

George Zorab

George Zorab (1898-1990) was a Dutch psychical researcher and commentator, who is chiefly remembered for his many books and articles on parapsychological topics.

Life and Career

George Avetoom Marterus Zorab was born in 1898 in Surabaya in Java, formerly part of the Dutch East Indies. In his early teens his family moved to the Netherlands.

Zorab became interested in spiritism after attending a séance which made a big impression on him.^[1]

He joined the Dutch Society for Psychical Research and in 1932 started experimenting, mainly on spontaneous paranormal phenomena and extrasensory perception with psychotics as subjects. He joined the Society for Psychical Research in 1938. He was the first editor of two Spiritualist periodicals, *Life after Death* and *Know Thyself*.

Zorab was honorary secretary of the Dutch Society for Psychical Research from 1945 to 1957. In 1956 he was invited by Eileen Garrett to direct her newly founded Parapsychology Foundation European Research Centre at St Paul de Vence, France, occupying the post until 1958.

In the 1950s Zorab came into conflict with WH Tenhaeff, who had been appointed professor of parapsychology at the University of Utrecht and was carrying out experiments with the psychic Gerard Croiset. Zorab criticized what he considered Tenhaeff's lack of methodological rigour, and dissented from his quantitative approach, preferring qualitative methods. In 1960 he and Jan Kappers, a doctor, founded the Dutch Association for Parapsychology with its own magazine, *Spiegel der Parapsychologie*, which Zorab edited until his death.

In later life, Zorab ceased experimenting but continued to be active in parapsychology as a writer, critic and popularizer. His books include a study of the nineteenth century medium DD Home, and bibliographies of parapsychology. He also acted as mentor to younger researchers.^[2]

Zorab wrote of his friendships with parapsychologists such as Eric Dingwall, Molly Goldney, Emilio Servadio and Robert Thouless.^[3] But he often engaged in controversy with them, for instance over his suggestion that paranormal functioning has a biological origin, with which many of his colleagues disagreed.^[4]

Zorab was honoured by the publication of a *Liber Amicorum* in 1986 that detailed his contributions to psychical research as well as listing his several hundred articles and books.^[5]

Select Publications

Books

The Resurrection Narratives in the Light of Parapsychology (1949). The Hague: H.P. Leopold.

Magnetism and Miracle Healers (1952). Leiden: Numij.

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Poltergeists and Their Phenomena (1984). The Hague: H.P. Leopold.

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The case of Mrs Maters (1961). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 41, 47-49.

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Foreign comments on Florence Cook's mediumship (1964). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 54, 173-84.

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An interesting long-termed precognition (1966). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 43, 309-17.

Correspondence (1966). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 43, 331-33; 383-85.

A precognition of death (1969). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 45, 141-44.

A precognitive dream in connection with an examination question (1969). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 45, 146-47.

Precognitive visions during the Second World War (1969). *Metapsichica* 24, 136-45.

Experiments in extrasensory perception in connection with a scientific investigation (1970). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 45, 211-20.

Test sittings with D.D. Home at Amsterdam 1858 (1970). *Journal of Parapsychology* 34/1, 47-63.

Were DD Home's spirit hands ever fraudulently produced? (1971). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 46, 228-35.

The Sitoebondo poltergeist Java, 1893: A firsthand account written soon after the events. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 67, 391-406.

Correspondence (1974). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 47, 466-69; 538-39.

A tribute to Emilio Servadio on his seventieth birthday (1974). *Parapsychology Review* 5/4, 7-11.

Have we to reckon with a special phantom-form predisposition? (1975). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 19-30.

Obituary: J.G. van Busschbach (1975). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 44.

Parapsychological developments in the Netherlands (1976). *European Journal of Parapsychology* 3/1, 57-82.

Have we finally solved the problem of D.D. Home's descent? (1978). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 49, 844-47.

A modern haunting (1980, with A. MacKenzie). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 50, 284-93.

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Psychic: The Story of Peter Hurkos by Peter Hurkos (1962). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 41, 429-31.

The Crisis in Parapsychology: Stagnation or Progress? by Hans Gerloff (1965). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 43, 153-55.

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References

Footnotes

1.^ Michels (1991), 381; Zorab (1987), 138.

2.^ Van der Hoeven (2002)

3.^ Zorab (1987), 141.

4.^ Zorab (1987), 141.

5.^ Snel (1986).