



Zeitschrift für Medizinethnologie • Journal of Medical Anthropology

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Startseite/Home AGEM Curare Meeting Calendar / Museum / Film Aktuelles Literaturdokumentation Links Kontakte

Die aktuelle Tagung / the actual meeting: AGEM neu/new

Leipzig AGEM & ESE / 08 nov - 10 nov 2007 / 6th Europ. Colloquium Ethnopharmacology

Das aktuelle Heft in Vorbereitung / Curare / the next issues

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- **Annual-meeting of the Swiss Ethnological Society** (25.11.)
- **The Annual Symposium of the Journal 'Medische Anthropologie'** (09.12.)
- **Alle anzeigen...**

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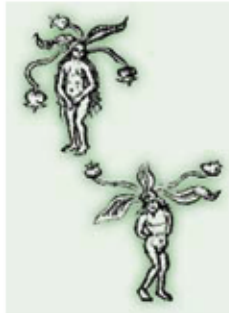
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40 years journals in medical anthropology - 1971-2011



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AGEM, the German Society for Medical Anthropology **Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnomedizin** was founded 1970 in Hamburg, Germany. It is classified as a non-profit organization of scientists, practitioners, and institutions.

In its founding principles from 1970, the AGEM established its mission to advance the critical inquiry of an "interdisciplinary field uniting anthropology and medicine" and to foster the scholarly collaboration and research at the nexus of medicine and culture, including in the related fields of the history of medicine, human biology, pharmacology, botany in the natural sciences, and in medical, social and cultural anthropology, human ecology, sociology, psychology, and folklore studies in the social sciences.

As outlined in the bylaws, the AGEM is committed to the research and dissemination of academic and practice-based research examining the intertwined relationships of medicine and culture through 1) the publication of a corresponding peer-reviewed journal, 2) regular professional meetings, and 3) the collection of relevant written materials that serve the purpose to increase scholarly exchange and debate.



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Indexseite/Index page of: www.agem-ethnomedizin.de – English version (detail from Nov. 24, 2011)

In den Heften 34,3 und 34,4 sind Teile der Website dokumentiert:

34,3: p. 152 – Useful Website Hints for Further Studies in the Field (Ethnobotany and Ethnopharmacology)

34,4: p. 320 – Was ist Ethnomedizin

34,4: p. 344 – Kampagnen und Bewegungen

Vorschau auf das nächste Heft/Forthcoming contributions in *Curare* 35(2012)1+2:

- NINA GRUBE: Von Heimatstationen und Helfersystemen: Die Ambivalenz „sozialer Beheimatung“ in der institutionalisierten Psychiatrie
- YVONNE SCHAFFLER: Spontane und „sozialisierte“ Besessenheit in der Dominikanischen Republik: Zur Integration theoretischer Perspektiven
- HANNES STUBBE: Ist religiöser Endokannibalismus ekelhaft? Zur psychologischen Anthropologie des Ekels
- GUNTER HOFER: Besessenheit, ein Phänomen der menschlichen Lebenswelt (Reprint 1984)
- SAMIA AL AZHARIA JAHN: Zur Frage des zähen Fortlebens der Beschneidung der Frauen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Verhältnisse im Sudan (Reprint 1980)

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Inhalt / Contents
Vol. 34 (2011) 4
Einzelheft / Single Issue

**AGEM 1970–2010: Rückblicke und Ausblicke IV.
Die Menschen, die Wörter und die Pflanzen**

Editorial

- EKKEHARD SCHRÖDER: Zur „Ethnomedizin“ in den 1970er Jahren. Ausgewählte Wegmarken 259

Artikel

- BARBARA FRUTH: Care for Health and Body: An Ethnobotanical Approach to Nkundo Plant Use (*Cuvette Centrale*, DRC) with Focus in the Significance of Indigenous Knowledge for the Human Skin 261
- JOHN M. JANZEN: Towards a Historical Perspective on African Medicine and Health (Reprint 1983) 282
- Anhang 1) Tagungsprogramm „Ethnomedizin und Medizingeschichte“, Hamburg 1980 295
- Anhang 2) John M. Janzen: The Impact of Scholarship and Collections in German-speaking Europe on my Africanist Medical Anthropology 296

Forum aktuell: Pharmaceutical Anthropology

- BEATRIZ CAIUBY LABATE: Comments on Brazil's 2010 Resolution Regulating Ayahuasca Use 298
- ANNETTE LEIBING: Drugs for Senility: Two Moments of Alzheimer's Treatment in Urban Brazil . . . 305

Forum „Ethnomedizin“ 1971–1980: Wegmarken/Steps Shaping the Field

Ethnomedizin in den 1970er Jahren

- WULF SCHIEFENHÖVEL: Vorläufiger Symptomenkatalog für die ethnomedizinische Feldforschung (Reprint 1971) 310
- GEORGE SIMEON: Field Methods in Ethnomedicine (Reprint 1973) 312
- JOACHIM STERLY: Ethnomedizin und Sozialdarwinismus. Kritik an einem Buch Alexander Allands (Reprint 1973) 314
- Was ist Ethnomedizin? Auszug aus der Webseite der AGEM 320
- GERHARD RUDNITZKI, WULF SCHIEFENHÖVEL & EKKEHARD SCHRÖDER: Vorwort zu „Ethnomedizin. Beiträge zu einem Dialog zwischen Heilkunst und Völkerkunde“ (Reprint 1977) 321

Ethnomedizin und Medizinische Soziologie in den 1970er Jahren

EMIL ZIMMERMANN: Das einmalige „Sizilienteam“ am Institut für Soziologie und Ethnologie der Universität Heidelberg und der Anfang der „Medizin der Gastarbeiter“	324
ROSWITHA HUBER: Soziale Psychiatrie im Sozialisierungsprozess. Bericht über 3 Tagungen (Reprint 1971)	329
VOLKMAR PAESLACK: Fruchtbare Dilemma – Zur Standortbestimmung der Rehabilitationsmedizin. Diskussionsbemerkung (Reprint 1972)	330
Buchbesprechungen/Book Reviews (Reprints): Kritik der bürgerlichen Medizin. 1970. <i>Das Argument</i> Nr. 60, Sonderband. Berlin. (HERMANN FISCHER-HARRIEHAUSEN, Reprint 1971) – S. 331 // Margarete Möckli-von Seggern 1965. <i>Arbeiter und Medizin</i> . Basel. (GERHARD RUDNITZKI, Reprint 1974/75) – S. 333 // Sokolowska Magdalena, Holówka Jacek & Ostrawska Antonina (Eds.) 1976. <i>Health, Medicine, Society</i> . Dordrecht (TYCHO JARESML, Reprint 1976/7) – S. 334.	
Zur 3ten Fachkonferenz Ethnomedizin: Familienkonzepte in ihrer Bedeutung als Elemente sozialer Sicherung, 6.–8. Mai 1977, Heidelberg. Dokumente zur Pressekonferenz am 7. Mai 1977 (G. RUDNITZKI, H.-J. DIESFELD & B. PFLEIDER-BECKER, Reprint 1977)	337

Ethnomedizin und Humanökologie in den 1970er Jahren und heute

Pädiater contra Nahrungsmittelkonzern (Flugblatt Berlin 1978, Reprint 1978/79) – S. 340 // Bewegung gegen Atomkraftwerke: Die Folgen der Errichtung von Atomkraftwerken (Flugblatt Luzern ca. 1974, Reprint 1975/75) – S. 341 // French Nuclear Tests in the South Pacific (Flugschrift Auckland, Reprint 1981/82) – S. 343 // Kampagnen und Bewegungen: Auszug aus der Webseite der AGEM – S. 344 //	
Mut zur Utopie 2012: Zur “First-Contact-Alley” in Ostafrika – ein Fernwanderweg-Projekt (ERNST SCHUMACHER)	345

Berichte / Reports

Lustvoll? Sexualität im Schnittfeld. Bericht zum Workshop 1 der 6. <i>Tage der Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie</i> , Wien, 22.–23. April 2010 (ELENA JIROVSKI & EVA MARIA KNOLL) – S. 348. // Bericht über das 2. Internationale Symposium “Mental Health in Developing Countries” am 4. Dezember 2010 in München. (WOLFGANG KRAHL) – S. 350 // Medical Anthropology Young Scholars (MAYS EASA) Annual Meeting, June 13–14, 2011, Warsaw, Poland (NINA GRUBE <i>et al.</i>) – S. 353	
---	--

Nachruf / Obituary

Nachruf auf Prof. Dr. Beatrix Pfeleiderer (*28. Juli 1941 †20. August 2011) (DIETER HALLER & DUNJA MOELLER)	359
---	-----

Résumés des articles <i>Curare</i> 34(2011)3 et 34(2011)4	363
--	-----

AutorInnen/Contributors <i>Curare</i> 34(2011)4	368
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Zum Titelbild	U2
Impressum	U2
Hinweise für Autoren/Instructions to Authors	U3

The Impact of Scholarship and Collections in German-speaking Europe on my Africanist Medical Anthropology

It is an honor to be asked by Ekkehard Schröder of the AGEM to offer a comment in connection with a short article *Traditional Medicine now Seen as National Resource in Zaire and Other African Countries*,¹ first presented in enlarged form at the 1980 conference in Hamburg on “Ethnomedizin und Medizingeschichte.” Rereading these words brings back many memories with 40 years of hindsight. Of initial note is the realization that I have enjoyed several significant moments of inspiration from scholars, scholarship, archival resources, and creative exchanges with my counterparts in German speaking Europe, for which I am most grateful. In particular, I note my semester as a Humboldt Fellow in Bonn in 1977 (under the sponsorship of Joachim Sterly, University of Cologne, and the Anthropos Institute, Sankt Augustin), and my visiting lectureship in 2004 at the Ethnomedicine Unit of the Medical University in Vienna (with Armin Prinz and Ruth Kutalek). I shall offer a few reflections on the topic of the 1980 paper, my own work on African health and healing, and the shifting terrain of health and healing scholarship in anthropology.

Within a few years of my Hamburg presentation, Zaire would be plunged into decades of chaos and conflict, and the initiatives (primary health care as promoted by the World Health Organization and the valorization of African healing) which I discussed were among the many victims. Did anything survive? One of the few steadfast features of the region was the name Democratic Republic of Congo which was restored after Mobutu’s ouster, in the context of an extension of the Rwandan war into all of Central Africa. The collapse and fracturing of the Zairian state into multiple armed camps, allied to neighboring countries and special interests, produced millions of victims—who were killed, died of disease or starvation, displaced within the region, or became refugees abroad. Miraculously, the WHO inspired primary health program that had been built up across Zaire in the 1970s and 80s, survived in many places in the form of health workers and methods of intervention, to experience episodic revival especially where funds, medicines, and emergency support became available through outside NGO

support.² Little documentation existed on the role of traditional healers in this period, although one supposes they persisted and thrived in their work.³ Campaigns similar to that launched in Zaire existed in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Rwanda, and more recently South Africa. In my own research and writing, a three month engagement with an NGO in Eastern Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi following the Rwandan genocide and war, shifted my scholarly attention to the importance of the study of conflict, post-conflict rehabilitation, healing, and the accommodation to persisting memories of terror in the health of individuals and populations.⁴

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s my research was devoted to a better understanding of the basic and historical nature of African healing in response to the array of diseases that affected populations in chronic or episodic form, the philosophical foundations of knowledge applied to healing, and the social institutions that carried this knowledge, practice, and traditions. A sub-continental survey in 1982–83 to converse with scholars, and to make direct observations of “cults of affliction” couched in the ancient proto-Bantu and widespread contemporary term *ngoma*—in Kinshasa, Dar es Salaam, Swaziland, and the Western Cape revealed significant common features in the social dimension of this large region of African healing traditions. This broad survey work came after the in-depth scholarship on Lemba, a “cult” in the Lower Congo that emerged in the 17th century in response to the collapse of coastal kingdoms and the overwhelming impact of the coastal trade. Lemba offered a therapeutic solution to class-based conflict by protecting the mercantile elite—the sufferers—from the envy of kin, and taxing them with the redistribution of food and goods as part of the “cure”. Across Central and Southern Africa *ngoma* orders address a myriad of issues, chronic and episodic. My 1982–3 project sought to determine the fate of these orders in contemporary urban settings.

Although specialized research such as that which I have pursued in Central and Southern Africa is the mark of a successful scholar, the reality of teaching—even at a major research university—requires one to



The photo is from an Igqira-type sangoma in Guguleto township, Capetown, of a graduation ceremony, in 1982, with graduate in veil to my left (facing camera), her sponsoring healer to my right, and a kinswoman to her left. (Photo by Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen)

be a connoisseur of many regions of the world, and to foster the ability to relate many disparate subjects to students' own projects and expectations. Thus, while I was actively researching African health and healing topics, I was advising M. A. and PhD dissertations on a variety of topics (as seen in the special edition of VEN "Global Medical Anthropology in the U.S. Heartland." My strategy for dealing with this centrifugal pull in all directions was to focus my teaching on courses of familiar and basic subject matter: "Introduction to Medical Anthropology," an "Advanced Medical Anthropology" seminar, and "Peoples of Africa." Within these courses I could use my specialized knowledge and research to address broader issues that affected other regions of the world, as well as the general fields of anthropology. This toolkit of generalized medical anthropology is what I brought to Vienna during a sabbatical semester in 2004 and taught to undergraduates and a few advanced graduate students there.

The Vienna invitation allowed me to take a side trip to the Sudan where I became better acquainted with Islamic medicine and could relate it to my experience in Central Africa. The collection of contemporary paintings on African health and healing topics that had been assembled by Drs. Prinz and Kutalek were of great interest in another project I was pursuing on museological representations of African healing. Museum collections were an important part of the discoveries I made with regard to Central Africa, and used in my research. The Ber-

lin-Dahlem collections (and the guidance of chief curator Hans-Joachim Koloss) of Adolph Bastian's Loango Coast expedition of 1870s were essential for my reconstruction of the Lemba order, as well as in interpreting a carved Loango ivory that was donated to my university.

My anthropological and Africanist scholarship has been—and continues to be—abundantly enriched by colleagues, collections, and venues of German-speaking Europe. May this brief note celebrate those experiences and contacts.

JOHN M. JANZEN

June, 2011

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Notes

- 1 See *Ethnomedizin* IV(1976/77)1+2: 167–170, reprinted in *Curare* 34(2011)3: 244–245.
- 2 This amazing largely unpublished story was told to me by Dr. Pakisa Tshimika, one of the physicians in charge of public health infrastructure in Bandundu province and the city of Kikwit during the 1980s.
- 3 Although Armin Prinz reported from Azande country in NE Congo that political chaos there produced a popular backlash against healers who were accused of using secretive knowledge to control and exploit the masses.
- 4 The scholarship that resulted from this involvement is contained in "Do I still have a life?" with Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen. The title is based, with permission, on a question asked by a traumatized Rwandan man during our first of several conversations in his site of exile in Eastern Zaire.

Books & Edited Volumes by John M. Janzen

1978 *The Quest for Therapy in Lower Zaire*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. Paperback published 1982 as *The Quest for Therapy: Medical Pluralism in Lower Zaire*; French translation, *La quête de la thérapie au Bas-Zaïre*, Paris: Karthala, 1995. // 1982 *Lemba 1650–1930: A Drum of Affliction in Africa and the New World*. New York: Garland Publishers. <http://ebookbrowse.com/janzen-lemba-1982-4of5-pdf-d83710200> // 1992 *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/r3779n8vf/> // 1992 *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press (with Steven Feierman). // 2000 *Do I still have a life? Voices from the Aftermath of War in Rwanda and Burundi*. Lawrence, KS: Publications in Anthropology, 20 (with Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen). // 2001 *The Social Fabric of Health: An Introduction to Medical Anthropology*. New York: McGraw-Hill // 2008 *Global Medical Anthropology in the U.S. Heartland*. Editor. Special issue, *Viennese Ethnomedicine Newsletter*, Vol. X, February & June (2 & 3). <http://www.univie.ac.at/ethnomed/PDF/ven%20X%20Nr.2+3.pdf> // 2009 *A Carved Loango Tusk: Local Images and Global Connections*. KU Monographs in Anthropology 24.