



Singing to the Plants: A Guide to Mestizo Shamanism in the Upper Amazon

Stephan V. Beyer

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In the Upper Amazon, mestizos are the Spanish-speaking descendants of Hispanic colonizers and the indigenous peoples of the jungle. Some mestizos have migrated to Amazon towns and cities, such as Iquitos and Pucallpa; most remain in small villages. They have retained features of a folk Catholicism and traditional Hispanic medicine, and have incorporated much of the religious tradition of the Amazon, especially its healing, sorcery, shamanism, and the use of potent plant hallucinogens, including ayahuasca. The result is a uniquely eclectic shamanist culture that continues to fascinate outsiders with its brilliant visionary art. Ayahuasca shamanism is now part of global culture. Once the terrain of anthropologists, it is now the subject of novels and spiritual memoirs, while ayahuasca shamans perform their healing rituals in Ontario and Wisconsin.

Singing to the Plants sets forth just what this shamanism is about--what happens at an ayahuasca healing ceremony, how the apprentice shaman forms a spiritual relationship with the healing plant spirits, how sorcerers inflict the harm that the shaman heals, and the ways that plants are used in healing, love magic, and sorcery.

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