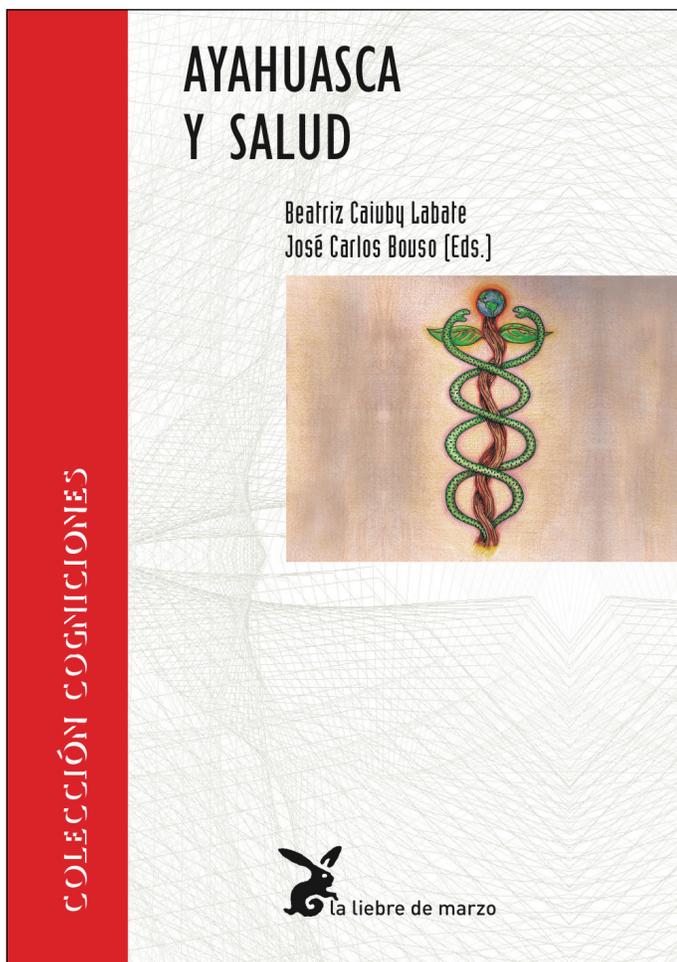


AYAHUASCA Y SALUD (AYAHUASCA AND HEALTH)

BEATRIZ CAIUBY LABATE & JOSÉ CARLOS BOUSO (EDS.)

BARCELONA: LOS LIBROS DE LA LIEBRE DE MARZO, 2013



Summary: This collection is composed of 22 articles, an introduction and a foreword. It brings together perspectives from the social and biomedical sciences as well as personal accounts of ayahuasca shamans and practitioners in order to address diverse indigenous, mestizo and Western concepts of health, illness and curing related to the use of ayahuasca. Through a comparative analysis of the different contexts in which this psychoactive substance is consumed, this work investigates the boundaries between shamanism, religion and medicine, while examining hybridization across the diverse knowledge-bases of ayahuasca practices. The diversity of cultural and regional situations is reflected in, for example, different traditions of governmental regulation of ayahuasca consumption: While Brazil permits religious (but not medicinal use) of ayahuasca, Peru has recently enshrined indigenous medical

traditions surrounding ayahuasca as part of its national heritage. This work also presents some of the latest biomedical findings concerning the medical and therapeutic possibilities of ayahuasca. Numerous contributions highlight both agreements and disagreements between the “traditional” and the biomedical approach to health and health risks.

This is the epitome of a 21st century book in that it ranges in its focus from the most advanced modern, scientific clinical research to the most sophisticated of anthropological discourse, to the profoundly authentic voice of indigenous healers. The editors and contributors have created a magnificent tour de force with a depth, diversity of perspective, and clarity of insight that deserves a place of honor and respect in the library of everyone interested in either religion, science, anthropology, ayahuasca, psychotherapy and drug abuse treatment. This masterpiece is a pleasure to be savored.

Rick Doblin, Ph.D., MAPS President, Santa Cruz, USA.

Gathering together the writings of different authors from a number of countries who approach the subject of the uses of ayahuasca to improve health from different disciplines, from biochemistry to anthropology, is the great merit of this pioneering anthology which deals with both the effects of the use ayahuasca on the health of those who consume it and the meanings which it assumes as the most important remedy in Pan-Amerindian medicine.

Henrique S. Carneiro, PhD, History Department, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil.

Ayahuasca use in the context of health – not only mental but also physical, sociological, and ecological – brings us to deep and dangerous waters, where all parties face threats to the epistemological basis of their own sciences, religions or political activism. What is ayahuasca, in the end: Hallucinogenic drug? Medicinal plant? Religious sacrament? Portal for inter-dimensional communication? Or an ambiguous toxic plant that is fundamentally unknowable? Read this book – a dialogue that is as much interdisciplinary as intercultural and inter-epistemological among diverse health professionals, indigenous shamans, anthropologists, practitioners, and activists – and find out.

Glenn H. Shepard Jr., PhD, Curator of Ethnology, Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi, Belém do Pará, Brazil.

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