



THE ETHNO-PHARMACOLOGY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE ETHNOPHARMACOLOGY SOCIETY

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NEWS AND NOTES

THE JOURNAL OF ETHNOPHARMACOLOGY has recently sent out issue number four of its first volume. It contains a review of Chemical Studies on medicinal Myristicaceae from Amazonia, part one of a report on arrow poisons of China, two studies of Albizzia lebeck, an Indian drug used for atopic allergy, as well as short communications on Jaborandi and dictamus, a Greek plant.

Looking back over volume one, we note with satisfaction that the editors, Laurent Rivier and Jan Bruhn, have set and maintained a high standard of scholarship and readability. The nature of the papers has been reasonably wide-ranging. While four of the 16 principal articles have been on hallucinogens, this may reflect the special interest of many people in the field. Other papers cover chemical analyses of specific plants, listings of medicinal plants used by specific peoples, belief systems associated with the use of medicines, the examination of historical uses of certain medicinal and other subject matter as well. A few pages devoted to news and book reviews have rounded out each of the first year's four numbers.

The publishers, Elsevier Sequoia of Lausanne, are asking S.F. 150 for volume II, the same price as for volume I. Initially this was equivalent to U.S. \$79. Because of the slippage of the dollar this is now equivalent to about U.S. \$91, currently a little less than the price of a night's stay in a good hotel in Lausanne. Subscriptions: Journal of Ethnopharmacology, P.O. Box 851, CH-1001 Lausanne 1, Switzerland.

VASCULAR DILATORS, AMYL AND ISOBUTYL NITRITES, according to Thomas P. Lowry, University of California at Davis, have been found to have low hazard potential. Of 3000 individuals surveyed one experienced 90 seconds of aphasia. While transitory

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headache is common, no documented reports of death or permanent injury was found in a federally sponsored data collection project. Isobutyl nitrite is sold over-the-counter and is inhaled for its presumed aphrodisiac effects.

BOOKS

Plants of the Gods, Origins of Hallucinogenic Use. R.E. Schultes and A. Hofmann. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, St. Louis, San Francisco. 1979. 192 pp. \$34.95.

Richard Evans Schultes is a name known to all who have any interest in botany. From his initial forays into peyote and mushroom territory as a student until the present, he has remained the foremost ethnobotanist in the world. This is evidenced by over 200 papers in this discipline. Especially noteworthy are the original observations made during his 17 years of research in the Amazon. Professor Schultes has collaborated with Dr. Albert Hofmann, discoverer of LSD and former Director of Sandoz Laboratories. Dr. Hofmann's contributions to an understanding of the chemistry of psychoactive alkaloids is well known and highly respected. The collaboration of these two scientists in 1973 gave us The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens, a book that has now become a classic and is about to appear in a new edition. This most recent book, Plants of the Gods, is astonishing in the union of new information of a technical nature with a visually ravishing presentation - there are over 100 illustrations in color! Plants of the Gods has a most palatable format. The narration is stylish and popular and yet never disappoints as is the case with many other books that have attempted to popularize technical information. The authors have included a lexicon that encompasses a wealth of new information and excellent illustrations of each plant. Complementing this is a reference guide indicating area of use, peoples involved, mode of preparation, and the effects of the drug.

No attempts are made to popularize drug use. The authors state their purpose in the introduction, that being to educate the public in a highly controversial field of scientific knowledge. The pleasure that is to be derived from the Schultes-Hofmann distillation and presentation is enormous. Few scientists are able to make so rich a chronicle of their research.

The press, McGraw-Hill Book Company, is to be credited for the quality of this book with respect to the paper, the binding, the elegance of presentation and the quality of the color illustrations. Dr. Joan Halifax and Mr. Richard Tobler are to be congratulated on their tireless search for illustrative material. It is rich and varied. A bit more editing would have caught the misspelled caption in boldface on page 20. This is one of those errors of small importance but glaring in presence.

MORE BOOKS

I cannot imagine a library in botany, or one that is concerned with the chemistry of natural products, being without this volume.

-- William Emboden

Narcotic Plants of the Old World: An Anthology of Texts From Ancient Times to the Present. Selected, translated and edited by Hedwig Schleiffer. Lubrecht & Cramer, Publishers, N.Y., 1979. 193 pp. Paperback \$7.95; Library binding \$12.95.

Dr. Hedwig Schleiffer will be known to readers for her fine book Sacred Narcotic Plants of the New World Indians, also an anthology. In this work we have an important contribution to an area of research that is much neglected. As Professor Richard Evans Schultes points out in his preface, there has been much more attention given to New World plants in recent times. The dichotomy in attitudes between the Old World usage and that in the New World is very apparent in these texts. That such a significant difference exists is, I believe, for reason of the lack of information that we have on antecedent uses. That is to say that the majority of contributions collected in this tome are late European appraisals of the use of psychoactive substances. We need to piece together the earlier uses from fragmentary data to establish the role of these plant drugs in archaic techniques of ecstasies. The "European attitude" of a diabolical character associated with such drug use is a late sentiment in the history of mankind. For example as Dr. Schieffler points out in her preface, ancient plant names such as pythonion and apollinaris for Hyoscyamus implicates the Pythia, the priestess at the Delphic shrine of Apollo probably uttered her prophecies in a state of intoxication generated by the smouldering fumes of this plant.

I would recommend that students interested in the ethnobotany of psychoactive plants read this book and then stand in awe of the amount of knowledge that we have not yet derived from ancient Old World cults that used narcotic plants as vehicles to ecstasies. The judicious selection of textual material allows one to compare divergent attitudes at different periods in the history of the Old World. We may herein read the accounts of Herodotus and contrast them with the observations of a great contemporary ethnomycologist, R. Gordon Wasson. The advantage of a book such as this is that it is like a sampler of diverse chocolates - it inflames the passion for more. Thus it will serve the important purpose of creating a new body of scholars whose interest will have been whetted by the diverse readings presented here. As such, it will be a valuable adjunct to courses taught in the area of ethnobotany or in conjunction with those chemistry courses that deal with the products of these plants and yet never give the student the necessary botanical and historical background with respect to the origins and use of the material in question.

MORE BOOKS

These readings will find a welcome place on the bookshelf of ethnobotanists and will certainly be used in many classrooms.

-- William Emboden

ABSTRACT AND CONCRETE

ETHNOMEDICINE, Vol. V, Nos. 1 and 2, 1978-9 includes among others the following articles of ethnopharmacologic interest:

The Use of Hemp and Opium in India - Traude Vetschera and Alfonso Pillai, Institute of Indian Culture, Bombay.

The authors speculate that Soma of the Sanskrit and Tantric texts may be cannabis. Various preparations of cannabis, opium and other drugs used in India are described as are techniques and circumstances of their consumption.

Zwischen Wunderbuch und Rezeptbuch-weisheit - Elfriede Grabner, Steirisches Volksmuseum am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz.

A handwritten, 19th century pharmacopoeia from the Burgenland area of Austria is examined and the source of its prescriptions is discussed. Most were copied from earlier published pharmacopaeias rather than originating from folk-medicine sources.

Ethnomedizinische Cuscuta-Applikationen - Vagn J. Brøndegaard, Pueblo Competa, Malaga, España.

The use of the genus Cuscuta (dodder) in folk medicines throughout the world is discussed. It has been used particularly for stomach and lung disorders, jaundice, fever, as a remedy for wounds and inflammation and in women's diseases.

Culture, Drug and Personality - Field Research among the Yebamasa Indians - Florian Deltgen, Universität Köln, Köln 41.

The context of the consumption of the hallucinogenic drink "caje," probably from various Banisteriopsis spp., were studied. The drug experience appears to be standardized by repeated consumption under circumstances and with ideal reactions defined by higher ranking shamans. Nevertheless, individual psychological disposition still had influence upon the responses.

Guyanese Ethnomedical Botany - A Folk Pharmacopoeia - Gary J. Mikollik, University of Pennsylvania.

The westernized population of Guyana uses a pharmacopoeia distinct from the one used by the Indian societies of the area.

MORE ABSTRACTS

The plants are identified botanically and their local names and indications for their use are listed. Probable origins of Guyanese folk medicine are discussed.

Chinese-American Patent Medicines - Richard M. Swiderski, Bridgewater State College, Massachusetts.

The Chinese communities in American cities have traditional drug shops in which elementary diagnoses are made and prescriptions are compounded from simples. They are also served by modern American pharmacies dispensing physician-prescribed and brand name compounds. There is, however, an entire group of drugs which falls in between these two: patent medicines produced in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia for the overseas Chinese market. They come in all the traditional forms -- pill, powder, syrup, linament. Ginseng, the immemorial panacea, is known in a variety of preparations. When examined closely these medicines reveal a reliance on Chinese traditional pharmacology, but reworked to take advantage of the packaged medium. There is evidence of a syncretism of formulas, and the accommodation of new medicines to the Chinese system. The medicines are in general a symbolic portrait of the Chinese health concept and of Chinese cultural identity preserved in diaspora.

Food and Medicinal Plants Used by Armenian Americans in Fresno, California - Helmut Kloos, University of California, San Francisco.

Distinct food habits and medical practices persist to varying degrees among most immigrant groups in the United States. Little is known about the sources of the foods and medicines of Armenian-Americans, and no studies have been made on their dietary patterns and healing ways within the changing social and cultural fabric of this immigrant population. Here I report the results of surveys made among Armenian and non-Armenian households and their kitchen gardens in Fresno, California. Emphasis is placed on the modification of traditional Armenian plant uses and on factors influencing these changes.

Traditional and Orthodox Medicine - Conflict and Prospects of Integration - Ayodele Tella, University of Lagos.

In Africa today, Orthodox Medicine generally regards Traditional Medicine as a system of medicine which is crude, basically unscientific and often ineffectual. Traditional Medicine on the other hand, whilst conceding the superiority of the former, draws attention to its own achievements and points out the disturbing shortcomings of Orthodox Medicine. Despite such mutual antagonism, cooperation with eventual integration between the two systems is possible. Both are strongly dedicated mainly to the same causes. For a most realistic health care

MORE ABSTRACTS

delivery system in Africa, the two must integrate. For that reason it will be necessary to improve the study of Traditional Medicine. Integration could start at village level and be gradually and carefully extended to cover urban areas as well.

Other articles include an interview of Amakour M.R. Ahyi by Hubert Fichte on ethnomedicine in Togo; Cannabis in New Guinea and, Tobacco in Venezuelan folk medicine.

THE JOURNAL OF ETHNOPHARMACOLOGY, Vol. 1, No. 3 includes the following articles:

Evolution of the Identification of Myristicaceous Hallucinogens of South America - R. E. Schultes, Harvard University.

Plants Used as Abortifacients and Emmenagogues by Spanish New Mexicans - G. A. Conway and John C. Slocumb, University of New Mexico.

Coca Pests and Pesticides - T. Plowman, Field Museum, Chicago, and A. T. Weil.

Evidence of an Ethnomedical Form of Aversion Therapy on the United States - Mexico Border - R. T. Trotter, Pan-American University, Edinburg, Texas.

PEOPLE

MARLENE DOBKIN DE RIOS, Professor of Anthropology, California State University at Fullerton, who has written extensively on anthropological aspects of drug use has left to become a Health Science Administrator with the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, Maryland. She has resigned as president of the Ethno-Pharmacology Society and co-editor of this Newspaper. Our best wishes go with her.

THOMAS BROWN, medical director, Centro Medico "San Jose," Taisha, Ecuador, welcomes correspondence with anyone interested in the Shuar and Achuar (Jivaroah) of the upper Amazon Valley.

RESOURCES

CURARE, Journal of Ethnomedicine and Transcultural Psychiatry, has been established to encourage interdisciplinary discussion between physicians and theoretical medical branches and cultural and social anthropologists who are involved with health, disease and healing. Articles are primarily in German with English and French summaries. Subscriptions: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, Verlagsgesellschaft mb H, Postfach 5829, D-6200 Wiesbaden 1, West Germany. The Editors: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnomedizin, Hauptstrasse 235, D-6900 Heidelberg, West Germany.

MORE RESOURCES

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY through its Institute of the History of Medicine offers M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in the history of medicine and kindred sciences. Lloyd G. Stevenson is the director of the Institute.

LABORATOIRE D'ETHNOBOTANIQUE, 57 rue Cuvier, 57231 Paris, has published its bibliographic bulletin no. 17, an extensive listing of recent publications on ethnobotany and related subjects. The laboratory also publishes Journal D'Agriculture Traditionnelle et de Botanique Appliquée.

PHANTASTICA is the title of a new catalogue of "rare and important psychoactive drug literature" from 1700 to the present. There are 278 titles (some repeats where duplicate volumes are available) plus nine engravings. Foreword by R. Gordon Wasson and introduction by Michael Horowitz, one of the founders of the Fitz Hugh Ludlow Memorial Library. Copies available from: William and Victoria Dailey, P.O. Box 69812, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

MEETINGS

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON DRUGS AND ALCOHOL will be held in Jerusalem, Israel, September 13-18, 1981. The tentative format of the meeting includes sessions on socially acceptable substances, sacramental use of drugs and other cultural aspects of drug use. Further information: Drugs and Alcohol Congress, P.O. Box 394, Tel-Aviv, Israel.

ETHNOPHARMACOLOGIE ET ETHNOMÉDECINE MALGACHES, an international scientific colloquium, will be held by L'Académie Malgaches in the Democratic Republic of Malagasy, September 7-21, 1981. Information: M. Pierre Boiteau, Residence d'Orsay, 76 rue A.-Briand, 91400 Paris, France, or, Colloque Ethnopharmacologie et Ethnomédecine Malgaches, B.P. 6217, Antananarivo, Madagascar.

The EPS Newsletter is published by The Ethno-Pharmacology Society, 4181 Brisbane Way, Irvine, CA 92715. Subscription and membership, \$10.00 per year.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME: ETHNOPHARMACOLOGY.

Dr. Jan G. Bruhn recently sent us a query: Had EPS published any definition or discussion of the very word, ethnopharmacology?

The answer is no, we haven't.

At the founding meeting of the Society the attendees, after deciding that an association devoted to cultural and historical aspects of drug use was justified, began considering what to call it. Such titles as, the Society for the Study of Cultural Aspects of Drug Use, were descriptive but ponderous, and such eponyms as, SSCADU, lacked flair. When someone said something about "ethnopharmacology" a responsive chord was struck and the group quickly made its choice.

The first time I had heard the word was in regard to the symposium held January 28-30, 1967, in San Francisco at the University of California Medical Center. Sponsored by the Pharmacology Section of the National Institute of Mental Health, the proceedings, Ethnopharmacologic Search for Psychoactive Drugs, was published later in the year. In his, Historical Survey, Bo Holmstedt recalls the work of the 19th and early 20th century pioneers whose work was, in fact, ethnopharmacologic, though that term does not appear among the bibliography he cites.

Richard Evans Schultes relates in his, The Place of Ethnobotany in the Ethnopharmacologic Search for Psychotomimetic Drugs, that the word ethnobotany had been coined by Harshberger writing in the Botanical Gazette in 1896. Schultes also points out that in recent years such words have been coined as "archaeo-ethnobotany, ethnomycology, ethnoecology and ethnopharmacology..." We might also add ethnozoology, ethnomedicine and ethnoscience.

If you have any information relating to this question, the EPS Newsletter welcomes your comments.

-- John Kramer

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