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A Dissertation on Healing from the Gods Ayahuasca and the Curing of Disease States

By Maggi Quinlan
(quinnadam@earthlink.net)

Abstract

This dissertation opens the doorway to the recognition in the United States of the potential for the reversal of organic illness through the use of the entheogen ayahuasca, an agent known as a "Divine Intelligence". This sacred drink has been used for millennia by over seventy indigenous groups in the Upper Amazon and Orinoco basin for healing, shamanic journeys and divination. (Luna, 2000) It is also referred to as yage, caapi, daime, hoasca, natem, nishi, along with numerous other names.

The purpose of this work is to report the medical healing experienced through the use of ayahuasca. It is qualitative research utilizing narratives and participant observation, to collect the stories of five co-researchers plus myself. The data was gathered through two visits to Mapiá, Brazil, the central home to the Church of Santo Daime. The first journey was a preliminary three week visit in 1996, followed by a return and three month stay at the beginning of 1999. All but one of the stories was collected in this environment.

In each of the accounts, the co-researcher was suffering from either a terminal or chronic illness. In four instances, the people came to Santo Daime because they had exhausted all other options within the allopathic system, and could go no further in their healing process. Two of those were facing imminent death. For the other two participants, one chose not to engage with the allopathic system beyond the point of diagnosis, and instead decided to work with ayahuasca from the beginning of the cancer. In the second instance, it was the Santo Daime that both showed the presence of the illnesses, and then facilitated the healing, which was validated through the biomedical system.

This work explores concepts of healing; what it means and how it is achieved. It explores and expands the concept of what creates disease. It is a record of the inner and outer journey through illness that each person experienced using ayahuasca as the catalyzing agent for the curing that each person reported. It investigates the potential for healing that does not currently exist in our allopathic system of medicine which "presupposes the direct organic combat of disease and of its symptoms through a neutralizing, opposing agent" (Groisman & Sell, 1995). Ayahuasca offers a potential to change that paradigm, and to expand our current medical options in treating terminal and chronic illness.