CONTRIBUTION OF THE IPP TO THE HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND TO PRESERVE THE PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL LEGACY IN ARGENTINA

INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of information about the history of the Parapsychology in Argentina. A summary research could be found in the Parra’s (1990) pioneer work, and most recently in Gimeno (2014), who developed a great historical research about the old mediums, psychics and psi researchers in Argentina.

The Institute of Paranormal Psychology (IPP) was established in 1994 as an educational center dedicated to the scientific study of paranormal/anomalous events. Its focus is on experimental, clinical and empirical research, plus the collection and publication of case reports dealing with parapsychological experiences. As a non-profit research and educational institute, the IPP has been recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) (for further information, see Parra, 2011).

The aim of this brief presentation is to describe three projects carried out by the Institute to preserve the historical legacy of the parapsychology in Argentina. (1) Library and bibliography research, (2) the Argentine psi...
theographic paranormal exhibition, and (3) the research project on the Spiritualism in Argentina.

THE PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL LIBRARY OF THE IPP

The IPP's main source of pride is its parapsychological library, which contains around 3500 books, 12,000 issues of academic journals and popular magazines, and thousands of files of articles in non-parapsychological journals in the scientific mainstream, which is the most important collection of its kind in Argentina and even in Latin America. The IPP also hosts about two thousands hours' worth of VHS and DVD tapes on parapsychological and related topics. The Latin American Agency of Psi Information Center (Agencia Latinoamericana de Información Psi, or ALIPsi) is an internet-based database of parapsychology references and on-line information related to the Spanish-speaking literature (see free downloadable catalogs in www.alipsi.com.ar). The data reside in a computer, because ALIPsi covers the bulk of parapsychology articles in Spanish-language journals from 1900 to-date. It also offers advisory service in bibliographical investigations to undergraduate students and journalists.

We designed SIF's® v.3.0, which is a collection of computerized bibliographic databases that emphasize parapsychology and related consciousness disciplines. The aim is to include a bibliographic citation and/or an abstract, of any book or article (scholarly or popular), thesis, chapter, conference proceedings paper, and monograph on parapsychology and Spiritualism, or related consciousness studies. Non-English languages included are Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. SIF's® also includes are relevant articles published in subject specialty journals in such fields as psychology, physics, engineering, education, philosophy, religion, psychiatry, medicine, literature, folklore, mathematics, anthropology, general science magazines, and related parapsychology and consciousness studies. We also include books and articles on parapsychology from 1900 to date and some of the most relevant books from other disciplines up to 2013.

In 2010, we received a grant from BIAL Foundation for support and preserve the Library and to charge all entries in the database.

"IMAGES OF THE OCCULT": AN ARGENTINE PHOTOGRAPHIC PARANORMAL EXHIBITION

From November 8th to 20th, 2009, the Roca Museum -National Institute for History Research in Buenos Aires, was the stage of the Images of the Occult: Spiritism and Paranormal Photographic Exhibition organized by the Paranormal Psychology Institute (IPP). The paranormal photographic exhibition was also supported by Ministry of Culture of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires. The Latinamerican Psi Information Agency (ALIPsi), and two of the oldest Kardecian spiritualist society, La Fraternidad and Constancia, established in 1877 and 1880, respectively.

Approximately 2,500 visitors attended the exhibition. As the Museum is an institution supported by the Argentine Government, the entry was free of charge and open to all. Psychologists Alejandro Parra and Juan Manuel Corbetta authored and edited a two hundred-pages CD catalog including 160 images ready for print (Parra & Corbetta, 2006). Some of the main thematic areas included engravings, classic illustrations, photos from the end of the 19th and 20th century showing typical physical phenomena (i.e. tables and mediums levitations, apparitions, physical effect mediums and ectoplasmas). The case of the most impressive Argentine medium Oswaldo Fidanza, in whose séances stones and other objects had appeared, and other internationally well-known mediums. Thirty old and rare psychical research books and magazines and a number of ancient instruments collection used to contact with spirits, besides other curiosities provided by the IPP archives and by two spiritualist societies La Fraternidad and Constancia, which joined together all Argentinian Spiritualist societies. The most controversial proofs of materialization are the series of photographs taken by Spiritualist societies at Buenos Aires, showing the successive phases of the phenomenon, and the hollow moulds of hands.
and feet, taken in paraffin wax. A reproduction of these phenomena was also shown. Curious objects, such as three-legged tables utilized when one could still find physical-effect mediums capable of moving them or a Ouija-board collection also was exhibited for visi-
tors. The same for the statues used to produce the so-called direct writing. Surely some of the shown may
have been the one utilized by American medium Hen-
ry Slade when he visited Buenos Aires (circa 1887).

A RESEARCH PROJECT ON SPIRITUALISM IN ARGENTINA

Historical researchers Juan Gimeno and Juan Manuel Corbetta, together with A. Fabiana Savalli, a Museum
curator, authored the book Cuando Habían los Espíri-
tus. Historia del Movimiento Kardeceano en la Argenti-
nia [When the Spirits Speak: A History of the Kardecean
Movement in Argentina], which is a well-documented
academic book, which focused on the idea of life af-
after death connected with Spiritism and Modern Spirit-
ualism in Buenos Aires (Gimeno, Corbetta, & Savalli,
2013).

There are few well known references to Spiritualism in
Argentina. The first one was written by the Argentinean
politician and journalista Cosme Marín, who was an
active participant in the political and social life of Bue-
nos Aires. He was also the President of Constancia,
one of the first spiritualist associations in Buenos Aires,
for nearly 20 years. The second one was written by
César Bogo. Spiritualism in Argentina was introduced
by Spanish Justo de Espada, one of thousands of im-
migrants, in 1857, only few months after the edition of
The Spirits Book by Allan Kardec. He founded the first
group together with Torcuato Zubiría, who was the first
medium in Argentina.

Spiritualism in Argentina began in 1877, when the first
centre, the Sociedad Espiritista Constancia [Spiritual-
ism Society “Constancia”], was founded. It attracted
numerous Argentinean free-thinkers and scientists.
Among others, the American medium Henry Slade
was invited to participate in spiritualist séances. In
1888, the physical medium Camilo Blendt produced
materialisations, ectoplasm and other impressive phe-
nomena. Osvaldo Fidalgo was one of the well-docu-
mented physical effects medium who lived in Buenos
Aires. An attempt on his life interrupted a series of
sessions that had been planned to show these phe-
nomena to the scientific community in Buenos Aires.
From that moment on he lost his abilities, although he
continued promoting his ideas and providing an ex-
ample of a healthy critical attitude toward these types
of phenomena.

These studies were taken as a challenge by the Ar-
gentinean chemist Ovidio Rebaudi, who founded the
Sociedad Magnétolójica Argentina [Argentine Mes-
merism Society] in 1886. The French physiologist
and Nobel Prize laureate Charles Richet was greatly
interested in the experimental results obtained by Ar-
gentinean psychical researchers. Rebaudi published
the Revista de Magnetología [Journal of Mesmerism],
of which a few issues were issued between 1886 and
1910; the Society’s name was then changed into the
Instituto Metaesquizico, which published the Revista
de Meta Psicografico Experimental [Argentine Journal
of Psychical Research] over a period of about ten years.
Ovidio Rebaudio, together with several collaborators,
worked within the spiritualist context, but emulated the
(British) Society for Psychical Research. Although
they went through many economic difficulties, spiri-
tualists respected Rebaudi for his work, because he
maintained an ‘anímicist’ (and not spiritualist) approach
when confronting mediunistic phenomena.

The authors also examine the rise of Spiritualism, tak-
ing the reader from Spiritualism to psychical research.
Gimeno, Corbetta and Savalli visited many Spiritualist so-
cieties in Buenos Aires and other places, where they
interviewed sitters, mediums and directors; and they
attended public and private meetings and carried out
a catalog of books, photographs, articles and admin-
istrative records never consulted before by outsiders.
Kardecean spirituality and parapsychology, which share
the same research aims, show a healthy tolerance for
each other’s viewpoints, and a complementary interest
in research.
FURTHER REMARKS

During the last twenty years the IPP has achieved much to preserve the historical legacy of parapsychology. For instance, Alejandro Parra introduced parapsychology into the university—slowly but increasingly—by using other names such as "paranormal psychology." Indeed there is no difference between paranormal psychology and parapsychology, but the change of terms was introduced because of the increased confusion between proper parapsychology and the activities of people who have abused the term by approaching it as 'pop' parapsychology. In Argentina, many people believe that the term parapsychologist is equivalent to psychic.

Finally, between 1990 and 2004, the IPP published fifty-four issues of a peer-reviewed quarterly journal, the Revista Argentina de Psicología Paranormal [Argentine Journal of Paranormal Psychology]. The journal's impact on many young parapsychologists in several Spanish-speaking countries was impressive. However, the RAPP was discontinued for financial reasons. Subsequently, in 2006, the IPP inaugurated a new on-line publication, the E-Bulletin Psi, of which twenty five issues have been published to-date. We publish many research articles on history of parapsychology in Argentina and its pioneers.

LITERATURE


Mediumistic received drawing on April 10th, 1933, between midnight and 2 AM.
Title: 'Jesus using the cross to reach the Lord'.
At the back of this drawing are the signatures of ten persons who witnessed the medium Mr. Verwaal.

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