

States of mind in a shamanic culture

Notes from ethnographic fieldwork among the Yanomami
(Upper Orinoco, Venezuela)

Mental Health in Developing Countries

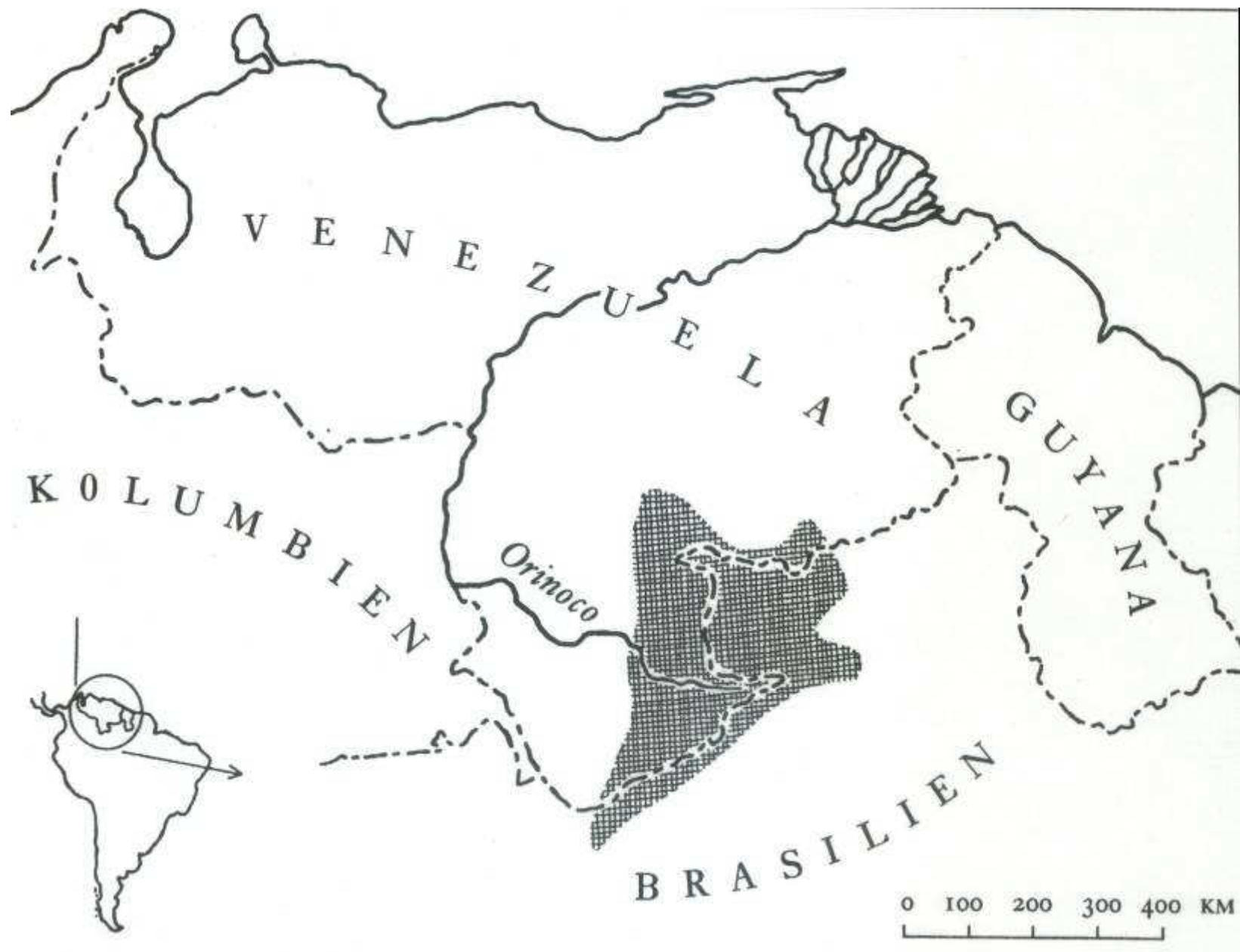
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Outline of the talk

- Shamanism
- The Yanomami of the Upper Orinoco
- Yanomami shamanism
- Presentation of a piece of ethnography (Feb. 1996)
 - an adolescent's crisis -- a mental disorder?
- interpretations of the crisis
 - the western scientists view
 - the Yanomami view

Shamanism

- Complex of different believes and practices
- Ecstatic state of mind – trance
- Spiritual specialist: communication with spirits
- Body-soul relation
 - Separation of body and soul
 - Controlled possession of the person by spirits





Shamanism among the Yanomami is characterized by

- the high relevance of the tutelary spirits – (*hekura*)
- the *hekura* live in the chest of the shaman (*shapori*)
- initiation is a stressful process
- almost all men go through initiation to be a shaman once in their lives
- most men loose their spiritual power
- several shamans (*shapori*) within one village

Visit 1996 in Patanowe

- New: Iyawë (father) and Hoshiyawë (son)
- Iyawë = Aroaema
- Aroaema # Yoreshi
- Parehose – son of Aroaema and Yoreshi

Different interpretations

- Juvenile crisis
- Approach of shamanic spirits (initiation)
- Effect of drug abuse
- „spiritual drug abuse“
- ???