuasca, Melo introduces evidence of an influence of modern forms of institutional rationality in the ritual structure of UDV trance practices. Furthermore, she works to explain the participants’ subjectivity and quest for self-knowledge in terms of institutional regimes that extend to cosmological postulates. The chapter indicates how syntheses exist in the way UDV incorporates aspects of myth and reason, belief and the state, and enchantment and bureaucratization, and how this has been valuable in term of the religious organization’s expansion from the Amazon to urban centers of Brazil.

Examining the national and international expansion of Santo Daime, anthropologist Beatriz Caiuby Labate and sociologist of religion Glauber Loures de Assis, in the third chapter, help to explain the growth and adaptability of Santo Daime by linking it to a broader Brazilian culture of “miscibility” and to a penchant toward “psychoactivity.” The authors explore the social and cultural history of Santo Daime and analyze its expansion from the marginal social space of the Amazon region of Western Brazil to a dispersed metropolitan urban middle-class and to Europe and North America. The processes by which the religious groups gained legitimacy along different trajectories of this expansion reveal, the authors demonstrate, key religious ambivalences and controversies associated with modernity. Three distinctive social spheres of Santo Daime – which include the Amazon region, urban middle-class Brazil, and international contexts – are investigated with regard to notions of the production of legitimacy and religious and cultural innovation. The authors also address religious and legal persecution in European and North American contexts, taking into account distinctions between institutional and dispersed forms of social organization, and between homogenous and heterogeneous religious practice. The expansion of

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Santo Daime represents, the chapter illustrates, a unique response to the contemporary zeitgeist of modern, global religions.

Moving away from the more general and encompassing type of analysis provided by Labate and Assis, and yet complementing it, anthropologist Eli Oda Sheiner, in the fourth chapter of the book, investigates the adaptation of Santo Daime in the context of Canada. The ethnographic study is focused largely on C  u do Montreal, a Canadian chapter of the Santo Daime religion, and investigates tensions and innovations related to an intersection between religious practice and broader Canadian society. Considering the implications of legal discourse and policy that places ayahuasca into the category of dangerous “drug,” and Santo Daime practices of ecstatic encounters with sacred nonhumans, Sheiner illustrates differences that exist on the levels of ontology and epistemology. The knowledge system of the state and the secularist qualities of Canadian society are considered in relation to Santo Daime participants’ accounts of drinking ayahuasca. Innovations and disputes that emerged between Santo Daime groups in Canada and groups in the homeland of Brazil are examined. In this direction, the chapter provides an interesting account of the sorts of “local adaptations” performed by Santo Daime in different contexts, contextualizing forms of indigenous Canadian syncretism with a Daimista ritual in Montreal. Sheiner explores the ways in which Santo Daime members in Canada navigate and bridge multiple ontological frameworks of identity, spirituality, and health, and reveals controversies and adaptations of the religious practice relative to broader Canadian society.

The fifth chapter, by Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Clancy Cavnar, and Glauber Loures de Assis, focuses on Santo Daime diaspora through its musical dimension. Some parallels are established with the international expansion of capoeira and Brazilian Afro-religions, situating the expansion of Santo Daime within the wider Brazilian religious diaspora. It provides a short description, based on fieldwork and literature review, of how the Brazilian hymns are sung and practiced outside Brazil. In different countries, they are either sung in Portuguese, or sung in translated versions; new hymns are “received” directly into various languages. Local groups, especially in the U.S., divide into two schools (“traditionalists” and “translationalists”): One advocates singing only in Portuguese; the other wants to sing translated hymns. This division invites debate about notions of tradition, authenticity, and sacredness. The authors examine the positioning of key experts around the musical performance and analyze how this reflects new power maps, where religious expertise is mixed with language knowledge – Brazilians fluent in English and foreigners fluent in Portuguese being on the top of the scale – and musical skills. It is argued that the ability to perform cultural translations is central to establishing leadership abroad. It is hoped that this reflection on music in Santo Daime inspires more research on the relationship between psychedelics, religion, language, subjectivity, and cognition.

Undertaking an ethnographic study of ayahuasca neoshamanism in Australia, anthropologist Alex K. Gearin provides in Chapter 6 an analysis of how indigenous ayahuasca shamanism has been reinvented in ways that embody political and cultural issues relative to Australian society. The chapter links Australian

ayahuasca neoshamanism to earlier forms of neoshamanism in the 1960s counterculture of Western societies and to fantastical constructions of “shamans” in eighteenth century European theatre. This contextualization assists the author in explaining the structures of the neoshamanic ayahuasca cosmology in which a dichotomy between nature and society underpins conceptions of illness, malaise, and healing. Gearin examines narrative accounts of ayahuasca trance and healing in Australia and considers the etiological implications of the narratives in contrast to healing systems of Amazonian shamanism to reveal a critical cultural sensibility in the cosmology and phenomenology of Australian ayahuasca neoshamanism. The chapter demonstrates how, in the context of Australian ayahuasca neoshamanism, conceptions of nature, plant-spirits, and an indigenous Other represent objects by which drinkers reflexively assess various aspects of everyday ethics and the broader cultural institutions of which they are constituted.

In Chapter 7, anthropologist Graham St John examines the cultural history of “changa,” or what has been termed “smokeable ayahuasca,” which is an innovative practice that originated among psychedelic experimentalists in Australia (see also Tramacchi, 2006). The author situates the emergence of changa within a recent history of psychedelic gnostic practices in which Westerners have experimented with ayahuasca analogues or different chemical combinations similar to those of indigenous ayahuasca brews. The use of changa emerged from a group of psychonauts within a large ethnobotany scene in Australia and from experiments with the natural depository of dimethyltryptamine (DMT)-containing *Acacia* trees in Australia. St John examines this history and explores various crusades of people disseminating “smokeable ayahuasca,” including large-scale commercial efforts by a public storefront, to reveal the travels of changa in Australia and beyond to electronic music festivals in Europe and North America. Drawing on interviews conducted with the creator of changa, other pioneering psychedelic experimentalists in Australia, and visionary artists and authors within a global psychedelic milieu, the chapter illustrates disputes and innovations that the “DMT effect” of changa has contributed to in the cultural context from whence it came. This represents perhaps one of the most original contributions of this volume. The description of changa raises issues on the very notion of what “ayahuasca” is, as mentioned earlier, and the limits between sacred and nonsacred, ritual and recreational, and natural and synthetic use of psychedelics.

Chapter 8, by anthropologist Joshua Homan, addresses the cultural impact of nascent forms of ayahuasca tourism in indigenous and mestizo contexts of the Western Peruvian Amazon. The chapter examines the “ayahuasca boom” in contrast to other economic “booms” of the area, including the notorious rubber-tapping operations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the violent 1980s coca boom. Examining the historical context of ayahuasca tourism allows the author to explain innovative sequences of urban and remote, and mestizo and indigenous, cultural change. While sorcery has been a hallmark of much ayahuasca healing in the region, the emergence of Westerners visiting the Amazon jungle to drink ayahuasca has resulted, Homan argues, in sanitized forms of shamanism in which local accusations of sorcery are less likely to encompass

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ayahuasca shamans providing services for Westerners. The chapter has the merit of highlighting key cultural tensions and challenges that have emerged at the intersection of the mobility of indigenous and mestizo ayahuasca shamans and diasporic networks in Western Amazonia, and in global trails of Europe and North America, such as commercialization, health-related problems, training of shamans, and cultural shocks.

Considering broader and philosophical questions about the economics of ayahuasca, professor of public health Kenneth W. Tupper provides an ambitious enquiry in Chapter 9 into ayahuasca as a globally exchanged material commodity. The transnational expansion of ayahuasca has included variations in the exchange systems of ayahuasca brew and materials (that are usually less explored), as well as consumptive practices. Tupper elucidates roles that government policy and free-market logics have had in exchange relations in the context of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions, shamanic tourism industry, and New Age neoshamanic circles. Compared to forms of indigenous Amazonian exchange relations in which ayahuasca is tied to animistic ideologies of reciprocity, the commodification of ayahuasca in Western contexts, Tupper explains, appears somewhat unavoidable, given the pervasiveness of free-market capitalism in late modern life. A neat congruence between ayahuasca and free-market capitalism, however, is approached critically by the author. Introducing the concept of “cognitive tool,” Tupper considers ayahuasca in relation to literacy, numeracy, bookkeeping, and other “cognitive tools” that were fundamental to the development of prehistorical and modern economics. The chapter provides speculations about the potential of the “cognitive tool” ayahuasca to provide transvaluations of contemporary issues related to global economic crises and to the possibility of new forms of exchange relations.

Anthropologist Daniela M. Peluso follows Tupper on the topic of economics, tracing the material bases that enabled ayahuasca’s world diaspora in Chapter 10. Examining small-scale entrepreneurship and related cultural dynamics of the ayahuasca tourism industry, she investigates actual and potential impacts of the ayahuasca boom with regards to issues of postcolonialism and globalization. Stemming from a focus on the Tambopata Province of Madre de Dios, Peru, the chapter addresses how the positive normalization of perceptions of the shamans providing ayahuasca experiences for wealthy foreigners coincided with the emergence of larger tourism initiatives on the part of the Peruvian government. Peluso examines the “entrepreneurial ecosystem” of ayahuasca tourism in this broader social and historical context, and provides brilliant insights on issues related to indigenous livelihood and structural economic inequalities, appropriation politics, and the flow of goods and services from the south to the north or from the Amazon jungle to New Age markets in Western postindustrial contexts. The capitalist dynamics in which value is exchanged in the ayahuasca tourism industry is examined critically, and messianic underpinnings and also the dangers of aggressive entrepreneurship are considered.

In the final two chapters of the book, the focus moves toward the topics of legal systems and the persecution of ayahuasca drinkers in national and international contexts. Members of the International Center for Ethnobotanical Education,

Research & Service (ICEERS), Benjamin K. De Loenen, Óscar Parés Franquero, and Constanza Sánchez Avilés, in Chapter 11, delineate the challenges of ayahuasca globalization, triangulating the current state of stigmatization and legal vulnerability of ayahuasca in different countries. Mapping characterizations of ayahuasca and traditional medicines in reports compiled by international drug control conventions, the authors address the rise in persecution rates of ayahuasca possession and consumption in Europe, South America, and North America since 2010. The practice of drinking ayahuasca in parts of these continents currently exists in problematic, and at times contradictory, legal conventions, or in legal vacuums, and the work of ICEERS has been investigating and proactively supporting court cases and media programs in various ways. It can be said that the very emergence of an NGO like ICEERS is evidence of the world ayahuasca diaspora; its appeal among users, in terms of their “public services” regarding health, safety, and diffusion of scientific information, shows an institutionalization and professionalization of what used to be purely oral and local traditions.

Examining legal processes of ayahuasca in English courts, legal academic Charlotte Walsh, in the final chapter of the book, provides a window on complexities and ambiguities of the legal status of ayahuasca in the United Kingdom. Investigating a case in which a self-proclaimed shamanic practitioner was prosecuted and convicted for production and supply of DMT, the author highlights how confusions in the case raise issues of a legal abuse of process and human rights. The chapter includes an exploration of ambiguous legal definitions of production and preparation in relation to the act of brewing ayahuasca, and to the status of organic and inorganic or “natural” supplies of the scheduled substance DMT. The need for the court to consider harm and benefit in order to fulfill the central act by which ayahuasca is prohibited is examined. The legal status of ayahuasca in the United Kingdom and other Western societies includes similarities with cases that concern similar psychoactive substances, such as psilocybin or magic mushroom, peyote cactus, and marijuana. Given the varied motivations that underpin ayahuasca consumption in the United Kingdom, which may include religious, medical, or cognitive expansion, the author indicates that a general right to drink ayahuasca appears necessary when considered next to the “artificial boundaries” that are the result of modern institutional categories. This chapter is relevant both in terms of placing ayahuasca in the broader drug policy debate, and in establishing legal links between ayahuasca and other psychedelics.

The field of ayahuasca studies appears to represent a window onto the future of academic work, given its strong interdisciplinary bent and given how the field includes considerably blurred borders between academic knowledge, public thought, government policy, and the lives of the people researched. The readership market of this text is wide for an academic text, potentially covering ayahuasca drinkers and groups from different backgrounds, researchers in the social sciences and humanities, lawyers and drug policy experts, and also those who research ayahuasca in the “hard sciences,” such as neuroscience and chemistry. The following contribution of chapters represents ideas of and for the world ayahuasca diaspora in a way that captures a very significant moment in the history of ayahuasca and

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global society. We hope this book will become increasingly relevant and useful over the next decade or so, during a period in which humanity continues to come to terms with what Marshall McLuhan coined “the global village.”

Notes

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- 4 Certain vines of the *Banisteriopsis* family contain harmala alkaloids, and the shrub *Psychotria viridis* contains the psychedelic alkaloid dimethyltryptamine (DMT). When consumed orally, the harmala inhibits an enzyme in the gastrointestinal track that allows the DMT to enter the bloodstream.
- 5 These organic sources of the alkaloid currently consumed around the globe in brews natively termed “ayahuasca” include *Peganum harmala*, for the harmala content, and, for the DMT content, several species of *Acacia* (*acuminata*, *obtusifolia*, *confusa*, *floribunda*), *Mimosa tenuiflora*, and *Phalaris grass*.
- 6 All authors who contributed to this book were present in Ibiza except Joshua Homan and Glauber de Loures Assis. Several chapters were different presentations than the ones given in Ibiza.
- 7 Venancio Kamiko – a mestizo Arawakan boat-builder who realized that he and others were being structurally coerced into cycles of debt to colonizers – played a central role in this network by traveling across Northwest Amazonia preaching, conducting festivals and rituals, and organizing other millenarian prophets to do the same. Kamiko’s political power was related to his abilities as a healer and a “master shaman,” or “jaguar owner,” which he gained through overcoming an illness and training with ayahuasca and other psychoactive plants, and conducting healings across Northwest Amazonia (Wright & Hill, 1986; Hugh-Jones, 1996; Wright, 2013).

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