

BOOK REVIEWS

Ayahuasca Visions: The Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman. Luis Eduardo Luna and Pablo Amaringo. Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books. 1991. Pp. 160. \$60.00 (clothbound). ISBN 1-55643-064-7.

Amazon Healer: The Life and Times of an Urban Shaman. Marlene Dobkin de Ríos. Bridport, United Kingdom: Prism Press (2 South Street, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 3NQ England). 1992. Pp. 180. \$10.95 U.S.; 7.95 pounds sterling (paperback). ISBN 1-85327-076-8.

Guiado Pela Lua: Xamanismo e Uso Ritual da Ayahuasca no Culto do Santo Daime. Edward MacRae. São Paulo, Brazil: Editora Brasiliense (Av. Marquês de São Vicente 1771, São Paulo 01139, Brasil). 1992. Pp. 163. (price not given; text in Portuguese) (paperback). ISBN 85-11-07035-4.

In keeping with the recent upsurge in lay and scientific interest in shamanic inebriants in general, and in the pan-Amazonianentheogenic potion *ayahuasca* in particular, we have here three recent books on the subject of contemporary, quasi-traditional, mestizo use of *ayahuasca*, mainly in an urban setting. Although there has been a modern resurgence in use of anciententheogens like *péyotl* (*Lophophora williamsii* [Lem.] Coulter) and *teonanácatl* (psilocybian mushrooms, especially *Psilocybe* species), *ayahuasca* had found its niche in the modern world long before its "rediscovery" by theentheogenic subculture. Mestizo *ayahuasqueros*, having abandoned their jungle homes for city life, have continued to practice shamanic healing in urban areas of Peru and Colombia, even as their Indian relatives continued, in ever decreasing measure, to commune with *Sacha Runa* (the "jungle man") and other "plant spirits," in ever-diminishing islands of primary rainforest throughout Amazonia. This urban shamanic use of *ayahuasca* is the subject of *Ayahuasca Visions* and *Amazon Healer*, whereas the Portuguese *Guiado Pela Lua* (*Guided by the Moon: Shamanism and Ritual Use of Ayahuasca in the Santo Daime Cult*) focuses on the syncretistic Christian church of *Santo Daime*, which has adopted *ayahuasca* as the Eucharist. Both the religious and urban shamanic use of the Amazonian ambrosia continue to expand internationally, far beyond their South American homes.

Ayahuasca Visions is a large-format art book, with 49 full-color, 19.7x26.4 cm plates of tempera paintings by Peruvian shaman/artist Pablo Amaringo, a bilingual Quechua speaker born in Peruvian Amazonia of parents with Cocama, Lamista (or Lama) and Piro Indian blood (all three traditional *ayahuasca*-using groups). After a general introduction to the subject of Amazonian shamanism and *ayahuasca* by Luna, there follows Luna's biography of Amaringo, in which we

learn how he first sampled the potion at age 10, and became a *vegetalista* or plant-using healer in the late 1960s. Much of this interesting biography consists of Amaringo's own words, and we also learn how he became a painter, and how Luna "discovered" his art in 1985. Besides detailed landscape paintings, Amaringo had painted a couple of his *ayahuasca* visions; indeed, he says he learned to paint from *ayahuasca*. On questioning Amaringo with regard to plants and other elements depicted in his visions, Luna realized that he had uncovered an entirely novel means of recording ethnobiological information. Over the next several years, there flourished a rich collaboration between Amaringo and Luna (Luna is a Colombian anthropologist, currently a lecturer at the Swedish School of Economics in Helsinki, Finland), with Luna providing art materials and funding to enable Amaringo to paint some 100 different *Ayahuasca Visions*, from which 49 were selected for reproduction in the book.

Following an introductory comment on the visions and their most common motifs, and the musical score and lyrics of a typical *ayahuasca* melody or *icaro*, there are reproduced 48 of the visions (number 49 appears on the cover) in vibrant, phantasmagoric color. Each vision is accompanied by 1–2 pages of text written by Amaringo himself, explaining the vision, its mythological background, and identifying the individual plants and animals present. Amaringo's text is accompanied by extensive analytical notes written by Luna with more detailed and specific scientific information, especially of an ethnobotanical nature. Here there is a plethora of new ethnological and ethnobotanical data, demonstrating incontrovertibly the validity and utility of this novel means of ethnographic documentation. Luna has also helped establish Amaringo in the Latin American art market by promoting and selling his original art works, and aided him in founding an art school in the Peruvian Amazon, the Usko-Ayar Amazonian School of Painting, presently with some 600 students! Luna has also promoted the work of the more talented of Amaringo's students through lectures, shows and an annual calendar, and there is evidence that this vibrant artistic movement has rekindled interest in traditional medicine and culture among the younger generation of Amazonian artists. Luna and Amaringo are to be commended for this superb example of the integration of shamanism and science; veritably the art of ethnobotany in full flower! Besides being a lavish visual feast, *Ayahuasca Visions* is a rich source of scientific information, and features the largest bibliography on *ayahuasca* yet assembled, and a useful 5-page (5 columns *per page*) index, including scientific and vernacular names for the organisms depicted in the visions. The book is well bound and printed on good quality paper: a good value in light of the 49 color plates and density of information these and the accompanying analytical notes represent.

Marlene Dobkin de Rios' new book on *ayahuasca* (a companion to her well-known 1972 *Visionary Vine: Hallucinogenic Healing in the Peruvian Amazon*, re-published in 1984 (Dobkin de Rios 1972) is a biography of her father-in-law, the Peruvian *ayahuasquero* Don Hildebrando Ríos, who hails from the same part of the Amazonian basin as Pablo Amaringo. Born in 1917 near the Amazonian urban center of Pucallpa, Peru, Don Hilde lives and practices in this polyglot city, located in traditional territory of the Shipibo and Cashiva Indians. Dobkin de Ríos characterizes urban *vegetalistas* and/or *ayahuasqueros* like Don Hilde as the

mestizo descendants of the tribal shaman/healer known throughout Amazonia's many indigenous groups. After centuries of proselytizing, first by the Jesuits (from 1630–1768), who preached the Gospel in 39 Indian languages, then by the Franciscans, and more recently by various Protestant groups such as the Instituto Lingüístico de Verano, and after the urbanization favored by the rubber boom and the subsequent petrol boom, little of indigenous Amazonian culture has remained untouched. Dobkin de Ríos here gives special attention to Seprionism, a branch of esoteric Christian mysticism/spiritualism which has especially influenced Don Hilde, and which she and her husband experienced at first hand, as initiates to the Seprionic Mystical Order in Lima. Dobkin de Ríos also studied 95 members of Don Hilde's patient cohort, characterizing the group as 83% practising Christians with 17% Evangelical Protestants among them, and gives short case histories of 21 patients to illustrate the sort of care they solicit from their *doctorcito*. The author documents two "particularly impressive cases" in which "it was clear that a healing had taken place," and in a curious introductory chapter, attempts to explain or justify traditional healing by the "transducer effect," a haphazard look at scientific concepts like hypnosis, endogenous analgesics and immune stimulation—this is the least successful part of the book and might better have been left out.

An important chapter, "The Plant Pharmacopoeia" suffers from insufficient ethnobotanical information. The author discusses "hallucinogenic [sic] plant use" by Don Hilde, mentioning *chiricsanango* without giving its botanical identification (*Brunfelsia grandiflora* D. Don subsp. *schultesii* Plowman—should one dig a bit, it can be found in Table II that the "probable botanical name" of this plant is *B. grandiflora*). Whereas *chacruna* is identified in the text as *Psychotria viridis* Ruiz et Pavón; one has again to dig into the tables to discover that the *toé* additive to *ayahuasca* is a *Brugmansia* species. A number of the 32 organisms (including insects) cited in Table I (Don Hilde's pharmacopoeia) are not identified scientifically at all, and the data on 11 plants mentioned in Table II is sketchy, the author stating "botanical identification is not available for the plants in this list but may conform to identifications by Plowman. . . ." In a field study involving a considerable number of ethnomedicinal plants, this is simply not acceptable. Why was the botanical identification not available? Why did the author fail to collect and deposit voucher specimens of all of the medicinal plants she mentions? This would not be up to standards in ethnobiological journals such as the *Journal of Ethnobiology* (Anon. 1990), and any ethnobiologists would do well to adhere to scientific journal standards in book publications as well. There is no chemical/pharmacological information given regarding the entheogenic plants used by Don Hilde, also a significant omission. After a chapter in which some of Don Hilde's conversations with the author are recorded intact, the book concludes with a chapter on the "vidente phenomenon" or clairvoyance, an attempt by Dobkin de Ríos to frame the proper line of inquiry for field work of this type. A short glossary precedes a small but useful bibliography, and the book suffers from the lack of an index.

Edward MacRae's second book *Guiado Pela Lua* fills an important gap in the literature on the Amazonian *ayahuasca* complex—the history and sociology of the Brazilian cult of *Santo Daime*, a contemporary Christian cult grounded in Amazo-

nian shamanism, in which the use of *ayahuasca* as sacrament is fundamental. Apart from a paper in Spanish on one (primarily urban) Brazilian branch of this cult (Henman 1986), and two short papers on branches of the cult in Acre (Lowy 1987; Prance 1970), no scientific papers have been published on this important contemporary syncretistic religion, and it is to be hoped that MacRae's Portuguese book will be translated into English and Spanish. Three introductory chapters discuss the relationship between entheogenic drugs (here we find the neologism *entheogens* used in print in Portuguese) and shamanism; the key role of *ayahuasca* and other "plant teachers" in Amazonian shamanism; and Amazonian mestizo concepts of disease as these relate to healing with *ayahuasca*. A detailed historical study of the *Santo Daime* cults commences with a brief biography of Raimundo Irineu Serra, or Mestre Irineu as he was known to his disciples, generally regarded to be the founder of the religion (MacRae's book appeared on the centenary of the birth of Serra, who died in 1971). Serra was introduced to *ayahuasca* late in the 1920s, and by 1931 was leading public *ayahuasca* masses under the auspices of his Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal (CICLU). Mestre Irineu's doctrine was based on eclectic Christianity, with *Daime* (or *ayahuasca*; from invocations like "Daime luz, força, amor . . ." "grant me light, strength, love . . .") as the solar, masculine element, and the lunar, feminine aspect personified as Nossa Senhora da Conceição or Rainha da Floresta.

From Mestre Irineu's CICLU cult in the state of Acre in the Brazilian Amazon, also called Alto Santo, there derived several branches, especially the group of Sebastião Mota de Melo or Padrinho Sebastião, who set up a related cult in Acre called Colonia 5000. When Padrinho Sebastião's group incorporated marijuana (*Cannabis* spp.) into the ritual, the federal police raided Colonia 5000 in 1981, leading to illegalization of *ayahuasca* in Brazil in 1985. By this time, Padrinho Sebastião had set up another commune called Céu do Mapiá near Río Purús, and in 1982 the first urban branch of the *Daime* cult was established in Rio de Janeiro, the Chamou-se Centro Eclético Fluente Luz Universal Sebastião Mota de Melo (CEFLUSME). An independent *ayahuasca* church, the Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal (UDV), started in Acre in 1961, had meanwhile become Brazil's largest *ayahuasca* church, which became centered in Brasília to attend to the needs of its predominantly urban flock. The relatively wealthy and politically-powerful UDV petitioned the government to overturn the ban on the sacrament, which was accordingly done in 1987, after a government commission had studied the cult and determined it to be genuine and sincere. Another attempt (with right-wing political motivation) in 1988 to illegalize *ayahuasca* also failed, after a second high-level government commission again gave the cult a clean bill of health, and recommended permanent exemption of *ayahuasca* from Brazilian controlled substances laws. The church continues to grow in strength in Brazil, and the various *Daime* groups have many millions of members. Impressive quantities of the sacramental potion are prepared from *Banisteriopsis caapi* (Spruce ex Griseb.) Morton and *Psychotria viridis* Ruiz et Pavón cultivated in Brazilian Amazonia. Recently there have been attempts to establish *Daime* church groups outside of South America, where it has already spread far beyond its original range (Liwszyc et al. 1992). In the United States such attempts were unsuccessful, as the U.S. government seized samples of the sacramental potion on attempts to import it into the country. In

Europe the church has fared better, and there has even been door-to-door proselytizing for *Daime* in Spain and other countries!

MacRae's book is a fascinating look at the history and inner workings of a growing, large-scale, syncretistic, Christian religion based on ingestion of a true, and not symbolic, sacrament, of an entheogenic potion of which the Christian Eucharist is but a placebo, a pallid symbol. It is hoped that there will be further study of this important phenomenon, and that this valuable book will not remain accessible only to the Portuguese-speaking world. Luna and Amaringo's pioneering *Ayahuasca Visions* will hopefully inaugurate a new era in documentation of ethnographic data, botanical and otherwise, and is a splendid example of the manifold creative possibilities for such work. While Dobkin de Rios' *Amazon Healer* contains much of interest, the scientific deficiencies in the presentation detract considerably from what could have been a useful and valuable book. The addition of an index and further botanical and chemical legwork would go a long way toward improving this book.

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