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The Therapeutic Use of Ayahuasca

- Focusing on the potential of Ayahuasca in the treatment and management of various diseases and ailments
- Presents a series of perspectives on the therapeutic potential and clinical use
- Fills in the gaps in the current literature

This book presents a series of perspectives on the therapeutic potential of the ritual and clinical use of the Amazonian hallucinogenic brew ayahuasca in the treatment and management of various diseases and ailments, especially its role in psychological wellbeing and substance dependence. Biomedical and anthropological data on the use of ayahuasca for treating depression, PTSD, and substance dependence in different settings, such as indigenous contexts, neo-shamanic rituals, contemporary therapeutic circles, and in ayahuasca religions, in both South and North America, are presented and critiqued. Though multiple anecdotal reports on the therapeutic use of ayahuasca exist, there has been no systematic and dense reflection on the topic thus far. The book brings the therapeutic use of ayahuasca to a new level of public examination and academic debate. The texts in this volume stimulate discussion on methodological, ethical, and political aspects of research and will enhance the development of this emergent field of studies.

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From the Preface

This book is inspired by the 2013 Psychedelic Science Conference, held in Oakland, California. The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) promoted the conference in cooperation with the Heffter Research Institute, the Beckley Foundation, and the Council on Spiritual Practices. The event convened over 1,900 people from all over the world, including anthropologists, medical doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, and psychologists, and members of the general public. It was wide ranging, with a focus on the scientific research into the medical use of psychedelics. Research topics included MDMA-assisted therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), ibogaine for opiate addiction, and LSD and psilocybin for end-of life anxiety, among others. The conference was composed of three tracks: (1) the Clinical Research Track; (2) an Interdisciplinary Track, with a mix of topics, including psychedelic psychotherapy, non-clinical research, arts and culture, and medical marijuana; and (3) the Ayahuasca Track. Beatriz Caiuby Labate was the organizer of the Ayahuasca Track. This volume brings together a select collection of six presentations from this track, and is complemented by seven additional relevant contributions. [...]

With this work, we aim to bring the therapeutic use of ayahuasca to a new level of public examination and academic debate, as well as to fill in gaps in the current literature. Though multiple anecdotal reports on the therapeutic use of ayahuasca exist, there has been no systematic and dense reflection on the topic thus far. We hope this collection offers an important advancement in this discussion, and helps to inform international regulation on ayahuasca use based on the scientific study of this substance's relative benefits and harms. We also hope this book proves to be a source of inspiration for further research in this emergent field of studies. [...]

Aguascalientes, October 2013
San Francisco

Beatriz Caiuby Labate
Clancy Cavnar

Comments

"Since the time our team has discovered the mind-altering effects of synthetic DMT in the 1950's, I am still amazed by the immense power of this drug to open - temporarily - the mind. Ayahuasca's potency is largely based on its content of natural DMT. The articles in this book will tell you how this power might be used to treat a variety of severe mental problems."

Stephen Szára, MD., DSc., Retired Chief of Biomedical Research Branch of the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse.

"This book makes a significant contribution to growing evidence on the therapeutic benefits of ayahuasca. The chapters explore ayahuasca's potential for physical and mental disorders from a variety of perspectives and settings, underscoring the importance of a transdisciplinary approach to understanding this 'medicine' that has been employed for centuries by Amazonian cultures."

Esther Jean Langdon, PhD, Professor of Anthropology, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil

"This volume offers the most recent and broadest overview of the therapeutic potential of this remarkable plant medicine, which is only now being recognized and accepted into the clinician's armamentarium."

Dennis McKenna, PhD, Assistant Professor, Center for Spirituality and Healing, University of Minnesota, USA

"This book fully traverses the space between shamanism and Western medicine, by giving attention to the special importance of setting, vindicating traditional ritual uses, and grounding the various aspects of healing on cultural studies, pharmacology, and neuroscience. This tour de force on the therapeutic use of ayahuasca is a must for those interested in the topic."

Sidarta Ribeiro, PhD, Professor of Neuroscience, Director, Brain Institute, Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil