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The Internationalization of Ayahuasca

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'hookups' do not end with having sex. (103) Women prefer dating. (151) There is more teenage pregnancy (205) and porn consumption (208) in right-wing states than elsewhere.

Much empirical detail will probably be used to confirm religious teaching about sex. Depression is more common among promiscuous women and "early starters" (162). Around 95% of young adults say they wish to marry (167), but they are in less and less of a hurry. Perhaps, the authors suggest, "many of them don't know how to get or stay married to the kind of person they'd like to find" (169). "Pre-marital sex" no longer has the implication "with one's future spouse". The authors conclude that "the institution of marriage remains a foundational good for individuals and communities... Yet many Americans—and westerners in general—underestimate the *collective benefits* of marriage at their peril." (170)

The book has been meticulously researched; it is the most readable book about sexual behaviour I have read. There is much to learn here and for which to be grateful.

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The Internationalization of Ayahuasca

BEATRIZ CAIUBY LABATE & HENRIK JUNGABERLE, eds., 2011

Münster: LIT Verlag

Performanzen/Performances 16

446 pp., €44,90 (pb)

ISBN 978-3-643-90148-4

In the last few years, the religious or ritual use of *ayahuasca* has emerged as a hot topic in the international discussion of drug-related questions. An Amazonian psycho-active brew, generally made from the decoction of the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine and *Psychotria viridis* leaf, *ayahuasca* is presented as a substance which has been used, since time immemorial, by the indigenous people of Northwestern Amazonia and of much of the Andean region for shamanic and other purposes. In 1930, a Brazilian syncretic, neo-Christian religion, the Santo Daime, was started, which took it as a sacrament. Since then, other similar religions have sprung up in Brazil, either variations on Santo Daime or totally new and separate revelations, like the *União do Vegetal*. Meanwhile, in countries like Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia, indigenous uses of the brew have drawn the attention of local urban dwellers and of people in other parts of the world belonging to what one might broadly refer to as the New Age scene. These developments have led to the establishment of many new local and international networks connecting indigenous and *mestizo* practitioners, religious leaders, and numerous people from all over the world, whose interests range from spiritual quests and healing to simple drug

experimentation. Initially, some more adventurous hippies made their way to remote areas of South America in search of the mind-expanding brew. In the early 1980s, Brazilian religious leaders and indigenous and 'white' shamans and neo-shamans from different South American countries began travelling abroad to attend to a growing clientèle in Europe, North America, and even Asia. Thus was established what some see as pilgrimage routes and others pejoratively label '*ayahuasca* tourism', while governments often consider this to be drug-trafficking rings. The expected official international reaction soon came and a series of judicial proceedings were started against several of these agents in many parts of the world, while the legal status of *ayahuasca* was opened to discussion in countries like Spain, the Netherlands, the United States, Italy, France, and Canada. However this matter may be seen, there is little doubt that the growing use and visibility of *ayahuasca* has brought a series of challenges to the existing international legal order, which is strongly marked by prohibitionist ideas and a deep suspicion of any kind of ritual alteration of consciousness. It has even been suggested that *ayahuasca* may be destined to play a central role in the formulation of an international drug policy which is more suited to the present times.

Therefore, this is a very opportune moment for the publication of *The Internationalization of Ayahuasca* which brings together papers presented at a pioneering academic conference held at Heidelberg University, in Germany, in May 2008, where experts from a wide range of academic fields discussed the topic. The book is full of interesting new ideas, not normally raised in discussions on the subject and there is also a healthy questioning of received wisdom on the use of *ayahuasca* and entheogens in general. In an illuminating foreword, sociologist Charles Kaplan appraises the role of *ayahuasca* in contemporary culture and the importance of its internationalisation for the evolution of the formal drug control system. In his view, the broad social and cultural process of the internationalisation of *ayahuasca* has already proved to be a critical legal test case in the evolution of the formal international drug control system and has helped bring to light the salience of emergent informal social and cultural control norms to regulate drug use in everyday life as an alternative to prohibitionist measures.

This foreword is followed by 25 essays and an interview, which are divided into three thematic sections. The first consists of discussions on the origins of *ayahuasca* use in South America and its spread to other parts of the world. The chapters present innovative views on the actual role of *ayahuasca* in indigenous history, ethno-medicinal considerations on the use of other ingredients which are sometimes added to the brew in the *União do Vegetal* tradition, a review of the literature on Santo Daime, discussions of challenges presented to the study of contemporary religion, and reflections on different aspects of the global expansion of *ayahuasca*, including its lay psychonautic use.

The second section is devoted to medical and pharmacological issues. It includes reports on studies carried out by experts in medicine, pharmacology, and psychology on the risks and benefits of taking *ayahuasca*, which is generally shown to be relatively safe. Other articles concern *ayahuasca* healing and give voice to two practitioners. Finally, section three deals with the development of the global debate on the ethics and legalisation of *ayahuasca*, with detailed discussions on the Brazilian, Dutch, American, Canadian, French,

Spanish, and Italian cases as well as an account of the judicial reasoning on the ritual and religious use of psychoactive substances.

This innovative and wide-ranging collection of texts should be of great value not only to those interested in *ayahuasca* and religion, but also to those concerned with matters of ethno-botany, social science, the therapeutic potential of psychedelics, and international drug policy.

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Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred

JEFFREY J. KRIPAL, 2011

Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press

332 pp., US\$22.50, £14.50 (pb)

ISBN 978-0-226-45387-3

In *Authors of the Impossible* (the hardback edition of which was published in 2010), Jeffrey Kripal takes the reader on an intense journey of ‘impossible’ events, happenings, and experiences that defy scientific rationalisation. Topics that are universally the subject of much intrigue across time and cultures, such as magical influence, telepathic communication, out-of-body journeys, energy forms, altered states of consciousness, fantasy themes as well as the hotly debated UFO phenomenon—all form part of what Kripal calls paranormal phenomena or ‘the impossible’.

The ‘impossible’ authors he selects to focus on in four different chapters are Frederic Myers, Charles Fort, Jacques Vallee, and Bertrand Méheust, whose interests span the Society for Psychical Research, narratives of Western ‘occulture’, UFO phenomena, and consciousness encoded in culture. All are eminent authors who think outside the square on matters that many feel compelled to keep silent about, or ignore, and who have arrived at, as Kripal sees it, some basic metaphysical conclusions that are ‘eerily similar’ to those grounded in fantasy literature that alludes to the vast untapped powers of human beings.

Kripal’s erudite writing, interspersed with snippets of humour, moves along at an enthusiastic pace; it is evident that he finds this area of study exciting, both personally and academically. Rather than dismissing the paranormal as pseudo-science or belonging only to the rat-bag fringe, Kripal suggests instead that a more gainful approach is to investigate how the paranormal might bridge the sacred and the scientific. He points out that in an academic climate to engage with such research (or even to admit a serious interest in the paranormal) might risk a promising academic career. In spite of this, however, there are academics and professional writers who are “more or less secretly working on such matters” (xii), a tantalising and provocative indication that Kripal is certainly not alone in taking such a stance. Indeed, there is a substantial amount of robust paranormal phenomena—“the stuff is everywhere”, he