Ethnopharmacology Encyclopedia Article

Ethnopharmacology

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Ethnopharmacology

This branch of pharmacology studies the use and lore of drugs that have been discovered and developed by sociocultural (or ethnic) groups. It involves the direct observation and report of interactions between the societies and the drugs they have found in their natural environments and the customs that have evolved around such drugs, whether ceremonial, therapeutic, or other. These drugs, usually found in plants (hence similar study by ethnobotanists as well as ethnologists), are described—as are their effects within the customs, beliefs, and histories of a traditional culture or a specific society.

Examples include descriptions of the use of coca leaves (*Erythroxylon coca*) by indigenous populations of Colombia and Peru, for increased strength and endurance in high altitudes; the ceremonial use of PEYOTE (*Lophophora sp.*) by Native Americans of the Southwest and Mexico; and the use of KAVA (*Piper methysticum*) in ceremonial drinks by the indigenous populations of many South Pacific islands.

See Also

Asia, Drug Use In; Dover's Powder; Plants, Drugs From)

Bibliography

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