

# The Internationalization of Ayahuasca

Beatriz Caiuby Labate and Henrik Jungaberle (eds.)

**Summary:** *The Internationalization of Ayahuasca* is composed of 27 articles (almost 500 pages) and is divided in three parts: “Ayahuasca in South America and the world”, “About medical, psychological and pharmacological Issues: is the use of ayahuasca safe?” and “The expansion of the use of Ayahuasca and the establishment of a global debate on ethics and legalization”. The book brings together the work of scholars from different countries and academic disciplines to offer a comprehensive view of the globalization of this Amazonian brew. It presents a rich array of reflections on the complex implications of this expansion, ranging from health, spiritual and human rights impacts on individuals, to legal and policy impacts on governments. As ayahuasca drinking becomes an increasingly established practice beyond the Amazon in the early 21st century, Labate and Jungaberle have put together a collection that is an unprecedented contribution to a growing field of research. It is a must-read for people interested in the present and future of ayahuasca, as well as in spirituality, ethnobotany, social science theory, contemporary religious and ritual studies, therapeutic potentials of psychedelics, and international drug policy. (Kenneth W. Tupper, Ph.D.)

## Editor’s biography:

**Beatriz Caiuby Labate** has a PhD 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 2001 (<http://bialabate.net>)

**Henrik Jungaberle**, Dr. sc. hum., Interdisciplinary Prevention and Drug Researcher, Health scientist. He studied philosophy and history at the Universities of Freiburg and Konstanz, completed his studies of Music Therapy at the FH Heidelberg and a postgraduate course in Health Sciences at the University of Heidelberg. His doctoral study was in psychotherapy research (2000). His key projects in drug research include a multi-method study on the salutogenesis of drug users ([www.risa.uni-hd.de](http://www.risa.uni-hd.de)) and the prevention project REBOUND ([www.my-rebound.de](http://www.my-rebound.de)), sponsored by the German Research Foundation and the European commission.

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Beatriz Labate and Henrik Jungaberle

**Foreword: Ayahuasca and the Coming Transformation of the International Drug Control System**

Charles Kaplan

## **Book Section 1**

### **Ayahuasca in South America and the world**

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#### **1. Tracing Hallucinations: Contributing to a Critical Ethnohistory of Ayahuasca Usage in the Peruvian Amazon**

Bernd Brabec de Mori

This paper deals with the question of what happened in the Amazon before the current trends of "Globalization" of ayawaska usage. In most studies, some "traditional", "ancient" (for hundreds or even thousands of years), and "shamanic" use of the compound is taken for granted, although there is no evidence to support this assumption. The fact that many Western users and researchers legitimate their doings by referring to "millennial indigenous knowledge" instead of the actual powers or effects of ayawaska provokes the questioning of this assumption. Therefore, the author embarks on a broad comparative approach to ethnohistorical, ethnolinguistical and especially ethnomusicological data. The historical sources and etymologies aside, the contextual music plays a most convincing role: While non-ayawaska-related songs usually sound very diverse and highly attached to the respective ethnic group's aesthetic understandings, only specifically ayawaska-related ikaro songs show structural similarities, transcending ethnic and geographic boundaries, pointing towards a relatively recent distribution of these songs and their context among these peoples. Thus, the "millennial tradition" of ayawaska use can not stand up against ethnohistorical analysis.

#### **2. Hoasqueira Ethnomedicine: The Traditional Use of "Nove Vegetais" ("Nine Herbs") by the União do Vegetal**

Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Denizar Missawa Camurça, Sérgio Brissac and Jonathan Ott

The article deals with a tradition of the Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal (Beneficent Spirit Plant Union Center, or UDV), which occasionally used in the past what became known as the *Nove Vegetais* brew (Nine Plants brew), that is, ayahuasca with the addition of nine species of plants specifically aimed at healing. The use of these plants distinguishes the UDV from the other Brazilian Ayahuasca religions and resembles the traditional practices of Amazonian healers. There is a body of evidence about the properties of these species and of another one that was occasionally used, the *João Brandinho*. These species are compared with those used by mestizo or indigenous populations described in the specialized literature: among the ten plants adopted by the founder of the UDV, Mestre Gabriel, five are reported to have been used by traditional healers of the Amazon region. The article explains that these plants do, in fact, possess medicinal properties, indicating the need for further research into the therapeutic potential of the *Nove Vegetais* and of the *João Brandinho*.

### **3. The Historical origins of Santo Daime: Academics, Adepts and Ideology**

Beatriz Caiuby Labate and Gustavo Pacheco

This article provides a panorama of the historical development of the Brazilian religion of Santo Daime while also conducting a critical revision of the entire anthropological literature produced up until this time on the origins of this movement. Without negating the intrinsic merit of each study, we argue that they say as much about the Santo Daime as they do about the different representations of this group constructed over time and its relationship with Brazilian society – in this way, they particularly reflect, in many instances, the ideological disputes present among the Brazilian ayahuasca religions.

### **4. Ayahuasca Groups and Networks in the Netherlands – A Challenge to the Contemporary 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.

## **5. Psychonautic uses of "ayahuasca" and its analogues: Panacea or outré entertainment?**

Jonathan Ott

A brief review of the history of "ayahuasca" and its analogues precedes an essay on diverse contemporary "psychonautic" uses of brews analogous to the jungle potions: *yaje/caapi/ayahuasca*. This concludes with an analysis of the use of this entheogen as a means of self-discovery, as a form of entertainment, or simply as a drug. It concludes that there is no great difference between these... all are more or less direct paths toward pleasure.

## **6. Some Reflections on the global expansion of Ayahuasca**

Luis Eduardo Luna

In this chapter the author traces his own trajectory in the field of ayahuasca, beginning on a pioneering period in the early seventies, when he had his first contact with the brew in Florencia, capital of Caquetá (Colombia) to realize astonished on how ayahuasca has expanded since then to all over the world. While revisiting his own biography he addresses important current topics in the field, such as the alleged origin of ayahuasca, the therapeutic aspects of *vegetalismo* along side with its power relationships, the interconnection between ayahuasca and arts so forth. He concludes with some reflections on the social, ethical and ecological implications of the expansion of the use of ayahuasca.

## **7. A vine network**

Oscar Calavía Saez

This article provides a review of the current ethnological literature on the peoples of the Amazon region and it considers two principle aspects: The diversity of the uses and conceptions of ayahuasca that can be found there, and the connective roles that the liana – with a diversity of its own – plays in the creation of certain regional patterns (i.e. a “generic” Upper-Amazon culture) and a regional system in terms of shamanism, mythology, cosmologies and even relationships with whites.

## **Book Section 2**

### **Medical, psychological and pharmacological Issues: How safe is the use of ayahuasca?**

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#### **8. Pharmacology of ayahuasca: clinical trials in healthy volunteers**

Jordi Riba

Ayahuasca was safely administered to humans in a series of clinical studies aiming at assessing its pharmacokinetics, tolerability, and physiological, psychological and neurophysiological effects. These studies have highlighted individual differences in metabolism that may influence alkaloid disposition, and have established that ayahuasca is generally well tolerated, with moderate cardiovascular modifications and few psychological adverse events. They have also identified high frequency electroencephalographic activity and increases in blood flow in frontal brain areas as the neurophysiological correlates of the ayahuasca experience. The main results obtained in past studies as well as projects currently underway at our centre are presented.

#### **9. The Risks and Potential Benefits of Ayahuasca use from a Psychopharmacological Perspective**

Ede Frescka

The current chapter is a brief overview of the current knowledge on the therapeutic risks and potentials of the plant hallucinogen Ayahuasca. After decades of restrictive regulations the research is on the rise showing the benefits of using hallucinogenic substances, and their adverse effects have been studied in a less politicized atmosphere than a couple of years ago. Results of controlled trials in increasing

number help to break the tendency of judging these compounds—Ayahuasca is not exempt—on their abuse instead of their responsible use. Clinical pharmacological research of Ayahuasca was a forerunner of the field. Nevertheless, even within professional circles, there is a good deal of poorly justified opinions on the pharmacological and psychological risks of Ayahuasca use. This author is faced with an uneasy task to lift the burden without encouraging irresponsible use.

## **10. Long-term effects of the ritual use of ayahuasca on mental health**

José Carlos Bouso, Josep María Fábregas, Débora González, Sabela Fondevila, Xavier Fernández, Marta Cutchet, Miguel Ángel Alcázar

Scientific research about long term effects of hallucinogens is, in general terms, poor. Until now, only 3 studies exist in which this issue was investigated in depth. In 2004, our research team stayed in Mapiá and Rio Branco developing longitudinal studies in order to assess the long term ayahuasca effects on mental health. In the first study we administered personality, neuropsychological, general health, psychosocial wellbeing and spirituality tests to 60 daimistas versus 60 non ayahuasca users from Boca do Acre. Those same tests were administered 8 months later in order to see if the scores were stable across time. In this chapter we present the preliminary findings.

## **11. An epidemiological surveillance system by the UDV: Mental health recommendations concerning the religious use of hoasca**

Francisco Assis de Sousa Lima and Luís Fernando Tófoli

The authors examine the use of ayahuasca – a beverage with psychoactive properties originating in the Amazon forest and utilized by some religious institutions as a sacrament – in the context of the Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal (UDV), where it is denominated *hoasca* or *vegetal*. This experience report presents data related to the mental health safety of hoasca use within this institution's context. Through anecdotal and original findings, the implications as to the potential of precipitating psychotic crisis in susceptible individuals as well as questions related to the interactions with medical drugs are discussed. The authors also present the recommended procedures that were adopted by the institution concerning the two latter issues, as well as some findings pointing to the safety in the ritual use of hoasca.

## **12. Mr. Chico, please heal yourself”: Spiritual Healing in Santo Daime Doctrine and its interface with medical-scientific knowledge**

Alex Polari de Alverga

This essay aims to situate some conceptual questions regarding spiritual healing within the context of the entheogenic Christian tradition of Santo Daime; the questions touch upon symbolic, cathartic, prophylactic, mediumistic and therapeutic issues. The curative and therapeutic properties of this brew, held to be a sacrament by this religious group, are described in order to trace out the boundaries between the “religious” and “therapeutic” uses of the brew. Special attention is paid to the experience of using Daime in the treatment of mental health problems, including, for instance, afflictive emotions, psychosomatic disorders, emotional blockages, spiritual persecutions, obsessions and mediumistic cures. It is suggested that such experiences contribute to harm reduction in the treatment of diverse afflictions, especially chemical dependence. On examining the demands for health and healing that bring many different people to seek out Santo Daime, the concept of “caridade de alto risco” (high risk charity) is introduced; it is an answer developed by some Santo Daime groups in response to this growing external demand on the religion. Reflections are made upon the extremes confronted by the religious Ayahuasca groups: From the risks of curanderismo to those of excessive medicalization. Finally, some institutional aspects are analyzed, such as the Final Report in 2006 of the Multidisciplinary Work Group (GMT) of the National Anti-drugs Council (CONAD) of Brazil. Challenges stemming from the State’s intervention remain unresolved, including how to guarantee communication between spiritual and medical knowledges.

## **13. Ritual Ayahuasca use and health: an interview with Jacques Mabit**

By Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Brian Anderson and Henrik Jungaberle

Through the interview with Dr. Jacques Mabit, director of the Takiwasi Center in Peru, the authors aim to elicit a comprehensive view of various health-related issues pertinent to the ritual consumption of Ayahuasca. In collaboration with this “local” authority, information regarding the preparation, proscriptions (diets), effects, and experiential integration central to Takiwasi’s use of Ayahuasca will be outlined. How Dr. Mabit views Ayahuasca’s possible healing qualities, contraindications, and “side effects” or adverse reactions is one of several aspects that will be covered. The interview also attempts to understand how medical and spiritual knowledge interact, via conflict and/or synthesis, within the decision making processes of the Takiwasi Center.

## **14. Ayahuasca Healing: A qualitative study about 15 European people handling their diseases**

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. On this account, fifteen people with a first hand experience with ayahuasca therapy on a special disease (like chronic pain, cancer or tumors, asthma or allergic reaction to food, depression, alcohol abuse, Hepatitis C tinnitus, glaucoma, pyalitis) were interviewed two times about their ideas and beliefs on Ayahuasca and healing and their subjective theories on the etiology of diseases and change. In most cases people were convinced their illness was influenced in a positive way by ayahuasca. Often self administration and self healing were going hand in hand. Concluding that in the present study ayahuasca was an important help for some people coping with their illness, it is clearly not a universal remedy and healing in no way warranted.

## **Book Section 3 The development of a global debate on ethics and legalization**

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### **15. The New Brazilian Law on Drugs and the Religious Uses of Ayahuasca: legal and anthropological aspects**

Luciana Boiteux

This article aims to discuss the general elements of the new Brazilian law on drugs, touching on its fundamental principles and the theme of users in particular. It will also focus on the religious use of psychoactive substances and the related legal and constitutional questions.

### **16. Development and organizational goals of the União do Vegetal as a Brazilian and international religious group**

Edson Lodi Campos Soares and Cristina Patriota de Moura

This article shows how the Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal (UDV) has been following the principles and fundamentals taught by the founder of the religion, Mestre Gabriel and, in this manner, throughout the years, has been establishing itself in society defending the good use of the Hoasca (Ayahuasca). These principles include that: the Hoasca should be used in a religious context, should



not be commercialized and no other substance should be used in the religious ceremonies. This article also demonstrates how, since the beginning, the UDV works with the country's authorities so that these principles be incorporated in the legal norms of the good use of the Vegetal (Ayahuasca). To conclude, this article presents the decisions of the Multidisciplinary Working Group of Brazil's National Antidrug Council (CONAD) in relation to the use do the Hoasca in Brazil.

## **17. The legal case of the União do Vegetal vs The Government of The United States**

Jeffrey Bronfman

The following article provides a summary of the União do Vegetal's successful legal action against the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Justice Department of the Government of the United States in securing the right to use the sacrament of Hoasca within its religious ceremonies. The article explains the evolution of the laws that protected religious freedom in the United States and how these laws relate to the religious use of otherwise controlled substances. Within this context the story of the progression of the UDV's case and published court opinions is described. The article ends with an explanation of the UDV's case arriving at the Supreme Court of the United States on appeal from the U. S. Government defendants, the U. S. Supreme Court's unanimous decision in favor of the UDV, and the international implications of these events

## **18. The Santo Daime road to seeking religious freedom in the USA**

Roy Haber

This paper will present briefly the history of the control over psychoactive plants since medieval days and the process of Christianization of the native use of these plants in diverse contexts. Then it will offer some historical background on the legal status of the use of psychoactive compounds in the USA. Next, it will give special attention to the Supreme Court ruling in the Native American Peyote Case and the United States Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Further, it will provide some historical background about the Santo Daime Brazilian Religion, founded by Mestre Raimundo Irineu Serra in the Brazilian State of Acre in the thirties, and expanded through out Brazil in the late seventies and to Europe and USA in the late eighties. Finally, it will describe the bust of the Santo Daime group in Ashland (Oregon) and provide a view on the process of granting a legal exemption for this Santo Daime church in Oregon. In the overall it will reflect about the relationship of the Santo Daime legalization case to the União do Vegetal (UDV) case - another Brazilian religion, which faced a five

year legalization process ending with a favorable decision from the Supreme Court in 2006. Our Santo Daime legalization strategy will be discussed. This strategy shall focus on the following arguments: right to religious freedom through the RFRA, the governments' view that the Santo Daime and UDV Churches are similar for purposes of the legal issues; no "short or long term ill health effects" (quoting Charles Grob study on UDV and John Halpern's Santo Daime study); no risk to "diversion to illicit use."

## **19. Ayahuasca in Canada: Cultural Phenomenon and Policy Issue**

Kenneth Tupper

The rise of interest in ayahuasca drinking in Canada—as in a number of other countries—has occurred as a consequence of its globalization in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a sociological trend that presents significant legal and policy challenges for governments in liberal democratic states, which strive to balance competing interests of criminal justice, public health and human rights. In this chapter, I review the types of ayahuasca uses in Canada, including psychonautic uses, cross-cultural vegetalismo uses, and the uses by the Santo Daime, a Brazilian ayahuasca religion with established chapters in Quebec and Ontario. I also summarize a 2001 legal action involving a visiting Ecuadorian shaman under whose care a Canadian woman died during an alleged “ayahuasca” ceremony, as well as the Canadian government’s consideration of the Santo Daime’s request for a drug law exemption allowing its members to use its sacrament legally. Finally, I conclude with a few remarks on the significance of the Canadian government’s decision on the Santo Daime with respect to the context of domestic and international drug control.

## **20. Ayahuasca under International Law The Santo Daime churches in the Netherlands**

Adele van den Plas

This article will demonstrate the development of the Santo Daime cases and juridicial situation in the Netherlands over a period of more than fifteen years. The relationship between the International Conventions on Psychotropic Substances and the issues of freedom of religion are discussed. Facts and dimensions that were crucial in the legal cases are analyzed.

The importance of the European Convention or Art. 18 of the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights for further juridicial development in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe are discussed.

## **21. The development of the Santo Daime legal situation in Germany**

Silvio Rohde and Hajo Sanders

The article will include a brief history of Santo Daime in Germany. The background of some of the protagonists of the first years of Santo Daime in Germany and nowadays is briefly illuminated. Following will be a presentation of major legal cases in which Daimistas in Germany were involved in the past with a focus on present day legal activities. Some reflections on international cooperation with other Santo Daime cases will be given and a short discussion of Santo Daime Germany's relation to other religions can be added.

## **22. One hundred days of ayahuasca in France: The story of a legal decision**

Ghislaine Bourgogne

This article is about how ayahuasca came to be known in France, about the meeting points of historical, social, medical, psychological contexts that are surrounding its use on the legal as well as on the ethical levels. The interest for psychotropic substances in France was born with the outcome of the psychedelic movement and grew with the May 68 events as well as the anthropological, ethnopharmacological and the psychiatric researches that started to be published at this time. Carlos Castaneda's books had a huge impact and branded the beginning of a strong interest for shamanism among the French public. The first publication took place in 1969. Forty years later the use of psychotropic plants especially ayahuasca eventually questioned even worried governmental institutions. The question is why the use of ayahuasca that after all concerns only a minute part of the French population leads to so much effects and controversies. We will explain the interaction of all those contexts. In France country of democracy and freedom of consciousness, how and why the government made the decision to forbid ayahuasca?

## **23. Santo Daime in Spain: A religion with a psychoactive sacrament**

Santiago Lopéz-Pavillard and Diego de las Casas

The article focuses on the presence of the Santo Daime in Spain, and the circumstances surrounding its legalization as a religious entity. First, it provides a complete chronology of this complex process of legalization. Then, the paper analyzes ayahuasca in Spain from both a legal and anthropological perspective. It concludes by remarking that in 2010 the Religious Freedom Act in force will be amended,

with consequences that are difficult to predict now.

## **24. Legal Recognition of the União do Vegetal in Spain**

José Vicente Marin Prades

This article shows how the Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal (CEBUDV) obtained the legal recognition as a religion in Spain.

## **25. The Santo Daime legal case in Italy**

Walter Menozzi

As in the other European and American Countries, also in Italy small Santo Daime groups began to form toward halves the years '90, particularly two centers affiliated to Brazilian CEFLURIS, one in Assisi (Perugia) and the other in the proximities of Genova. In August of 2004 an Italian exponent of the Santo Daime was stopped to the customs of the airport of Perugia with different liters of sacrament. In the following months searches happened in Assisi, Rome, Trieste, Milan and in the Center next to Genova, with the recovery (not in all the searches) of modest quantities of Daime. In March 2005, 21 people from Santo Daime were arrested and incarcerated by the Tribunal of Perugia for criminal association finalized to the international traffic of drugs. On October 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 the Supreme Court of Cassazione in Rome declared that the Public Persecutor of Perugia had not shown if the Ayahuasca seized was a drug under control for the Italian law and that therefore all the people had been arrested without juridical motivation. The Supreme Court has added the guide lines to be used for defining if the Ayahuasca results or not a substance under control for the Italian law. On April 4<sup>th</sup> 2006 the Judge of Perugia declared the case close because "hypotheses of crime don't result". Subsequently a penal procedure in Reggio Emilia remained open, proceeding to show that in base to the directives of the Supreme court of Cassazione, the Ayahuasca / Saint Daime cannot be considered prohibited by the Italian law. The Italian Santo Daime community expects to brief the definitive closing also of this last penal procedure.

## **26. Judging Religious Drug Use: The Misuse of the Definition of “Religion”**

Russell Sandberg

In determining religious disputes, courts and other bodies may take three different approaches. First, they may hold that the claim fails on the basis that there is no interference with the religious right. Second, they may hold that the claim fails on the basis that although there was interference such interference was legally justified. Third, they may hold that the claim succeeds because it passes both hur-

dles: there was interference and that such interference was not justified. This article examines judicial reasoning in claims concerning the religious use of drugs in diverse contexts (such as Rastafarian uses in the UK, the peyote in the USA and the uses of ayahuasca in different European countries). It analyses judicial decisions that have taken each of the three approaches. In particular, it examines the role the legal definition and understanding of 'religion' has played in deciding whether there has been interference. It concludes that the use of the definition of 'religion' for this purpose is both unnecessary and deeply problematic.