

Westerners in search of the legendary potion  
Ayahuasca travel in the borderland between tourism and  
pilgrimage

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Master's thesis in Comparative Religion

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Abstract of Master's thesis

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<p>The thesis examines the phenomenon most commonly known as “ayahuasca tourism” – i.e. the practice of westerners traveling to South America and partaking in ceremonies in which a powerful entheogenic brew, ayahuasca, is consumed. While this popular phenomenon has been steadily increasing during the last decades, it has, however, been insufficiently studied by scholars. An important question which has not been properly addressed in earlier studies is how ayahuasca tourism relates to the wider occurrence of travel and how it should be perceived with reference to the theoretical frameworks on the subject of travel. Drawing on theories regarding pilgrimage and tourism, the main purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between ayahuasca tourism and the broader spectrum of travel. In particular, the study tests the designations “pilgrimage”, “religious tourism” and “spiritual tourism” with reference to ayahuasca tourism. Utilizing earlier literature as well as ayahuasca tourists’ reports obtained from an Internet forum as a basis for analysis, I search for a suitable terminology to be used for the phenomenon. The study lays special emphasis on the protagonists’ motivations, experiences and outcomes in order to take note of various aspects of the wide-ranging occurrence of ayahuasca tourism.</p> <p>Key findings indicate that ayahuasca tourism is best understood as a combination of pilgrimage and tourism. On the basis of the analysis I argue that ayahuasca tourism should be labeled as “pilgrimage” and/or “spiritual tourism”, and the tourists respectively as “pilgrims” and/or “spiritual tourists”. The category of “religious tourism/tourist”, on the other hand, turns out to be an inappropriate designation when describing the phenomenon. In general, through my study I show that the results are consistent with the present trend in the study of travel to perceive pilgrimage and tourism as theoretically similar phenomena. The study of ayahuasca tourism serves thus as living proof of contemporary travel, in which the categories of pilgrimage and tourism are often indistinguishable. I suggest that ayahuasca tourism is by no means exceptional on this point, but can rather be used as an illustration of modern travel forms on a general level. Thus, the present study does not only add to the research of ayahuasca tourism, but also provides additional insights into the study of travel.</p>	
Keywords: <i>ayahuasca, Ayahuasca Forums, ayahuasca tourism, pilgrimage, spiritual tourism</i>	
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# 1 Introduction

Thousands, if not tens of thousands, westerners travel to South America each year and participate in ceremonies where ayahuasca, a powerful entheogenic beverage used in the area for at least a few centuries, is consumed. This steadily growing phenomenon has received a great deal of attention, not only among scholars but in the media as well as in popular culture. Most commonly known as “ayahuasca tourism” (e.g. Grunwell 1998), the phenomenon has also been labeled as “entheogen tourism” (Davidov 2010), “drug tourism” (de Rios 1994a; 1994b), “mystical tourism” (Znamenski 2007), “psychedelic tourism” (Shanon 2002:20), “shamanic tourism” (Fotiou 2010) and “spiritual tourism” (Herbert 2010).

The increasing interest in ayahuasca tourism, as the phenomenon is provisionally called in this thesis, has taken place simultaneously with an upsurge in worldwide travel. In the last five decades, the number of global travelers has risen fifteen-fold, with one billion international tourists traveling in 2012<sup>1</sup> (Stausberg 2011:4). Whilst travel is such a widespread and popular phenomenon, it goes without saying that not all travelers are alike. People travel in various ways and they are driven by widely divergent motivations. Whereas traditional forms of travel are revitalized (Winkelman and Dubisch 2005:ix), various newfangled modes of travel are as well becoming more and more popular (Norman 2011:3). Understandably, travel is to a greater extent being noticed also by scholars.

However, despite the fact that ayahuasca tourism and travel in general are more prevalent phenomena than ever before and both are also ever more focuses of academic research, no rigorous and thorough studies that would have examined these phenomena in relation to one another have been set forth. With the present work, it is first and foremost my intention to fill this gap in the research. Through this study, I perceive ayahuasca tourism as an occurrence within the larger phenomenon of travel and analyze their reciprocal relationship. Before moving into the subject, this introductory chapter presents the foregoing research and the methodology used in the present study, along with relevant terminology and the structure of the thesis. First, however, the central research questions, along with the purpose and significance of this study, are addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> [media.unwto.org/en/press-release/2012-12-13/unwto-welcomes-world-s-one-billionth-tourist](http://media.unwto.org/en/press-release/2012-12-13/unwto-welcomes-world-s-one-billionth-tourist) (retrieved January 19, 2013).

## 1.1 Research questions and the purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is essentially twofold. Firstly, I want to address the question of how ayahuasca tourism relates to the broader occurrence of travel and how it should be interpreted in the light of the theoretical models regarding various forms of travel. So far, no systematic studies focusing on these issues have been put forth. The present study is thus as far as I know the first of its kind and will hopefully contribute to future studies on ayahuasca tourism. In particular, I am interested in examining how the theories regarding pilgrimage and tourism can be applied in the study of ayahuasca tourism. Moreover, there is a noticeable disagreement among scholars as regards the terms that should be used for the phenomenon and its protagonists. One of the further aims of this study is therefore to offer a functional terminology to be used for ayahuasca tourism and for the travelers partaking in this phenomenon.

Secondly, I also want to determine what the examination of ayahuasca tourism can reveal about the study of travel and of various classifications, such as pilgrimage and tourism, on a general level. To put it simply, I argue that this study is not only advantageous for the research of ayahuasca tourism, but also beneficial for the study of contemporary travel. Moreover, I provisionally claim that ayahuasca tourism is an occurrence that is in no way unparalleled in today's world and that an analysis of ayahuasca tourism does not only shed light on this particular phenomenon but can also bring forth significant implications on present-day ways of travel more generally.

On the whole, the essential wish of this study is thus to bring together the topical subject matters of ayahuasca tourism and travel. Rather than searching for final truths, this study acts as a pioneering endeavor to propose that the study of these phenomena in connection with each other can give rise to enriched understandings of both ayahuasca tourism and travel.

## 1.2 Methodological considerations and previous research

Several scholars have observed ayahuasca tourism in detail and I appreciate many of these works as excellent sources of information. In particular, I am referring to the recent works of Fotiou (2010; 2012), Holman (2010a), Homan (2011), Owen (2006) and Taylor (2011), which all have been very valuable for this thesis. However, while these and several other studies used in this text have provided a great basis for my study, none of them have

explicitly examined how ayahuasca tourism is related to the wider phenomena of tourism and pilgrimage. In point of fact, such studies are conspicuous by their absence.

Subsequently, while this thesis is largely based on earlier research as regards both the topics of travel and ayahuasca, I have not completely restricted my material to earlier literature. A wide-ranging source of data, largely absent in ayahuasca-related studies, is found on the Internet. While some authors (see e.g. Holman 2010a; 2011) have examined websites that advertise ayahuasca online, only a few have focused on websites that act as meeting places for ayahuasca users (for a rare exception, see Frias 2011). In this study, I have utilized testimonies from an Internet forum, Ayahuasca Forums, to analyze the relationship between ayahuasca tourism and the broader continuum of various forms of travel. Ayahuasca Forums is an online community of more than 14,000 members worldwide and it works in conjunction with the website [ayahuasca.com](http://ayahuasca.com), “a multi-disciplinary project devoted to the Spirit Vine *Ayahuasca* [...] and its home, the great forests of the amazon” (main page of [www.ayahuasca.com](http://www.ayahuasca.com), accessed December 17, 2012). The forum has been active for well over a decade (the earliest posts I found were from 1999) and with over 200,000 posts, it is in all probability the largest of its kind.

The majority of the scholars that have studied ayahuasca tourism have conducted fieldwork in South America, focusing on how ayahuasca tourism occurs on a local level. In this study, however, I have not conducted any practical investigations *in situ*, which, someone might argue, is an inadequacy for the present thesis. In my opinion, this needs not, however, be the case. There exists by now a considerable amount of data regarding the perceptions of ayahuasca tourists, shamans and tour operators. Would my personal interviews and observations have offered some new, previously undetected information on the subject? It is possible, although not necessarily so. This is not to say that new data on ayahuasca tourism would not be desirable, far from it. Rather, it is my intention to show that it is possible to validly examine the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism using the bulk of literature that has been written of it, along with a scrutiny of personal accounts found on the Internet. While first-hand information from the field certainly could make this study more personal and contextualized, there are equally several benefits resulting from my decision not to use empirical field observations.

First of all, I have avoided the struggling with finding representative actors to be interviewed. On the Internet, and especially on the Ayahuasca Forums, innumerable testimonies are found

and these can in my opinion be perceived just as appropriate sources of information as those that one would gain by means of conducting personal interviews in Iquitos, for example. Secondly, I have had the possibility to largely bypass various concerns that usually are closely related to ethnographical studies in general; for instance, issues such as the insider/outsider problem as well as that of subjectivity. Naturally, this is not to say that such issues were completely absent when utilizing Internet accounts. However, I have not requested any information, nor am I a member of the Ayahuasca Forums from which the accounts stem from. I have merely searched for personal testimonies and utterances regarding ayahuasca tourism that would shed light on the research questions that were outlined above. Using such a method, I have positioned myself as objectively and impartially as possible.

Nonetheless, I am at the same time aware of the problem with choosing certain accounts as demonstrative for a broader perspective. In order to cope with this issue as properly as possible, I have simply acquainted myself with the Ayahuasca Forums and read an uncountable number of posts submitted by its members. I have primarily searched for such positions and experiences that have given the impression of being commonly shared by ayahuasca tourists. Moreover, where contrasting opinions have been expressed, I have tried to let the voices of both parts be heard.

Given that there are thousands of posts on the Ayahuasca Forums which in one way or other tangle the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism, reading through the innumerable threads have not been the easiest task. To restrict my material, I have primarily scrutinized topic areas which have given the impression of encompassing the most relevant discussions for my study. In particular, I have analyzed the sections entitled “Testimonies” (designed merely for experienced ayahuasca users and especially for active forum members), “Dreams & Visions” (discussions regarding ayahuasca experiences, with posts also by newbies), “Health & Healing” (topics associated with individual healing) and “Connections & Events” (discussions concerning ayahuasca tourism etc.). In order to notice additional relevant discussions which have taken place in other areas on the comprehensive forum, I have furthermore used a search engine available on the Ayahuasca Forums. Using keywords such as “pilgrimage”, “pilgrim”, “tourism”, “spiritual tourism”, “religious tourism” and “ayahuasca tourism”, I have sought after pertinent points of view by ayahuasca tourists regarding these issues.



As with all studies dealing with online material, the utilizing of internet accounts brings forth questions regarding the researcher's right to make use of personal testimonies in his or her study. This is certainly an important issue and scholars have highly differing opinions concerning the online research ethics (see for instance Hookway 2008:104–106). In my analysis of the testimonies found on Ayahuasca Forums, I have taken note of the statement expressed in the forum guidelines, where it is maintained that the forum is a “community resource for the investigators and explorers<sup>2</sup>” of ayahuasca. In the forum section “Testimonies”, it is even more evidently stated that the accounts can be used by researchers: “[T]his is an area which will be of particular interest to researchers, policy makers, the medical establishment and psychotherapists. Please provide information that will assist these parties in understanding the way this medicine works over time<sup>3</sup>”. With reference to these utterances, I have considered it appropriate for me to make use of the accounts from Ayahuasca Forums in this study.

Retrospectively, my method of collecting information has appeared to be fruitful, yet not as efficient as it could have been. In upcoming studies, I will more explicitly put my faith in the search engine and try to limit the search results by using as apposite keyword combinations as possible. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this thesis, I find my method successful. In my study, I have focused on the examination of ayahuasca tourism on a general level, without laying overly emphasis on subjective anecdotal information, as some scholars, in my point of view, have done. Instead of perceiving the testimonies recounted in chapter six as “ultimate proofs”, I am interested in realizing the accounts in a wider context as guiding suggestions of the nature of ayahuasca tourism and the tourists themselves.

### 1.3 Terminology

Whereas the central concepts of pilgrimage, tourism and ayahuasca are clarified thoroughly later in the text, there are some additional terms of importance to this study which require closer examination. Below, the expressions “ayahuasca tourism”, “entheogens”, “west”, and “westerners” will be examined.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=12&t=13106> (retrieved on February 25, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=30&t=8625> (accessed on February 25, 2013).

### 1.3.1 Ayahuasca tourism

In this thesis, I make use of the term “ayahuasca tourism” as a working definition. For the purpose of this study, and this study only, I define ayahuasca tourism simply as the phenomenon of westerners traveling to South America and partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies. However, I am aware of the problems with using this term and definition. First of all, there is a gradually increasing trend of South American shamans and neo-ayahuasqeros traveling to the western world in order to conduct ayahuasca ceremonies for westerners. Certainly, as some authors have pointed out, this practice, too, can be seen as taking place within the outlines of ayahuasca tourism. Nevertheless, in order to restrict my data I have decided not to address this phenomenon in the present thesis. Thus, the practice of shamans and neo-ayahuasqeros conducting ceremonies outside South America falls outside my definition of ayahuasca tourism. Whilst this occurrence is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is unquestionably a subject that needs to be scrutinized in future research. In fact, it is my wish to examine this out-of-original-context ayahuasca use in the future, perhaps in a doctoral dissertation.

Secondly, there are several scholars who do not consider “ayahuasca tourism” as a good or correct designation<sup>4</sup>. Taylor (2011:13), for instance, maintains that “ayahuasca tourism” is not a proper term because it “shifts the focus of the participants’ intentions from the spiritual to the phenomenological, making the term reductive and inhibiting its utility”. Consequently, Taylor employs the term “shamanic tourism” along the lines of Fotiou (2010). In my opinion, however, “ayahuasca tourism” is not a reductive term *per se*, unless one specifically wants to understand it as such. Instead, it is a more accurate term than “shamanic tourism”, which does not even take note of ayahuasca, the key element in this kind of traveling. Moreover, the term “shamanic tourism” may act rather misleadingly, since the ayahuasca tourists’ outlooks are not always connected to shamanism.

As a final point, some might argue that my decision of making use of the term “ayahuasca tourism” is prejudiced as this appellation can be understood as implying attention to the word “tourism”. However, this is anything but my intention. In my opinion, there are undeniably certain undertones associated with the word “tourism”, but this does not mean that the use of any other designation would be without problems. However, this is not to say that I find

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<sup>4</sup> It is, however, worth noting that “ayahuasca tourism” is not seen as a disturbing expression by the local population (Holman 2010a:180).

“ayahuasca tourism” as an absolute best-fit designation. Quite the opposite, in fact, as it is my intention by way of the present study to propose a proper terminology to be used for this phenomenon. As stressed earlier, “ayahuasca tourism” is used here solely as a working definition, simply because of its commonness. It is unclear when and by whom the designation “ayahuasca tourism” was coined, but it is the most general term used when referring to the practice of westerners traveling to South America participating in ayahuasca ceremonies.

### 1.3.2 Entheogens

Throughout this thesis I refer to ayahuasca as an *entheogen*. Although this term has been used in numerous studies for a long time, it is still a rather unknown concept and thus requires clarification. In addition to the rather renowned categories of *hallucinogens* (producing hallucinations) and *psychedelics* (mind-manifesting), a great number of more unused terms have been proposed in order to describe certain features of drugs, including, but not limited to: *illusogens* (generating illusions), *oneirogens* (producing dreams), *mysticomimetics* (mimicking a mystical state), *phanerothymes* (visualizing feelings), *phantasticants* (stimulating fantasy) and *psychodysleptics* (altering or disrupting the mind) (Strassman 2008:10; see also Stafford 1992:7–8). However, while all these categories have their benefits, none of them have shown to be without any problems. Whereas some are too heavily charged with pejorative and suspicious connotations, others are too narrow and deficient.

Consequently, in 1978, an informal committee was put together by Gordon Wasson in order to formulate a new designation that would be free of the inadequacies linked to the earlier appellations (Ott 1995:37). The innovative term *entheogen* was first introduced in a 1979 issue of *The Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*. Ever since, the term has gained popularity among researchers as well as among the popular audience. According to Fotiou (2010:106), *entheogen* is by ayahuasca ceremony participants the most preferred label to be used for ayahuasca and similar substances. Along with ayahuasca, different tobacco species, opium, *datura* plants, *psilocybe* and fly agaric mushrooms, peyote cacti, even alcohol, among other things, are perceived as entheogens (see e.g. DuBois 2009:162–171).

The term itself is derived from the Greek words *en* (within, inner), *theo* (god, divine) and *gen* (becoming, creating) (Fotiou 2010:106–107). It can thus be translated as “becoming divine

within”, “generating the idea of God”, “containing deity”, or “the God within” (Ott 1995:37; Znamenski 2007:136). As Ott (1995:37) points out, it is not designed to act as a theological nor a pharmacological appellation, but should rather be seen as a cultural term which shifts the focus from the recreational use of plants to the spiritual significance of these substances, demonstrated in the motivations and experiences of their users (see also Znamenski 2007:136 and Fotiou 2010:106). Although not everyone is satisfied with the use of the term (for a critique of the word “entheogen”, see de Rios 2009:73–74), I argue that, all things considered, it is the most accurate designation to be used for ayahuasca. It is therefore utilized in this thesis.

### 1.3.3 West and westerners

Since the concepts of “west” and “westerners” are frequently mentioned in this thesis, it is relevant to make clear what is meant by these terms. Generally speaking, by using these terms I refer, in line with Fotiou (2010:6), to the countries and inhabitants of Europe and North America as well as the colonial and postcolonial derivatives of these countries, such as Australia. However, as Taylor (2011:1, footnote) points out, using these categories is definitely problematic when speaking of ayahuasca tourism, since not all tourists partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies can be labeled geographically or culturally as westerners. Indeed, ayahuasca tourists also come from countries, Japan for instance, which do not fit into the classification of “western” nations by any means. Besides, as Taylor (*ibid.* 1, footnote) further notes, “the many sub- and micro-cultures that exist among those even nominally ‘Western’ defy any singular category to adequately define or even describe the many different persons making these kinds of journeys”.

Nevertheless, the labels “west” and “westerners” are frequently used in discussions regarding ayahuasca tourism. While it perhaps would be more accurate to speak of industrialized or developed countries and their residents, such designations are neither trouble-free. As a result, whilst recognizing the ambivalent nature of these expressions, I hereafter make use of the terms “west” and “westerners” in this study.

## 1.4 The structure of the study

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework for this thesis. The first part of the chapter examines the concept of pilgrimage and takes notice of various theoretical standpoints that have been set forth in relation to it. The focus in the second part of the chapter is on the definitions and characteristics of “religious tourism” and “spiritual tourism” as distinct forms of travel. The third part looks upon the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism, focusing on differing positions among scholars as regards this issue. Lastly, the chapter presents the spectrum of travel as the basis of this study.

Chapter three examines the entheogenic brew ayahuasca, the key feature of ayahuasca tourism. Firstly, the chapter observes the chemical consistence of ayahuasca and the historical origins of its use. Secondly, it examines the ayahuasca experience and the effects that the entheogen produces. Thirdly, the chapter discusses the various uses of ayahuasca in detail. This section inspects ayahuasca uses in traditional indigenous settings, as well as the practice of vegetalismo, the type of ayahuasca shamanism practiced by the mestizo population. Moreover, it addresses the ayahuasca-using churches and religious groups, such as the Santo Daime, as well as the newfangled phenomenon of “psychonautic” ayahuasca use, which consists of non-religious and non-organized use of ayahuasca by westerners in western settings. Finally, the chapter scrutinizes the various risks related to ayahuasca use.

The fourth chapter lays emphasis on the western fascination in ayahuasca, presenting an overview of the research history of ayahuasca and examining the way in which the brew was introduced both to the academic circles as well as to the general public. In particular, the focus is on the romanticizing views that from early on were characteristic to the portrayals of ayahuasca. The chapter also examines the connection between the growing interest in ayahuasca and the publication of certain countercultural works, especially in the 1960s and the 1970s, which had a large impact when ayahuasca became famous to the wider public. Moreover, it presents key anthropologists who have studied the use of ayahuasca, discussing their role in the popularization of the brew. Finally, the chapter discusses the role of various media, such as the Internet, in making ayahuasca internationally known.

Chapter five observes ayahuasca tourism in depth. First, it presents the scenery and the context of this phenomenon, secondly discussing ayahuasca tourists on a general level, and thirdly paying special attention to the motivations and benefits of the ayahuasca tourists. The

chapter draws on data from previous studies regarding the subject. Furthermore, it addresses the issue of authenticity, a central aspect regarding ayahuasca tourism. Finally, the last part of the chapter takes into consideration the various concerns linked to ayahuasca tourism.

Chapter six analyzes ayahuasca tourism in view of the theoretical framework presented in chapter two. The main focus is on how ayahuasca tourism relates to the wider spectrum of travel. The chapter utilizes personal accounts of ayahuasca tourists in order to examine how the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism should be understood with reference to the discussions regarding various forms of travel. At first, the chapter analyzes ayahuasca tourism as a passage rite. Next, it examines the experiences and the outcomes of ayahuasca tourists as indications of a transformation journey. Thirdly, it discusses the motivations of ayahuasca tourists with a special emphasis on the notion of healing. Lastly, the chapter re-examines the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism in the light of the theoretical interpretations on the topic of the spectrum of travel. It also observes the results with reference to contemporary travel in general and offers insights into the study of these phenomena.

The final chapter looks at the implications that this study have brought forth. It presents an evaluation of the thesis and makes suggestions for further areas of research.

## 2 Pilgrimage and tourism – the landscape of travel

Travel is without doubt one of the oldest and most wide-spread human activities and it has become one of the largest industries in the modern world (Stausberg 2011:1). This chapter scrutinizes the multifaceted phenomena of travel, focusing especially on travel that is in one way or other related to religion or spirituality. As follows, the concepts of pilgrimage and tourism are essential and are thus examined in detail. At first glance, these two terms might sound as relatively unambiguous and separate phenomena. However, as this chapter will show, this is far from the truth and the relatedness between tourism and pilgrimage will therefore be discussed in depth. The purpose of this chapter is to set up the theoretical context for this thesis and thus provide a frame of reference for the interpretation of ayahuasca tourism.

### 2.1 Pilgrimage

Conventionally, pilgrimage is seen as a "journey to a distant sacred goal", encompassing both the outward journey in the physical world as well as the inward journey that takes place within the individual in terms of spiritual development (Barber 1991:1; Blackwell 2010:25). At its most basic, to use the words of Griffin (2007:18), "pilgrimage can be viewed as any travel that involves a religious experience" and hence the phenomenon can basically be seen as a combination of travel and religious experience. It is a phenomenon encountered in all major religions and it observably is a universal occurrence. In the last decades, however, the term "pilgrimage" has undergone a noteworthy transformation and it is increasingly being used in various contexts outside its traditional position (see e.g. Porter 2004). Indeed, celebrities' homes as well as football stadia are nowadays referred to as pilgrimage sites (Blackwell 2010:24–25). Moreover, various scholars claim that pilgrimages performed today are becoming profoundly dissimilar to those undertaken traditionally (ibid. 34). According to Norman (2011:98, 110), there has occurred, during the last two centuries, an identifiable decline in pilgrimages that are carried out explicitly for religious reasons. As a substitute, motives associated with recreation, pleasure and individual spiritual practice are flourishing. As a result, as Winkelmann and Dubisch (2005:xvii) point out, "almost any journey may be termed a 'pilgrimage' these days, its meaning defined by inner feelings and motivation rather than by external institutionalized forms".

Yet, scholarly interest in pilgrimage has until recently been rather limited. Coleman (2010:32) argues that one reason for this lack of interest among academics can be found in the very nature of pilgrimage: “[T]he trajectory of sacred travel [...] is after all constructed around a disruption of the Malinowskian linkage between culture and place”. In Turnbull’s view (1992:259), one important cause for the negligence towards pilgrimage lies in the tendency in anthropology to avoid the central feature of religion, “the power of Faith, the sense of the Sacred, the Perception of Spirit”. Whatever the case may be, the first major theory of pilgrimage was proposed by Victor and Edith Turner (1978) and it is still the only substantial theoretical model of pilgrimage that has been offered (Morinis 1992:8; Badone & Roseman 2004:3). Regardless of the numerous criticisms it has provoked, Turners’ theory has been groundbreaking and it is largely owing to Victor Turner that pilgrimage has become a subject of research among anthropologists in the first place<sup>5</sup> (Morinis 1992:8).

Turner draws his theory on the concept of rites of passage put forward by Arnold van Gennep (1960 [1908]). According to Turner, pilgrimage can be perceived as a ritual and more precisely as a transition rite. In this model, pilgrimage is seen as an ellipse-formed journey from the structural (the familiar) to the anti-structural (the unfamiliar) and back (Gothóni 1993:102). The allegory of pilgrimage as an ellipse thus serves to illustrate the binary character of pilgrimage (ibid. 113). Two fundamental aspects in Turner’s reasoning are the notions of *liminality* and *communitas*. The liminal period in pilgrimage, Turner insists, is the period spent in the anti-structural phase, whilst *communitas*, the “mood of relationship among participants”, is a distinguishing feature of this liminal period (ibid. 102). In Turner’s model, pilgrimage thus consists of three phases: 1) the separation from the structural state; 2) the liminal phase between the structural and the anti-structural state; and finally 3) the reaggregation of a new social status (Mendel 2010:294).

Turner’s model has been heavily criticized by Gothóni, who perceives it as “a real blunder that calls for correction” (1993:101). In his view, there are several errors in Turner’s model and pilgrimage should first and foremost be conceived as an individual transformation journey instead of a social process as suggested by Turner (1974:166–230). Several other scholars have in a similar manner pointed out that, while the notion of *communitas* may be applicable in certain occasions, it does not hold true as a universal model. As Morinis

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<sup>5</sup> Another factor that has contributed to the anthropological interest in pilgrimage is that religious experience is today seen as a legitimate area of research. This again is attributable to the 1960s fascination in entheogenic drugs and eastern religions (Preston 1992:32).



(1992:9) puts it, “pilgrimage is too varied in content to be analyzed as if there were a single, recurrent, common manifest factor”. However, Turner’s idea about *communitas* is, even with its obvious imperfections, important since it has revealed the individual experience as a key feature in pilgrimage (ibid. 9). Today, scholars lay emphasis on the pilgrims and their individual perceptions of pilgrimage as it has become obvious that it is the pilgrims themselves who are the key feature in pilgrimage (Pavivic et al. 2007:51). Consequently, pilgrimage is by contemporary scholars seen above all as an individual and a pluralistic phenomenon (Norman 2011:18).

If one is to believe Gothóni (1993:103–104), a crucial inaccuracy in Turner’s reasoning is the initial idea that pilgrimage can be equated with a passage rite. This is an incorrect assumption, Gothóni claims, because there are major differences in the functions and in the motives between pilgrimages and transition rites. In fact, Gothóni (1993:103–104) sees the characteristics of these phenomena as contradictory; pilgrimages are not compulsory, nor are they occasions where individuals are visibly integrated into a new social status, as is the case in transition rites. In the words of Gothóni (1993:108), it is primarily the experience of transformation that can be considered as a uniting factor for pilgrims, not transition, which sequentially is the key element in rites of passage. This transformation, be it overjoyed or modest, typically results in modifications of attitude and life-style among pilgrims (ibid. 113).

Elsewhere (2010), Gothóni has taken a more accepting standpoint to Turner’s ellipse-theory, as he has termed it. Instead of criticizing the theory, Gothóni now recognizes that there is evident potentiality in Turner’s model of pilgrimage as a rite of passage. However, he is not satisfied with the theory *per se*, but calls for further interpretations which would deepen the understanding of the phenomenon of pilgrimage. Gothóni (2010) proposes Hjalmar Sundén’s role theory, as well as Gadamer’s game theory, as complementary models to Turner’s scheme. Whilst both of these theories surely can add some new insights into the study of pilgrimage, the obvious difficulty with them is, however, the simple fact that none of the models is explicitly designed for explaining pilgrimage. In view of that, it is understandable that these theories cannot be seen as satisfactory substitutes for Turner’s theory of pilgrimage. Therefore, scholarly definitions of pilgrimage more or less on every occasion refer to the works of Turner (Owen 2006:19). On the other hand, contemporary scholars are more and more taking distance from the criticism of Turners’ model, and instead focusing on interpreting pilgrimage in broader theoretical and/or geographical settings (Winkelman &

Dubisch 2005:xv). Turner's theories, Norman (2011:105) argues, are most convenient when seen as variable and situational rather than characteristic features of pilgrimage in general.

In addition to Turner's theory, various other theoretical interpretations have been presented. A historical approach, Pavivic et al. (2007:51) write, "has highlighted change over time and the distinctiveness of each pilgrimage, plus its embeddedness in the cultural context and the sponsoring religion". A phenomenological approach has focused on the mutual features of pilgrimage and perceived it as an encounter with the sacred, while a sociological approach maintains that pilgrimages "reflect broader social processes, such as bolstering of a social status and construction of collective identity" (ibid. 51).

On the other hand, scholars such as Eade and Sallnow (1991) resist universal interpretation models and claim that pilgrimages should always be examined as separate phenomena, focusing on their specific contexts. In Eade's and Sallnow's (1991:5) view, distinguishing features in pilgrimages are namely the partakers' divergent perceptions. Preston (1992:32–33), in the same way, stresses that no single theoretical perspectives, such as structuralism or cultural materialism, are satisfactory for the study of pilgrimage. The ambiguous nature of the anthropology of pilgrimage becomes manifest also in Morinis' (1992:9) utterance, when he states that pilgrimage is "a socio-cultural institution that bears analysis from whatever theoretical perspective an anthropologist chooses to bring to it". What makes the study of pilgrimage even more complicated is the fact that pilgrimages are highly varied in terms of structure, journey and motivations (Morinis 1992:10–14; Stausberg 2011:53).

In Morinis' view (1992:4), pilgrimage is a quest of a place or state which is believed to stand for a valued ideal. To put it another way, pilgrimage is not necessarily a journey to a geographical location; the purely "search for an unknown or hidden goal" may as well be perceived as pilgrimage (ibid. 4). For the purpose of this thesis, Morinis' viewpoint is of great interest, for it situates pilgrimage "beyond the original religious realm" and broadens the phenomenon in a way "which allows secular journeys to be included" (Hovi 2010:212). Such nonreligious pilgrimages, increasingly studied by anthropologists, are, however, by no means without significance for the participants. As Winkelmann and Dubisch (2005:xv, xvi) point out, "secular" pilgrimages often have deep spiritual meaning for the partakers.

As Porter (2004:167, 173) notices, the concepts "place" and "space" are seldom put to the test in pilgrimage studies despite the fact that space in pilgrimage can be "decentered". Eade and Sallnow (1991:6–7) claim that pilgrimage can on occasion be person centered, and Porter

(2004:167) correspondingly stresses that culturally embodied ideals can be found within people just as within places. Porter (2004:173), in her study of *Star Trek* conventions as secular pilgrimage sites, further points out that, while the concept of space can be irrelevant to the experience of participants, so too can the concept of journey. This statement may sound odd, but it can be explained with the fact that traveling in modern times is fundamentally different than ever before; “the convention is simply a plane ticket away”, as Porter puts it (2004:173). She continues: “[S]ince the anthropology of pilgrimage is moving away from a study of bounded structures to an appreciation for unbounded processes [...], emphasizing the interactive cord of pilgrimage, rather than the geographic boundaries, can lead to new insights in the field” (ibid. 173). Mulligan (2007:120) has on the other hand made an essential observation that at the same time the significance of the physical location weakens due to globalization, the importance of the location in mental, emotional and spiritual terms is heightened.

Blackwell (2010:32) claims that while religion in her view is the key motivation for pilgrimage, there are many other motives alongside this primary purpose. To be sure, this has always been the case with pilgrimage. As Blackwell correctly points out, pilgrimages are, and have always been, perceived e.g. as opportunities for adventure (ibid. 32). What makes the definition of the motivations of pilgrims even more complicated, is correspondingly the fact that motivations “can change when the individual switches activities, for example, from being a pilgrim to a tourist and vice-versa, often without the individual being aware of the change” (ibid. 33). What is more, on occasion the traveler becomes a pilgrim first during the journey or after experiencing events that are connected to the journey; for some pilgrims, pilgrimage is not the original motivation for their journey (Winkelman & Dubisch 2005:xiv). As a result, motivations for pilgrims are “complex, multi-faceted, and multi-layered” (Blackwell 2010:33). Yet, intent is the most significant feature when describing pilgrims (Norman 2011:97). Granting the diversity in the underlying motivations, a universal cause in all pilgrimages, according to Gothóni (1993:109), is some sort of deficiency that is sought to satisfy by the means of the pilgrimage (see also Morinis 1992:27). Pilgrims frequently mention self-discovery and individual development as motives for pilgrimage. According to Ambrósio (2007:84), a distinctive feature among pilgrims is “their capacity to interpret their experiences as a form of personal transformation”. Pilgrimages are also recurrently linked to personal crises and it is not unusual that sacred journeys are undertaken in a time when major changes in life have occurred (Mendel 2010:297, 302, 303). Pilgrimages can function

therapeutically and they are undeniably believed by many to cure social, physical, psychological and spiritual wants (Frey 2004:95; Mendel 2010:302).

Interestingly, studies regarding the aftermaths of pilgrimage have been very rare; pilgrimage is by tradition perceived as a “linear narrative” and the emphasis is commonly on the journey and the actions of the pilgrim (Frey 2004:96). Still, it is often first after the journey itself that the outcomes become tangible. Therefore, it is important to note that the process of pilgrimage is not complete as soon as the physical journey has ended. Equally, it is worth highlighting that pilgrimage is often perceived as a process which starts before the journey as such. Mendel (2010:295–296) has proposed a tenfold model consisting of: decision-making; preparation; departure; transition; journey; arrival; return; reintegration; working up the experiences and lasting effects. Compared to Turner’s three-phase model, Mendel’s proposal visibly widens the definition of pilgrimage, whilst it simultaneously raises the question whether all pilgrimages actually involve all of the abovementioned features. In any case, the important point here is that pilgrimage should above all be examined as a process that ranges further than the actual journey.

For the study of ayahuasca tourism, pilgrimage seems, at least at this point, to be a useful viewpoint for a number of reasons. First of all, it has the advantage that the term is not strictly defined in general terms but is rather characterized by the diversity in all its manifestations. Secondly, it accentuates the role of the individual experience, which in the case of ayahuasca tourism is most likely to be of major significance. What is more, the destinations of pilgrimages are, as stated above, not exclusively sacred and/or geographical locations. This is of special interest in the study of ayahuasca tourism, since the endpoint is not a traditional pilgrimage center such as a shrine or a temple. Furthermore, the physical journey is not automatically essential in all forms of pilgrimage and this again, I believe, is exactly the case within ayahuasca tourism, in which it is instead the inner journey that matters. All in all, it seems to me at this time that pilgrimage truly can be an appropriate term when referring to ayahuasca tourism. However, in order to better understand what pilgrimage actually is and what it is not, it is necessary to examine another form of travel – tourism.

## 2.2 Religious and spiritual tourism

In recent years, tourism scholars have started to pay attention to what Norman (2011:105) terms niche forms of tourism; for instance, wine tourism, ecotourism, sex tourism, shamanic tourism and film tourism. Even though specific categories such as “secular pilgrimage” and “pilgrimage tourism” have been occasionally proposed, there are first and foremost two expressions that are used when referring to tourism that is religiously or spiritually associated. It is for that reason that these two terms, “religious tourism” and “spiritual tourism”, will be discussed here. I am aware of the problems with defining “religion” and “spiritual” as divergent categories, but here, however, these classifications are understood as two separate phenomena.

For the purpose of this study, I wish to make use of Hanegraaff's (2011:90) scheme in which he comprehends “religions” and “spiritualities” as distinct subcategories within the larger category of “religion”. Drawing from this outline, he defines “religions” as manifestations of “any symbolic system **embodied in a social institution** which influences human action by providing possibilities for ritually maintaining contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning” (ibid. 90, original emphasis). Moreover, he defines “spiritualities” as expressions of “any human practice which maintains contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning by way of the *individual manipulation* of symbolic systems” (ibid. 90, my italics). Thus, while these two phenomena are largely similar, it is first and foremost the aspect of institutionalism which differentiates religions from spiritualities. Respectively, it is the characteristic of individuality that distinguishes spiritualities from religions. In sum, with “religious tourism” is here referred to tourism that is linked to institutionalized religion, while “spiritual tourism” stands for tourism that is related to individual spirituality.

The category “religious tourism” emerged in post-war Europe as a result of a decline in religious practice, the secularization of societies and so forth (Santos 2003 quoted in Shinde 2007:187). The term has gained popularity for a variety of reasons and religious tourism is frequently seen as a form of cultural tourism (Shinde 2007:187). According to Rinschede (1992:52), religious tourism is “that type of tourism whose participants are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons”. Blackwell, (2007:37) in a similar manner, writes that religious tourism includes “all kinds of travel that is motivated by religion and where the destination is a religious site”. However, while the distinguishing feature is travel, the journey

itself is not always seen as a characteristic element in religious tourism (ibid. 38). Moreover, tourism studies, just as pilgrimage studies, are increasingly emphasizing the “inner experience” and the individual elements of travelers instead of focusing on social or cultural features in tourism (Norman 2011:18).

According to Norman (2011:185), religious tourists differ from pilgrims in that they are not identified as such by themselves or that they are not considered as being on a pilgrimage. Furthermore, he perceives religious tourists as unlike spiritual tourists because the latter are not (or only marginally) connected to religious phenomena (ibid. 185). Da Graca Mougá Pocas Santos has proposed five components that she claims are distinctive for religious tourism: 1) voluntary, temporary and unpaid travel; 2) motivated by religion; 3) supplemented by other motivations; 4) the destination is a religious site; 5) travel to the destination is not a religious practice (quoted in Blackwell 2007:38). Moreover, Tomasi (2002; quoted in Shinde 2007:187) recognizes holidaymaking as well as social, cultural and political reasons as distinguishing elements in religious tourism.

Despite its popularity, as Blackwell (2007:36) points out, the term “religious tourism” is not without any problems and there have been debates especially concerning the connection between religious tourism and pilgrimage. In order to better understand the association between different forms of travel it is necessary to take a look at how scholars interpret the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism. First, however, it is relevant to discuss spiritual tourism, another significant term in this discussion.

A spiritual tourist, Norman (2011:20) argues, is “one who includes an activity, such as yoga, meditation, following a pilgrimage, prayer or time for self-reflection in their travel itinerary for the purpose of ‘spiritual betterment’, such as creating personal meaning, in a secular way”. The term is still new and amorphous, although it has been used by some scholars to define e.g. Brazilian faith healing and, especially, contemporary New Age tourists (ibid. 186). However, as Norman (2011:186) states, there is a need for the term “spiritual tourism” since tourists’ intentions and practices are not always associated with religion, but rather with motivations connected to individual spirituality. Equally, spiritual tourism is an applicable term in settings that are purely secular (ibid. 199). Holman (2010a:199–200, 257) argues that spiritual tourism is a neocolonial phenomenon and a form of postmodern tourism which is closely related to the topics of consumerism and consumption. She defines spiritual tourism as “a phenomenon of predominantly non-indigenous, Western tourists traveling to foreign,

often ‘exotic’ countries with the aim of participating in traditional healing, transcendent or spiritual ceremonies” (ibid. 40).

As Cohen (1992a:53) points out, it has been widely recognized by scholars that touristic phenomena are by no means standardized. In his own point of view, there are basically five different modes of touristic experiences: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental and existential (ibid. 53–55). These modes reveal various amounts of intensity and profundity in tourists’ experiences and exemplify diverse phases of the relationship between the tourist and the Other as an elective center (see below). Whilst Cohen’s interpretation correctly distinguishes differences in tourism, the model does not, however, work in the case of spiritual tourism for, as Norman (2011:107) notices, the sacred center in spiritual tourism is most often perceived as the self. To put it another way, what matters for spiritual tourism is not the structure but the function in the experience (ibid. 107). Indeed, as Norman (2011:199) observes,

It is the nature of modern spiritual practice and belief that informs the desire for spiritual tourism to become healing and growth oriented. Such journeys are functional according to need, are governed and self oriented, and they tend to situate personal happiness with calmness, simplicity, and within ideals of maturity and compassion. In this sense forms of modern spirituality are best understood as syncretic, in that they borrow freely from any source, but also secular in that they tend to reject institutionalized forms of practice and authority. Further, spiritual destinations fit with certain travel paradigms: they offer education, achievement, time to work on the self and an atmosphere that is inward looking. [...] Spiritual tourism is thus defined by its outcome as well as its intent.

What makes spiritual tourists different from other forms of travelers is principally the intent of the journeying (Norman 2011:19). Although the visited destinations and the activities undertaken on the journey as well can be perceived as distinctive features, it is definitely the intent that in Norman’s view (2011:19) is the most characteristic feature of spiritual tourism. While there exists a variety of motivations among spiritual tourists, Norman (2011:183) argues that it is specifically the notions of self-improvement, self-realization, personal identity and purpose in life which are frequently reported and thus distinguishing themes for spiritual tourism. It is therefore especially these features that will be paid attention to when analyzing the accounts of ayahuasca tourists in chapter six. Regarding the outcomes, spiritual tourists deliberately seek out destinations that offer experiential practices and a majority of

these tourists want to work on their identities and personalities; spiritual tourism is on occasion paralleled with counseling and psychotherapy (ibid. 200).

Dann (1981; quoted in Norman 2011:108) has suggested a noteworthy idea that the reasons for tourists' travel can be divided into two categories; he labels them "push" and "pull" factors. The former consist of features within an individual's life giving rise to the desire to travel, while the latter are composed of tourist-drawing elements that are found at the destination. In spiritual tourism, approved push factors are self-development and self-examination (Norman 2011:108). In addition, a development of the everyday to which the traveler returns is frequently the purpose of the journey. Therefore, paraphrasing Norman (2011:108), the spiritual tourism experience can basically be understood as something that differs from the everyday. With regard to the pull factors, reasons are more varied. To give an example, the presence of facilities at a destination may be seen as a pull factor.

To sum up, it appears that religious tourism is in reality not a pertinent term to describe ayahuasca tourism with. This is due to the fact that ayahuasca tourism is presumably not closely related to any specific religion, and thus not motivated by intrinsically religious reasons. Along these lines, religious tourism can in fact be seen as a more rigorous category than pilgrimage, since it is more dependent on religion and religious phenomena than what pilgrimage is. However, a category that to me seems very relevant in the case of ayahuasca tourism is that of "spiritual tourism", a designation that actually bears a close resemblance to pilgrimage. As presented above, spiritual tourism is, in contrast to religious tourism, a well-designed term to be used in secular contexts and it is especially applicable when referring to circumstances where the individual experiences of travelers are of particular importance.

### 2.3 The relationship between pilgrimage and tourism

It is certainly hard to come across studies regarding pilgrimage and tourism which would not embrace the quotation of Turner and Turner (1978:20): "a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist". This outlook, however, is not shared by all scholars. As Cohen (1992a:48) has made clear, there are two essentially different theoretical positions among scholars as regards the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism. At the one end are those who see tourism and pilgrimage as indistinguishable, while some authors contrariwise claim



that these phenomena are completely unlike. Cohen (1992a:48) has termed these standpoints respectively as convergence and divergence.

The earlier point of view, made famous by Boorstin (1964), was the position of divergence and it is represented by authors who perceive tourism as mere pleasure-seeking, lacking any profounder spiritual or cultural meaning (Cohen 1992a:48–49). Antagonists, supporting the convergence position, then again maintain that tourism and pilgrimage are by nature theoretically equivalent. This viewpoint is represented primarily by authors such as MacCannell (1976) and Graburn (1977) and it is these two scholars who have “produced the most astute and wide-ranging theoretical analyses of how modernist touristic travel may fulfill individuals’ need for periodic spiritual renewal” (Badone & Roseman 2004:5).

According to Cohen (1992a:49), the positions of convergence and divergence differ primarily in the level of analysis. Whilst those who advocate divergence allude to a “phenomenal” level and perceive tourism as “superficial”, supporters of convergence refer to a deeper, structural level and maintain that universal themes exist underneath the surface of contemporary tourism (ibid. 49–50). One such collective theme, as stated by MacCannell (1976), is the search for authenticity, and if one is to believe Puztai (2004:33–34), it is specifically the issue of authenticity which is essential, not only in the discussions regarding the relationship between tourism and pilgrimage, but also in the disciplines of ethnology, ethnography and anthropology in general. As this study will show, the question of authenticity is clearly present also in the case of ayahuasca tourism.

The essentiality of authenticity has, however, been criticized lately due to the simple fact that authenticity is not objective; what participants experience as authentic may not appear as such in the eyes of others (Puztai 2004:35). Even so, this criticism does not remove the notion that the experience of authenticity is a shared feature both in pilgrimage and in tourism, for, as Hovi (2010:212) states, the experienced authenticity needs not to be reliant on the historical and/or scientific authenticity. Indeed, as Hovi (2010:211–212) argues, a pilgrim site (and a tourist site for that matter) has to feel authentic so that it can be truly experienced, whether this experience of authenticity matches up with the general idea of authenticity or not. This notion of the experience as a key feature in pilgrimage phenomena is reflected in contemporary research as more and more studies are focusing on the actors’ experiences (Norman 2011:95). It is furthermore accepted that “the experiential and existential dimensions of a number of tourism forms can be similar to pilgrimage” (ibid. 96).

Cohen (1992b) has suggested that a separating aspect between tourism and pilgrimage is the direction of the journey. In his view, pilgrims are typically traveling in the direction of the sociocultural center of their society (concentric centers), whilst tourists are journeying from it toward the other; the periphery (eccentric centers) (Ambrósio 2007:84; Hovi 2010:213). However, this interpretation is not as straightforward as it seems as it is acknowledged that during the last centuries, a new category called “pilgrim-tourists” has emerged by way of tourists constructing new centers in settings which previously have been marginal (Badone & Roseman 2004:10–11). Thus, “far-off people, cultures, and landscapes are transformed into ‘attractions’, not because they symbolize ones’ own culture but precisely because they are different, allegedly harboring an ‘authenticity’ that modernity has lost...” (MacCannell 1976:8; quoted in Cohen 1992a:52). To make things even more complicated, there are also cases where pilgrimages are directed towards eccentric centers. In such cases, it is maintained that touristic aspects will be substantial (Ambrósio 2007:84). The Center and the Other are understood as two opposed deep cultural themes that set up modern tourism (Cohen 1992a:52). In Cohen’s opinion, it is the once distinct movements of pilgrimage and tourism that have given birth to what has become modern tourism.

In Norman’s view (2011:97–99), scholars have to pay attention to the travelers’ conceptions of themselves. He maintains that pilgrims are actually tourists who are identified as pilgrims, either by themselves or by an institution. Equally, travelers who are on pilgrimage-like journeys, but who nevertheless do not identify themselves as pilgrims cannot be perceived as such. Norman (2011:99) explains tourism simply as a “descriptive term for any person travelling for leisure”. To him, pilgrimage is therefore fundamentally a form of tourism for the reason that it too takes place during leisure time and thus is a form of leisure travel (ibid. 96).

There are several aspects that cause confusion in the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism. Primarily, as Pavivic et al. (2007:53; see also Smith 1992) note, the sharp dichotomy drawn between the pilgrim as a religious traveler and the tourist as a vacationer is an opposition made in cultural terms which does not leave any room for examining their motives. It is today recognized, as Shinde (2007:184) points out, that many travelers combine religious and recreational needs on their journeys and pilgrimages are likewise made for non-religious reasons (Norman 2011:93). In other words, the functional motivations among pilgrims and tourists are often virtually identical (ibid. 98). A separation between pilgrims and tourists in respect of their behavior is as well inappropriate; travelers’ activities as well as

interests “may switch from tourism to pilgrimage and vice versa, even without the individual being aware of the change” (Pavivic et al. 2007:54). In their impacts, tourism and pilgrimage are akin (Shinde 2007:187), and “their mechanical, somatic and economic similarities demand we consider them in at least similar, if not the same light” (Norman 2011:96). In brief, “rigid dichotomies between pilgrimage and tourism, or pilgrims or tourists, no longer seem tenable in the shifting world of postmodern travel” (Badone & Roseman 2004:2).

Consequently, most scholars today are trying to find a midway classification between pilgrimage and tourism instead of focusing on their dissimilarities (Ambrósio 2007:85). As Norman (2011:95) observes, there has been a general tendency to blur the lines between pilgrimage and tourism rather than to differentiate or dedifferentiate them. A rather common view among various scholars is that pilgrimage and tourism are end points on a linear spectrum. This standpoint, represented by e.g. Smith (1992), respectively places the sacred and the secular as polarities. As a result, there exist innumerable variations between the pious pilgrim on the one end and the purely secular tourist on the other (Pavivic et al. 2007:54). Religious tourism is usually located in the center of this spectrum. Another model, put forward by Norman (2011:200), interprets tourism as an umbrella-term which encompasses all three forms of travel examined in this chapter: pilgrimage, religious tourism and spiritual tourism. However, these categories are by no means exclusive. In fact, a spiritual tourist can in Norman’s view (2011:200) be a pilgrim as well as a religious tourist at once. What these models suggest, in other words, is that it may be impossible to label individual travelers simply as “pilgrims” or “spiritual tourists” because of the equivocal character of both the terms and the travelers. On the topic of ayahuasca tourism, this is certainly worth taking into consideration as it may turn out that the phenomenon cannot be described purely by using one classification, but is better comprehended as a blending of various elements.

It is not, however, only the concepts of tourism and pilgrimage which cause confusion. In addition, several scholars have remarked that anthropologists and ethnographers themselves are also blurring the lines in the debate of sacred travel. Turnbull (1992:259–260) states: “I suggest that some anthropologists might usefully be classified as primarily either tourists or pilgrims, for there is no question that just as both tourism and pilgrimage center around a quest, so does anthropology. Pilgrim and tourist (and anthropologist) alike are bent on self-satisfaction”. In a similar manner, Badone (2004:182) writes:

At its most basic level, ethnography – like pilgrimage and tourism – involves travel. Even when ethnographers work “at home”, some physical displacement is involved between those places or “centers” framed as fieldwork sites and those unmarked places that the ethnographer inhabits when he or she is occupying roles other than that of field-worker. A pattern of movement to and from unmarked and marked spaces imbued with significance – sacred centers for pilgrimage, destinations for tourism, and fieldwork locations for ethnography – is shared by all three forms of travel. All three processes construct a “there” where “goods” not available “here” are perceived to be accessible: knowledge, self-transformation, or leisure and creation. While at the abstract level, the quest for one of these goods may predominate in a particular type of journeying – knowledge in ethnography, self-transformation in pilgrimage, leisure and recreation in tourism – in practice, all three goods contribute in varying degrees to the experience of each type of travel. Recreation implies the re-creation of the self, just as knowledge leads to self-transformation, and both pilgrims and ethnographers, like tourists, engage in leisure activities.

The notion that anthropologists and ethnographers may be very similar to tourists and pilgrims is of special interest in this thesis because it is largely due to anthropologists that ayahuasca tourism has become such a well-known popular phenomenon as it is today. The role of anthropologists in the popularization of ayahuasca is addressed in chapter four.

## 2.4 The spectrum of travel

Far from being exhaustive, this chapter has focused on the multidimensional field of pilgrimage and tourism. As has been stressed above, pilgrimage is a highly complex phenomenon and its character has changed strikingly from what the term traditionally has stood for. Whilst it is generally recognized that pilgrimages consist of both a physical as well as a spiritual journey, there seems to be endless variations in how pilgrimages become manifest in the present world. Contemporary authors are increasingly acknowledging that the dissimilarities between various kinds of pilgrimages have made it to some extent impossible to interpret pilgrimages in terms of universally applicable models. As a result, the pilgrims themselves are today by most scholars seen as the most important aspect when studying the phenomenon.

Moreover, it is recognized that pilgrimages are made for various reasons and that the motivations are usually complicated and multidimensional. The geographical location of the

journey is not inevitably significant and, what is more, even the journey itself can on occasion be unimportant. What is of foremost importance in all forms of pilgrimages, it seems, is on the other hand the individual experience of the pilgrim. Whilst the outcomes are various, some sort of individual transformation seems nonetheless to be a typical result from pilgrimage. The aftermaths of pilgrimage are still poorly studied but various scholars have pointed out that pilgrimage should be seen as a process which reaches further than the bodily journey. On the whole, it seems to me that pilgrimage certainly can be of use as a frame of reference when studying the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism.

Religious tourism is commonly perceived as travel that is motivated by religious reasons. It shares many common aspects with pilgrimage, but it looks as if the term is not as suitable as “pilgrimage” when referring to ayahuasca tourists since religious tourism is more explicitly related to institutionalized religion than what pilgrimage is. The newfangled category “spiritual tourism” is, however, much more applicable in the case of ayahuasca tourism because it is not closely related to religious phenomena but rather characterized by its secular nature. Spiritual tourism is in particular distinguished by the emphasis it gives to the individual as well as the function of the experience. This is especially evident in the motivations of spiritual tourists, which frequently are associated with the self and the identity of the individual.

The connection between pilgrimage and tourism is at best ambiguous. Earlier authors perceived the two phenomena as completely dissimilar while later scholars have instead pointed to the similarities between tourism and pilgrimage. There are indeed several aspects in both forms of travel which can be seen as almost identical. The experience as a key feature as well as the search for authenticity as an underlying theme is apparent as much in tourism as in pilgrimage. What is more, the motivations and the activities of pilgrims and tourists are often indistinguishable. These notions have led most of today’s scholars to interpret tourism and pilgrimage as largely overlapping phenomena. In consequence, travelers may actually be perceived as tourists and pilgrims at the same time. Considering ayahuasca tourists, this outlook may possibly appear useful. One last point which further makes the classification of travelers complicated is that anthropologists and ethnographers are on many occasions much like tourists and pilgrims. This notion, too, is of significance when taking into account that anthropologists have had a major impact in the birth of ayahuasca tourism.

To end this chapter, it is in my opinion possible to discern a number of points from these theoretical discussions regarding pilgrimage and tourism that are of special importance to this thesis. Provisionally, I hold that it is the individual experiences, motivations and the outcomes, together with the search for authenticity, that constitute the main elements that most of all are of use when analyzing ayahuasca tourism as one phenomenon within the wider spectrum of travel. It is therefore primarily these factors that are examined in depth in chapter six. Moreover, it seems already at this moment that, of the three categories examined here, religious tourism is not as suitable as pilgrimage and spiritual tourism when analyzing ayahuasca tourism. Therefore, the emphasis in chapter six lies mainly on the two latter terms. Next, however, I proceed to the scrutiny of ayahuasca, the key feature in ayahuasca tourism.

## 3 Ayahuasca

*Ayahuasca* [eye-uh-WAS-skuh] is the general term used for an entheogenic beverage consumed widely in the area of Upper Amazon. The term itself is Quechua<sup>6</sup> and is usually seen to be consisting of the words *aya* (commonly translated as soul, spirit, or dead person) and *huasca* (frequently translated as vine or liana). However, there is also a possibility that the term derives from the words *jayac huasca*, which could be translated as “bitter vine” (Fotiou 2010:9–10; see also Karsten 1935:432, footnote). The most common English translation for ayahuasca is nevertheless “vine of the soul” (or “soul-vine”), which, as Fotiou (2010:10) notices, may relate to a “strong tendency to sensationalize and romanticize”. In indigenous contexts, ayahuasca is known by many titles and different kinds of the brew are likewise sometimes called by various names. According to Luna (1986:171–173), at least 42 terms are known to have been used for ayahuasca.

### 3.1. The chemistry of ayahuasca

The ayahuasca brew is a thick, bitter-tasting drink that is usually made from the stem of a jungle vine belonging to the *Banisteriopsis* species (*B. caapi* and *B. inebrians* being the two mostly used) and of the leaves of *Psychotria viridis* (also known as the chacruna plant). Although there are some reports of *Banisteriopsis* use alone (Callaway 2006:102; Znamenski 2007:148; Rodd 2008; Fotiou 2010:11, 114), the ayahuasca infusion nearly always consists of at least two ingredients. The reason for this is that *Banisteriopsis* sp. contains  $\beta$ -carboline alkaloids, monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAO inhibitors), which make the pharmacological activity of N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), the psychoactive ingredient in *Psychotria viridis*, possible (McKenna 2006:41). Without the MAO inhibitors, DMT is destroyed by the MAO enzymes in the human gut and liver and is thus inactive when ingested orally (Luna 2008a:95). To put it simply, for the psychoactive effects to take place, at least two components are needed in the ayahuasca brew. There is, however, an enormous variety in the plants added in ayahuasca – altogether hundreds of different plants are known to have been used in ayahuasca (see for example López Vinatea 2000). Different tribes using ayahuasca

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<sup>6</sup> Quechua is a native language spoken today in Western Amazonia. It was also the language of the Incas, and some scholars have speculated that the Incas might have been familiar with ayahuasca, although this supposition lacks confirmation (see Naranjo 1983 and Fotiou 2010:8). In the scientific literature, however, ayahuasca is sometimes inaccurately associated with the Incas (see e.g. Virtanen 2009:2).

have their own versions of the beverage and varied types of ayahuasca are used for different purposes. In the western world, people are furthermore using what Ott (1994) calls “ayahuasca analogues”. This term refers to different types of plants found around the world, which include the same active ingredients as in ayahuasca; the MAO inhibitors and DMT. In Finland, for example, it is possible to use the plant *Phalaris arundinacea*, because of its portions of DMT, as an ayahuasca analogue to create “fennohuasca”, as the drink is sometimes called.

### 3.2 The origins of ayahuasca use

There are various speculations about the origins of ayahuasca but there appears to be no consensus whatsoever among scholars as regards to this issue. Some believe that ayahuasca has been used for millennia while others see the phenomenon as much more recent. It goes without saying that the former standpoint is far more popular among the (especially western) users of ayahuasca (see e.g. Fotiou 2010:108,129,135–136). Among several scholars, too, erroneous and romanticizing conceptions regarding the age of ayahuasca use abound (Brabec de Mori 2011:23).

Remains of *Banisteriopsis* sp. have been found at an archaeological site known as Camarones 14, dating roughly 2000 B.C. (Rivera 1995; Browman et al. 2009:339), but it is unclear whether these remains can be linked with the use of ayahuasca. There has also been debate of whether Peruvian “whistling bottles”, estimated to date around 1000 B.C., could have been used in ayahuasca rituals (see Pearson 2002:138–139) but the evidence is at best dubious. The same can certainly be said about the Upper Amazon and Orinoco rock art, which some scholars are willing to see as indication of early ayahuasca use (Fotiou 2010:108).

The very first mentioning of ayahuasca is believed to date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, “when Jesuit priests described the existence of ‘diabolical potions,’ prepared from forest vines by the native people of Peru” (Grob 2006:67). The first time ayahuasca is mentioned in a published source<sup>7</sup> is in 1858 by the geographer Manuel Villavicencio, although Richard Spruce, the English botanist, had noted the use of ayahuasca seven years earlier but nevertheless published his reports first in 1873 (McKenna 2006:44). The fact that ayahuasca was used by different tribes over an extensive region by the time it was first observed by westerners has

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<sup>7</sup> See however Maroni (1737) and Magnin (1740) for passing references to ayahuasca (Homan 2011:55).



given birth to ideas about the antiquity of its use (ibid. 42). Peter Gow (1994:91) argues, on the other hand, that ayahuasca shamanism evolved in urban settings during the past three centuries and consequently spread to rural areas where it became the prevailing method of shamanic curing. A similar viewpoint is also represented by Brabec de Mori (2011). The discussion concerning the antiquity of ayahuasca is ambiguous and seems to continue as such unless some revolutionary findings in the field of archaeology will shed some new light on these questions.

### 3.3 The ayahuasca experience

Ayahuasca is considered as one of the most powerful entheogens, being considerably stronger than e.g. the entheogenic mushrooms used in Siberia or Mexico (Znamenski 2007:149). It produces life-changing experiences which often have a religious, spiritual or mystical character (Krippner & Sulla 2000; Shanon 2002:178; Kjellgren et al. 2009; Cavnar 2011:10–11, 20, 83). Numerous studies have been conducted in order to clarify the psychological effects of ayahuasca (for an in-depth phenomenological research on the subject, see Shanon 2002). What makes the detailed study of the ayahuasca experience very complicated is however the fact that the experiences are always unpredictable and somewhat dependent on the cultural setting they are experienced in (Shanon 2002:56; Grob 2006:76). On the other hand, there are still some shared elements in the ayahuasca experience that do not seem to be determined by the cultural context. Znamenski (2007:151) writes: "...it does not matter if one is an Indian or a European, the imagery experienced during an *ayahuasca* journey essentially will have the same thematic lines".

Ludwig (1969:13–16) has listed ten universal features of altered states of consciousness, which can be applied also in the case of ayahuasca (de Rios 1972:23; Grob 2006). These characteristics include: alterations in thinking, an altered time sense, fear of loss of control, changes in emotional expression, changes in body image, perceptual alterations, changes in meaning or significance, a sense of the ineffable, feelings of rejuvenation and hyper-suggestibility. According to Harner (1973b), common themes in indigenous ayahuasca experiences consist of visions of snakes, jaguars, demons and deities; sensations of out-of-body-experiences and flight; clairvoyance and various kinds of divinatory experiences. Furthermore, typical accounts include different kinds of visualizations; feelings of

transformation (e.g. transformation to an animal or being another person), death and reincarnation; feelings of eternity or of being outside time; ethical and existential awareness, and so forth (Shanon 2002).

As Znamenski (2007:149) points out, the ayahuasca experience is far from being enjoyable; partakers feel nausea and it is very common that people vomit and suffer from diarrhea under the effect of ayahuasca. The experience may be intolerably frightening and feelings of dying or becoming mad are not exceptional (Luna 2008b:132–134). Kensinger, who observed the use of ayahuasca among the *Cashinahua*, reports that only “few informants have ever admitted that they find it a pleasant experience” (Kensinger 1973:12). Goldman (1963:211) writes in a similar way about the *Cubeo* use of the brew: “I spoke to no one who pretended to enjoy it”. Still, ayahuasca is used by a great number of people in various contexts – apparently due to its “spiritual rewards”, as Znamenski (2007:149) puts it.

### 3.4 The use of ayahuasca

Ayahuasca is one of the most widespread entheogens used in shamanic settings. The precise origin of the *Banisteriopsis* sp. and *Psychotria viridis* is not known but they both are found in the western and the Northwestern Amazon (Fotiou 2010:9). As stated by Luna (1986:167–170), there are at least 72 indigenous tribes that either use or have been using ayahuasca, even if he sees the list as incomprehensive. Ayahuasca is used in indigenous settings mainly in the area that today covers Peru, Ecuador and Colombia as well as parts of Brazil, Panama, Bolivia and Venezuela.

The use of ayahuasca is, however, not limited to the indigenous tribes but is likewise being used in various contexts throughout the world. By taking the risk of oversimplifying the subject, there are in my opinion five different phenomena of ayahuasca use that can be discerned. The first of these is the indigenous use of the brew, the type of ayahuasca use that first was reported by westerners. The second phenomenon is the use of ayahuasca by the mestizo population, studied in detail by Luna (1986) among others. Thirdly, there are several churches and religious groups that fit in the use of ayahuasca in varied ways. The fourth phenomenon consists of what is here termed psychonautic ayahuasca use. These four phenomena will be briefly discussed below. The fifth phenomenon, ayahuasca tourism, is the key subject of this thesis and will be examined exhaustively in chapter five.

### 3.4.1 Indigenous ayahuasca use

As mentioned earlier, ayahuasca is used by several tribes spread over a vast area and it is therefore reasonable that the customs surrounding the use of the potion vary somewhat from tribe to tribe. In indigenous contexts, ayahuasca is consequently being used for various reasons. These include “foreseeing the future, sending messages to other groups, contacting distant relatives, determining if wives were unfaithful, determining plans of the enemy, identifying sorcerers, and practicing love magic” (Luna 2004:378). Moreover, ayahuasca is used in order to visit “unseen realms” and “other realities” (Luna 2010:2) and with the purpose of rinsing out the body of “unnecessary emotions and feelings” (Znamenski 2007:151). Reports tell of ayahuasca use with the purpose of communicating with spirits; to obtain protective spirits; to achieve ecstasy; in sorcery and witchcraft against other people, and so on (de Rios 1972:45). Ayahuasca is also used at ritual feasts, initiation ceremonies and funerals (de Rios 1972:46–47; Znamenski 2007:151).

One of the most important motives of ayahuasca use is curing and diagnosing illness. Illness in ayahuasca-using tribes is believed to be caused by soul-loss, spirits or sorcery, and some Amazonian societies even believe that there is no such thing as “natural” death (Siskind 1973:31; Perruchon 2003:236–237). By the means of ayahuasca, the shaman is able to distinguish the origins of illness and subsequently find a cure for it. Sometimes it is only the shaman who ingests ayahuasca but on occasion the patient, too, is given the brew. In some tribes, ayahuasca is also used for self-curing (Perruchon 2003:221).

Ayahuasca ceremonies are regularly held in the evening or at night time and it is the shaman or the shamans within the society who conduct these ceremonies. The usual length of an ayahuasca ceremony is some hours but sometimes the ceremonies can last up to several days. In some Amazonian groups, ayahuasca is normally taken alone, while in other tribes it is always consumed in community (Luna 2008b:128; DuBois 2009:168). Women and children seldom take ayahuasca but there are also exceptions (see e.g. Harner 1973a:17). Strict dietary rules are always followed when ayahuasca is consumed. For a period before and after the ayahuasca experience, the person who is about to ingest the brew is not allowed to eat certain foods or, as in many cases, nothing at all. Sexual intercourse is typically also forbidden and each tribe has their own additional restrictions regarding the ingestion of ayahuasca.

Shaman neophytes ordinarily have to undergo long periods of frequent ayahuasca use in order to be highly regarded shamans. The shamans are believed to obtain special helping spirits under the influence of ayahuasca. These spirits protect and guide the shaman under the ayahuasca journeys. The more spirit helpers the shaman has, the more powerful he or she is considered to be.

Metzner (2006:14) identifies shamanic singing (songs in ayahuasca shamanism are commonly known as *icaros*, studied recently in detail by Bustos 2008) as a distinctive element in ayahuasca shamanism. The shaman usually has a large repertoire of different *icaros* as well as incantations that are most often personally transmitted to him or her under the influence of ayahuasca. These songs and incantations are chanted during the ayahuasca ceremony and have various purposes; for curing, for seeing certain kinds of visions; for making contact with spirits, and the like. Ayahuasca ceremonies conducted without these songs and incantations are, at least by some tribes, considered to be both unsuccessful and unsafe (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975:91).

Ayahuasca has a profound role in the indigenous societies where it is used and it is “very important in maintaining social order and in interpreting daily life events” (Fotiou 2010:11). The impact of ayahuasca can be seen on different levels in indigenous groups’ lives. For instance, the creation myths and cosmogonies of some Amazonian Indians are closely related to ayahuasca (see Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971; 1972; 1975 and Goldman 2004 in particular). What is more, the influence of ayahuasca use can also be seen in the art and the beliefs of ayahuasca-using societies. Reichel-Dolmatoff, for example, writes of the Tukano Indians: “...everything we would designate as *art* is inspired and based upon the hallucinatory experience” (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1972:104, original italics). Ayahuasca is generally seen as a sacred brew and it is consumed with great respect. Among many tribes ayahuasca is personified as an intelligent being and regarded as a great teacher (Luna 1986:60; Luna 2010:3). Not only the drinking but even the preparation of ayahuasca is often surrounded by various rituals and symbolic connotations (see e.g. Ripinsky-Naxon 1993:132–133).

### 3.4.2 Mestizo ayahuasca use

The term *mestizo* refers to Spanish-speaking, mixed blood people in the Amazon area. The ayahuasca shamanism practiced by these people is entitled by Luna as *vegetalismo* and he

sees mestizo shamanism as a “direct continuation of shamanism as it is found among ethnic groups” (Luna 1986:31). Vegetalismo includes indeed many elements that are common in the indigenous uses of ayahuasca. For example, the icaros, the helping spirits and the dietary directions are all essential parts in vegetalismo. On the other hand, Christian elements have likewise a crucial role and Jesus and Mary may be included in the ayahuasca ceremonies conducted by mestizo shamans (Kamppinen 1989:114; Luna 2003).

In vegetalismo shamanism, shamans are commonly known as *vegetalistas* who claim to get their knowledge from the spirits of *vegetales* or *doctors*, i.e. the plants they use (Luna 1984; Luna 1986:14–15, 16, 32). Vegetalistas are furthermore called by various names depending on the plants they mostly work with; those who use ayahuasca are regularly known as *ayahuasqeros*. In addition to the vegetalistas and ayahuasqeros there are also other kinds of ayahuasca practitioners among the mestizo population. Some are known as *oracionistas* and they are frequently using Christian prayers in their ceremonies (Luna 1986:141). Another group of ayahuasca shamans are the Rosicrusians who see themselves as bearers of an Old World esoteric tradition (Luna 2003).

Vegetalismo is focused primarily on healing and the shamans claim that all sorts of illnesses can be cured with ayahuasca – including cancer and AIDS (Fotiou 2012:9). According to Fotiou (2012:8–9), ayahuasca shamanism is surrounded by a holistic methodology and ayahuasca itself is claimed to work simultaneously on a physical, psychological and a spiritual level. It is nevertheless worth mentioning that the local people do not turn to an ayahuasqero if the illness in question clearly is of natural origin. Instead, an ayahuasqero is contacted when the illness is believed to be caused by sorcery (ibid. 7–8). The healing sessions are always held at night and the number of participants usually range from five to twenty-five (de Rios 1973:69). The ayahuasca healing sessions resemble in a great degree those that are held in native settings. The spirits and the icaros are seen as essential parts of the ceremonies and consequently have an important role in the healing process as well (Fotiou 2012:16–20).

Although ayahuasca is first and foremost used for diagnosing and healing illnesses, it is consumed on other occasions too. For instance, locals turn to shamans in order to resolve social and emotional problems (Holman 2010a:17), and vegetalistas may have collective ayahuasca sessions where they get together to take ayahuasca in order to “learn from visions and renew their strength” as well as to “see more clearly” (Luna 1986:142–143). Moreover,

people may also partake in ayahuasca sessions without being ill. Some take ayahuasca with a view to “cleanse their organism or just ‘to see visions’” (ibid. 143, 150). There are also *brujos*, witches, who use ayahuasca in sorcery to harm other people in various ways (de Rios 1972:93).

The most notable difference between the ayahuasca use among the mestizo population and the ayahuasca shamanism in tribal settings seems in conclusion to lie in the reasons for ingesting the brew. As de Rios (1972:47) points out, the ayahuasca use in ritual feasts, for example, has practically vanished in the urban contexts. Instead, the focus has mainly switched to the healing properties of ayahuasca and it is indeed seen as a potent cure by a great number of people among the mestizo population.

### 3.4.3 Ayahuasca use in syncretic churches and religious groups

In recent years a great number of writings dealing with ayahuasca-using religions in different contexts have come forth. It is not my intention to sum up the bulk of literature here but to give some very general notions about the phenomena usually labeled loosely as “ayahuasca religions”. There are primarily three religions in this category, all originating in Brazil.

The oldest and the best-known ayahuasca religion is called *Santo Daime*. According to Schmidt (2006:324), it has over 10,000 members in Brazil alone. It was founded in the 1930s by a rubber tapper named Raimundo Irineu Serra (1892–1971), or “Master Irineu”, who is on occasion believed to be the reincarnation of Jesus’ spirit (Dawson 2010:143). In the state of Acre, Brazil, he witnessed the use of ayahuasca and consequently constructed his own religion around the use of the brew, which he termed *daime* (“give me”). After Irineu Serra’s death, the official name of the church came to be Universal Light Christian Enlightenment Center, or CICLU (Labate, MacRae & Goulart 2010:2). However, a separate branch also emerged under the lead of Sebastião Mota de Melo (1920–1990), who is in turn held as the re-embodiment of the spirit of John the Baptist (Dawson 2010:144). This new group became later known as the Eclectic Centre of the Universal Flowing Light Raimundo Irineu Serra, or CEFLURIS, and is today the largest division of Santo Daime with activity in at least 26 countries (Balzer 2005:60; Labate & Goldstein 2009:54). It is incidentally worth mentioning that CEFLURIS has in the recent years been a target for criticism by the other ayahuasca religions as being a “non-original”, “new age” group (Labate 2012:94–95).

According to Dawson (2008:185), Santo Daime is “an amalgam of popular Catholic, esoteric, indigenous, Spiritist, Afro-Brazilian, and new age beliefs and practices”. Its rituals, (*trabalhos*) are structured around hymns (*hinários*) and the most significant rituals are the preparation of daime, dance, concentration and mass (Dawson 2007:72, 76). Rituals such as baptism and confession are also conducted and daime is besides used as a talisman, in personal treatment of sicknesses as well as when women give birth (Cemin 2010:54–57). Ceremonies where daime is taken can last up to twelve hours and they always begin with Christian prayers (Silva Sá 2010:169). The churches of Santo Daime resemble to a great degree those of other Christian churches and they are adorned with crosses, candles, statues of Jesus and Mary, and so forth (ibid. 169). Members of Santo Daime consider themselves Christians and daime is seen as a sacrament (Cougar 2005:31; Dawson 2007:86).

One of Raimundo Irineau Serra’s friends, Daniel Pereira de Mattos (also “Master Daniel” and “Frei Daniel”), joined Santo Daime in the 1940s but then experienced a vision that led him to found a new conviction by himself (Frenopoulo 2005:24). The religion was first known by the name *Capelinha de São Francisco*, but became later called *Barquinha* (“Little Boat”) (Labate, MacRae & Goulart 2010:3). It has many features that are similar to those of Santo Daime, and ayahuasca is termed “daime” also by the members of Barquinha. As Santo Daime, Barquinha can also be labeled as a syncretic church. According to Araújo (2010:73), it combines religious practices from “popular Catholicism, indigenous shamanism, Afro religions and the philosophy of the Esoteric Circle for the Communion of Thought”, an esoteric group centered in São Paulo.

The rituals surrounding the preparation of daime, dance and concentration are in a central part also in Barquinha but the most important ritual is the concept of cure (Dawson 2007:86; Frenopoulo 2010). Barquinha rituals take place in autonomous churches (*igrejas*), where prayers are recited and hymns (*salmos*) sung (Dawson 2007:87). According to Frenopoulo (2005:26), as much as 300 rituals may take place in a Barquinha church per year, which makes it a Brazilian ayahuasca religion with the greatest number, as well as the greatest rate of recurrence of rituals. The number of members in the Barquinha religion is most likely to be counted in hundreds. It is a religion without any centralized authority and without any plans of spreading (ibid. 26–27, 29).

The third Brazilian ayahuasca religion is *União do Vegetal*, often known simply as UDV. It was founded in 1961 by a rubber tapper named José Gabriel da Costa (1922–1971), later

entitled “Master Gabriel” (Brissac 2010:135). As Santo Daime and Barquinha, UDV also encompasses elements from various sources, including popular Catholicism, the Spiritism of Allan Kardec, Masonry, and Afro-Brazilian traditions (Goulart 2010). Members claim that the UDV is “both the foundation and culmination of humankind’s religious quest” (Dawson 2007:90). Ayahuasca, which among UDV members is known as *hoasca* or “the Vegetal”, is seen as a “spiritual being whose main attribute is the Light” (Brissac 2010:135).

The UDV is said to be the largest of the ayahuasca religions and it is also the most formal and rationalized (Metzner 2006:32; Dawson 2007:88). According to de Lodi Campos Soares and de Moura (2011:277), it has over 12,000 registered members. Unlike Santo Daime and Barquinha, UDV rejects the therapeutic use of hoasca (Luna 2004:381). The UDV church has a hierarchical structure and rituals are conducted by a master (Luna 2008a:106). The central ritual is called *sessão* and it is held in quite ascetic conditions (Dawson 2007:91). Hoasca is primarily taken in order to reach spiritual development (Luna 2008a:106). It is largely attributable to UDV that ayahuasca use is since 1986 legal for spiritual purposes in Brazil, and nowadays, for the UDV community, in the United States as well (DuBois 2009:173; see also Bronfman 2011).

In addition to the three religions briefly presented above, Dawson (2007:70, footnote) further notices the presence of “neo-esoteric and Afro-Brazilian groups which are both organizationally sporadic and small scale”. It is hard to estimate the exact number of these groups, but as Labate (2012:88) points out, the “phenomenon appears to be flourishing both numerically and in terms of sociological impact”. This phenomenon is, however, not limited to Brazil. As Cavnar puts it, there are altogether

hundreds of offshoot groups that have integrated ayahuasca use with other beliefs. These include the ‘post-islamic’ Fatimiya Sufi order and the ‘Illuminada Ordem do Amor,’ [...] as well as others including the ‘Ile ale efu l’ase’ a group that combines African Orixá worship with ayahuasca use [...] (2011:33)

Likewise, according to Hanegraaff (2011:86–87), there are more than a few different ayahuasca networks in the Netherlands alone. The influences of all these syncretic churches and religious groups are still vaguely studied but it is clear that they are a profound part in the modification and internationalization of ayahuasca use. Metzner, for example, argues



(2006:33) that we “may be seeing the beginnings of a broader transcultural movement with significant impact”.

#### 3.4.4 Psychonautic ayahuasca use

Although largely neglected by scholars, the non-religious ayahuasca use in the west is of great interest and worth examining in a separate section. Partly overlapping with the phenomenon “ayahuasca tourism”, the subject matter is here termed “psychonautic ayahuasca use”. The word “psychonaut” was designed by Jünger (1970) and it has been used sporadically when referring to people who “use psychoactive materials to achieve a subjective sense of excursion or inner exploration” (Tramacchi 2006: 101, footnote). Far from being trouble-free, I see the term as a better alternative to the more familiar, but also the more negative-loaded word “tripper”. Luna (2008b:115) speaks of “recreational” use of ayahuasca, but this is in my opinion even a worse term considering the fact that ayahuasca is frequently spoken of as an entheogen poles apart from recreational (for a differing viewpoint, see Ott 2011).

In short, the psychonautic use of ayahuasca is the practice of its use by westerners who neither belong to any religious groupings nor to the category of ayahuasca tourists, but who consume ayahuasca (or ayahuasca analogues) in their homelands in miscellaneous settings. This phenomenon, alongside the psychonautic use of any other entheogens, can be seen as an occurrence that has expanded simultaneously with the rise of the World Wide Web. Internet sites and discussion forums such as [www.erowid.org](http://www.erowid.org), [www.lycaeum.org](http://www.lycaeum.org), [www.dmt-nexus.me](http://www.dmt-nexus.me) and [www.ayahuasca.com](http://www.ayahuasca.com) have altogether tens of thousands of users from all over the world. On these media, not only thoughts but instructions and advice on cultivating and preparing ayahuasca and ayahuasca analogues are shared between people. Moreover, several online-shops have made it possible, be it generally illegal, to order myriad entheogens and thus experiencing ayahuasca and its analogues everywhere.

The reasons for people using ayahuasca and ayahuasca analogues in their homelands instead of visiting the Amazon are certainly numerous, but a common factor may be a general resistance towards ayahuasca tourism. The late Terence McKenna, a central figure in the entheogenic scene and in the internationalization of ayahuasca, commented: “I am against exploiting shamans or removing them from their cultural context or exporting Westerners

into their cultural areas. The best course is to obtain the plants and the techniques and judiciously adapt them to one's own needs" (McKenna quoted in Grunwell 1998:61). I believe that this very same attitude can be found among many psychonauts. Rigorous studies on the subject are, however, unfortunately lacking.

Another spokesman of psychonautic ayahuasca use is Jonathan Ott, who calls himself a "pioneering psychonaut" (Ott 2011:115). Particularly with his 1994 book *Ayahuasca Analogues*, he has worked intentionally to change the attention from ayahuasca tourism to psychonautic ayahuasca use. He writes: "...I knew that my book would also foment *white shamanism* – I would like to think it has in some measure inhibited 'ayahuasca-tourism'" (Ott 2011:116, original italics). However, as Tupper (2009:131) points out, Ott's "work may also have unintentionally had the opposite effect, by contributing to an increased interest in and consumption of *B. caapi* and *P. viridis* preparations by those seeking what they perceive to be greater authenticity in the traditional brew". In consequence, the relationship between "psychonautic" ayahuasca use and "ayahuasca tourism" appears to be rather complicated. This is a subject matter that unquestionably needs to be addressed in upcoming studies.

### 3.5 Health risks linked to ayahuasca use

Recent studies suggest that the use of ayahuasca is reasonably safe both in terms of physical and mental health when the brew is consumed in proper settings (see for instance Frecska 2011 and Bouso et al. 2011). As the lethal dose of ayahuasca is as much as six liters and the usual dosage ingested lies around a deciliter, there is virtually no possibility to have an overdose with the brew (Luna 2008b:127). However, there are still various dangers related to the consumption of the brew. For instance, as ayahuasca may cause tachycardia (increase in heart rate) in some individuals, people with heart problems should avoid drinking ayahuasca (ibid. 131).

One of the greatest risks related to ayahuasca consumption is a dangerous condition known as the serotonin syndrome. This state, which at its worst can be fatal, is caused by an increase in serotonergic effects within the individual (Callaway 2006:103–104). The use of ayahuasca alone does not trigger this state, but in interaction with certain chemical components, the serotonin syndrome constitutes a genuine risk for ayahuasca users. In particular, certain

medical drugs such as SSRIs, used in the treatment of depression etc., may even cause death if taken together with ayahuasca (ibid. 103). Indeed, there are a number of cases where ayahuasca users, while under an unsuitable medication, have died as a result of drinking ayahuasca (see for instance Stuart 2002; Homan 2011:104). Moreover, certain tyramine-containing foods can also interact dangerously with the alkaloids in the ayahuasca brew, causing a serious risk for the user (Tupper 2008:301; Frecska 2011:162).

As with other entheogens, ayahuasca may also cause mental problems to its users. Whereas serious psychological problems seem to be rather rare among ayahuasca tourists, reports of such cases are, however, not totally absent (see for instance Owen 2006:86; de Rios & Rumrill 2008:78). As Trichter (2010:137) stresses, people who have been diagnosed with psychological health conditions or who are at risk for having ones, should especially be very cautious with ayahuasca use. He further points out that ayahuasca “can bring up past traumas or can bring about new traumatic experiences that participants may not be able have the ego strength or emotional capabilities to work through without causing significant disturbances to themselves, their friends, and their families” (ibid. 137).

In sum, the use of ayahuasca is not without risks, albeit many of the dangers associated with its consumption are caused primarily by a careless attitude towards the brew. Nevertheless, as this chapter has shown, ayahuasca has been used in various circumstances for a long time and it is also increasingly being used by western people. Before addressing the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism, the next chapter examines more closely how the brew made its way to the western awareness.

## 4 Ayahuasca and the western imagination

Ever since the time ayahuasca was first recognized by westerners in the mid-nineteenth century, it has been increasingly studied by various disciplines. Ethnographers, anthropologists, chemists, botanists and psychologists, among others, have all been interested in different aspects of the brew and its use. In order to fully comprehend the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism, the subject of this thesis, it is necessary to take a closer look at how the brew made its way to the western awareness. Here, a brief chronological overview of ayahuasca research, focusing on the anthropological studies, is presented. In addition, the connection between ayahuasca and the west in different periods is examined.

### 4.1 The early encounters

During the latter half of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars such as Villavicencio (1858), Spruce (1873; with Wallace 1908), Simson (1886), Rivet (1905), Koch-Grüneberg (1908; 1909), Reinburg (1921), White (1922), Rusby (1923), Karsten (1923; 1935), Tessman (1930), Morton (1931) and Barret (1932) observed the use of ayahuasca among indigenous tribes (Stafford 1992:334–335). Right from the beginning, descriptions of ayahuasca had a romanticizing character. Karsten (1935:434), for example, wrote of *natema* (ayahuasca) using words as “wonderful” and “magical”, whereas other scholars described the effects of ayahuasca in highly glamorizing styles.

Homan (2011:56–57) recounts an interesting anecdote regarding the early associations between ayahuasca and telepathy. In 1906, a Colombian chemist named Rafael Zerda-Bayon had come across stories of how ayahuasca was linked to telepathy and clairvoyance. These stories led him to name an extract of the ayahuasca vine as *telepatina bruta* (crude telepathine), and when an alkaloid was first isolated from *Banisteriopsis caapi*, it too was entitled as *telepatina*. As stated by Homan (2011:57), these events gave birth to ideas regarding ayahuasca’s connection to telepathy both in Europe and in the Americas.

Publications such as *Le yajé: plante télépathique* (Rouhier 1924), *Phantastica* (Lewin 1931), *Note on yagé* (Holmes 1927) and *The ayahuasca and jagé cults* (Critchley 1929) all contributed to the awareness of ayahuasca in the west (Homan 2011:57–59). According to Stafford (1992:334), a film presenting ayahuasca ceremonies was shown at a meeting of the

American Pharmaceutical Association in 1923, probably being the first film depicting ayahuasca use. In 1932, an article under the title “Drug said to cause clairvoyance” was published in *Modern Mechanics and Inventions*. The same year, another article entitled “Indian plant said to cause movie like visions” was published in *The Science News-Letter*. These articles included views on ayahuasca, which, as Homan (2011:60) puts it, “certainly influenced later perceptions of ayahuasca, especially in regard to the purported telepathic capabilities”.

## 4.2 The interest in ayahuasca increases

The famous English ethnobotanist Richard Evan Schultes was among those scholars whose research surrounding ayahuasca (*yage*) most prominently reached audiences beyond the academic circles. Stafford states:

Considerable interest in this psychoactive complex arose from the 1960s fascination with LSD, and reports that ordinarily would have been restricted to the technical literature received fairly wide circulation. *Psychedelic Review* and *The Psychedelic Reader*, for instance, reprinted Richard Evans Schultes' efforts to straighten out confusion about *yage*. After collecting plants and searching out rubber sources on the Amazon for over a dozen years, Schultes gave his account of *yage* in lectures to the College of Pharmacy at the University of Texas and in *Harvard Botanical Museum Leaflets*. Republication in more popular periodicals, issued by Leary associates, spread the word about *yage* and its use for divinatory and prophetic purposes. (Stafford 1992:336)

Indeed, as shown in the paragraph quoted above, the psychedelic milieu of the 1960s had a profound impact in the way ayahuasca became known in the west. In conjunction with the invention of LSD in the 1940s, the works of Aldous Huxley (1954; 1956) contributed to the birth of the psychedelic subculture (Homan 2011:61). Whereas Huxley wrote of his experiences with mescaline, a banker named Gordon Wasson conducted experiments in Mexico with *psilocybe* mushrooms. In 1957, *Life* magazine published an article under the name “Seeking for the Magic Mushroom”, where Wasson’s mushroom-experiences with his wife and a female shaman named Maria Sabina was presented in a highly romanticizing manner. Znamenski writes:

this piece attracted millions of readers. As a result, many seekers of alternative spirituality turned their attention to indigenous Mexico and farther to South

America. From cultural and literary standpoints, Wasson's encounter with the shamaness was a landmark. [...] ...with his *Life* essay, Wasson planted in the popular consciousness the idea that people could travel to an exotic location to find exotic hallucinogens that could unleash extraordinary visions. [...] As in many similar cases, public Western pilgrimages to the tribal setting quickly prostituted this native plant that had been hidden from outsiders. Soon, *psilocybe* mushrooms found their way to Mexican peasant markets, where they were openly offered as items of tourist trade. (Znamenski 2007:127–128)

In a way, it is thus possible to trace back the birth of ayahuasca tourism to this milestone. Wasson's impact was enormous and he consequently became a role model for upcoming lead figures in the psychedelic scene, such as Timothy Leary and Carlos Castaneda (Znamenski 2007:128). The latter became especially known for his 1968 work *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, a “realistic” book in which Castaneda himself is being taught by a shaman named Don Juan. Even though the book has been the subject of serious critique, its influence has been profound and, together with the 1960s psychedelic movement, it “ushered in an era of entheogenic neo-shamanism throughout the world” (Homan 2011:63). Although several entheogens are used in *The Teachings of Don Juan*, ayahuasca is not mentioned in the book. Still, concerning the book's worldwide popularity, there is every reason to believe that it has acted as a trigger also in the growth of ayahuasca tourism.

Along with the very same development, the first non-scientific work explicitly on ayahuasca was published in 1963. This was a book called *The Yage Letters*, a letter correspondence of the well-known writers Allen Ginsberg and Richard Burroughs about their search for ayahuasca. The book was criticized by some anthropologists as misleading, but it nevertheless became popular among the wider public and gave a reputation to ayahuasca (Stafford 1992:337). According to Znamenski (2007:155), the book became a “cultural and spiritual blueprint for would-be spiritual pilgrims who followed in their footsteps”.

Only eight years after the publication of *The Yage Letters*, the next popular work<sup>8</sup> on ayahuasca was published under the title *Wizard of the Upper Amazon: The Story of Manuel Córdoba-Ríos* (1971). Written by an American named Bruce Lamb, this book narrates what is said to be the true story of a famous vegetalista. Although criticized by Carneiro (1980) as being fiction, the book includes several phenomena that, according to Luna (1986:21), should

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<sup>8</sup> In 1965, a novel under the title *At play in the Fields of the Lord* was published by Peter Matthiessen. In this work, ayahuasca is mentioned, but the book did not appear to greatly contribute in making ayahuasca generally known (Luna 2008a:84).

be seen as truthful. Whatever the case may be, the impacts are of great interest. The *Wizard of the Upper Amazon* was advertised with comparisons drawn to Castaneda's Don Juan (actually, Znamenski [2007:219] calls the book a "Castaneda clone"), and as Homan (2011:64) highlights, the beginnings of a tourism market surrounding ayahuasca were recognizable almost immediately after the publication of the book. In 1973, *New York Times* published an article where it was stated that some indigenous people living in Iquitos made money by offering ayahuasca séances to tourists (quoted in Homan 2011:64). This is to my knowledge the first actual reference to ayahuasca tourism as a fixed phenomenon.

In the beginning of the 1970s, Terence and his brother Dennis McKenna traveled in Amazonia where they also ingested ayahuasca. In 1975, they published the book *The Invisible Landscape*, which according to Homan (2011:65) "set the stage for the integration of psychedelics, shamanism, and the New Age". Subsequently, Terence became a leading figure in the psychedelic scene and although his death in 2000, he is still a renowned icon in the psychedelic subculture. As Grunwell (1998:59) states, McKenna's name is repeatedly mentioned as an inspiration for many people's ayahuasca experiences. He can furthermore be seen as a "main force in the creation of the contemporary ayahuasca tourism market" (Homan 2011:65), even if this ostensibly was not his intention (cf. pp. 37–38 this paper).

It was, however, not only the abovementioned popular works that made ayahuasca well-known to a wider public. As de Rios (2006:20) points out, a number of anthropologists had a major role in this process as well. Indeed, during the 1960s and the 1970s, the anthropological literature on ayahuasca increased rapidly and certainly prompted the emerging ayahuasca tourism. The majority of the anthropologists writing about ayahuasca in the sixties and the seventies observed the use of the brew in indigenous, tribal settings. An exception at this time was Marlene Dobkin de Rios, who was among the first scholars to study the use of ayahuasca among the mestizo population (e.g. 1970; 1971, 1972; 1973).

One anthropologist with a great influence in the process of ayahuasca's internationalization is Michael Harner, who conducted fieldwork among the *Jivaro* and *Conibo* at several occasions during the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s. He had an ayahuasca experience in 1961, which he nonetheless published first in 1968 in an article named *Sound of Rushing Water*. He writes: "I realized that anthropologists, including myself, had profoundly underestimated the importance of the drug in affecting native ideology" (Harner 1973a:17). Harner's enthusiasm in entheogens grew in conjunction with the psychedelic movement and as this revolution

weakened so, too, did Harner's emphasizing on the role of entheogens in shamanism (Znamenski 2007:234–239). Indeed, in his later writings Harner stresses that entheogens are merely one, in fact minor, technique of achieving shamanic states. In 1980, Harner published his bestseller, *The Way of The Shaman*, which came to act as a manual and a “sacred text” for the shamanic community in the west (Znamenski 2007:239). This book begins with a whole chapter dedicated to his ayahuasca experience, and although he states that shamanism can be successfully practiced without the ingestion of ayahuasca or any other drugs (Harner 1980:23), his account has made ayahuasca known for millions of readers.

Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff is one of the best-known anthropologists to have focused on the role of ayahuasca among indigenous tribes (e.g. 1971; 1972; 1975). He conducted fieldwork among the *Tukano* and *Desana* Indians and, although his writings are heavily influenced by a Freudian point of view (Fotiou 2010:113), he is considered as the foremost anthropologist as regards the study of ayahuasca (Shanon 2002:46). Other anthropologists that have studied ayahuasca use in the sixties and the seventies, to mention a few, are Goldman (1963), Karsten (1964), Kensinger (1973), Siskind (1973), Weiss (1973) and Langdon (1979a; 1979b).

### 4.3 Ayahuasca becomes internationally renowned

Ott (2011:109) pinpoints the year 1980 as the precise birth-year of ayahuasca tourism. At that point, an American “guru-center” started advertising ayahuasca tours to South America, thus selling access to the brew (ibid. 109–110). Another event in the 1980s that spread the word of ayahuasca was the publication of Peter Gorman's article “Ayahuasca – Mind-bending Drug of the Amazon” in *High Times* magazine in 1986 (Holman 2010a:2). The anthropological interest in ayahuasca also sustained, but perhaps to a slightly lesser extent than in the previous decade. Scholars such as Chaumeil (1983), Whitten (1985) and Taussig (1987) observed the use of ayahuasca, but the most prominent anthropologist during the 1980s, however, was Luis Eduardo Luna, who in his works (1984; 1986) focused on vegetalismo and the mestizo use of ayahuasca.

Luna was introduced to ayahuasca by the McKenna brothers, who he met in Colombia in 1971 (Luna 2008a). Together with Dennis McKenna, Luna organized the first ayahuasca symposium, held in Bogotá, in 1985. Luna also started to collaborate with a painter and a former shaman named Pablo Amaringo, and in 1991 they published a book called *Ayahuasca*



*Visions: The Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman*. Fotiou (2010:113) and Grunwell (1998:59) both count this book amongst those works that have amplified ayahuasca's reputation. Beyer (2012:2) goes even further, stating that the publication of *Ayahuasca Visions* actually started the course of the popular interest in ayahuasca.

Luna has continued his research on ayahuasca and since 1997 he has also worked as a “neo-ayahuasqero” (Luna 2003). According to Luna, it was first and foremost the demand from others that led him to conduct his own ayahuasca ceremonies (2008a:109). However, already in the introduction of his doctoral dissertation he writes that he positioned himself as a “potential apprentice” and that he was “aware of the dangers of such an approach”, although he often found himself in a more biased situation than his intention was (Luna 1986:16–17). Thus, it looks as if Luna's doings are not merely triggered by the requests of his friends. He writes: “[G]radually, I gained confidence and started to conduct sessions from time to time, creating, ultimately, a simple ritual that incorporated some of the techniques I had witnessed during my years of exposure to various traditions as well as my own ways of conducting sessions” (Luna 2008a:109).

Moreover, Luna has also founded a research center called “Wasiwaska” in Brazil. In this center, he organizes seminars for people representing various professions:

Participants in my seminars come from many different cultures and parts of the world [...] The seminars include a combination of ayahuasca sessions; holotropic breath work (rapid and rhythmic deep breathing that induces ASC [altered states of consciousness]); literary, musical, or artistic expression workshops; lectures by recognized specialists; and excursions. Wasiwaska is a base for serious exploration and scientific research that reflects my work, and that of other contemporary ayahuasqueros [...] (Luna 2003)

On the basis of the accounts presented above, it becomes obvious that Luna has for a long time worked deliberately in order to make ayahuasca acknowledged and he can, at least in my opinion, be seen as the anthropologist who has most prominently acted on behalf of making ayahuasca recognized. What is more, he can also be perceived as an actor within ayahuasca tourism. Accordingly, he fits into the category labeled as “shamantropologists” – i.e. the group of shaman-turned anthropologists, in which Carlos Castaneda and Michael Harner are the two most important representatives (Svanberg 2003:69).

Luna's open-minded attitude as regards the internationalization of ayahuasca becomes apparent when he expresses his opinion of the Yurayaco Declaration, a proclamation published by an organization of ayahuasqueros representing several indigenous communities<sup>9</sup>. He writes:

The Yurayaco Declaration code of ethics released in 2001 should apply, with some modifications, to the work of legitimate non-indigenous practitioners. The code, however, has two aspects that I cannot accept. First, it rejects any kind of ayahuasca experimentation by scientists, botanists, medical doctors, or anthropologists. Understanding that shamanic knowledge has been exploited and abused, I believe a fair dialogue is needed between indigenous *ayahuasqueros* and Western people. Scientific studies of ayahuasca could be of great importance in the study of healing and studies of consciousness and the mind. The code also negates the reality of the mestizo population of the region, and the fact that many indigenous shamans have trained Westerners such as myself. I have had both mestizo and indigenous teachers, who I now honor by doing my own work. (Luna 2003)

Whilst Luna's statement raises significant questions concerning the responsibility of anthropologists studying ayahuasca use, I also find his attitudes somewhat self-contradictory. In Luna's opinion, he "honors" the indigenous and mestizo shamans by conducting ayahuasca ceremonies. However, he does not appreciate the wish clearly verbalized in the declaration that westerners should not interfere in ayahuasca related activities. Perhaps the "fair dialogue" that Luna calls for is not understood as such by the local inhabitants, and perhaps they dislike the fact that westerners like Luna turn into competing shamans, whether in disguise of anthropologists or not. In any case, Luna's viewpoint regarding ayahuasca tourism is certainly not reproachful; he perceives this phenomenon simply as a "continuation of the vegetalismo tradition turned international" (Luna 2011b:19; see also Luna 2011a:128).

During the 1990s, a number of popular works focusing on ayahuasca received a lot of attention. Besides *Ayahuasca Visions*, Wade Davis' *One River*, published in 1996, as well as *The Cosmic Serpent* (1998) written by Jeremy Narby, may probably be seen as the most influential. In the twenty-first century, the number of popular publications on ayahuasca has grown exponentially and the trend is constantly ongoing. Also other media have started to pay attention to ayahuasca like never before. If one is to find a single agent that has been the most important contributor to the internationalization of ayahuasca that would most likely be the Internet. Tupper states:

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<sup>9</sup> Unión de Médicos Indígenas Yageceros de la Amazonía Colombiana

Its [the Internet's] role in disseminating knowledge and opinions about ayahuasca in the past decade has been instrumental in spreading cross-cultural *vegetalismo* (and the brew more generally) beyond the Amazon. [...] The inception of the World Wide Web during the 1990s established novel sociological conditions for ayahuasca to enter the popular mindscape of Euroamerican culture in the way it has. Indeed, equally prevalent as the use of the brew itself are online narratives about the ayahuasca experience, which generally emphasize healing, personal insight and spiritual transformation. Yet, whereas in the 1960s governments were able to counter discourses lauding similar kinds of substances, such as LSD and mescaline, with one-sided deprecatory representations that served their political interests, today authorities are hard-pressed to challenge the volume and scope of information about ayahuasca easily available to the lay public. The use of the Internet by ayahuasca aficionados allows for a diversity of thought and expression about the brew and its effects that pose significant challenges to policy-makers. (Tupper 2009:123)

Besides the Internet, popular television programs have more or less noticed the use of ayahuasca. Travel programs such as *Madventures* and Bruce Parry's *Amazon*, for instance, have certainly made ayahuasca familiar to many viewers. The same is true of the accounts made by numerous celebrities in the popular culture. Sting, for example, starts his autobiography *Broken Music* (2003) with a description of an ayahuasca experience he had in the eighties. It is, apropos, interesting to recognize that famous figures within popular culture have played a part also when other entheogens have become famous in the west. Znamenski (2007:128) points out that after Wasson's *Life* article had made the *psilocybin* mushrooms renowned, rock stars, for instance Mick Jagger, John Lennon and Peter Townsend, went to Mexico in order to experiment with the mushrooms. Similarly, Jim Morrison was fascinated by the works of Castaneda, not to mention all the rock groups and artists who were largely influential for LSD spreading to the general public. Today, numerous music groups as well as artists are influenced by ayahuasca and these undoubtedly further spread the awareness of the brew within the western culture. As Fotiou states, perhaps somewhat exaggeratingly, it is nowadays "hard to browse popular media, fiction books, or turn on the TV and not to run into some sort of reference to ayahuasca" (2010:109). As Beyer puts it (2012:2), the word ayahuasca has in the popular media become "a trope for the edgy, the transgressive, the seriously cool".

Several documentary films have been made about ayahuasca and international ayahuasca conferences are held around the world. The anthropological studies focusing on ayahuasca use have also increased hugely in recent years. The same counts for other scholarly research

surrounding ayahuasca by various disciplines. Although they may not have had any larger impact in the way ayahuasca has been celebrated in the west, it is still noteworthy that scientific studies on the topic of ayahuasca are continuously conducted throughout the world. Moreover, the ayahuasca using religions have made the brew known outside South America and articles about ayahuasca are certainly common in different magazines and newspapers around the globe. According to Fotiou (2010:123), a *National Geographic* article written by Kira Salak in 2006 had a particularly large impact and inspired many people to travel to South America. Articles like Salak's have certainly played a fundamental part in westerners' perceptions about ayahuasca and such articles are unceasingly growing in number (Tupper 2008:299). Indeed, while writing this thesis, an article on ayahuasca tourism was published in a weekly supplement of the Finland's largest newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (Huhtanen 2012).

Right from the beginning, anthropologists have played a central part with regard to the way ayahuasca has been encountered in the west. Consequently, anthropologists are also greatly in charge of the birth of ayahuasca tourism (de Rios & Rumrill 2008:71). However, only a few anthropologists have addressed this issue publicly, although it is my opinion a subject of great importance. Whether the personal attitudes towards ayahuasca tourism are positive (cf. Luna 2003; 2008a), negative (de Rios 1994a & 1994b; de Rios & Rumrill 2008), or something there between (see for instance Taussig in Wilson 2002), anthropologists have a substantial effect on the lives of the local inhabitants in South America. Therefore, it is in my opinion the responsibility of every scholar of ayahuasca tourism to carefully think through his or her own role with relation to the phenomenon and reflect on the possible impacts and costs that one's statements might bring forth.

Evoking the discussion in chapter two regarding anthropologists who every so often are indistinguishable from pilgrims and tourists, the study of ayahuasca seems far from exceptional. To be sure, the role of anthropologists appears often to be at least equivocal. Anthropologists' motivations and undertakings, as well as their perceptions concerning authenticity, appear occasionally to be almost identical to those of ayahuasca tourists, as will be seen in the next chapter. To anthropologists, maintains Crick, "tourists are relatives of a kind; they act like a cracked mirror in which we can see something of the social system which produces anthropologists as well as tourists. More than that, tourists remind us of some of the contexts, motives, experiential ambiguities and rhetoric involved in being an anthropologist" (Crick quoted in Badone 2004:185).

Whilst it is important to stress that not all anthropologists have positioned themselves as biasedly as some of those discussed in this chapter, it is, however, essential for all anthropologists to understand the implications of their research. As Badone (2004:187) notes, “[R]ather than precluding political engagement or advocacy, the recognition that ethnography – like pilgrimage and tourism – is in part a meaning-making enterprise should serve to sharpen its analytical focus”. Needless to say, these recommendations are not only vital in the study of ayahuasca tourism but also in the study of travel in general. That said it looks as if the occurrence of ayahuasca tourism is rather exceptional in that anthropologists are shaping the phenomenon in an unusually influential way.

As shown above, ayahuasca has made its way to the western imagination in multiple ways. In addition to scientific research, general trends such as the psychedelic revolution of the 1960s, have also contributed to this process. It is likewise important to note that the popular culture has been, as it certainly is today, a major factor in the globalization of ayahuasca and especially in the birth of ayahuasca tourism. As Fotiou (2010:113) states, several of her western consultants, who had traveled to Iquitos in order to drink ayahuasca, had stumbled across the brew as a result of reading a book or some other source. These “other sources” have become increasingly important in the last two decades and the Internet, especially, has opened new doors that have assisted the spread of ayahuasca into the western awareness (see for instance Holman 2010a:84, 149). Furthermore, ayahuasca has become a regular occurrence in various other media and in our day it draws the attention of, for instance, innumerable journalists and bloggers.

To put it briefly, while ayahuasca tourism can principally be seen as a phenomenon that has evolved rapidly during the last two decades, it is nonetheless possible to discern that the roots of this development lie much deeper in history. As it has become clear, the emergence of ayahuasca tourism can in fact be seen as a result of a broader process that has been ongoing ever since ayahuasca was first discovered by the west. The understanding of this process is a crucial step when interpreting ayahuasca tourism. It is additionally worth stressing that the process has by no means come to an end but continues in the present day and is definitely stronger than ever before.

## 5 Ayahuasca tourism

As stated at the outset of this thesis, innumerable appellations have been proposed of the phenomenon consisting of an increasing amount of westerners who travel to South America and participate in ayahuasca ceremonies. As the numerous labels indicate, the definition of ayahuasca tourism is a complicated task as the phenomenon may encompass a variety of diverse practices. In recent years, for example, Amazonian shamans and neo-ayahuasqeros have in increasing numbers traveled outside South America in order to conduct ayahuasca ceremonies (see e.g. de Rios & Rumrill 2008:90 and Ott 2011:110). These ceremonies are usually held for white, middle-class participants in the United States and in Europe<sup>10</sup> (Metzner 2006:34). While this practice undeniably can be seen as a form of ayahuasca tourism, it is nonetheless, at least so far, a trivial incidence compared to the steady flow of westerners visiting the Amazon and partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies.

Tupper (2009) has offered the term “cross-cultural vegetalismo” as a term that covers both of the occurrences described above. While this term certainly has its benefits, it correspondingly fails to incorporate some essential elements of ayahuasca tourism. This is because of not all ayahuasca tourists partake in *vegetalismo* ceremonies, conducted by the mestizo population. Some tourists visiting South America take part in ayahuasca ceremonies offered by the religious groups and the syncretic churches while some drink ayahuasca with indigenous tribes. Moreover, some participate in ayahuasca ceremonies conducted by Europeans or Americans, and so forth. In this section, the term ayahuasca tourism is hence seen as more applicable, even though the term is tested thoroughly in chapter six. However, by ayahuasca tourism is here referred only to the phenomenon of westerners traveling to South America and partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies, not to the ayahuasca ceremonies conducted outside this area.

### 5.1 The setting

The region with the most prevalent ayahuasca tourism is Peru, and especially the city of Iquitos (Fotiou 2010:121). In fact, virtually all of the ethnographic studies on ayahuasca

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<sup>10</sup> There is to my knowledge at least one neo-ayahuasqero who conducts ayahuasca ceremonies in Finland.

tourism have been conducted in Iquitos<sup>11</sup>. Ayahuasca tourism, however, takes place in other South American countries as well, and in recent years ayahuasca ceremonies have been conducted even in countries as Costa Rica – in other words, outside the area where ayahuasca has traditionally been used (Homan 2011:54, footnote). It is, however, curious to note that Peru is without doubt the country where the phenomenon has gained the strongest foothold; some tourists consider the Peruvian Amazon “as the Harvard of shamanism” (Znamenski 2007:156). According to Stuart (2002:37), ayahuasca is “a valued part of Peruvian spiritual and economic life. The government tourist agencies sponsor ayahuasca festivals, the brew and the raw materials for its manufacture are openly sold in markets, and even Peru’s current president Alejandro Toledo participated in an ayahuasca ceremony”. Moreover, ayahuasca jewelry (pendants made of *Banisteriopsis* sp.) is sold on the street markets and some restaurants in Iquitos even have designed special “ayahuasca diet” meals for ayahuasca tourists (Holman 2010b:14).

Although some tourists take part in ayahuasca ceremonies conducted in indigenous settings or in syncretic churches, many prefer to visit special ayahuasca lodges, often located nearby Amazonian conurbations (Homan 2011:68). There are an increasing number of such lodges and it is common that these offer a variety of activities for the participants. For instance, visits to indigenous communities and archaeological sites along with lectures, seminars and workshops are often contained within the lodge’s undertakings, even though the use of ayahuasca is the central event (Znamenski 2007:155–157; Homan 2011:68). The lodges furthermore typically offer accommodation, thus being complete “all-inclusive” packages. The cost of such lodges varies greatly depending on the reputation, the length of the stay and so forth, but it is nonetheless striking that the ayahuasca lodges charge a whole heap of money. A common price for a two-week ayahuasca lodge lies around 2000–3000 dollars, while one of the most expensive ayahuasca tours is probably that of the “Four Winds Foundation”, which in the early 1990s cost as much as \$30,000 for a three-week period (Znamenski 2007:156). Bearing in mind that the monthly income in these areas can be as small as \$76 (Homan 2011:68), it is not surprising that ayahuasca tourism has become an extraordinary way of making money for many locals. The ayahuasca lodges are, however, not

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<sup>11</sup> According to Holman (2010a:180), there are primarily two reasons that explain the role of Iquitos as the locus of ayahuasca tourism; the upsurge in Internet advertising and the “Shamanism Conferences” arranged in the city by an American named Alan Shoemaker.

exclusively run by Amazonian residents. Interestingly, several of the most popular ayahuasca lodges are owned by foreigners, coming mainly from North America and Europe<sup>12</sup>.

The struggle for ayahuasca tourists has led to an ever increasing advertising of ayahuasca lodges and shamans. Hotels, restaurants and representatives get paid for leading tourists to the lodges (Fotiou 2010:122), whilst ayahuasca tours are advertised in “cheesy popular magazines” such as the *Shaman’s Drum* or the *Magical Blend* (Ott 2011:110). Ayahuasca lodges are also visibly marketed on the Internet and several lodges have their own websites. Though these sites make communication available, it is obvious that their actual purpose is to attract tourists to the lodges (Holman 2011:97). The significance of these websites is tremendous; Holman (2010a:149) suggests that as much as 90% of the ayahuasca tourists in Iquitos travel there by reason of websites.

## 5.2 The tourists

There are only a trivial number of studies concerning ayahuasca tourists specifically and additional research regarding this topic is undoubtedly required. The largest study on the subject has to my knowledge been put forward by Fotiou (2010), who interviewed altogether 82 ayahuasca tourists in Iquitos, Peru. Her study is valuable when searching for the “typical” ayahuasca tourist and is hence presented here. Writing of her informants, Fotiou (2010:125) notices that there does not seem to be any patterns among ayahuasca tourists as regards age, social status, education or class. The most notable discrepancy was that there were only 22 females compared to the 60 males in her sample. The greater percentage of men as ayahuasca tourists is also a mutual feature in other studies on the subject (see e.g. Kristensen 1998 and Winkelman 2005). Fotiou (2010:125) explains the inequality in gender proportion as a logical outcome regarding the fact that traveling in South America poses certain challenges for women. More than half of her informants had not traveled to South America explicitly to drink ayahuasca and the majority were raised Christian although they did not identify themselves as such. The age of the tourists varied from 20 to 61 and whilst some had

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<sup>12</sup> These include for example *Blue Morpho* (run by Souther Hamilton), *Sacred Peru Adventures* (Steffan Heydon), *Shamanismo* (Alan Shoemaker), *Takiwasi* (Jacques Mabit) and *Wild Mushroom Traveling Road Show* (Gerry Miller). Contrary to what one would expect, there seems not to be any furious competition between the local shamans and the foreign tour brokers (Holman 2010a:250–252).



partaken in only a few ceremonies, some had participated in hundreds. Thirteen informants were Peruvian and the rest predominantly from North America or Europe (ibid. 125–126).

Holman (2010a:187–210) has proposed a tripartite classification of ayahuasca tourists. In her view, the “type 1” tourists are characterized by the ayahuasca experience as the primary purpose of their journey. These tourists, Holman argues, have thus planned their trip in advance and often booked their ayahuasca ceremony via the Internet. Furthermore, “type 1” tourists commonly use a lot of money on their ayahuasca experience(s) and they typically spend their time almost exclusively at the lodge, having little or no interaction with the local people. The “type II” tourists, on the other hand, are not traveling solely with the purpose of drinking ayahuasca but are in Holman’s view distinguished by their want to travel around the Amazon and to partake in different kind of activities, of which the ayahuasca ceremony is only one feature in the midst of others. These tourists are more interested in the experiential features of ayahuasca than in the “shamanic aspects”, as is the case among “type 1” tourists (ibid. 209). Finally, Holman distinguishes the “type III” tourists, who, in contrast to the two other groups, are not taking part in any organized ayahuasca tours, but who come across ayahuasca “via a shaman on the street” (ibid. 203). In Holman’s view, these tourists may or may not be deliberately seeking for ayahuasca; what characterizes them is that they are approaching ayahuasca independently and are often willing to partake in multiple ceremonies and drink ayahuasca with different shamans. Holman argues that it is especially these “type III” tourists who are in the greatest danger of meeting various risks that are associated with the use of ayahuasca (ibid. 206).

Although there is an irrefutable potentiality in Holman’s tourist typology, I do not, however, consider the abovementioned ordering as unproblematic. This is largely caused by the size of the sample which the classification is constructed on; the typology is created on the basis of interviews with only eight tourists and an online survey with five respondents (Holman 2010a:188). As a result, I comprehend Holman’s model mainly as guiding. What is of importance here is that not all ayahuasca tourists are alike. Some are purposefully traveling to South America with merely the aim of ingesting ayahuasca, while others stumble across it during their visit and want to try it primarily out of curiosity. Likewise, several tourists are comfortable with staying at ayahuasca lodges together with other like-minded, whereas some have the desire to self-sufficiently seek out ayahuasca shamans and to partake in their ceremonies individualistically.

While Beyer's (2009:353) statement that ayahuasca tourists are "primarily white, urban, relatively wealthy, well educated, and spiritually eclectic outsiders" may certainly hold true for many ayahuasca tourists, the situation is not always as straightforward. It is self-evidently an impossible task to establish an accurate depiction that would suit every ayahuasca tourist, but some notions on a general level can be made. While travelers from countries such as Peru, Australia and Japan partake in ayahuasca ceremonies, it is however the Americans and Europeans who constitute a clear majority of the ayahuasca tourists. Therefore the notion that the tourists predominantly are white and urban is more or less truthful. However, the education and the wealth of the tourists cannot be seen as a uniting feature, as shown in Fotiou's study (see above). Ayahuasca tourists can undeniably be perceived as "outsiders", but in order to better understand their "spiritual eclecticism", it is necessary to take a closer look at the tourists' whys and wherefores.

### 5.2.1 Motivations

One of the first surveys regarding the motivations of ayahuasca tourists was conducted by Kristensen (1998). According to Kristensen, the four most prominent explanations given by ayahuasca tourists were self-exploration and spiritual growth, curiosity, physical and emotional healing, and a desire for a vacation to an exotic location (Kristensen 1998:15, cited in Grunwell 1998). Although his survey was small-scale and included the accounts of only twelve individuals, the aforementioned motivations seem to a great extent be consistent with other studies on the subject. Winkelman (2005), for example, interviewed 16 ayahuasca tourists from around the world and received responses that were very similar to those reported by Kristensen. In Winkelman's study (2005:211–212), the most common motivations fall into the categories of spiritual relations, personal spiritual development, emotional healing, purpose and direction in life, and scientific knowledge. In addition, one participant pointed out hedonistic reasons. As Winkelman (*ibid.* 214) states, the idea that ayahuasca can offer spiritual relations and development, as well as provide healing properties, was protuberant among the participants in his study. A similar impression is apparent in Homan's (2011:72) study, where the main motivations among ayahuasca tourists were spirituality, health and experimentation. Additionally, on many occasions tourists had experienced some sort of trauma and were seeking for a cure in ayahuasca.

According to Fotiou (2012:7), the notion of the healing effects of ayahuasca was so widely held in Iquitos that it was far more common that ayahuasca tourists spoke of “the medicine” than called ayahuasca by its name. However, a profound dissimilarity lies in the way illness is perceived by locals and tourists using ayahuasca. Beyer writes:

The seekers also came to the shaman with their own set of etiological and nosological concepts, rooted primarily in popular psychology and alternative medicine. And they brought with them assumptions about the nature of ayahuasca and its healing potential that often differed radically from the concepts of the mestizo and indigenous shamans to whom they come for gringo-style healing of what were conceptually gringo diseases. Few gringo tourists understood – or cared about – the cultural assumptions underlying the ayahuasca ceremony or the nature of the diseases that the shamanic healer actually addressed, which, in the Upper Amazon, are essentially signs of a failure of right relationship – a social rather than an individual pathology. (Beyer 2012:3)

Whereas traditionally the origins of illness are seen as external, western ayahuasca tourists commonly perceive the sources of illnesses as existing within the individual (Fotiou 2012:7–8). Thus, westerners commonly have an idea that “the responsibility for healing is placed on the individual” (ibid. 8) and some even talk of “becoming their own shaman” (ibid. 16). Another widely prevailing assumption is that personal healing can contribute to a shared healing of humanity. Alternative healing practices such as reiki are frequently used during ayahuasca ceremonies and many tourists openly criticize western biomedicine (ibid. 8). It seems that a fairly common assumption among ayahuasca tourists is that the visions experienced during ayahuasca are not the purpose but rather a distraction of the experience (ibid. 16, 21).

The idea of the transformational aspects of ayahuasca has in the recent years become “part of the ayahuasca mystique” and it is also a common purpose for ayahuasca tourists ingesting the brew (Fotiou 2010:239). Holman (2010a:8–9), for instance, sees the “spiritual and/or transformational experience” as the principal motivation for ayahuasca tourists. Various ayahuasca centers have, too, started to underline the transformative effects as essential in the ayahuasca experience (Fotiou 2010:239). In some ayahuasca retreats, partakers are prepared for transformative experiences by telling them stories of former participants, shamans and apprentices who have underwent life-changing experiences by the means of ayahuasca (ibid. 291). According to Fotiou (2010:241), the mere ingesting of ayahuasca is, however, seldom the only motivation for tourists undertaking the trip; an aim to personal transformation,

“aided by the removal from the world and one’s ordinary life”, is often an underlying drive among ayahuasca tourists. Moreover, the ayahuasca ritual is perceived as contributory in the broader process of self-transformation (ibid. 259).

According to Beyer (2009:353), key themes used in advertising of ayahuasca tourism are healing and transformation. Such expressions without a doubt affect tourists’ perceptions of ayahuasca and it is probably fair to say that advertising has an impact also as regards the motivations of ayahuasca tourists (see Holman 2010a:84). Taylor (2011:20), for example, notes that it is exactly the desire for these abovementioned elements, healing and transformation, that form the foremost intentions for westerners partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies. The picture given of the brew in popular culture indisputably plays a part, too. Numerous first-hand reports on the Internet, for instance, describe ayahuasca experiences in vivid and fascinating terms. What is more, accounts of some extraordinary cures that are attributed to ayahuasca are abundant (see for instance Topping 1998 for a reported recovery from metastatic liver cancer) and many shamans claim that they are able to cure illnesses such as cancer and AIDS (Fotiou 2012:9). Beyer makes a significant notion when he states that the therapeutic claims connected with ayahuasca usually focus on “diseases that are salient for otherwise well-nourished foreigners outside the Amazon...” (Beyer 2012:3).

Although it is apparent that not all travelers are searching for a cure or a spiritual transformation, it nonetheless astonishes that purely hedonistic motivations seem to be relatively exceptional among ayahuasca tourists. The hedonistic motivations are possibly more common among the younger ayahuasca tourists, who give the impression, at least on occasion, that they are primarily interested in the entheogenic experience accessible by the means of ayahuasca (Holman 2010a:202). The most straightforward uttering of this kind is probably presented by one of Homan’s informants: “[Y]ou know, I just want to drink some of that fuckin’ shaman juice, brother” (quoted in Homan 2011:77). While arrogances certainly occur (cf. de Rios & Rumrill 2008:75), they are, however, relatively rarely pointed out by tourists (see for instance Holman 2010a:248). Instead, a shared longing of creating social change in the world seems to be an “ultimate desire” for many ayahuasca tourists (Owen 2006:93). Fotiou (2010:269) noticed that in the majority of the ayahuasca ceremonies that she witnessed, the importance of the partaker’s intention was emphasized. Before the drinking of ayahuasca, the shaman conducting the ceremony encouraged the participants to formulate their intention, either in private discussions or openly in a group with other partakers.

Scholarly views on the underlying motivations of ayahuasca tourists are varied. Fotiou (2010:127) stresses that “the attractiveness of anything that is perceived as the antithesis of Western civilization: pre-industrial, pre-modern, natural, exotic, spiritual, sacred, traditional and timeless” is a shared leitmotif in the motives of ayahuasca tourists. De Rios (1994a:16) goes a step further when she argues that the foremost motivation can be found in “the empty self of the post-World War II period, a self which is soothed and made cohesive by becoming filled up by consuming food, consumer products, and experiences”. Prudon (2011:161), in a similar manner, perceives the motivations, as well as the benefits, of ayahuasca tourists, being related to “the pursuit of the individual identity, doing away with the collective and focusing on the ‘self’ that lies at the basis of modern individualism”. Whatever the exact case may be, it is interesting to note that the benefits achieved through ayahuasca seem by and large to be consistent with the purported aims reported by tourists.

### 5.2.2 Benefits

Psychological and emotional healing, personality changes, transformation of various kinds and heightened self-awareness, to mention a few, are frequently reported benefits by ayahuasca tourists (Beyer 2012:3; Prudon 2011:161). Shared proceeds also typically include feelings of universal connectedness and dissolution of the ego (Fotiau 2010:296–298) – i.e. common themes in entheogenic experiences. Winkelman (2005:212–213) groups the benefits encountered in his study in the following categories: self-awareness and development; emotional healing; spiritual experiences; physical healing; direction in life, and bad experiences.

Self-transformation appears to be among the main benefits recounted by tourists. For many people, Fotiou (2010:293) writes, “the most important thing they got out of the ayahuasca experience was a change in the way they saw themselves, life and their relationships to other people and most importantly, the way they see hallucinogens”. As Trichter (2010:133) puts it, “those who seek spiritual insight through ayahuasca tend to find what they are looking for”. To be sure, ayahuasca experiences may shape the spirituality of the participants robustly (ibid. 133).

While “dramatic and miraculous” cases seem not to be usual, various kinds of health benefits are nonetheless commonly reported by ayahuasca tourists (Fotiau 2012:25). Ayahuasca is

often paralleled with psychotherapeutic treatment (see for instance Huhtanen 2012) and it seems that the brew can in fact produce similar affective expression that is sought in psychotherapy (Trichter 2010:134). Fotiou (2010:294) notices that many of her informants reported therapeutic experiences as well as powerful awareness about themselves and their relations. Trichter et al., who studied the changes in spirituality among novice ayahuasca ceremony participants, write:

participants tend to, after their experience, be more empathic and feel more connected to others, nature and their sense of god or the divine. They are consistently shown to, in the short-term, feel healed, grateful and peaceful, with an increased sense of responsibility for, and reconciliation with, themselves, others, and the world. (Trichter et al. 2009:133)

Healing is by many ayahuasca tourists seen as a continuous process. The same also holds true for the transformative effect of ayahuasca and it is in fact typical that ayahuasca tourists return to South America in order to carry on the “work” with ayahuasca (Fotiou 2010:300).

A rather common view is that, in order to be healed, it is necessary to first undergo a spiritual crisis (Fotiou 2012:20). Psychological distress is linked to ayahuasca use and while this definitely does not count for everyone, many ayahuasca tourists go through extremely terrifying and devastating experiences (Lewis 2008:114, 117). However, it seems that after the experience itself, even the hardest conditions are almost exclusively perceived as positive by the tourists. For example, the bad experiences reported in Winkelman’s paper (2005:213) were later on viewed as more positive. Additionally, it seems that the more difficult the experience, the more transformative effect it has (Fotiou 2010: 239).

Lewis (2008), in her pioneer study on the subject, reports the accounts of three Americans, who, as a result of ayahuasca use, suffered from serious spiritual/psychological emergencies (such as suicidal behavior, delusions, profound depression, anxiety, depersonalization and hallucinations) after the entheogenic experience<sup>13</sup>. She compares these accounts with data regarding shamanic initiation from traditional contexts, and perceives the negative experiences caused by ayahuasca as liminal transformation periods, where “one’s former beliefs are challenged” (ibid. 129). Lewis concludes her study by arguing that overcoming

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<sup>13</sup> It is incidentally worth mentioning that the familiarity with ayahuasca use seems not to prevent spiritual crises; one of Lewis’ consultants was a woman who had drunk ayahuasca 30–40 times over a period of six years before she had her first negative experience.

spiritual, ayahuasca-caused emergencies can lead to personal growth and a new identity (ibid. 127, 129).

According to Fotiou (2010:270), it is common that the ayahuasca experiences are discussed after the ceremony. Sometimes the participants shared their experiences and insights with each other in the company of the shaman or an apprentice, and on occasion the shaman interpreted the experiences. Some shamans interpret the experiences of ayahuasca tourists in terms of western psychotherapy whilst, on the other hand, some western shamans construe the experiences using terminology deriving from mestizo shamanism (ibid. 295–296). The appropriating of western elements into mestizo shamanism and vice versa can be understood as a part of a two-way exchange between South American shamanism and the western world (ibid. 2). Peculiarly, this process is to a great extent related to the desire for authenticity.

### 5.3 The search for authenticity

It goes without saying that the birth of ayahuasca tourism, a “multi-million dollar enterprise” as Homan (2011:67) calls it, has resulted in many fortune hunters trying to make a living by conducting ayahuasca ceremonies for westerners. Consequently, serious competition is constantly present between ayahuasqueros, who try to convince the tourists on their side. It is, for instance, not uncommon that competing shamans spread antagonistic rumors about each other (Fotiou 2010:122). As Stuart (2002:36) notices, ayahuasca tourists “are often bewildered by the fact that almost every shaman claims to be the only person in all of Amazonia who knows how to properly brew the magic potion”.

As early as in 1994, de Rios observed the presence of

Mestizo men who become instant traditional healers or ayahuasqueros without any apprenticeship period, without having any teachers, and without control. They provide American and European tourists mixtures of ten or more different hallucinogenic plants to help them become embedded in the universe and to provide mystical experiences for them. The hallucinogenic plants in question have never been used traditionally in the way that the self-styled healers use them, and there are numerous psychological casualties. The so-called healers fight among themselves, and they have their champions abroad who function as travel agents and tour guides [...] (de Rios 2001:277)

Today, such “charlatans” and “inauthentic shamans” constitute an essential feature of ayahuasca tourism. As one British female ayahuasca tourist in Peru stated: “[T]here are so many westernized shamans in this region. They are [...] not authentic; they have given up their traditions. They’re only in it for the money” (quoted in Herbert 2010:1). According to Herbert, this was a common perception among many ayahuasca tourists in the area. Indeed, warnings of posing ayahuasca “shamans”, who sometimes even do not know how to cook ayahuasca, can be found for instance in various magazines and Peruvian hotels (Znamenski 2007:158).

The tourists’ conceptions regarding the authenticity of ayahuasca use are worth examining in detail. Ayahuasca tourists frequently search for “authentic”, traditional and conservatory shamans and settings (Herbert 2010:1–2). Simultaneously, however, many misconceptions and naïve beliefs about shamans and the use of ayahuasca are present among tourists. As Fotiou (2010:129, 136) stresses, ayahuasca tourists often overlook historical and cultural contexts of shamanism as well as they overlook essential aspects of Amazonian shamanism, such as cosmology and sorcery. Moreover, tourists have romanticized perceptions of the local population. These perceptions have understandably resulted in a trend among shamans and tour organizers to modify their activities in line with the tourists’ suppositions. As Peluso and Alexiades (2006:73) note, the ayahuasca ritual is being “sanitized and purged of its more ambiguous aspects that contradict global tourism philosophies or which are unpalatable to outsiders”.

The tendency to “authenticate” the settings for ayahuasca use becomes apparent in the way ayahuasca is advertised, especially on the Internet. The websites of the ayahuasca lodges, for example, often contain exotic terms and the names of the lodges are frequently made of Quechua words, apparently in order to authenticate the lodges as well as the shamans using ayahuasca (Holman 2011:97; Homan 2011:69). In addition, common aspects in online-advertised ayahuasca tours include the use of “[C]orporate and New Age language to market the tours and to exoticize the ayahuasca plant/ceremony, as well as the Amazon region and the local people (largely absent from the websites)” (Holman 2010a:156). Shamans are commonly attributed with indigenous ancestry or alternatively ascribed as having been trained by noticeable indigenous shamans (Homan 2011:69–70). Ayahuasca tourism is commonly seen by the lodges as a fully accepted phenomenon and highly romanticizing utterances about the universal nature of shamanism abound. Hamilton Souther, founder of Blue Morpho Tours, sees tourism as “a means of recovering lost spirituality, so that it can be



restored to those whose cultures have lost connection with shamanic truths over time” (cited in DuBois 2009:285). In the same line, Alex Madrigal, another tour operator, stated that “shamanism does not belong to the Indians; they are only the caretakers of that knowledge. The new shamans, according to their prophecies are us, the new caretakers...” (quoted in Znamenski 2007: 161).

It is not only exotic and indigenous terms that are utilized in ayahuasca tourism. What is more, ayahuasca shamans have started to incorporate foreign and New Age expressions in their functioning; some contemporary shamans even speak of *chakras* in their ceremonies (Znamenski 2007:160–161; Fotiou 2010:136–137). Alterations in ayahuasca ceremonies can furthermore be seen at many levels. For instance, Fotiou (2012:19) has noticed that the icaros sung during the ayahuasca ceremony occasionally resemble songs, which she thinks may be a new development. According to her, some shamans even sell recorded icaros as CD’s to tourists. This is atypical, because traditionally, icaros are seen as strictly private melodies that are kept secret by shamans.

The location of the shaman appears to be a major factor affecting the westerner’s presumptions of authenticity. Tourists prefer ayahuasca ceremonies conducted outside the urban area, whilst locals drink the brew in the city (Fotiou 2010:137). In addition, the visual appearance of the shaman is of importance. As Fotiou (2010:137–138) notices, westerners are impressed by shamans who wear indigenous-styled clothing, although such costumes are not used when ayahuasca ceremonies are conducted for local people. The most peculiar aspect of the modern ayahuasca shamans’ adjustment to the tourists’ presuppositions is probably the downplaying of Christian elements in the ceremonies. Fotiou (2010:138), for example, describes one shaman who removed Christian images and symbols from a ceremonial space for the duration of a ceremony for western ayahuasca tourists. Such undertakings are most likely the consequence of negative experiences confronted with westerners, who are not familiar with the fact that Christianity is a key element of mestizo shamanism. Owen recounts an incident that took place at the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Shamanism Conference, held in Peru in 2006:

A *curandero* called Don Mario asked to have a few minutes at the microphone whereupon he proceeded to say that Christ was his savior. Silence filled the room, as conference-goers did not know how to respond. At his next ceremony, this *curandero* lost over half of the people who had signed up for his ceremony due to this comment, as they didn’t want to be with a *curandero* who had been corrupted by Christianity and therefore unfit to run an authentic ceremony”. (Owen 2006:70)

Fotiou (2010:138–139) stresses that not every shaman has submitted himself to the trend of authentication. A number of shamans have started to resist appealing to tourists and want to separate themselves from others. According to Fotiou (2010:139), at least some of these shamans conduct ceremonies just as successfully as the rest.

## 5.4 Concerns related to ayahuasca tourism

As there is virtually no regulation in the way ayahuasca tourism is practiced (see de Rios & Rumrill 2008:110–111), there are understandably a number of concerns related to the phenomenon. Perhaps most worryingly, the health risks related to ayahuasca use (cf. pp. 38–39 this paper) are not always acknowledged by the ayahuasca tourists or even by the new shamans conducting the ceremonies. For example, the strict dietary rules, traditionally closely linked to the use of ayahuasca, have automatically circumvented e.g. the possibility of one to come down with the serotonin syndrome. Today, however, as Fotiou (2010:209) notes, not all westerners pay attention to these restrictions and, at times, the importance of the diet is also insufficiently emphasized by shamans. What is more, the shamans conducting ceremonies for westerners seldom take notice of the health conditions of the participants (de Rios & Rumrill 2008:74, 76; Fotiou 2010:207–208; Homan 2011:104). While it could be argued that it is first and foremost the responsibility of the ayahuasca tourists themselves to find out about the various risks associated to ayahuasca use, it is in my opinion also the duty of the shamans to address these issues more systematically. Nevertheless, it is an unfortunate likelihood that as the number of ayahuasca tourists and competing shamans increases, so too does the number of ill-fated incidences.

A hazardous problem as regards ayahuasca tourism is the fact that one cannot be guaranteed of all the admixtures that are added in the ayahuasca potion. If one is to believe one of Owen's informants, some shamans have started to add substances like LSD, ecstasy and opium in the ayahuasca brew in order to make sure that participants experience effects (Owen 2006:89; see also de Rios & Rumrill 2008:72). As Homan (2011:103) further notes, certain deliriant added in the ayahuasca brew may dramatically change the nature of the experience and the intoxication may last up to several days. It goes without saying that such actions undertaken by shamans are not only extremely unethical but also very dangerous.

While de Rios' and Rumrills (2008:88) statement that many of the new ayahuasca shamans "are people without experience, with sociopathic tendencies, who do not have the personal capacity, preparation, or personality for this work" sounds like a provocative generalization, it is nevertheless true that not all of the shamans who are working with westerners can be trusted. This is especially a concern as regards women partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies, since there are numerous reports of shamans that have sexually assaulted female ayahuasca tourists (see for instance Owen 2006:82, 87; Fotiou 2010:214; Trichter 2010:140). Moreover, ayahuasca tourists have occasionally been robbed and even murdered by shamans. According to Fotiou (2010:211) there are also many shamans who suffer from alcoholism. Given that people are extremely vulnerable under the effects of ayahuasca, westerners are putting themselves in great danger when partaking in ceremonies which are led by irresponsible shamans. However, as a reaction to the various negative occurrences encountered within ayahuasca tourism, a number of organizations have been set up by shamans who want to take distance from the dishonest and suspicious actors conducting ayahuasca ceremonies. In Iquitos, for example, a group called *Asociación de Médicos Vegetalistas de Iquitos* consists of shamans practicing "ethical shamanism" (Owen 2006:87).

At times, ayahuasca tourists may have a profound impact in the lives of indigenous inhabitants. An "increased commercialization" appears, in the locals' opinion, to be one of the most frequently informed burdens of ayahuasca tourism (Holman 2010a:242). According to Homan (2011:68), ayahuasca tourism has besides in numerous regions led to a situation where ayahuasca shamans have moved from the rural areas to the cities in hopes of better incomes. As a result, this has resulted in a lack of ayahuasca healers in many regions. Herbert (2010), on the contrary, reports the attention-grabbing case of female ayahuasca healers among the *Shipibo-Conibo* Indians in Peru. Here, shamanism has traditionally been restricted to men, but when the ayahuasca tourism has opened a new niche for money-making, a growing number of females have started to conduct ayahuasca ceremonies for tourists. To be sure, this trend has resulted in a great desire among young girls in the community to work with tourists.<sup>14</sup> Tourism has thus shaped "not only their plans and wishes, but also their perception of shamanism" (ibid. 13). In the case of the *Shipibo-Conibo*, as well as in various other contexts, female ayahuasca healers have an advantage compared to their male counterparts for the reason that they look "more authentic" in the eyes of tourists and are considered safer, particularly by women traveling alone (ibid. 2). As Herbert (2010:19)

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<sup>14</sup> A similar desire among the youth to become shamans is reported also by Holman (2010a:259).

subsequently puts it, “tourism does not seem to be integrated into shamanism, but rather it seems that an aspect of shamanism (the drinking of ayahuasca) is integrated into tourism”. This notion is essential in understanding the enormous impact that ayahuasca tourism can have on the local population.

According to de Rios and Rumrill (2008:76,139), ayahuasca use in the Amazon area is frequently being replaced by the use of tobacco and the plants that are used to prepare the ayahuasca brew are probably becoming extinct. Whilst there is no clear data on this subject, Tupper (2009:131) has also pointed out that harvesting wild plants for ayahuasca potions may be an unsustainable practice. This is certainly an issue that calls for systematic research. There have also been attempts, thus far unsuccessful, to patent the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine (see for instance Tupper 2009:128).

It goes without saying that the impacts of ayahuasca tourism are, however, not merely negative. Many shamans who have benefited from ayahuasca tourism are helping their communities in various ways (Owen 2006:104–106). Holman (2010a:233) recounts that in Peru, the increased income and/or the economic support for the community, along with the opportunity for intercultural conversation, were the two most recurrently reported benefits by the local population. As a final point, it is obvious that ayahuasca tourism is still at a stage which in many ways is open for alterations. While the practice is by no means coming to an end, it is yet possible that ayahuasca tourism will go through major changes in the future. Hopefully, if such changes are to occur, the present concerns related to ayahuasca tourism will be solved in the best way possible.

## 6 Analyzing ayahuasca tourism

An initial question that needs to be answered when analyzing ayahuasca tourism is which part of the extensive phenomenon is it that one actually should focus on. As defined in chapter five, ayahuasca tourism is in this thesis understood simply as the phenomenon of westerners traveling to Amazon and partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies. Making an allowance for this loose definition, the subject of study can thus be seen as the travel from the western world to South America and back. However, as it has become clear, the essential feature in ayahuasca tourism is most importantly the ayahuasca ceremony and therefore the mere examination of the physical round-trip to South America is not satisfactory as such. What also needs to be taken into consideration is therefore the ayahuasca ceremony, which in fact constitutes the foremost element of the journey. As a result, there are thus actually two journeys in the phenomenon of ayahuasca tourism that require explanation. What is more, whilst some ayahuasca tourists truly partake only in one ayahuasca ceremony, there are on the other hand many who participate in several ceremonies during their stay. Subsequently, there can thus be many inner trips within the broader physical voyage. How, then, should these intersecting journeys be perceived? First, it is worth examining how Turner's classical theory of pilgrimage as a rite of passage can be applied in the case of ayahuasca tourism.

### 6.1 The journey: ayahuasca tourism as a passage rite?

According to Fotiou (2010:264–265), ayahuasca tourism can without a doubt be seen in terms of a rite of passage. In her view, ayahuasca tourists are experiencing liminality in two different ways. First of all, she comprehends the ayahuasca ritual as a transition rite which brings forth the liminal space with its anti-structural and extraordinary aspects. Secondly, the whole journey to South America can also, restating Fotiou (*ibid.* 264), be realized as a liminal phase where ayahuasca tourists are “separated from their regular life and after which they return home and are reintegrated into their lives, after having undergone a radical change”. Thus, the three key phases in Turner's model; the separation, the liminality and the reaggregation, can be discerned in the case of ayahuasca tourism. Fotiou (*ibid.* 265) further proposes that the ayahuasca ceremony is preceded by a pre-liminal phase, characterized by dietary restrictions, and followed by a post-liminal period, which, too, consists of dietary rules as well as the dealing with the experiences. Equally, Lewis (2008:129) stresses,

“[P]eriods of transformation that may come about following ayahuasca ceremonies can be considered liminal periods [...]”. Such liminal transformation phases seem to be rather common among ayahuasca tourists. Here is an account posted on the Ayahuasca Forums by the user *ade*<sup>15</sup>:

So many things are stirred when you drink aya, you realize that so many things that you believe for so long to be true are not, your entire worldview is changed. Ayahuasca is said to cure depression, but for me, it actually worsened it for almost a whole year. I thought I was becoming crazy, I didn't (sic) know how to continue on living after seeing all the beautiful things that exist in the world, how the world could be and what we had done with it. everything (sic) seemed so negative and I was annoyed and even disgusted by the people around me who were living in an illusion and destroying the planet. I guess that this is an extreme example, but I believe this happened (sic) because I failed to integrate my experiences. They were so intense and I didn't know what to "do" with it. They were not part of what my culture had taught me about reality and I failed to make sense of it. It just didn't make sense with the reality I was experiencing in my everyday life in Europe. The shaman's view on the spirit world was too different, there was something missing, a link between 2 worlds. I became obsessed with understanding this world which didn't make sense to me anymore. It took me almost a year to accept those 2 realities that were not necessarily contradictory as I first thought, but now I feel I've never been stronger and full of energy in my life. Everything (well, not all, but a lot!) fell into place, slowly, one step at the time. Even though I haven't drunk (sic) for a year, I still feel the aya effects. What happens during the ceremony is very important, but I feel that the most important part happens after, especially when you go back home and you are out of the safe environment constituted by all the beautiful and like minded people that you meet in Peru [...]. When you come back home, this is when you need to be surrounded by people who can support you, as all of this seemed so foreign when I came back to my european (sic) surroundings. Love from the people around me just wasn't enough, I had gone so far away that they couldn't reach me.

This extensive quotation presents an excellent example of liminality as found in Turner's model. The earlier, structured worldview preceding the ayahuasca experience is contested, and after the long and bewildering liminal stage, a reaggregation into a new, altered worldview gradually takes place. However, the notion that ayahuasca tourists like *ade* experience liminality does not necessarily designate them rigorously as pilgrims, for, as Norman (2011:110) argues, liminality can also be understood simply as something that differs from the everyday. In his view, “modes of tourism have been woven into the process of everyday life, and now gain and are given meaning by their contrast to those aspects of it

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<sup>15</sup> Posted on Sun Sep 19, 2010 on Ayahuasca Forums under the title “reflection on the path walked” (retrieved on December 17, 2012, available in: <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=30&t=23425>)

that dominate, such as work, home life and routine. As well as being able to operate as ritual, rite of passage and identity reinforcer, tourism can also operate as a mode of re-creation, or a format for self-discovery” (ibid. 110).

Whether or not one wishes to interpret liminality in terms of pilgrimage, *ade*'s testimony also highlights the importance of the second key feature in Turner's model – *communitas*. Fotiou (2010:265, 288) has remarked that it is a common feature in ayahuasca tourism, particularly within clearly structured rituals where the emphasis is on personal transformation (see also Luna 2008b:140). Winkelman and Dubisch (2005:xx) maintain that pilgrimage occurs “outside of, and in some respects in opposition to, the ordinary demands and requirements of life and society and the pilgrim's normal roles and status”. They further note that “pilgrimage is often carried out in a context in which the pilgrims are engaged in a popular and individual act that is in tension or even outright conflict with established hierarchies of the church or of society” (ibid. xxii). It looks as if ayahuasca tourism provides a pertinent example of this kind of pilgrimage, in which the participants are partaking in an activity that is far from the standard and at least partly in conflict with the regular norms of western society. It is therefore not a surprise that ayahuasca tourists experience a feeling of *communitas*.

The tourists are in a situation far from the ordinary where they can share their emotions with others coming from the same direction; a sense of unity between participants is certainly a natural outcome in ayahuasca ceremonies. This sense of community “can lead to the creation of a sense of relationship to others that is both personal and physical, and the elimination (at least to some extent) of social distinctions” (Winkelman & Dubisch 2005: xxxii). Furthermore, the feeling of community is essential to the curative power of pilgrimage (ibid. xxxii). On the other hand, it must also be kept in mind that the notion of community is not solely an occurrence found within pilgrimage. For spiritual tourists, too, the idea of community is essential as they “promote the notion of community as both critical to and a product of self-exploration and happiness” (Norman 2011:132).

In the case of *ade*, when he/she narrates that it was the “beautiful and like minded people” which sat up the “safe environment”, it looks as if he/she became fully aware of the importance of these people first when they were absent. This is by no means exceptional, and as was stressed in chapter two, it is often the case with pilgrimages that the aftermaths become apparent subsequently to the physical journey. Even in this aspect, the testimony referred to above is rather typical, for it illustrates that the pilgrimage is a process which

ranges further than the bodily journey. Likewise, the feelings of disorientation and isolation as experienced by *ade* are commonly reported by pilgrims in general. As Frey (2004:99) writes, “[T]he returned pilgrim may unexpectedly find himself or herself viewing daily life with different eyes and realize that perhaps the changes are coming from within [...]”. I believe that such feelings are not limited to pilgrims but are also experienced by many tourists (cf. Mendel 2010:310–311).

Summing up, it seems that, at least in the case of some protagonists, ayahuasca tourism can indeed be comprehended as a rite of passage when analyzed by means of Turner’s theory. Consequently, it looks that for some ayahuasca tourists, the journey to South America as well as the partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies can in fact be perceived in terms of pilgrimage. Simultaneously, however, it also needs to be stressed that both the notion of liminality as well as that of *communitas* can be understood as manifestations without indispensable association to pilgrimage. With this in mind, spiritual tourism might also appear as a beneficial classification of ayahuasca tourism. Nevertheless, interpreting ayahuasca tourism merely as a transition journey is not enough. As was pointed out in chapter two, later scholars of pilgrimage have tended to move away from Turner’s interpretation model, focusing on the individual experiences of pilgrims. It is therefore pertinent to next examine the experiences and outcomes of ayahuasca tourists in a separate section.

## 6.2 The experience and its outcomes: ayahuasca tourism as a transformation journey?

In Gothóni’s (1993) view, it is primarily the experience of individual transformation that is the most essential feature of pilgrimage, not that of transition as suggested by Turner. Likewise, Ambrósio (2007:84) suggests that it is namely the capability to construe one’s experience as a form of individual transformation that is a distinguishing feature shared by pilgrims. According to Fotiou (2010:291, 301), ayahuasca ceremonies do not reproduce social order, but they offer an “ideal setting for personal transformation, by providing the liminal space that in turn challenges basic cultural assumptions”. Certainly, as was shown in the previous chapter, the concept of transformation is clearly manifested as a primary theme in the motivations and the benefits of ayahuasca tourists’, as well as in the advertising of ayahuasca tourism.



Next, three different accounts are presented in order to show how experiences of transformation are recounted by the tourists themselves. To begin with, the user named *NeverEndingEpiphany* narrates on Ayahuasca Forums:

I have always believed in a higher power, but Aya has shown me how weak my belief was and how much stronger it has become. Now, everyday is an epiphany to the spiritual and the human species. I look at the world in a whole different way, and gaze in wonder and enjoyment. I have learned to relax and enjoy life instead of trying to control it. In essence, all of my dreams have become renewed. Through Aya, I have come to terms with the death of loved ones, and have begun to understand the journey we are all destined to travel. I am reading books that I never would have picked up, and listening to music I would have never heard if not for the teacher. I have been brought to the breaking point, were (sic) time stretches into infinity. There I have seen the one energy and the beauty of the universe. Aya has taught me the strength of the human species and their capacity for love and wonder.<sup>16</sup>

On the same forum, a user nicknamed *somegood* comments:

Where to begin? Ayahuasca has taken my life in such a drastically different direction since I first drank it six months ago. It's opened my psyche up to a new way of viewing the world around me and how I perceive life and *spirituality*. I went into my first session with a very fundamental view of Christianity, and was looking for answers to validate my beliefs. But in doing so it's led me on a much more esoteric view of my faith, and the God now that I feel I know personally – is much different than the God I feared before. I had no idea how much dogma and religion had been robbing me of true salvation. Ayahuasca made this all very clear to me. Don't get me wrong, I still love and worship Jesus Christ, but an approachable Christ that lives inside me and wants me to absorb gnosis, and spread love, charity, and goodwill. A Christ that needs no intermediary to approach. It is so very true that ayahuasca gives you what you need and not what you ask for. It's like I've been given a new brain! Although I still require much work – the transformation has been amazing thus far! [...] Through ayahuasca I believe that I've been able to tap into that vein that connects all of the universe and shows us who we are and why we're here. God bless ayahuasca!!! (my italics)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Posted on July 20, 2007 on Ayahuasca Forums, entitled “My never ending epiphanies.” (retrieved on January 3, 2013, available in: <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=30&t=15215>)

<sup>17</sup> Posted on February 21, 2013 under the title “Six months later. How ayahuasca has changed my life”. Available in: <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=30&t=31612> (accessed on February 25, 2013)

Thirdly, a shorter excerpt from the user *phantasmagoria* on his or her experience with ayahuasca:

I have regained something lost long ago. I am no longer physically incapable of smiling. My sense of humour has returned. I feel younger, more energetic and highly motivated. I am seeking complete silence and tranquility and often find it.<sup>18</sup>

What these three accounts have in common is that they all reveal that the ayahuasca experience has in one way or another contributed to a change of life. Although the detailed contents in these testimonies are somewhat different, it is noticeable that the key feature in all of them is a new outlook on life, caused by a transformation. The user *somegood*'s testimony is of particular interest. While his story is closely associated with Christianity, he nevertheless speaks of "spirituality" instead of religion and it is certainly possible to discern a negative attitude towards institutionalized religion in his account. Consequently, I argue that whilst *somegood*'s testimony is not characteristic as it accentuates the role of Christianity, it can however be used as an exemplification of how ayahuasca tourism is better understood in terms of spirituality than of religion. In my opinion, *somegood*'s testimony acts as a proof of the fact that "religious tourism" is not the correct term to be used for ayahuasca tourism.

While it is evident that not all experiences are as powerful and transformative as those presented above, it is apparent that for some, the ayahuasca experience may actually be a life-changing event. Does this mean that ayahuasca tourism should be realized as a transformation journey and consequently as a form of pilgrimage? In Gothóni's view (1993:108), it is namely the aspect of transformation which makes all pilgrims alike. Using his theorizing, ayahuasca tourism could thus, at least on occasion, truly be perceived as pilgrimage. Moreover, it seems as if Ambrósios (2007:84) aforementioned notion that the capability to understand the experience as individually transformative holds true as regards ayahuasca tourists. The quotations above clearly show that tourists are indeed interpreting their experiences as personal transformations. Therefore, it is in my opinion totally appropriate to use the term "pilgrim" when referring to ayahuasca tourists who have experienced personal transformations.

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<sup>18</sup> Posted on July 30, 2007 on Ayahuasca Forums under the title "I am eternally grateful to the lifesaving medicine". (Date of access: January 3, 2013, available in: <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=30&t=15300>)

An opposite standpoint is, however, represented by Holman (2010a:8–9), who argues that ayahuasca tourists cannot be perceived as pilgrims because “their motivation is for a spiritual and/or transformational experience, one that is neither connected to a specific religion nor directed toward a particular site or sacred space”. However, as was manifestly seen in chapter two, pilgrimage is not reliant on any particular religion, nor it is dependent on a geographical location (cf. Frey 2004). What is more, *somegood*’s testimony exposed that sometimes the motivations of ayahuasca tourists are indeed linked to a particular religion. I therefore claim that Holman’s statement is erroneous and that certain ayahuasca tourists can indeed be characterized as pilgrims. Besides, while Holman argues that the journey of ayahuasca tourists is not focused on a specific location, I suggest that this is not always the case.

The concept of place is complicated as regards ayahuasca tourism. At first glance it undeniably seems that the geographical location is not a significant factor for the tourists; it is primarily the *experience* that they are searching for, just as Holman argues (see above). Thus it could be argued that the center of the journey is not geographically but rather mentally located. However, as was seen in chapter five, there is in fact one location that stands out above all others as a key site for ayahuasca tourists; Iquitos, Peru. Could this city be perceived as a pilgrimage destination? In Taylor’s view (2011:4), the answer is affirmative, since the fascination with this city “reaches beyond its initial social and cultural boundaries”. He further writes:

In some ways, the very composite nature of the city of Iquitos, the phenomenology of the *ayahuasca* experience, and the intentions, preconceptions, and agencies of the persons involved reflect one another, producing a unique sense of *place*. Such a place is simultaneously physically, socio-culturally, and historically situated, and yet works through, or even transforms, these forces and factors into something that is more than simply their sum (Taylor 2011:5, original emphasis).

Obviously ayahuasca tourism is not a traditional manifestation of pilgrimage, but in the light of the theoretical discussions regarding this multifaceted phenomenon, ayahuasca tourism can, circumstantially, indeed be regarded as a form of pilgrimage, whether one interprets the endpoint of these journeys as geographically or mentally situated. That said it is clear that while the concept of transformation is a key element for many ayahuasca tourists, it is inadequate to label all ayahuasca tourists simply as “pilgrims”. Holman (2010) maintains that ayahuasca tourists should be considered as spiritual tourists, and in my opinion, too, this

category is equally suitable when categorizing ayahuasca tourists. As was shown in chapter two, the function of the experience, along with the outcomes and the intents of the journey, is essential to spiritual tourists. All these aspects are linked not only to individuality, but also to some sort of transformation of the self. This is exactly what we see in the three testimonies presented earlier. Themes of self-betterment, self-realization and purpose in life, i.e. common leitmotifs in spiritual tourism, are noticeably revealed in the accounts of *NeverEndingEpiphany*, *somegood* and *phantasmagoria*. However, this does not automatically mean that all ayahuasca tourists should be tagged as spiritual tourists either. Not everyone experiences (or even search for) such radical transformations as in the three accounts that were presented earlier. To be sure, some ayahuasca tourists openly stress that they do not experience anything at all. For example, *rtype* writes on the Ayahuasca Forums about his experiences with a curandero called Percy:

After taking the deep red liquid in 2 gulps I sat down on the side of the bed and waited with my bucket below me but no nausea came. When I mentioned it to the guide (after noticing he was not sick either), he explained it was because they were used to it, though this still did not explain why it was yet to affect me. This confusion only lead to doubt, and increased even further when the guide seemed to act out the guise of someone drunk who was " seeing things " while Percy sat there largely amused or humming songs. Perhaps encouraged by Percys amusement the guide continued in this routine, throwing in the odd moan while he described the indescribable or just lying on his back until eventually it was hard to tell if he was asleep. By around the 3 hour mark the dawning realisation (sic) that my whole experince (sic) had been waste of time became complete and I simply withdrew to my room to reflect on events. When morning came the next day , they again professed their amazement that nothing had happened , other than some some (sic) noises I had heard outside my room , which they claimed concided (sic) with " something supernatural " they had happened to see last night - when i wasnt (sic) there. I took their word for it , because I had no choice and decided to return later that day to Iquitos , and if possible Lima, After meeting them one final time and handing them the cash , including the additonal (sic) bonus money Percy requested for his " coin collection "I bid my farewell and took the next flight back to Lima. This was, on reflection, my one and probably only chance I would of had to ever try Aya, it would take a lot now - even if i was physically possible for me to ever convince myself it was worth trying again.<sup>19</sup>

Recognizing the presence of such bland experiences, it appears that the interpretation of ayahuasca tourism simply as a transformation journey is not functioning due to the diversity of protagonists' experiences. I believe, however, that this is not merely the case as regards

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<sup>19</sup> Posted on March 5, 2011 under the title 'Percy Garcia: Fake Shaman?'. Retrieved on January 9, 2013 (available in: <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=24574>).

ayahuasca tourism, but that the very same problem is to be found in all phenomena labeled as “pilgrimages”. In my opinion, it is somewhat simplistic to argue that *all* pilgrims were distinguishable merely by their transformative experiences. Certainly the transformation is a key feature found among many pilgrims as well as among numerous ayahuasca tourists, but this does not automatically mean that travelers, who do not experience any kind of transformation, should not be perceived as pilgrims.

Equally, I argue that designating all ayahuasca tourists as “spiritual tourists” has its problems. For some individuals, the label “pilgrim” may in fact be more appropriate than that of “tourist”. What is more, these two categories should not be seen as exclusive of each other. I argue that in respect of many ayahuasca tourists, both “pilgrim” and “spiritual tourism” are equally fitting terms. Drawing from Morinis (1992:9), I maintain that ayahuasca tourism is too wide-ranging in content to be examined as if there were only one, consistent and shared noticeable aspect. Laying emphasis solely on the transformative experiences within ayahuasca tourism evidently is inadequate. In order to better comprehend the phenomenon and its relatedness to travel in general, it is in my opinion necessary to analyze the motivations of ayahuasca tourists in depth.

### 6.3 The motivations: ayahuasca tourism as a healing journey?

As was discussed in chapter five, not all ayahuasca tourists are alike, and while some purposefully travel to South America only to partake in an ayahuasca ceremony, others find out about it during their stay and decide to drink the brew out of mere curiosity. Still, there seems to be a striking similarity as regards the motivations of ayahuasca tourists, with transformation and healing being the two most prominently reported inspirations. While scholars typically make a distinction between these two themes, I suggest that the subjects of healing and transformation are in fact closely related. This is especially the case as regards spiritual or emotional healing, which in my opinion is often, if not always, associated with personal transformation. As Winkelman and Dubisch (2005:xix) stress, healing consists of a passage from illness to health, and can therefore be equated with transformation. For instance, in the three testimonies recounted in the previous section, all informants described some sort of spiritual and/or emotional healing in conjunction with the transformational experiences they encountered. Whereas the foregoing paragraph focused on the experiential

and transformational features of ayahuasca tourists, here it is my intention to scrutinize the motivations of ayahuasca tourists and especially examine the concept of healing as a key theme in ayahuasca tourism.

Whilst the accounts presented earlier in this chapter have first and foremost underscored what one might call spiritual or emotional healing, there are also many ayahuasca tourists who are in quest for a cure for purely physical conditions. Below is a case reported by the user *CarlosTanner* on Ayahuasca Forums, a testimony which is, in my view, by no means matchless in the midst of the numerous accounts given by ayahuasca tourists.

From spring 2000 to spring 2003 I developed a strange habit of throwing up every morning. No matter what I ate, even if I ate nothing the day before, I threw up in the morning. At first I tried to manage it with diet but it was clear that my diet had no effect. I went to a doctor who did tests and came up with the diagnosis that I had a cyst in my sinuses that was leaking into my stomach when I slept. I took the test results to another doctor who told me that I did not have a cyst, but did have an ulcer. I then went to a third doctor who said I did not have a cyst, nor an ulcer, but had acid reflux. All three doctors had a prescription medicine that they thought I should take for the rest of my life. It seemed to me like none of them really knew what they were talking about, and I certainly didn't like the idea of taking pharmaceuticals for the rest of my life. I wondered why I couldn't be healed. I started checking out alternative medicines online. I bought various natural remedies and had success, but only while I was taking them, and they were not cheap. It was just a natural path with the same result, having to take the medicine for the rest of my life. For three years I dealt with this problem and eventually got used to it. I would just wake up and start my day by vomiting, then I'd go to work like a normal person. I noticed that it was worse if I drank alcohol, but that wasn't very surprising. I did keep looking on the internet though, and had come to the conclusion that ayahuasca would work if I could find a curandero or travel down to Peru. In June of 2003 I travelled to Peru, going to Pucallpa by bus and then Iquitos by boat. In Iquitos, I met don Juan and drank ayahuasca with him five times. My experiences in the first three ceremonies completely changed my life. My belief in spirits had turned rock solid, having seen them, felt them touching me, and having communicated with them. I knew that I would be healed in the fourth ceremony. I had learned so much already that I knew that I would be able to heal myself. That's exactly what I did. In the fourth ceremony I left my body and my spirit entered into my stomach to fix the problem. After the ceremony, I never had the symptoms again. I was healed.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Posted on Ayahuasca Forums on May 30, 2011, retrieved on January 9, 2013. Available in: <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=30&t=25214>.

This testimony bears a resemblance to numerous journeys undertaken by pilgrims both past and present. As remarked by Winkelman and Dubisch (2005:xxvi), it is by no means uncommon that pilgrims try to find cures for detailed bodily ailments, irrespective of whether these are seen as curable by the biomedical system. Given that many ayahuasca tourists disapprove of western biomedicine, *CarlosTanner*'s account is rather typical as it reveals mistrust in western medical doctors. What is more, the testimony also exposes the active role of the protagonist, as it is stressed that it is namely *CarlosTanner* himself who heals his illness. As was shown in chapter five, this is a common perception among ayahuasca tourists and it differs radically from the local's comprehension of illness and healing. However, this contradictory viewpoint, represented by *CarlosTanner* and several other ayahuasca tourists, finds parallels in contemporary pilgrimages. According to Winkelman and Dubisch (2005:xxiii), the function of pilgrimage is to serve "as an act of empowerment, an active engagement in the creative aspects of self-expression that provides healing". This theme of empowerment is clearly visible also in the account above.

However, it is not only many pilgrimages which look a lot like *CarlosTanner*'s story. Spiritual tourism is, too, closely associated with healing. Recalling the words of Norman (2011:199), there is in fact a desire for spiritual tourism to become healing and growth oriented. This is largely due to the emphasis put on the individual. Norman (ibid. 206) further notes that "spiritual tourism indicates a level of individual spirituality that operates outside institutional forms, favouring the individual. It also indicates that travel can be, and is, used as a part of individual spiritual projects, and that these projects centre on well-being, happiness and a sense of purpose or meaning in life". In view of this statement, *CarlosTanner*'s journey seems indeed to be a case in point of an individual spiritual project.

In actual fact, it seems that the motivations expressed by ayahuasca tourists on the whole should be perceived as individual spiritual projects. Whether these motivations revolve around healing, transformation, self-exploration, spiritual growth or pure hedonism (see pp. 54–57), they seem permanently to be linked to endeavors of individual spirituality. The self is truly in the center of ayahuasca tourists' drives. In Norman's view (2011:107), spiritual tourists regularly comprehend the sacred center of their journey as the self. For that reason, I argue that the motivations uttered by ayahuasca tourists suggest that "spiritual tourism" is rightly a well-suited category for the definition of these individuals. This standpoint is also represented by Holman (2010a:9), who sees precisely the motivations of tourists as the distinguishing feature in spiritual tourism (and thus in ayahuasca tourism): "[I]t is this

motivational, experiential aspect, combined with a self-described lack of affiliation with any organized religion, which differentiates the spiritual tourist from either the religious tourist or the modern pilgrim". Her statement generally holds true in the case of religious tourism, since it is true that ayahuasca tourists are not often motivated by explicitly religious reasons. However, this notion does not remove the fact that the motivations of ayahuasca tourists are often identical to those of pilgrims. As has been stressed earlier, pilgrimages need not be motivated by religion, as is the case with religious tourism.

Above and beyond, the motivations of pilgrims in general can moreover be realized as being linked to individual projects, just as in spiritual tourism. Indeed, as Winkelman and Dubisch (2005:xxvii) note, in the modern western world, the motivation of pilgrimage has progressively turn into a quest for psychic and cultural healing, as well as for self-fulfillment and spiritual identity. As a result, it appears that the motivations of ayahuasca tourists are indistinguishable not only from those of spiritual tourism, but also from those of pilgrimage. A concrete illustration of this can be found for instance in that ayahuasca tourism, pilgrimage and spiritual tourism have all been compared to psychotherapy. Consequently, it is fair to say that, with regard to the motivations of ayahuasca tourists, both pilgrimage and spiritual tourism are proper terms to be used for ayahuasca tourism.

## 6.4 Redefining ayahuasca tourism

In this chapter, I have looked at various aspects of ayahuasca tourism in order to observe how this phenomenon is related to the wider spectrum of travel. The emphasis has been especially on the motivations, experiences and the outcomes of ayahuasca tourists. In addition, Turner's well-known theory of pilgrimage as a passage rite has also been tested pertaining to ayahuasca tourism. What these different viewpoints have revealed is that there seems essentially not to be any aspects within ayahuasca tourism that would explicitly categorize the ayahuasca tourists rigorously as pilgrims or tourists. On the contrary, the examination of various features of ayahuasca tourism has given the impression that what we are dealing with is a phenomenon which in fact can best be understood as a combination of pilgrimage and tourism. This echoes the prevailing standpoint represented by contemporary scholars of pilgrimage and tourism.



Using the “convergence” position, as termed by Cohen (1992a), appears to be the most astute way of comprehending ayahuasca tourism. What this means in practice is that, instead of trying to separate tourists from pilgrims, it is more appropriate to perceive them as belonging to the same phenomenon. As was stated in chapter two, the motivations, experiences and activities as well as the impacts of tourists and pilgrims are often indistinguishable from each other. Moreover, both forms of travel are frequently driven by a search for authenticity, and if pilgrimage and tourism perhaps once were discernable by the direction of the journey, this is at least not the case in the present world. This chapter has evidenced that these notions are not only theoretical assumptions, but are truly coming to life in the case of ayahuasca tourism. What we are seeing is thus a tangible phenomenon wherein the lines between pilgrimage and tourism are highly blurred.

This is not to say that all westerners seeking for ayahuasca were similar, however. While the Turners (1978:20) famously stated that “a tourist is half a pilgrim if a pilgrim is half a tourist”, this does not, though, mean that every tourist would be a pilgrim, nor that every pilgrim would be a tourist (Hovi 2010:212). As Taylor (2011:1) stresses, ayahuasca tourists “range from sincere pilgrim to hedonistic tourist”, and this statement certainly manages to encapsulate the ambivalent nature of ayahuasca tourists. Whilst pilgrims and tourists often are indistinguishable from each other, there is, however, in my opinion, no reason to reject the use of the terms “pilgrim” and “tourist”. Instead, drawing from Taylor, I argue that both of these terms are suitable when referring to ayahuasca seekers. More exactly, I argue that it is specifically the term “spiritual tourism” which should be used for ayahuasca tourism along with “pilgrimage”. Religious tourism, on the contrary, has appeared not to be a suitable term because of its connectedness to institutionalized religion, as was supposed at the outset.

However, following Norman (2011:97–99), I argue that in order to be comprehensive and satisfactory, any study which deals with travelers also has to take the protagonists’ perceptions into consideration. Unfortunately, no such studies in which the travelers would have self-identified themselves have been conducted in relation to ayahuasca tourism. Still, numerous sporadic accounts in the previous literature on the subject suggest that “tourism” is not a favored term among numerous ayahuasca tourists. Holman (2010a:179), for example, recounts the utterances of two Americans who contested the term “tourism” because of its thought relatedness to a passive activity (as opposed to the participation in an ayahuasca ceremony) and the “pejorative” connotation of the term. In a similar manner, the user *shamanCarlos* writes on Ayahuasca Forums:

I would like to address the comments about ayahuasca tourism. As you can see, those of us involved with what I think you are referring to do not agree with the use of that term. I personally have never liked tourists, and even when I am one, I prefer to be called a traveller. What I think is actually the most accurate term when talking about ayahuasca is a pilgrim. For people who come to drink ayahuasca are not tourists by any means, and they are more focused than (sic) travellers. Pilgrims have a specific journey in mind to reach a sacred space that will allow them to release their negativity, purge their bad feelings, heal their afflictions and return home the person they know themselves to be. I believe that the Amazon Rainforest has become a sort of Mecca for those called to heal by the plant teachers, and we are merely offering shelter during their stay, and guidance on the path, for the journey does not end here in the rainforest, but continues on into other dimensions, until we each find our own personal destination within.<sup>21</sup>

I maintain that the thoughts recounted by *shamanCarlos* are shared by many ayahuasca tourists. Not everyone, however, condemns the use of the term “tourist”. A thought-provoking thread is found elsewhere on Ayahuasca Forums, where a newcomer asks advice in his/her search for “a more authentic experience than a tourist engineered session”<sup>22</sup>. To this post, a user named *carpedmt* replies:

Ah, the elusive "authentic" experience! In my limited experience, I would say the tourist engineered sessions would be according to your ideas to authentic...and you ARE a tourist, so I wouldn't kid yourself that you are anything else over there wherever you go! 😊 At the end of the day, there is a man or woman who has prepared an ayahuasca brew and will provide a physical and psychic space for you to do that in...the more inauthentic looking and seeming situations and people may be the right one's for you... [...] People who are used to dealing with tourists will know how to deal with tourists such as yourself better, and give them the kind of experience (reflections) they are looking for!<sup>23</sup>

Thus, it seems that there are various attitudes among the ayahuasca tourists about the terms that should be used of them. In my opinion, this observation acts as a further legitimization for the use of both the terms “pilgrim” and (spiritual) “tourist” when referring to westerners who travel to South America and participate in ayahuasca ceremonies. As Taylor (2011:5) puts it, “studies are beginning to show that while the pejorative sense of ‘tourist’ is potentially

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<sup>21</sup> Posted on December 15, 2007 on Ayahuasca Forums under the title ‘Turning Tourists into Pilgrims’. Retrieved on January 9, 2013. Available in:

<http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=16164&start=60>.

<sup>22</sup> Posted by the username *Dr Gonzo* on April 26, 2006. Retrieved on January 13, 2013. Available in:

<http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=10626>.

<sup>23</sup> Posted on April 27, 2006. Available in: <http://forums.ayahuasca.com/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=10626>. Retrieved on January 13, 2013.

applicable to some, the idea of ‘pilgrim’ may be more useful in understanding the phenomenon under investigation when speaking of Westerners making their way to a place abroad, especially as they go in search for healing and transformation”. Equally, Fotiou (2010:302–303) maintains that ayahuasca tourism can be likened with pilgrimage due to the very same reason; both phenomena are distinguished by healing and personal transformation.

As a result, it seems to me that ayahuasca tourism can indeed be realized as pilgrimage and ayahuasca tourists can likewise be called pilgrims. Simultaneously it is evident that ayahuasca tourism is also a concrete manifestation of spiritual tourism (see Holman 2010a:36). There is no general rule of when to apply these two terms. Selecting the most appropriate designation is always dependent on the specific case and it is the task of every scholar of ayahuasca tourism to make the decision regarding the best-fit terminology in his or her own terms. And yet, as this chapter has shown, within ayahuasca tourism there is often a situation in which the categories of pilgrimage and spiritual tourism overlap to the point where it is impossible to differentiate these two appellations. This is by no means exceptional; rather, as was seen in chapter two, a widely preferred standpoint among modern scholars is one which tries neither to differentiate nor to dedifferentiate the concepts of pilgrimage and tourism (Norman 2011:95).

As stated previously, many perceive pilgrimage and tourism as altered manifestations on a wider spectrum of travel. If the opposite end points of this continuum are presented by the sacred pilgrim and the secular tourist respectively, as in Smith’s (1992) model (see Pavivic et al. 2007:54), I believe that ayahuasca tourists are to be found throughout this range, with the majority of the tourists probably situated around the middle. However, whilst the central area in Smith’s interpretation is represented by “religious” or “knowledge-based tourism” (Pavivic et al. 2007:54), I do not classify ayahuasca tourists in terms of these categories. Instead, along the lines of Owen (2006:21), I suggest that “spiritual tourism” is equally found in the middle of the continuum, notwithstanding religious tourism.

A somewhat similar model on the relationship between various forms of travel is offered by Norman (2011:200), who identifies pilgrimage, religious tourism and spiritual tourism as largely overlapping categories within the broader field of tourism. In his view, these manifestations of tourism are intersecting and a traveler may at the same time possess the role of all three forms of travelers. This model does not, however, fully fit in with reference to ayahuasca tourism, since the group of religious tourists is in the latter case absent. Still, I find

Norman's model useful by reason of its recognition of the overlapping nature of pilgrimage and spiritual tourism. Ayahuasca tourists are to be found within these two appearances of travelers, but it is often impossible and even pointless to make a distinction between the two. Ayahuasca tourism is thus a phenomenon which is most truthfully realized as an amalgamation of pilgrimage and spiritual tourism. It consists of pilgrims and spiritual tourists, but also of travelers which are best understood as fluctuating fusions of the two. Taylor (2011:13) proposes the term "seeker" as a substitute for the labels of "tourist" and/or "pilgrim", and whilst it may give the impression of vagueness, I perceive it as a proper term, though not necessarily to be used as a substitute but rather in conjunction with the terms "pilgrim" and "spiritual tourist".

As a final point, it is worth observing what the study of ayahuasca tourism reveals about contemporary ways of travel. While some may argue that ayahuasca tourism is an unconventional phenomenon, I argue that it is by no means matchless in the modern world. In fact, there exist several occurrences which bear a close resemblance to ayahuasca tourism. For instance, numerous people travel to West Africa in order to partake in ibogaine ceremonies, and in Mexico, travelers participate in ceremonies where *psilocybin* mushrooms and peyote cacti are consumed (Persad 2010:48). Moreover, various manifestations of contemporary travel, although lacking the use of entheogens, can certainly be compared with ayahuasca tourism, especially as regards the motivations, expectations, experiences and the outcomes among travelers (cf. Arellano 2007; Cremers 2010). In view of such phenomena, the present study does not only shed light on ayahuasca tourism, but equally gives rise to observations about modes of present-day travel.

In my opinion, modern travelers are as a general rule too multifaceted to be simply written off as "pilgrims" or "tourists". Without a doubt there exists journeyers who truly can be defined as such, but it seems that a great number, if not a majority, of travelers are placed somewhere in the middle of these two fixed categories. It is furthermore my impression that as the number of global travelers steadily increases, ever more people are behaving in ways which have elements both from "tourism" and "pilgrimage". It is not hard to think of pilgrims who take in "touristic" aspects in their journeys, nor of tourists who include religious or spiritual undertakings in their trips. However, if these people are to be understood sufficiently, it is not merely their activities that should be looked at. What is needed is a holistic perspective which takes into account all the aspects that are linked to their journeys.

Only in this way, I argue, can studies comprehensively accomplish a truthful picture of modern travelers.

This chapter has shown that ayahuasca tourism is not only a multidimensional phenomenon in which people, falling into the categories of “pilgrims” and “spiritual tourists”, play a part. What is more, and more important, is that ayahuasca tourism is a visible case in point of a phenomenon, where these categories are befalling indistinct and even inseparable. Numerous scholars have suggested that studies regarding pilgrimage and tourism should take distance from paying too much attention to the two concepts. Ayahuasca tourism serves as a perfect example of a manifestation where the classifications of “pilgrimage” and “tourism” overlap. Thus, the examination of ayahuasca tourism puts flesh on the bones of the theoretical discussions and functions as a solid illustration of a real-life case, in which the categories of tourism and pilgrimage become indistinguishable. Along these lines, it becomes apparent that the present trend among scholars to blur the lines between pilgrimage and tourism is indeed accurate and advantageous.

In my opinion, there is yet no reason to discard the designations “pilgrimage” and “tourism” in the study of present-day travel. Instead, I argue, scholars of these phenomena would succeed in taking advantage of the theoretical discussions concerning the two occurrences. In my view, herein lies the key to the most appropriate way to study contemporary travel. Rather than seeing the theories of pilgrimage and tourism as contradictory, they should be understood as complementary. In this analysis, I have utilized theories both from the field of tourism research and of pilgrimage studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of ayahuasca tourism. I argue that a similar approach is fruitful in the scrutiny of any manifestation of present-day travel. If people combine aspects of pilgrimage and tourism in their travel, which they certainly do, then the best way to understand these people is likewise to combine the research areas of these subject matters.

## 7 Conclusions and discussion

If the spectrum of travel is a complex and multilayered subject matter, so too is ayahuasca tourism. As this thesis has revealed, both of these concepts are a long way from clear-cut. While this study has only scratched the surface of the two phenomena, it has nevertheless shown that the juxtaposing of these two research areas is an advantageous starting point for the more complete understanding of ayahuasca tourism. Moreover, this paper has also pointed out that through an analysis of ayahuasca tourism, it is also possible to gain important comprehensions of travel theories on a general level.

On reflection, this study started with an overview of the multifaceted landscape of travel and thus presented the theoretical framework for the study of ayahuasca tourism. It became noticeable that the concepts of pilgrimage, religious tourism and spiritual tourism are not only eclectic but also largely intersecting phenomena within the wider continuum of travel. In chapter three, I examined ayahuasca in detail and paid special attention to how the brew is used in different contexts. In the fourth chapter I examined how ayahuasca has become renowned in the west and there turned out to be several factors that have played a part in this process and that have had a major role in the birth of ayahuasca tourism. Anthropologists, along with popular writers and celebrities have made the brew famous and, during the last years, ayahuasca has also come to be a recurrent occurrence in various forms of popular culture as well as in different media. The fifth chapter scrutinized ayahuasca tourism in depth with an emphasis on the ayahuasca tourists themselves. A key finding which the chapter revealed was that ayahuasca tourism has generated a myriad of consequences, not all of them positive. Moreover, whilst ayahuasca tourists cannot be perceived as a unified group, it became clear that the motivations and benefits among these people are relatively similar. In chapter six I analyzed ayahuasca tourists' reports from Ayahuasca Forums in the light of the theoretical background presented in chapter two. Next, I will take a closer look at the results that were yielded through the examination.

One of the purposes of this study was to establish a suiting terminology that can be applied with regard to ayahuasca tourism. Using the discussions concerning pilgrimage and tourism as a theoretical framework in the study of ayahuasca tourism, a number of outcomes have come forth. First of all, "pilgrimage" has proved to be a largely applicable designation in respect of many ayahuasca tourists. As a result, speaking of "ayahuasca pilgrimage" as well as of "ayahuasca pilgrims" is in my opinion a justified way of comprehending the

phenomenon and several of its actors respectively. However, the truth is not as straightforward as it might seem. As has been stressed, not all ayahuasca tourists can be interpreted as pilgrims. Indeed, another significant implication that this study has brought forth is that hordes of westerners who travel to the Amazon and participate in ayahuasca ceremonies are best understood as “tourists”. Yet again, this is not to say that “ayahuasca tourism” would be the most accurate designation to be used for the phenomenon. While this particular term has come to be the most common appellation for this occurrence, it is in my opinion too vague to capture the essence of this complicated phenomenon.

In my analysis, I have tested the categories of “religious tourism” and “spiritual tourism”, and there has turned out to be a major difference between these two manifestations of tourism. Whereas the former is distinguished by its connectedness to institutionalized religion, the latter is in turn characterized by its focus on individuality. Concerning ayahuasca tourism, this particular difference proved to be of essential importance. As ayahuasca tourists are continuously emphasizing the individual in their outlooks, “spiritual tourism” is certainly a suitable term to be used for this phenomenon. Correspondingly, as the ayahuasca tourists are hardly ever speaking of their journey in terms of institutionalized religion, the category “religious tourism” is not appropriate in this case. Consequently, I argue that instead of speaking of “ayahuasca tourism”, the appellation “spiritual tourism” is more appropriate and well-defined.

How, then, should one make a distinction between the “ayahuasca pilgrims” and the “spiritual tourists” partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies? In my view, this is an issue that needs to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Paying attention to the motivations, activities and outcomes of the travelers is the only way of finding the correct terminology to be used in each study concerning ayahuasca tourism. What is more, the voices of the travelers themselves should also be heard. Indeed, this is a topic which needs to be addressed in future research regarding the phenomenon. Whether charted by means of traditional interviews or using online questionnaires, it would be essential to understand how the actors themselves comprehend their journeys. That said it is still equally important for scholars not to overemphasize the subjective views of the protagonists. As the few outlooks that have been presented in this thesis tentatively suggest, it is likely that there are highly varied attitudes among ayahuasca tourists regarding the terminology that they best self-identify themselves with.

To further complicate matters, perhaps the most significant result that this study has brought forth is that, in reality, it can often be virtually impossible to point out unambiguous differences between “pilgrims” and “tourists”. This is an issue that cannot be neglected, neither by scholars of ayahuasca tourism nor by researchers of contemporary travel. Accordingly, I argue that ayahuasca tourism is best comprehended as a fusion of pilgrimage and spiritual tourism. In addition to the more or less identifiable representatives of these two categories, it also consist of innumerable travelers which cannot solely be distinguished as belonging to neither classification, but who are carrying out their journeys in ways that incorporate elements of both pilgrimage and spiritual tourism. Along the lines of Taylor (2011:13), I maintain that these individuals can be termed as “seekers”, although it is obvious that this term, too, has its difficulties. Another designation that perhaps could also be used for these travelers is that of “pilgrimage tourist” (Griffin 2007) or “pilgrim-tourist” (Badone & Roseman 2004:11), a novel term which, at least ideally, takes equal account of both of these phenomena.

According to Smith (1992; quoted in Badone & Roseman 2004:10), it is essential to improve the categories of pilgrims and tourists instead of grouping them into the wider classification of “travelers”. To some extent, I concur with this opinion; labeling all journeyers simply as “travelers” is definitely not a solution in the long run, not least because of the highly elusive character of this term (see e.g. Clifford 1992 in Badone & Roseman 2004:10). However, attempting to develop the categories of “pilgrimage” and “tourism” in order to better comprehend present-day travelers is, in my opinion, likewise an unfeasible task. In our day, people travel in ways that are no longer grasped simply in terms of these strict categories. And still, in my view, there is a place for such designations. Indeed, as this study has shown, these terms can successfully be used in the study of travel, but only when put side by side. What I have pointed out is that the concepts and theories of tourism and pilgrimage can be seen as complementing each other. When used together, they provide the best framework for the understanding of contemporary travel forms, in which touristic as well as pilgrimage-like aspects often overlap.

In this thesis, ayahuasca tourism has been defined as the phenomenon of westerners traveling to South America and partaking in ayahuasca ceremonies. However, as has been stressed, ayahuasca is also increasingly being used outside this region in various circumstances. At least when shamans travel to the western world in order to conduct ayahuasca ceremonies, these occurrences, too, can be seen as a form of ayahuasca tourism. Still, there are hardly any



scholars who would have observed such phenomena exhaustively (see however Hanegraaff 2011; Ott 2011; Tupper 2011 and Harris & Gurel 2012 for transitory discussions regarding this topic). Therefore, while beyond the scope of this paper, there exists a vast area that unquestionably calls out for research. Indeed, if ayahuasca tourism is to be understood properly, future studies need to address these scarcely observed occurrences in depth. What is more, the “psychonautic” ayahuasca use, a topic which has not attained the scholarly attention it certainly deserves, should equally be taken account of. In fact, this practice may turn out to be far more closely related to ayahuasca tourism than what has been previously assumed.

And yet, further research focusing on the more customary ayahuasca tourists should also be conducted. So far the number of studies examining ayahuasca tourism is quite limited and it appears that most scholars have paid more attention to the local inhabitants and actors within the phenomenon than to the tourists themselves. It goes without saying that whereas the number of studies focusing on ayahuasca tourists increases, so, too, does our understanding of the nature of this interesting group of individuals. Another issue which should equally be addressed by authors is the role of the anthropologist in the study of ayahuasca tourism. While this topic has been only scarcely glanced at in this work, it is a matter which certainly deserves discussion in upcoming studies. As it is indisputable that anthropologists have had a major impact in the birth of ayahuasca tourism and have largely shaped the phenomenon through their works, it would be crucial to examine this issue at length.

In my opinion, ayahuasca tourism is not a unique phenomenon. Whilst it certainly is not the most traditional form of travel, it is nonetheless comparable with other contemporary manifestations of journeying and I also suggest that it stands for a type of travel that will generally increase in the future. Modern travelers are frequently searching for more than just a vacation; they combine various activities in their journeys and want to experience things that differ from their everyday life (see e.g. Norman 2011:3). As a result, religiously, or perhaps more accurately, spiritually associated travel forms are also likely to increase in the future. With no concrete data on the subject, I personally believe that if travel is understood as a linear spectrum, as several authors have suggested, with purely secular tourism on the one end and purely sacred pilgrimage on the other, then these endpoints are increasingly becoming closer to another. Put another way, it is my sensation that as the practice of travel continues to grow in popularity, ever more people are traveling in ways that fall into the

middle of this spectrum. While it certainly is hard to verify the existence of such a trend, it would nevertheless be interesting to develop this idea further in upcoming research.

In conclusion, I maintain that the present study has succeeded in bringing together the research areas of ayahuasca tourism and travel, even though it is obvious that this thesis has examined these extensive phenomena only superficially. Without a shred of doubt, for instance, more studies on the subject of travel could have been used as a basis of analysis. That said, however, I believe that this thesis has taken account of the most relevant standpoints regarding various forms and theories of travel. Equally, whereas the accounts of ayahuasca tourists that have been analyzed in this work surely have not been numerous, I nonetheless argue that I have managed to present thoughts and opinions that can be considered as characteristic for ayahuasca tourists at large. As a result, I maintain that this study has been advantageous and I hope that it can act as a trigger for upcoming studies to integrate the subject matters of ayahuasca tourism and travel.

## *Swedish summary*

### Västerlänningar i jakten på den legendariska drycken: ayahuascaresande i gränslandet mellan turism och pilgrimsfärd

Tusentals resenärer åker årligen till Sydamerika och deltar i ceremonier där en stark enteogen brygd, *ayahuasca*, används. Ceremonierna, som för det mesta utspelas i Peru och Ecuador, ökar ständigt i antal och uppmärksammas i allt högre grad såväl i populärkultur som i olika massmedier. Ayahuascaturism, som företeelsen vanligtvis kallas, har inte vuxit fram i ett tomrum. Antalet internationella resande har ökat enormt under de senaste årtiondena och det faller sig av sig självt att människor reser på mycket varierande sätt och är motiverade av olika skäl.

Trots att ayahuascaturismen tidigare har studerats av forskare, har den ändå inte undersökts grundligt i relation till resande i vidare bemärkelse. Det är i synnerhet med tanke på denna brist i forskningen som jag har skrivit denna avhandling. Den huvudsakliga forskningsfrågan är hur ayahuascaturismen förhåller sig till resande på det hela taget och hur företeelsen skall förstås med avseende på de teoretiska modeller som framförts gällande olika typer av resande. Ett mer specifikt spørsmål gäller terminologin som används om ayahuascaturism. Diverse inkonsekventa benämningar av fenomenet har föreslagits och ett mål med avhandlingen är att presentera ett bättre benämningssätt, som baserar sig på en omsorgsfull analys av fenomenet med hänsyn till teorier om turism och pilgrimsfärder. Syftet med utredningen är i grund och botten dubbelsidigt. Genom studiet av ayahuascaturismen är det min avsikt att också bedöma hur termerna och teorierna kring turism och pilgrimsfärder går att tillämpa i studiet av modernt resande i allmänhet. Jag föreslår att fastän ayahuascaturismen kan ses som en marginell företeelse, är den ändå på flera sätt jämförbar med andra rådande reseformer. Under sådana förhållanden hävdar jag att avhandlingen bidrar inte endast med ny information till forskningen om ayahuascaturismen, utan också är värdefull för studiet av dagens resande i bredare mening.

Avhandlingen bygger på en tudelad metodik. För det första granskar jag kritiskt tidigare studier av ayahuascaturismen och litteratur angående turism och pilgrimsfärder. För det andra analyserar jag inlägg på ett internetforum, *Ayahuasca Forums*, för att undersöka ayahuascaturisters position som nutida resenärer. Jag väljer sådana yttranden som är

karaktäristiska för ayahuascaturister i vid mening. Jag betraktar inte de inlägg som jag väljer att analysera som absoluta sanningar utan snarare uppfattar jag dem som riktgivande exemplifieringar av ayahuascaturisternas tankar i största allmänhet. För att få tag i betecknande uttalanden har jag fördjupat mig i internetforumet och läst oräkneliga diskussioner om och redogörelser för ayahuascaturismen.

I kapitel två presenterar jag den teoretiska bakgrunden till studiet av ayahuascaturism. Jag börjar med en utredning av begreppet pilgrimsfärd och ser på hurdana förklaringsförsök forskare har lanserat för studiet av fenomenet. Det visar sig att det är en teori som i synnerhet har fått stor uppmärksamhet inom forskningen. Det är Victor Turners tes, som går ut på att pilgrimsfärder kan betraktas som övergångsriter. Fastän antagandet ofta har blivit kritiserat, är det ändå påtagligt att det i hög grad har påverkat studiet av pilgrimsfärder. Följaktligen prövar jag denna teori i analysen av ayahuascaturismen. Andra viktiga anmärkningar som jag tar upp här har först och främst att göra med den diffusa karaktären som pilgrimsfärder i allmänhet kännetecknas av. I motsats till vad man kunde tänka sig är pilgrimsfärder inte alltid relaterade till religion och inte heller nödvändigtvis bundna till geografiska platser. Däremot kännetecknas pilgrimsfärden av den individuella upplevelsen som ett central element, och av den stora variationen i hur pilgrimsfärder ter sig som en följd av olika kontexter.

I den andra delen av kapitel två redogör jag för turism som på ett eller annat sätt är anknutet till religion eller andlighet. Jag fokuserar på två sådana indelningsgrupper, närmare bestämt ”religiös turism” och ”andlig turism”. I min avhandling betraktar jag den sociala och institutionella sfären som den avgörande skillnaden mellan dessa två kategorier. Samtidigt som det förra begreppet är nära associerat med institutionaliserad religion, är det senare karaktäriserat av individualitet som dess mest kännetecknande aspekt. Gränserna mellan pilgrimsfärd, religiös turism och andlig turism är diffusa och i den tredje delen av kapitlet koncentrerar jag mig på denna problematik. Forskarna har praktiskt taget delat sig i två skilda läger när det gäller uppfattningen om förhållandet mellan turism och pilgrimsfärd. En del hävdar att dessa företeelser är fundamentalt olika, medan andra betraktar fenomenen som sammanfallande. Den senare ståndpunkten har blivit mer populär bland nutida forskare, som påpekar att intentionerna, handlingarna, förväntningarna och upplevelsena ofta är de samma hos pilgrimer och turister. En allmän föreställning bland moderna forskare är att resenärer på en och samma gång kan te sig som både turister och pilgrimer. Vad som ytterligare fördunklar förhållandet mellan de olika kategorierna av resande är det faktum att

antropologer och etnografer som bedriver forskning många gånger är oskiljbara från turister och pilgrimer.

I det tredje kapitlet beskriver jag drycken ayahuasca, som är det väsentligaste elementet i ayahuascaturismen. Jag börjar med att redogöra för dryckens kemiska sammansättning och diskuterar debatten som förts kring dess ursprung. Jag behandlar effekterna som ayahuasca framkallar och tar sedan ingående upp de olika kontexter i vilka drycken används. Till dessa hör användningen av ayahuasca bland ursprungsbefolkningen, konsumtionen av brygden bland mestizobefolkningen, förbrukningen av ayahuasca inom synkretistiska kyrkor och religiösa grupper, samt det ”psykonautiska” bruket av drycken. Avslutningsvis behandlar jag de risker och faror som är förknippade med användningen av ayahuasca.

I det fjärde kapitlet behandlar jag ingående förhållandet mellan ayahuasca och västvärlden. Jag presenterar en kronologisk överblick av det akademiska studiet kring ayahuasca och undersöker särskilt den antropologiska forskningen om drycken i olika tider. Jag fokuserar mig på 1960- och 1970-talen, eftersom det var under dessa decennier som intresset för ayahuasca väcktes, såväl bland antropologer som bland allmänheten. Den generella miljön som tidsperioden kännetecknades av var en lämplig grogrund för expansionen av ayahuasca och det var flera faktorer som bidrog till det ökande intresset för drycken. Utöver den växande mängden antropologer som beskrev användningen av ayahuasca i uttrycksfulla och ofta även rätt så romantiserande böcker, började det också utges populärkulturella böcker som berättade om brygden. På 1980-talet fortsatte forskningen kring ayahuasca och sedan 1990-talet har drycken fått en synlig roll i olika medier samt inom populärkulturen. Särskilt tillkomsten av internet har haft en enorm betydelse i hur kännedomen om ayahuasca har brett ut sig. Artiklar, tv-program och dokumentärfilmer har likaså spridit ordet om drycken. Uppkomsten av ayahuascaturismen kan följaktligen ses som en konsekvens av den ständigt ökande uppmärksamhet som drycken fått. Jag hävdar att denna utveckling bäst kan förstås som en process som pågått mer eller mindre under hela den tid som ayahuasca varit känd i västvärlden.

Kapitel fem utreder fenomenet ayahuascaturism. Kapitlet inleds med en allmän beskrivning av företeelsen med fokus på omständigheterna och de lokala aktörerna. Jag berör bland annat annonseringen av ayahuascaturismen och uppkomsten av de efterfrågade men också kostnadskrävande härbärgena, som tillhandahåller ayahuascaceremonier för västerlänningar. Därefter presenteras ayahuascaturisterna grundligt. Jag lägger märke till de intentioner som

ayahuascaturisterna rapporterar, och vad de säger sig få ut av ceremonierna. Därpå följer en redogörelse för ledmotivet autenticitet beträffande ayahuascaturismen. De västerländska ayahuascaturisterna har ofta förväntningar och uppfattningar om användningen av ayahuasca som inte överensstämmer med de reella förhållandena. De lokala aktörerna har i sin tur kommit med sina lösningar för att tillfredsställa västerlänningarnas förhoppningar angående de autentiska omständigheter som drycken används i. Som en sista punkt i kapitlet lyfter jag upp de konsekvenser och olägenheter som är förknippade med fenomenet ayahuascaturism.

I kapitel sex analyserar jag ayahuascaturismen i ljuset av de teoretiska modeller som presenterats i det andra kapitlet. Inledningsvis jämför jag fenomenet med Turners teori om pilgrimsfärder som övergångsriter. Det visar sig att ayahuascaturismen vid vissa tillfällen faktiskt kan betraktas som en övergångsrit. De centrala aspekterna i modellen, liminalitet och *communitas*, kan nämligen urskiljas i vissa resor som ayahuascaturisterna gör och därför är det enligt min mening möjligt att uppfatta vissa ayahuascaturisters resor som pilgrimsfärder. Det är ändå samtidigt ett faktum att också begreppet ”andlig turism” kan inbegripa aspekter av liminalitet och *communitas*. Således visar det sig att en tolkning av ayahuascaturismen som enbart en övergångsrit inte är tillfredsställande. Som följande steg studerar jag ayahuascaturismen som en transformativ resa och koncentrerar mig särskilt på de individuella upplevelser och de följder som ayahuascaturisterna rapporterar om i sina internetinlägg. På basis av detta blir det klart att personlig förvandling är ett karaktäristiskt tema i många ayahuascaturisters resor. Det är dock omöjligt att klassificera ayahuascaturisterna enbart utifrån denna utgångspunkt, eftersom individuella upplevelser och transformationer är kännetecknande element både inom pilgrimsfärder och också inom andlig turism. Vad som emellertid blir uppenbart är att ”religiös turism” inte kan användas som en beskrivande kategori för ayahuascaturister. I det tredje avsnittet i kapitel sex tar jag en närmare blick på intentionerna bland ayahuascaturisterna. En central iakttagelse är att idén om helande med hjälp av ayahuasca utgör en väsentlig motivation hos ayahuascaturister. Konceptet helande är i hög grad sammankopplat med individualitet. I själva verket ser det ut som om många ayahuascaturisters resor kan uppfattas som individuella projekt, vare sig dessa projekt är explicit syftade för helande eller någonting annat. Denna iakttagelse kan dock inte tillämpas för att klassificera ayahuascaturisterna, eftersom både andlig turism och pilgrimsfärder kan uppfattas som individuella projekt.

I den sista delen av kapitel sex föreslår jag ett sätt att förstå ayahuascaturismen på. Enligt det kan ayahuascaturisterna inte tydligt klassificeras som antingen pilgrimer eller (andliga)

turister, eftersom dessa kategorier på det hela taget är sammanfallande. I min syntes betyder denna insikt ändå inte att begreppen pilgrimsfärd och turism vore oanvändbara i studiet av ayahuascaturismen. Enligt min mening består fenomenet nämligen både av individer som tjänligast kan kallas pilgrimer, men också av ayahuascaturister, som lämpligast kan förstås som turister, och mer exakt som ”andliga turister”. Som en tredje kategori hävdar jag att fenomenet ytterligare omfattar en mängd individer, som inte entydigt kan kategoriseras som vare sig pilgrimer eller andliga turister, utan som istället skall tolkas som blandningar av de två kategorierna. Sammantaget menar jag att ayahuascaturismen skall förstås som en kombination av turism och pilgrimsfärd i vilken väldigt många olika slags människor tar del i. Resultatet är i överensstämmelse med den moderna forskningen angående turism och pilgrimsfärd och de två fenomenen är ofta överlappande och oåtskiljbara. Jag hävdar att ayahuascaturismen inte är ett unikt fenomen utan ett som tvärtom kan jämföras med flera andra aktuella reseformer. Ayahuascaturismen fungerar således som en konkret illustration av det faktum att nutida former av resande sällan kan uppfattas entydigt som pilgrimsfärder eller turism, utan snarare skall förstås som fusioner av dessa kategorier. För att kunna förstå moderna reseformer tillfredsställande är det nödvändigt att betrakta teorierna gällande turism och pilgrimsfärder som kompletterande.

I det avslutande kapitlet sammanfattar jag de centrala resultaten och ger förslag på framtida forskningsområden. En fråga som i synnerhet bör besvaras i kommande studier är hur ayahuascaturismen ter sig utanför Sydamerika. Under de senaste åren har nämligen schamaner i ökande antal färdats till västvärlden för att hålla ayahuascaceremonier. Fastän denna företeelse inte behandlas i avhandlingen, kan den utan tvivel också betraktas som en form av ayahuascaturism. Ayahuascaturismen, på det sätt som den ter sig i Sydamerika, har heller inte utforskats tillräckligt. Denna avhandling är framförallt ett försök att föra samman forskningsfälten ayahuascaturism och resande. Jag hoppas att den kan fungera som riktningsgivande för framtida studier genom att uppmärksamma dessa fenomen i relation till varandra. På så sätt kan nya förståelser uppstå, inte bara gällande ayahuascaturismen utan också för moderna reseformer på ett allmänt plan.

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