



Stichting OPEN and MAPS present

– in collaboration with Bia Labate Ph.D., MAPS Hungary and Cognito –

European Ayahuasca Research Symposium

Amsterdam, 17 June 2011

The European Ayahuasca Research Symposium is a multidisciplinary series of lectures that focuses on current research being done in Europe. Experts from various disciplines will present their studies on ayahuasca's effects on health, neural functioning and consciousness.

Ayahuasca is a psychedelic brew made from plants native to the Amazon Basin. Ayahuasca's psychoactive effects are due, in pharmacological terms, to a mixture of beta-carbolines (harmala alkaloids) and dimethyltryptamine (DMT). It is thought that, together with various psychosocial and spiritual factors, these plants allow for the profound phenomenological experiences that users report after drinking ayahuasca. This 'tea' has become increasingly used for religious, therapeutic, shamanic and research purposes in Europe and other parts of the world over the past few decades.

Location: UvA, Oude Manhuispoort 4-6, Amsterdam. Room D0.08

Time: 17:00 – 22:00

Date: June 17th, 2011

Admission: donation

Presenters:

Bia Labate, Ph.D. (BR)

Prof. Dr. Wouter Hanegraaf (NL)

Brian Anderson, MD/MSc cand. (USA)

Petra Bokor, MSc (HUN)

Rama Leclerc, Ph.D. (FR)

Janine Schmid, Ph.D. (DE)

Jörg Daumann, Ph.D. (DE)

For more information: stichtingopen.nl/ears or info@stichtingopen.nl

PROGRAM

17:00 – 17:20 – Introduction by Joost Breeksema, Stichting OPEN

AYAHUASCA, BIOMEDICINE & HEALTH: MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

17:20 – 17:45 - Reflections on scientific research about ayahuasca and health

Bia Labate

In this presentation I will give a general review of the theme "Ayahuasca and Health" from the vantage point of someone who has been both an anthropologist and had empirical experiences in this field for the last fourteen years. I will discuss the principle challenges to scientific studies in this area as well as to policies on the public regulation of ayahuasca consumption. These challenges include: the lack of current scientific knowledge and the accompanying lack of interest on the part of many ayahuasca groups in sharing the knowledge they have beyond their own communities; the stigma of the psychotic break that still lingers around the use of "hallucinogens"; the difficulty of establishing a universal consensus on what should be the ethical standards of consuming these plants; the frontiers and limits between "therapeutic" and "religious" uses of ayahuasca (and their complicated legal implications); the theoretical and political challenges facing researchers dealing with the "darker" aspects of the experience; the limitations of interdisciplinary dialogue -- always promoted but rarely accomplished; the exaggerated analytical emphasis on the visionary element of the experience; the overestimation of the role of the ritual in preventing risks; the misunderstanding that the indigenous use of ayahuasca is always associated with health, among others. I will conclude with a brief presentation of the book *Ayahuasca y Salud*, of which I am a co-editor with José Carlos Bouso, and which will soon be published by Los Libros de La Liebre de Marzo.

17:45 – 18:10 - Pharmacological modulation of attentional processes in the DMT and ketamine model of psychosis

Jörg Daumann

Deficits in attentional functions are counted among the core cognitive symptoms in schizophrenic patients. Pharmacologic challenges with hallucinogens have been used as models for psychosis. In this talk I give an overview of our studies on the pharmacological modulation of DMT and ketamine on different aspects of attentional functions. We investigated prepulse inhibition of the startle reflex (PPI), mismatch negativity (MMN), and visual and auditory alertness as well as spatial orienting of attention combined with fMRI. Data of fifteen healthy subjects were collected in randomized, double-blind, crossover studies. Ketamine increased PPI,

whereas DMT had no significant effects on PPI. Ketamine decreased and DMT tended to decrease startle magnitude. Furthermore, we found blunted MMN after both drugs. However, the reduction in MMN activity was overall more pronounced after ketamine intake, and only ketamine had a significant impact on the frontal source of MMN. Administration of DMT and ketamine led to different cortical activations during performance of both tasks. The ketamine model and the DMT model of psychosis display distinct neurocognitive profiles. These findings are in line with the view of the two classes of hallucinogens modeling different aspects of psychosis.

18:10 – 18:35 – Ayahuasca in psychiatry: From *psiquiatría folklórica* to neuroimaging

Brian Anderson

This presentation analyzes from an anthropological perspective some of the ways that ayahuasca's curative potentials have been portrayed in conventional psychiatry from the 1950s until today. Through considering seldom-cited and difficult-to-access publications and other forms of academic psychiatric productions, it is shown how different cultures within psychiatry have shaped the construction of scientific 'facts' of how ayahuasca can affect and heal the mind. Suggestions are made for how such a historical and cultural analysis of psychiatric discourse can be applied to the development of the contemporary ethnopsychiatric study of ayahuasca.

18:35 – 18:55 - Questions: Bia Labate, Jörg Daumann & Brian Anderson

18:55 – 19:30 - Dinner Break

AYAHUASCA EN ROUTE: NEW GEOGRAPHIES, NEW COSMOLOGIES

19:30 – 19:55 - Ayahuasca and the Study of Religion

Wouter J. Hanegraaff

In this contribution I will look at the ritual use of ayahuasca in contemporary Europe, and the Netherlands in particular, from the perspective of a historian of religions. I will argue that the study of contemporary ayahuasca groups and networks confronts academic researchers with a very specific set of problems that should be (but, so far, have not been) carefully identified and addressed. First, from a *theoretical* point of view, the ritual use of psychoactive substances in general, and the sociology of ayahuasca networks in particular, challenge certain assumptions implicit in current concepts of "religion". This problem is crucial for any scholar of religions

involved in legal disputes about the relation between religious liberty and drugs legislation. Second, from a *historical* point of view, there is a serious deficit of knowledge concerning the role of “altered states of consciousness” (itself a contested term) in the history of religion in Europe, and of pharmacologically-induced altered states more in particular. This makes it very difficult for historians of religions to properly contextualize contemporary ayahuasca groups and networks currently active in various European countries. Third, from a *methodological* point of view, there are certain problems specific to the study of such groups and networks, and which pose a serious challenge to “accepted practice” in the academic study of religion. In particular, the very nature of this type of religious practice challenges the way scholars of religion normally handle the well-known problematics of insider/outsider and objective/subjective knowledge. In my contribution I will address these three problem areas at the example of several different ayahuasca groups and networks that are currently active in the Netherlands. Whereas there now exists a sizeable body of published research on the Santo Daime churches, there is virtually no reliable information about the many informal ayahuasca networks that have developed in Europe in recent years, and the phenomenon as a whole is virtually uncharted territory in the study of religions. Not least in view of the legal tension between religious liberty and European drug policies, this situation needs to be improved.

19:55 – 20:20 - The bridge of knowledge: Special links between Shipibo curanderismo (Peruvian Amazon) and Westerner practices with ayahuasca

Rama Leclerc

The Shipibo-Konibo people from the Peruvian Amazon are part of the Pano ethnolinguistic family. Distributed within more than one hundred villages, the inhabitants live along the Ucayali River and its tributaries, on both sides of Pucallpa city. The Shipibo women are recognized for their handicrafts (especially pottery and textiles) decorated with magnificent geometrical drawings. The curandero sees these same patterns in his visions during the night-sessions of ayahuasca. The curandero is a practitioner, a shaman who thanks to his initiatory apprenticeship, has developed the capacity to make the link between the human beings in the physical world and the spirits in the world above. These spirits are endowed with volition and intentionality just like human consciousness. Moreover, they can find embodiment in an animal, plant, mineral or even in a geographical structure. The knowledge of the curandero is based on the incorporation of powerful plants called rao. The strength of these rao is linked to their double nature: a material aspect, the physicality or the body of the plant, juxtaposed to the spiritual aspect, the interiority or the spirit of the plant. After ingestion, these plants pass on some knowledge to the curandero during dreams or visions. He will learn to understand and to use them according to his progress along his initiatory route. After the initiation diet, he can see his recently acquired powers through the ingestion of the ayahuasca decoction.

For several years, and this movement accelerates, a greater number of Westerners visit repeatedly Shipibo curanderos in their small villages. They come from diverse horizons and their reasons are varied: a disease, a need of exoticism, a mystic quest, etc. By studying this growing tendency, we can observe a reappropriation of the speech of the other like a kind of knowledge crossing. Shipibo curanderos get better organized in order to welcome better these people in a more adapted way to their culture; whereas, in Europe, the followers of ayahuasca recreate a small community, developing a kind of subculture which integrates this non-native practice into particular processes of therapies. Making a link between both continents, I am interested to analyze elements absorbed, incorporated and even thrown back in these new syncretic therapy practices as well as the transformation of the Shipibo curanderos' speech. Moreover, I will approach other interesting peculiarities to understand better the functioning of the Shipibo shamanism; such as consubstantiation, the finished conception of the self-contained universe, the notion of niwe (energy), olfactory perception as a particular hermeneutic, etc.

20:20 – 20:35 - Questions: Rama Leclerc & Wouter Hanegraaf

AYAHUASCA & THERAPY IN EUROPE

20:35 – 21:00 - Integration process and possible therapeutic effects of ayahuasca in non-therapeutic setting

Petra Bokor

The presentation starts with an overview of the research on the psychotherapeutic effects of ayahuasca and presents in details an investigation into the integration process of ayahuasca experiences.

Eleven individuals participating in a series of ayahuasca rituals were followed for the period of one year in a study carried out in Hungary. A core theme was identified from each participant's intentions and emerging psychological issues and the changes on such themes were tracked during both the participants' ayahuasca experiences and their day-to-day lives. A methodology aiming to assess therapeutic change was used for the analysis, dividing the therapeutic process into seven phases from problem definition to termination.

By the end of the research almost all participants attained and began to practice a new behaviour pattern to their problems, all of them at varying levels and pace. Participants provided rich subjective reports involving remarkable breakthroughs as well as crises.

Another Hungarian study carried out by Dr. Ede Frecska, aiming to investigate ayahuasca's effects on creativity, will also be touched upon.

21:00 – 21:25 - 'Self'-therapy' with ayahuasca

Janine Schmid

The often used term 'healing ritual' for nearly all kinds of ayahuasca rituals (Santo Daime rituals, neo-shamanistic rituals and even do-it-yourself-rituals) attracts people searching for an alternative method for treatment. In this study, fifteen people with first-hand experience with ayahuasca 'therapy' for a special disease (like chronic pain, cancer or tumours, asthma or allergic reaction to food, depression, alcohol abuse, Hepatis C, tinnitus, glaucoma) were interviewed twice about their ideas and beliefs on ayahuasca and healing, and about their subjective theories on the etiology of disease and change. In most cases people were convinced their illness was influenced in a positive way by ayahuasca. 'Healing' is not limited to the cure of physical and mental diseases but extends to a lot of psychological and even spiritual problems. Often 'self transformation' and 'self healing' went hand-in-hand.

Although ayahuasca was an important help for all people coping with illness and self-actualization, it is clearly not a 'universal remedy' which provides healing for free - it involves a lot of personal work to succeed. Therefore there must be a critical discussion of some healing concepts and their implications. An idea commonly found – not only in the field of ayahuasca users - was that so-called 'positive and negative thinking' can influence the course of a disease. Likewise, ancient wisdom ("millennial indigenous knowledge") was taken for granted and often used for legitimation and to deny negative effects or difficulties. These and other problematic issues will be questioned and discussed.

21:25 – 21:40 - Questions: Petra Bokor & Janine Schmid

21:40 – 21:45 - Closing

21:45 – 22:00 - Exodus

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES

Brian Anderson obtained his BA in Biochemistry with a minor in Latin American and Latino Studies from the University of Pennsylvania, USA in 2007. Currently, he is an MD Candidate at the Stanford University School of Medicine, USA and an MSc Candidate at the BIOS Centre at the London School of Economics, UK. His anthropological fieldwork experience includes working with the undocumented Mexican immigrant population in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and with the União do Vegetal in Bahia, Brazil. He is a researcher with the Nucleus for Interdisciplinary Studies of Psychoactives (NEIP). See: http://med.stanford.edu/profiles/Brian_Anderson/

Petra Bokor obtained an MSc in Consciousness and Transpersonal Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University, UK in 2010. She presently works as a private therapist in Budapest, Hungary.

Petra conducted a study in 2009-2010 to investigate the integration process and the possible therapeutic effects of a group of Hungarians participating at a series of ayahuasca rituals. The results of the study are presently being summarized. She is a member of the presidency of the Hungarian Multidisciplinary Society for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS Hungary), aiming to facilitate research and carry out education in the area of psychedelic studies. Devoted to the field of altered states of consciousness and the therapeutic use of psychedelic substances, she intends to carry on her research in a PhD.

Jörg Daumann is Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University of Cologne, Germany (<http://neurologie-psychiatrie.uk-koeln.de/psychiatrie-und-psychotherapie/forschung/arbeitsgruppen/experimentelle-psychiatrie>). He obtained his Diploma in Psychology (University of Bonn, Germany) in 1998, and his Ph.D. in Psychology (University of Bielefeld, Germany) in 2002. From 2003 to 2006 he was Senior Scientist at the Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University of Cologne, Germany. He has several peer-review published articles on the neuropsychopharmacology of DMT, ketamine, Ecstasy/MDMA, and Cannabis.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff is Professor of History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, President of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE; see www.esswe.org), and a member of the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is the author of *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden 1996/ Albany 1998); *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500): The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents* (Tempe 2005; with Ruud M. Bouthoorn); *Swedenborg, Oetinger, Kant: Three Perspectives on the Secrets of Heaven* (West Chester 2007), and numerous articles in academic journals and collective volumes. His forthcoming monograph *Esotericism and the Academy* will appear with Cambridge University Press in 2012.

Beatriz Caiuby Labate has a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), Campinas, Brazil. Her main areas of interest are the study of psychoactive substances, drug policies, shamanism, ritual, and religion. Currently she is a Research Associate at the Institute of Medical Psychology, Heidelberg University and a member of the Collaborative Research Center (SFB 619) "Ritual Dynamics - Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective." She is also researcher with the Nucleus for Interdisciplinary Studies of Psychoactives (NEIP) and editor of its site (<http://www.neip.info>). She is author, co-author and co-editor of seven books, two with English translations, and one journal special edition. Her book *A Reinvenção do Uso da Ayahuasca nos Centros Urbanos* (Mercado de Letras, 2004) received the prize for Best Master's Thesis in Social Sciences from the National Association for Graduate Studies in Social Science (ANPOCS) in 2000. For more information, see: <http://bialabate.net>

Rama Leclerc has a Ph.D. in social and cultural anthropology from Paris 10 University. She pursued her research on the symbolic use of plants in the social construction in the Shipibo-Konibo people from the Peruvian Amazon. She also participated in development projects for the setting of bilingual education in indigenous schools. Today, as an independent researcher living in Barcelona, she dedicates her investigation to Western society's new forms of integration of and adaptation to native concepts of the body, spirit and environment.

Janine Tatjana Schmid was born in Germany in 1975. She holds a Ph.D. in Medical Psychology (University of Heidelberg, SFB 619, C8). Her doctoral thesis is entitled "Subjective Theories of Self Treatment with the Psychoactive Substance Ayahuasca." A summary has been published as "Subjective Theories about (Self-)Treatment with Ayahuasca in the journal *Anthropology of Consciousness* (2010). She works as a psychologist in a rehabilitation hospital supporting patients with chronic pain, musculoskeletal disorders, and cancer, yet her special interests are still in shamanism and psychotherapeutic methods as well as in the psychology of consciousness.

SPONSORS

Stichting OPEN (OPEN Foundation)

www.stichtingopen.nl/en/home

The OPEN Foundation is an interdisciplinary initiative aimed at achieving the following goals:

- * To make psychedelics an accessible subject for both scientists and students who want to do research.
- * The acknowledgement of psychedelics as a legitimate academic subject within Dutch academia.
- * To increase awareness of the (psycho-) therapeutic applications of psychedelics.
- * To stimulate media and politics to adopt an objective and evidence-based attitude towards psychedelics.

Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)

www.maps.org

MAPS' mission is to:

- 1) To treat conditions for which conventional medicines provide limited relief—such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), pain, drug dependence, anxiety and depression associated with end-of-life issues—by developing psychedelics and marijuana into prescription medicines;

- 2) To treat many thousands of people by building a network of clinics where treatments can be provided;
- 3) To educate the public honestly about the risks and benefits of psychedelics and marijuana.

Bia Labate

www.biabalabe.net

Cognito

The COGnITO association is an active student association that was founded by Brain and Cognitive Sciences students in 2006. Their aim is to unite students across fields and academic years in order to promote exchange of knowledge, interdisciplinary discussion and networking about cognition matters. They organize parties and group activities, find conferences to attend, and communicate with other universities to keep up to date with current research being conducted by peers.

SUPPORTED BY

Núcleo de Estudos Interdisciplinares sobre Psicoativos (NEIP)

www.neip.info

NEIP - Interdisciplinary Group for Psychoactive Studies - was founded in 2001 in Brazil. It is a group that unites scholars from various institutions in Brazil and abroad to promote reflection on the topic of psychoactive substances. Member researchers investigate diverse aspects of psychoactives, such as their religious use (ayahuasca, iboga, San Pedro and coca leaves), and secular or non-religious uses of both legal substances (alcohol, tobacco, coffee, etc.) and illegal substances (marijuana, cocaine, crack, ecstasy, etc.), as well as their therapeutic use. Its members also investigate harm reduction policies, narco-trafficking, and medical and media discourses on psychoactives. NEIP seeks to participate in public debate about drug policy, which is normally dominated by ill-informed and prejudiced perspectives, and insists that the Human Sciences have an important role to play in broadening and deepening this debate. In as far as NEIP understands contemporary international prohibitionist policy to stifle debate and reflection, it adopts an anti-prohibitionist political and ethical stance. It thus promotes simultaneously research activity, intellectual exchange, and political intervention.