



The Spirits or Mothers of the Plants - Pablo Amaringo (Luna)

## Twelve Constellations of the Girdle of Gaia

*"The Tree of Life bears twelve manner of monthly fruit  
and the leaves are for the healing of the nations"- Revelation*

Just as the twelve signs of the Zodiac represent twelve constellations of prominent stellar configurations so the following constellations of sacred plants, because of their great cultural significance, deserve to be respected as the fabled twelve-fold fruit of the Tree of Life. Each constellation represents a collection of species sharing a particular molecular arrangement psychoactive in the human brain, and having a significant cultural history of religious use to induce visionary, mystical or shamanic trance states.

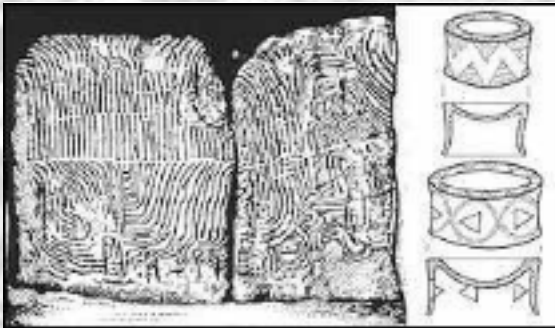
This chapter is to acknowledge the stature and respect these sacred fruits deserve, and to indicate beyond them those other stars without number which further enrich the diversity of our conscious life. It should be borne in mind that ancient uses of such plants were negotiated in a sacred and ritual manner and that several, despite their historical use are toxic. Others despite not being physically harmful have profound effects on the conscious mind, which, without proper guidance, could lead to social consequences detrimental to the respect in which these and all medicinal plants should be held. Eliade's failure to recognize the central role of hallucinogens in the shamanic path, both in Siberia and particularly in the Americas constitutes one of the most misleading episodes in modern anthropology.

Pivotal to this realization is also an overturning of James Frazer's sequence of civilized attainment from magic to religion and finally to science. The idea that magic is more primitive than religion and that religion is more primitive than science arises from a confusion between mechanism and the intrinsic uncertainty of conscious experience. From a quantum-mechanical perspective, science and magic look if anything complementary. Science explains the probabilities in a given situation and 'shamanism' addresses why one possible fate rather than another is chosen by nature. Religion has been caught in the middle, falling from its primal roots in vision in the doctrines of mass belief, and yet neither conforming to the rational developments of scientific reason. Through a combination of scientific reason and shamanic vision, we may finally correct the folly of religion and regain the Tao of vision-reason which the gatherer-hunters with their vast knowledge of plants gave us as their sacred heritage of the Garden - the fruit of knowledge and immortality.

## The Ancient Use of Sacred Plants

By the Upper Palaeolithic period, beginning about 45,000 years ago and ending around 10,000 years ago in Europe *Homo sapiens sapiens* had firmly established itself with an economy based on hunting, fishing and the gathering of plants. Almost all gatherer-hunter societies have a division of labour between the sexes. The men hunt whilst the women gather plants and collect or hunt small animals (e.g. shellfish, birds, eggs, etc.). Whilst animal proteins are prized, the bulk of the staple foodstuffs are gained by female labour. In prehistoric times women's role vis-a-vis plants, probably not limited to food, or medical species, but extended into the discovery of psychoactive plants (echoing the European witchcraft tradition. Gatherers have an extremely detailed knowledge of their land and its natural resources, and traditionally identify, collect and process a variety of psychoactive species. The leisure time of many hunter-gatherers seems to be abundant. Case-studies from various parts of the world show that sufficient food can be obtained in an average adult working day of 3-5 hours (Rudgley 12-14).

The neolithic saw no particular improvement over the palaeolithic in the amount of time required per capita for the production of subsistence; probably, with the advent of agriculture, people had to work harder. There is abundant data which suggests not only that hunter-gatherers have adequate supplies of food but also that they enjoy quantities of leisure time, much more in fact than do modern industrial or farm workers, or even professors of archaeology (Sahlin).



Carved stones from the neolithic tomb of Gavrinis in Brittany. Pottery braziers Er Lannic (Rudgley).

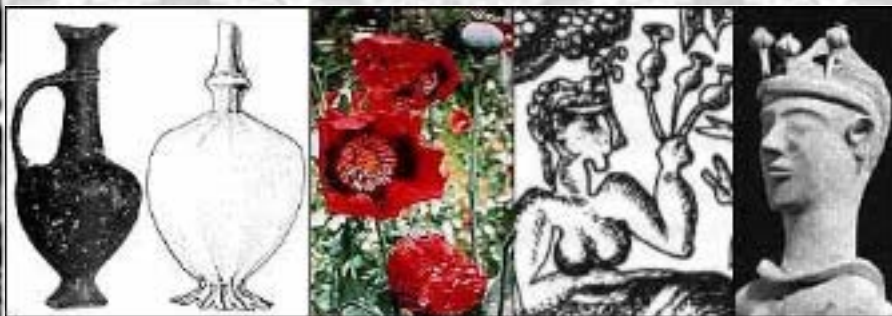
In the *Alchemy of Culture*, Richard Rudgley gathers evidence from several researchers that Palaeolithic cultures, based on such detailed knowledge of local flora and fungi utilized the natural distributions of psychoactive species in their locale as an early feature of

their cultural development. Rudgley notes the research of other authors who make a case that the abstract patterns that occur in parallel with the animals found in such pre-historic caves as Lascaux, which have long been ascribed to shamanic rites of hunting, are representations of the phosphenes that accompany meditative and trance states, accompanying shamanic practices, particularly those associated with psychoactive plants. Somewhat later we indeed find more definitive suggestions of such 'phosphene art' in the form of the Neolithic Tomb of Gavrinis in Brittany, where carved megaliths from a neolithic tomb show striking abstract patterns of this nature. These are also nearby another find of pottery 'vase-supports' from Er Lannic, some of which show signs of being used as braziers, and are consistent with an early spread from the South of ritual burning possibly of opium.

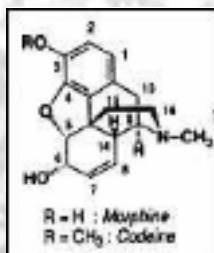


## 1: *Papaver somniferum*: The Poppy of the Holy Mother

The opium poppy, which is one of the most medically important plants known to man and which still plays a central role in the control of pain and suffering, particularly in terminal conditions, shows a very early pattern of use and cultivation. Although the exact origins of the poppy remain uncertain, it seems to have been domesticated in the west Mediterranean by the sixth millennium BC. Several finds of remains poppy seeds have come from neolithic lake villages in Switzerland, and also in Germany and Italy point to widespread domestication in neolithic times. These are complemented by full pods at burial sites at Albul in Spain from around 4200 BC which are more indicative of medicinal use.



Cypriot juglets from Egypt 18th dynasty from around 1350 BC appear to be designed on inverted poppy pods, *Papaver somniferum*, inset of Minoan seal from Crete 1500 BC, head of Goddess with slit poppies Crete 1350 BC (Rudgley, King, Gadon, Gadon).



Use of poppies in Crete is attested by Minoan statues and seals from the second millennium BC clearly indicating ritual use of opium resin in the cultures of the fertility Goddess, consistent with her role in gathering medicinal plants and using them as an integral part of her ritual worship. It is natural for the fertility Goddess to utilize and respect as spiritual those emanations of her own manifestation of physical fertility as an aspect of the very body of the Earth Goddess. During the Late Minoan period opium was taken by participants in ceremonies to induce a state of ecstasy essential for the performance of the sacred rites. From a similar period come

Cypriot juglets from tel Amarna in the 18th dynasty of Egypt of Akhenaten. It has been suggested that these juglets were designed to iconically represent their contents as indicated above left. Chromatographic evidence confirms the presence of opiates in at least some of these juglets (Rudgley 27).

The role of opium in the ancient world is well attested. There are references to it in writings from Egypt, Assyria and Greece. Egyptian medical texts list among opium's many uses its sedative powers to alleviate the pain of wounds, abscesses and scalp complaints. For the Romans too it was something of a panacea, being used to treat elephantiasis, carbuncles, liver complaints, epilepsy and scorpion bites, according to Pliny. Opion is Greek for poppy juice, dedicated to Nyx, goddess of the night, who is shown distributing it to youths in repose in a cameo. Almost every

major writer of antiquity from Hippocrates who recommended poppy wine, mentions it. (Emboden 23).



A Lisu village Thailand-Burma border 1976. Poppy field, lisu child among the poppies (CK)

It has also been suggested that the poppy was an integral part of sacrificial rites from Sumer to Babylon. It has been noted that in at least some of the sacrificial Tombs of the early Kings of Ur the sacrificed servants and courtiers appear to have died peacefully, suggesting they were given a potion to relax them, or even to bring on unconsciousness. Sumerian tablature of the second millennium BC mentions its efficacy in bringing sleep and an end to pain (Emboden 23).

A key paragraph from Babel Tower (273) expresses this use in poetic terms: “We are told by antiquaries ... that in ancient Babylon, in the chamber at the top of the ziggurat which was reserved for the activities of the god Baal, he came sometimes to sleep with the priestess, and sometimes to share a feast at a giant stone table, and sometimes, in difficult times, to demand a sacrifice. And there are many tales of what this sacrifice was - a red human heart, tastefully roasted, a whole human infant, the first-bom, trussed and tossed into the flames of his altar fire. It is told that on his feast days a great cake was baked, and cut into small portions, one of which was blacked with the soot of the eternal Fire of his altar. The people took their cakes blindfold, and he who chose the black square was the Chosen One, devoted to the god. And for a time this Devoted One was fed and fattened, granted his desires of the flesh, sweet cakes and wine, sweet bedfellows and smoky opiates. And when his time came, he was led smiling to the fire, and the god was pleased, and did not wilfully torture or persecute the people for the following year, but let their corn and vines grow rich and their children spring up plump and healthy.”

In Eurasia there is a legend that Buddha cut off his eyelids in order to prevent sleep overtaking him, and where they fell, there grew a herb which bore a nodding violet flower which was to give sleep and tortured dreams to all mankind (Emboden 20).

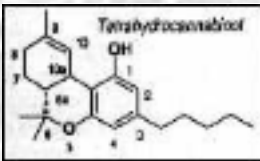
## **2: Cannabis: Ganga, the Sacred River of the Sadhu**

A similar case can be made for the use of hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) as an intoxicant in prehistoric Europe. Hemp seeds have been found at a variety of Neolithic sites in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Romania. Like the opium poppy, hemp grows as a weed, and its proximity to prehistoric communities was a factor in its domestication. (Rudgley 28). Cannabis has been a five-purpose plant: fiber, seed oil, for its seeds as food, for its psychoactive properties, and therapeutically as a medicine (Schultes & Hofmann 92).





The River of the Sadhu: Om Nama Shivai! A Sadhu takes the sacred chillum (Schultes & Hofmann 1979). The immortal Ganges is the very name of Hemp. Government Ganga shop: Varanasi: Sacred status permits the sale of Ganga within the ancient city of the Ganga (CK)

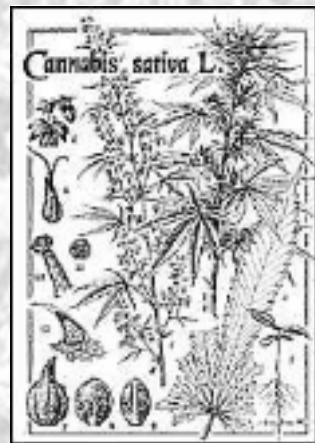


In several parts of eastern Europe decorated pottery 'polypod' bowls or braziers from the early third millennium BC have been found. The earliest of these came from the Pontic Steppes. Examples found in the Carpathian Basin, Czechoslovakia and southern Germany are somewhat later, indicating this type of pottery spread from east to west. *Cannabis sativa*, too, is generally thought to have originated on the steppes and subsequently to have spread into Europe. Two further finds of associated artifacts add weight to the possibility of a later Neolithic cannabis cult. "A pit-grave burial of the later third millennium in Romania was discovered to include an item described as a 'pipe cup' which itself contained charred hemp seeds. Another pipe cup from the same period and belonging to the north Caucasian Early Bronze Age was found with hemp seed present. The seeds are the most heat-resistant part of the plant, suggest the intoxicating flowers and leaves had been burnt away" (Rudgley 28).

*Cannabis sativa* (Schultes and Hofmann 1979)

Contemporary with the rise of the polypod bowls was a novel style of pottery ornamentation. While the bowl was still wet, cord was wrapped around it in order to impress it with a pattern. This cord decoration may have been a way of celebrating the contents of the bowls, ... not by imitating the shape of the *Cannabis sativa* plant (as the Cypriote juglets imitated the opium poppy) but by decoration applied by the use of hemp cord.

Both the fibre and intoxicating qualities of hemp were exploited by later cultures such as the Thracians. "A Greek source notes that they made their garments from its fibre and it is known that their shamans (Kapnobatai) used cannabis to induce trance. Just as it can be shown that the use of opium was widespread in the early historical period in the



east Mediterranean, there is also sufficient evidence that hemp was being used as an intoxicant by the Iron Age. Cannabis has been discovered in the grave chamber of the Hochdorf Hallstatt waggon-burial near Stuttgart in Germany (circa 500 BC), and also at Scythian sites on the steppes” (Rudgley 30). Democritus around 400 BC noted its use occasionally with wine and myrrh to produce visionary states. The Assyrians were also during the first millennium BC known to use Hemp as an incense.

*To Earth's far-distant confines we are come,  
The tract of Scythia, waste untrod by man.  
Aeschylus - Prometheus Bound.*

In the eighth century BC Scythian groups from the east began to migrate westward with their flocks and herds. After a successful alliance with the Medes, which resulted in the sacking of Assyrian Nineveh in 613 BC, both the Asiatic and the European Scythians began a series of conflicts with the Persian kings of the Achaemenian Dynasty. A group that features in a number of trilingual inscriptions in Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian is the *saka haitinaiaixa* or ‘haoma-drinking Scythians’ after Haoma (Rudgley 35).



Neolithic bowls probably used as braziers for Hemp. The Scythian Goddess holds the Tree of Life before a horseman. Scythian Hemp braziers and ‘tripod’ (half-size) (Schultes & Hoffmann 1979, Rudgley).

In the fifth century BC Herodotus travelled widely to the north of the Black Sea and

includes the following account of Scythian intoxication in his Histories: ‘On a framework of tree sticks, meeting at the top, they stretch pieces of woolen cloth. Inside this tent they put a dish with hot stones on it. Then they take some hemp seed, creep into the tent, and throw the seed on the hot stones. At once it begins to smoke, giving off a vapor unsurpassed by any vapor bath one could find in Greece. The Scythians are so delighted they shout for joy.’

The Chinese emperor Shen-Nung 2737 BC prescribed Cannabis. Ruderalis, indica and sativa. A miniature from 15th cent The garden of heavenly delights of the Hashishim (Schultes & Hoffmann 1979).



Tradition in India maintains that the gods sent man Hemp so that he might attain delight, cour-



age, and heightened sexual desires. When nectar or Amrita dropped down from heaven, Cannabis sprouted from it. Another story tells how when the gods, helped by demons churned the mile ocean to obtain Amrita one of the resulting divine nectars was Cannabis, able to give man anything from a good health and a long life to visions of the gods. It was consecrated to Shiva and was Indra's favorite drink. Cannabis bears the name Vijaya for the victory the gods had over the demons in retaining guardianship of Amrita. Ever since the plant has been held in India to bestow supernatural powers on its user). As Bhang it was thought to deter evil, bring luck and cleanse man of sin s (Schultes and Hofmann 92).

Hemp fibre can be found from 4000 BC in China and 3000 BC from Turkestan. It is described as Ma-fen (Hemp-fruit) in China where a legendary emperor of 2000 BC said 'If taken to excess, it will cause you to see devils. If taken over a long time it makes one communicate with spirits and lightens one's body'. Emperor Shen-Nung in 2737 BC noted its bisexual nature and recommended for a variety of uses from malaria to absent-mindedness. A Taoist priest in 500 BC noted that Cannabis 'was employed by necromancers, in combination with Ginseng to set forward time and reveal future events'. In later China, this use seems to have disappeared (Schultes and Hofmann 93-5).

Hashish is also associated with the Old Man of the Mountain and his garden of paradise supposed to convince kidnapped young men that if they obeyed his orders as assassins, they would gain such a reward. It was described as a physical realization of Muhammad's paradise promised to the followers of Islam: 'In a beautiful valley between two mountains [Aloedin] formed a luxurious garden, with delicious fruit and every fragrant shrub ... with streams of milk and honey and beautiful damsels accomplished in the arts of singing and playing on all sorts of instruments, dancing, dalliance and amorous allurements'. However historical accounts of the Ismaili leader Hasan-i Sabah say he built the castle Aluh Amut 'the eagles teaching' on an eyrie and was a recluse learned in geometry, astronomy and magic. As an opponent of the caliph who did commit assassinations, he has been fancifully denigrated by his Sunni opponents (Rudgley 101). It is thus very doubtful whether hashish should receive the stigma of the assassin.



Children having a ritual smoke in the Rastafarian church. Children are also invited to three peyote meetings in the Native American Church during their childhood (Cohen D).

Despite Islam's unambiguous stand against alcohol, the use of Hemp spread widely in the Islamic world, and into Africa, and subsequently throughout the globe through movements of both slaves and migrants.



Cannabis is also the sacred herb of the Rastafarians, setting an unusual biblical tradition of being cannabis-smoking followers of Yahweh. The Ethiopian tradition also runs through the Shulamite Queen of Sheba.

The psychoactive effects of Cannabis and its preparations vary widely, depending on the preparation the user and the background. Perhaps the most frequent characteristic is a dreamy state. Long-forgotten events are often recalled and thoughts occur in unrelated sequences. Perception of time and occasionally space are altered. Visual and auditory hallucinations follow the use of large doses. Euphoria, excitement and inner happiness - often with hilarity and laughter are typical. It behooves us to consider the role of Cannabis in [our] past and learn what lessons it can teach us ... for it appears the it will be with us for a long time (Schultes and Hofmann 101).

### **The True Hallucinogens**

The Americas are to the rest of the world a psychic Garden of Eden. The vast majority of truly hallucinogens originate from there or were discovered and used there. This irony for human culture leads to a paradoxical situation where the most powerful spiritual agents in nature have become accursed by an inexperienced alien culture of conquest, only to become nearly lost to civilization as endowments of evolution for the illumination of humankind.

In the Americas, psychedelic power plants have been without exception the object of veneration and worship in virtually every culture that has had access to them, over time scales of millennia. This includes a spectrum of the most potent agents known including sacred mushrooms from the ancient Mayas to the modern Mazatecs, Peyote from the Toltecs to the Huichols, San Pedro cactus from the Chavin culture to Eduardo Caldero, Ayahuasca - the vine of the soul from the Genesis of the world, morning glories and even the frankly uncontrollable plants of the Datura family. We should take a lesson from their experience and try to understand why they held these plants in such esteem.

Despite their powerful nature, the sacred use of these allies has served to foster respect in their use. This turns what could become an unhinged occasion into a carefully guided one, which happens only on ritually appointed occasions, over which the group and its guardians keep a watchful eye on the participants and firm protocols operate. This in turn serves to unite the participants in a bond which is both shared with one another and with the infinite.

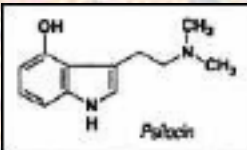
### **3: Teonanactl: Flesh of the Gods**

The Story of the discovery of the flesh of the gods is dealt with in detail in *Homage to Maria Sabina* (p 124). It is surely one of the more exceptional episodes of human history. The very existence of such entities had apparently disappeared from human consciousness, despite the existence of ancient mushroom stones in the Guatemalan highlands, when in 1936 an anthropologist in Mexico discovered of the existence of a mushroom rite, hidden through the 500 years of Christian repression. It was to lie fallow for another 20 years until Gordon Wasson received the prophesied transmission from Maria Sabina.

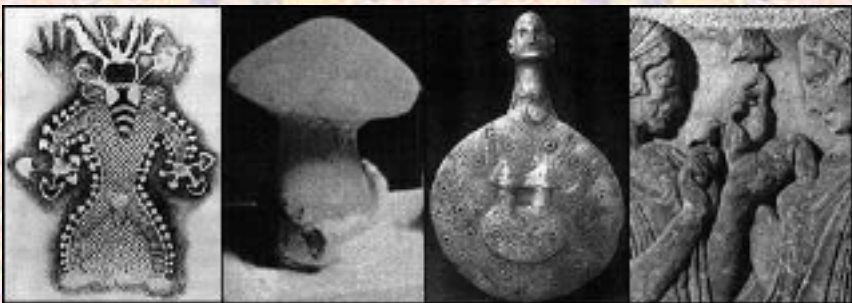




*Psilocybe cyanescens* (Stamets 111), Mushroom Stone (Weil), Maria Sabina with the living sacrament (Riedlinger 1992)



Subsequently great interest developed in psilocybe mushrooms, Albert Hofmann synthesizing the active ingredient and Timothy Leary giving them notoriety, while nevertheless recognizing in them something of their spiritual potential. It gradually came to be discovered that although somewhat difficult to identify, there were psilocin-bearing mushrooms, predominantly psilocybes, in just about every moist terrain on the planet. Psilocybin the phosphorylated form of psilocin is also present. Two types of habitat are distinguishable. Most species are carbohydrate decomposers that live stably for long periods on decaying wood. The other type is a large tropical mushroom growing in pastures in association with Brahmin cattle.



Tassili rock painting Southern Algeria 3500 BC (McKenna). Mushroom, Vinca, Central Balkans 5500-3500 BC (McKenna) Double Mushroom Idol from the Konya Plain, Turkey (McKenna). The sacrament: Eleusi's 'liberty cap' (Graves 1955).

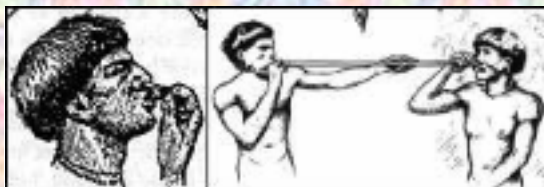
Mushroom artifacts have also been discovered in the Old World. Given the widespread distribution of forest psilocybes it would be most surprising if the early gatherers of Europe had not become familiar with their properties. The example



from the Konja plain above has what look like a pair of mushrooms on the front and a riveting stare consistent with a visionary state. These are consistent with an early spread of a mushroom cult, possibly of a pastoral mushroom associated with cattle. On the south side of the Mediterranean, Tassili rock painting shows a variety of instances of shamanic figures some either running holding a 'mushroom' or sprouting 'mushrooms', while at the same time covered in just those entopic patterns mentioned in prehistoric Europe. Climatic changes could have made this area fertile in earlier periods.

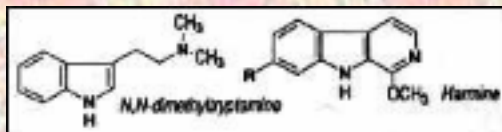
A stele of Demeter, passing the central sacrament of the Eleusinian mystery to Persephone, also presents the distinctive appearance of a liberty bell mushroom similar to the pastoral *Psilocybe semilanceata*. These mysteries have also been associated with ergot, because it is a hallucinogen which is in the very grain of which Demeter is the Goddess, but one should regard all sacred plants and fungi as potentially in the domain of the Earth Goddess and her mystery religions. The above sacrament is clearly not ergot. Neither does ergot show on the grains otherwise held by Persephone.

*Psilocybe cyanescens* is extensive throughout Europe and may have been introduced to the US with the Europeans. The preferred substrate of *cyanescens* is alder. As such woods come to be cut down and used domestically, so piles of decaying nutrient build up which can lead to large eruptions of fungi in association with small communities. The alder figures in old European tree lore (Graves).



Two forms of snuffing tube (Schultes & Hofmann 1980).

#### 4: The Vine of the Soul and the Hallucinogenic Snuffs



One of the most powerful traditions in shamanic use comes from a complex of plants containing various admixtures of methylated-tryptamines and beta-carbolines. Dimethyl-tryptamine or

its 5-methoxy derivative may also be taken on its own as a snuff. There are a variety of famous snuffs including *yopo* from leguminous *Anadenanthera* beans and *epena* from *Virola* species. These snuffs are often blown through long blow guns, resulting in an explosive intoxication. The substances are very short acting and literally knock the participant over, while lasting no more than five minutes. Several species of *Acacia* including *confusa*, *maidenii*, and *phlebophylla* also contain DMT as well as related *Mimosa hostilis* the roots of which form the



basis of an hallucinogenic drink..



Left and right: evidence of nasal discharge from Nazca culture and its predecessor shows that the shamanic power animals of the desert were to be seen by flying shamans (Flightpath to the Gods TV). Centre: Hallucinogenic snuffing through a blow gun (Flightpath to the Gods TV)

However the most singular hallucinogen known to man is certainly the drink known in Quechua as *ayahuasca* - the vine of the soul or rope of the dead, *caapi*, or *yaje*. "There is a magical intoxicant in the northwestern most of South America which the Indians believe can free the soul from corporeal confinement, allowing it to wander free and return to the body at will. The soul thus untrammelled, liberates its owner from the realities of everyday life and introduces him to wondrous realms of which he considers to be reality and permits him to communicate with his ancestors" (Schultes & Hofmann 1979 120).

This is an admixture based on both dimethyl-tryptamine and the carboline harmine. The bark of the vine of certain *Banisteriopsis* species is mashed and boiled with the leaves of plants such as certain *Psychotria* species especially *Psychotria viridis*. Sometimes some tropanes are also added. The principal is regarded as a major botanical discovery of the Indians: the beta-carboline acts as a mono-amine oxidase inhibitor, making it possible for the dimethyl-tryptamine to both enter the body through the stomach and to remain active for some four hours. In combination, these substances produce a profound and sustained visionary state of a particularly tumultuous sort.

Michael Harner in "The Way of the Shaman" gives a particularly striking description of his introduction to ayahuasca by the Conibo Indians "Just a few minutes earlier I had been disappointed, sure that the ayahuasca was not going to have any effect on me. Now the sound of rushing water flooded my brain. My jaw began to feel numb ... Overhead the faint lines became brighter and gradually interlaced to form a canopy resembling a geometric mosaic of stained glass. I could see dim figures engaged in shadowy movements ... the moving scene resolved itself into a supernatural carnival of demons. In the centre was a gigantic grinning crocodilian head from whose cavernous jaws gushed a torrential flood of water". The scene gradually transformed into sky and sea. He then saw two vessels which merged into a single vessel with a dragon-headed prow'. "I heard a regular swishing sound and saw it was a giant galley. I became conscious too of the most beautiful singing I have ever heard in my life ... emanating from myriad voices on the galley. I could make out large numbers of people with the heads of blue jays. ... At



the same time some energy essence began to float from my chest up into the boat' as if to take his soul away. His body began to become numb as if his heart was going to stop. His brain became partitioned into an intellectual command level, the numb level and lower levels of the visions" (Harner 1980 1)



Phosphene ornamentation on the Maloca (Reichel-Dolmatoff). Psychotria and Banisteriopsis (CK). Ritual yaje vessel (female) (Reichel-Dolmatoff).

"I was told that this new material was being presented to me because I was dying and therefore 'safe' to receive these revelations. First they showed me the planet earth as it was eons ago. Then appeared "large creatures with pterodactyl-like wings" which "were fleeing from something out in space" and "showed me how they had created life on the planet in order to hide within the multitudinous forms". He then witnessed the unfolding of plant and animal speciation learning that "the dragon-like creatures were inside all forms of life". "These revelations alternated with visions of the floating galley which had almost taken my soul on board" (Harner 4).

"With an unimaginable last effort, I barely managed to utter one word to the indians: 'Medicine!' I saw them rushing around to make an antidote [which] eased my condition but did not prevent me from having many additional visions. Finally I slept. Rays of light were piercing the holes in the palm-thatched roof when I awoke. I was surprised to discover that I felt refreshed and peaceful" (Harner 5).

Afterwards he related his vision of the bat-like creatures to an aged sightless shaman who said with a grin "Oh they are always saying that. But they are only the masters of the outer darkness." waving his hand casually towards the sky, just as Harner had seen in his vision.

There have been many reports that medicine men achieve clairvoyance under the influence of ayahuasca. For this reason, Fisher the first investigator to extract an alkaloid from it called the substance now known as harmine telepathine. This is a controversial area. Some researchers very experienced at the use of entheogens discount the idea that ayahuasca has any unique properties in this regard, but acknowledge that such properties are often attributed to hallucinogens generally (Ott 233).

Carlos Fallon commanded a gunboat flotilla navigating the Putumayo. He met a medicine man who was able to 'see' a Peruvian boat coming upstream manned by a crew of four and an officer before it was confirmed by a radio. Fallon took the



potion himself and reported that he was covered in feathers and talons rather than feet. He moved into the centre of the hut and from there he looked back to see his human body sleeping. When he asked the paye if this was possible, he was admonished not to attempt such things until after more practice at 'mastering his dreams' (Andrews 353).



Fighting Through Tikunas An ayahuasca session - Pablo Amaringo

To the Amahuaca an ayahuasca party is a social occasion. Anyone can drop in and women will sit chatting while their men keen and shudder away. However it may also be taken to find a thief or to seek revenge for acts of witchcraft through summoning a power animal soul as an agent to dispatch psychic darts into the adversary. Corresponding to this a shaman will traditionally remove such magical darts by sucking them from a person's abdomen during a healing session. Visions of sexual incubi and succubi are regarded as pleasant diversions with no ill effects. In general there is a clear distinction between disease per se and disease caused by sorcery, based on its unexplained or coincidental occurrence (Andrews 349).

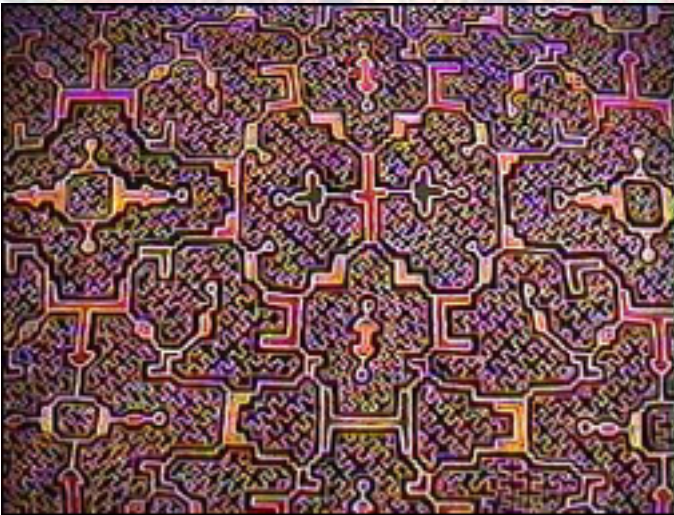
Hallucinations generally involve scenes which are part of a Cashinahua's daily experience, but they sometimes have visions of other places during their session. Kenneth Kennsinger notes: "Several informants who had never been to or seen pictures of the local capital Pucallpa have described their visits under the influence of ayahuasca with sufficient detail for me recognize specific shops and sights. On the day following one ayahuasca party, six of nine men informed me of seeing the death of my *chai* or 'mother's father'. This occurred two days before I was informed by radio of his death" (Harner 1973 12).





Ayahuasca serves to form a meaningful social bond reinforcing the inner meaning of cultural values of the tribal relationships. It is thus valuable for young people and serves as a protection from the scourges of cocaine addiction. Note the death-like mask on the left (Psychedelic Science TV).

Once the drug begins to shake them chanting begins in earnest. Each man sings independently. Chants often involve conversations with the spirits of the ayahuasca. At other times they chant simple rhythmic monosyllables. The experienced lead the uninitiated. Although each man operates on his own, the group is very important as it provides him with a contact with the real world, without which the terrors of the spirit world he is travelling through could be overwhelming. They see multicoloured snakes, jungle cats, spirits of ayahuasca, and scenes of real or spirit life in rapid transformation. Frequently a group of men will line up on a long each one wrapping his arms and legs around the one in front. The chanting rises and falls punctuated by shrieks of terror, retching and vomiting.



Shipibo skirt showing ayahuasca vision motifs (San Francisco, Yarinacocha)?

The Cashinahua drink ayahuasca in order to learn about things, persons and



events removed from them by time and/or space which could effect one or all of them. Hallucinations are viewed as the experiences of an individual's dream spirit, they are portents of things to come or reminders of the past. They have two kinds of medical specialist: the herbalist, who treats natural diseases through specific remedies and the shaman who treats supernatural causes by applying the power he has gained to the spirit cause of the malady (Harner 1973 13).

I journeyed to Pucallpa to descend the Rope of the Dead. By the time I arrived, my time had nearly run out, and I had to seek a session through a canoe operator on the slummy back streets of Yarinacocha. The shaman was crippled with leprosy. He had to crawl across the floor to get to the ayahuasca bottle and because he had no fingers, he had to pull out the cork with his teeth, holding it in the stumps of his hands. He poured me a vial of brown liquid. I simmered this briefly under a kerosine lamp and drank its pungent contents like varnish. He sat talking to his friends spitting volubly in every direction. He had a young boy companion who he was caring for very tenderly and keeping well protected from mosquitoes. After some thirty minutes I asked for a second cup to make sure the vision quest was accomplished.

I began to feel the need to lie down. I returned to my room at the Mystic Society on the lagoon. I was lying flat in the night feeling really nauseous with the sounds of the lagoon and the insects weaving through the night air. The surroundings were alive with Shipibo art. The moving patterns moved with waves of nausea. I turned desperately to vomit and found a host of Shipibo vases each yawning at me waiting to receive my offering. The woven zig-zag bed covers were running with flood waves of Shipibo energy. The force of the ayahuasca became all-consuming. Everywhere I tried to look, it was pulling me into its vortex like a whirlpool, so I would become lost. The mere shock of trying to step backwards seemed to add a toxic intensity. All my previous visionary experiences came apart like a stack of cards. Above all I wanted to know how consciousness was realized in space-time. I posed the question as a koan and sat in stillness of death in the tropical night 'seeing' the answer with my quantum-mechanical brain, revealing its secrets of precognition - how conscious experience is able to reach both forward and backward in time. The Orphic experience from the world beyond.



La Senora nd Trinico at the end of the 1999 ayahuasca session

Nearly twenty years later n 1999 I returned to Pucallpa on my vigil down the



Amazon and again sought out an ayahuasca curandero on the outskirts of Yarina-cocha to convey the Amazonian rite of passage to my companions. After a chance meeting in the street with a middle-aged woman, we were directed to Senora Trinico. After some searching in the slum area of the back streets I finally was greeted in a small shanty by a rheumy-eyed middle-aged man with a walking stick who was not the senora but certainly claimed to be trinico. The moment I saw his fingerless hands, I realized this was the one and same person echoing from the deep past. This time four of us had an evening cramped in the dark in the small shanty room while Trinico, sang ayahuasca songs whistling softly and eerily connecting us all in an infinitely spacious chant, watched over astutely by the senora throughout. I was the only one to hold my stomach throughout. We each took one larger but less concentrated draft. The first onrush was very strong punctuated by a quiet period after midnight. When we came to take our leave and seek the solace of fresh pineapple in the local hospedaje los delphines, we desperately cut pina to assuage our tettered stomachs. Holding the medicine had an interesting sequel. With each round of sustinance, came another flush of visions as the stomach unwound and beganto ingest the remnants of alkaloids.?



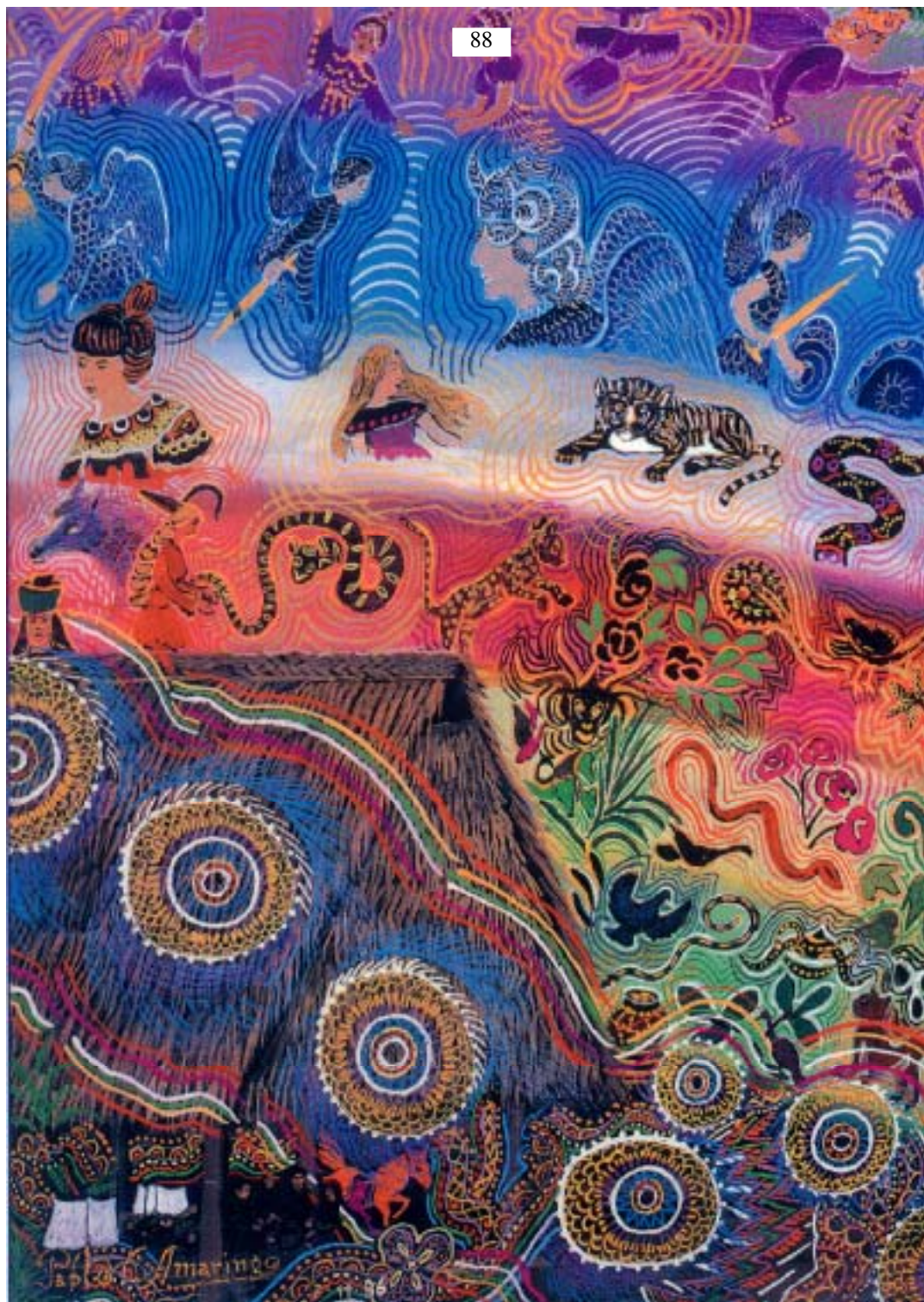
The Yurupari rite. Chief Paye of the Kofan: "they have also wisemen or wizards among them of great esteem who serve them as counsellors for Religion, Physick, Law and Policy... and he called himself the son of the sun." - 1663 (Schultes & Hofmann 1980 71).

Yurupari dances [have been] widespread, especially in western Amazonia ... they characteristically use sacred bark horns and are taboo to women, who are forbidden to see them and flee to the forest at the first sound. In former times, women who did actually see a horn were killed, usually with poison. *Yurupari* means everything from 'the devil', 'ancestor spirit', 'mystery' to 'fertility rite' (Schultes & Hofmann 1980 173). The new adolescent freshmen are subjected to a wild ritual whipping from head to toe, during the ceremonial drinking of ayahuasca, while trumpeters in pairs weave in and out of the Maloca in dancing motions. In Tukano Yurupari is *miria-pora* which means to submerge oneself (coitus) - descendents (paternity). The ritual promulgates the law of exogamy.

The Tukano origin of Yaje goes back to the first woman of creation, who 'drowned' men in visions, just as Tukano men also believe they drown in coitus. She found herself with child, impregnated through the eye by a ray of the sun like Mary. She gave birth to the child who became Caapi.

**Opposite: Detail Graduation of Powers Pablo Amaringo (Luna)**







The child was born in a brilliant flash of light. The woman - Yaje cut the umbilical cord and rubbing the child with magical plants shaped his body. She took him into the house full of chaotic disorder where the men are and says "whose child is this?" - They are "suffocated with visions" under the giddy influence of her and the child. After a pause the spell is broken and one man after another takes a piece of the child, like Dionysus, each staking a claim to the incestuous paternity. Each piece became a cultivar of the Yaje vine, and symbolically the light each carries.

Epena snuff is similarly described by the Tukano in terms of a male fertility myth as the 'semen of the sun'. At the beginning of time Father Sun had incest with his daughter who acquired Viho or epena by scratching her father's penis.

For the Indian "the hallucinatory experience is essentially a sexual one ... to make it sublime, to pass from the erotic, the sensual to a mystical union with the mythic era, the intra-uterine age is the ultimate goal, attained by a mere handful, but covered by all" (Schultes & Hofmann 1979 124). The Maloca is itself the uterus. The purpose of the myth is to preserve the order of fertility. If mankind was to prevail and survive as part of nature, and was to pass on a true legacy to new generations, people had to assume responsibilities and find ways to control the organization of society so as to produce a balance between human needs and the resources available in nature (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1).



UDV meeting with ayahuasca brewing. The Celebrants sit for four to six hours in the church meeting hall in contemplation, music and some speeches. A celebrant drinking ayahuasca (Psychedelic Science TV).

The indigenous use of ayahuasca has been reformed into a modern religious movement, Union of the Vegetal, to "remember past lives and to understand the true meaning of reincarnation as well as to become familiar with the origin and the real destiny of nature and of man". The Union Vegetale is a nominally Christian movement to experience inner harmony through partaking of ayahuasca tea. A fortnightly meeting is held by the movement, which includes members of both sexes from all walks of life. Its membership is not restricted to one fringe group.

Another plant from the old world which also contains harmine and harmaline after which it is named is *Peganum harmala* or Syran rue. This plant remains one of the candidates for the sacred plant Soma (p 110). The Avesta describes Soma as tall perfumed and greenish. The Vedas also describe Soma as growing in the mountains. In 1794 Jones' *Laws of Manu* describes Soma as a species of moun-



tain rue but not true rue (Ruta). Peganum (wild rue) is found in the central Asian steppes and Iranian plateau.

The consumption of sauma is the visionary gateway in the Zoroastrian literature and is the means used by Ohrmazd when he wishes to make the *menog* - seeing into existence before death - visible to living persons (McKenna 105). In the book of Arda Wiraz the Persian priest drinks *mang* from three golden cups for Good Thought, Speech and Action, at a great meeting of priests to assess the future prospects in the wake of Alexander's incursions. His soul travels to another world returning on the seventh day, relaying all he has seen to a scribe. In this journey he travels on the axis-mundi to heaven and hell in just the manner of Muhammad's night flight to heaven. "I saw the pre-eminent world of the pious which is the all-glorious light of space, perfumed with sweet basil, all-bedecked and splendid full of glory and every pleasure, with which no one is satiated" (Rudgley 53).

This follows a close parallel to the Prophet during his night journey to heaven. "It is related from the Prophet that over each leaf and seed of the *isfand* plant an angel is appointed so that through its bark and roots and branches grief and sorcery are set aside" Baqir Majlisi (Rudgley 43). A hadith relates that in seeking a solution to the cowardice of his followers, Muhammad was told by Allah to command them to consume isfand in order to make them brave (Rudgley 52). In the garden of paradise Allah also has a sacred drink spiced with ginger.

Evidence is accumulating that this hallucinogen may also have been available to ancient Biblical prophets including Moses, and Bedouins of al-Lat. Peganum harmala is widespread in Biblical areas and is noted on Gebel Musa one principal candidate for Mt. Sinai of Moses (Hobbs 16). A specific desert Acacia, Sant, a host tree of the mistletoe-like loranthus, is Moses 'burning bush' and the source of mana (Graves 1948 264), which is the prime oracular tree of Canaan (440).



Ceramic snuffing pipe with a deer holding a peyote in its mouth Monte Alban 500 BC (Schultes & Hofmann 1979).

### 5: Little Deer and the keys to the Golden Gate

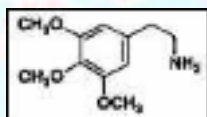
Fray Bernadino de Sahagun estimated from Indian chronology that peyote had been known to the Chichimeca and Toltec at least 1890 years before the arrival of the Europeans. It is shown on Xochipili flower God of the Aztecs. This is

confirmed by the peyote deer snuff pipe from Monte Alban. Usage for as long as 3000 years is suggested from Tarahumara rock carvings and Peyote specimens found in Texas rock shelters. de Sahagan reports as follows: "There is another herb like [opuntia]. It is called peiotl. It is found in the north country. Those who eat or drink it see visions, either frightful or laughable. This intoxication lasts two or three days and then ceases. It is a common food of the Chichimeca, for it sustains them and gives them courage to fight and not to feel hunger or thirst. And they say it protects them from all danger" (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 132).

As with sacred mushrooms, the Spaniards repressed the use of peyote because it was connected with heathen rituals and superstitions to contact evil spirits through diabolical fantasies. Francisco Hernandez, physician to King Philip II noted: "Wonderful properties are attributed to this root., if any faith can be given to what



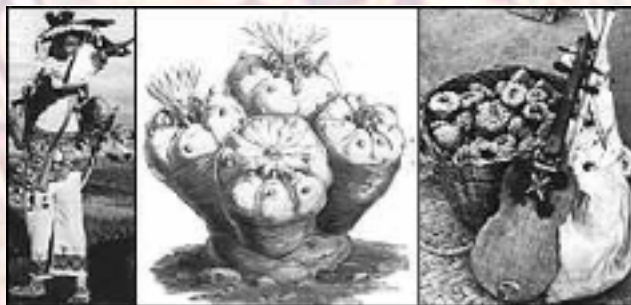
is commonly said among them on this point. It cause those devouring it to be able to foresee and predict things..." (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 134).



A little later, we hear of a Cora ritual: "Close to the musician was seated the leader of the singing, whose business it was to mark time. Each had his assistants to take his place should he become fatigued. Nearby was a tray filled with peyote, which is ground up and drunk by them so that they

will not become weakened by the all night function. One after another they went dancing in the ring ... singing the same unmusical tune he set them. They would dance all night without stopping or leaving the circle." This ancient ritual use of peyote is preserved among the Huichol and has become a founding theme of the Native American Church. (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 134).

The Huichol make a yearly pilgrimage, the peyote hunt over 600km of rugged desert country from their tribal homeland in the Sierra Madre Occidental (Meyerhoff 10, Furst 136). The journey involves many ritual steps and many days of journey involving hardship. Confessing marital infidelities is done without recrimination. They are polygamous and traditionally accept such revelations with a light heart. A knot is placed in a string for each occasion and then burned.



Ramon on the hunt, *Lophophora williamsii*, the Peyote collected (Furst).

"Might the sacred country be a kind of 'Great Mother'? If so we would have at least one explanation for the emphasis on ridding oneself of all adult sexual experience

before embarking on the journey, lest the whole enterprise come to naught and the offender go mad in Wirikuta. To 'enter' the great mother as an experienced adult would be tantamount to incest. ... I want to emphasize that there is no overt equation of Wirikuta with a 'Great Mother' in the Huichol peyote traditions, yet it is implied: one need only recall the emphasis on the embrace of the hummingbird-children by the Mother Goddess Niwetuka(me) as they finally reach the peyote country" (Furst 158). Crossing the 'dangerous passage' the gateway of the clouds they are blindfolded. "From there one travels to the place called Vagina .. and from there directly to Tatei Matinieri - Where Our Mother Dwells." (Furst 162). Later still we reach 'The Springs of Our Mothers' (Furst 166). Also notable is the place where the penis hangs.

Finally with rising excitement the *mara'akáme* - spiritual leader rushes ahead and fires an arrows to enclose the first peyote on all quarters and exclaims "how sacred, how beautiful, the five-pointed deer!". He then cuts the hikuri leaving some root to regrow new crowns. The return to Wirikuta the sacred mountain is seen as a return to paradise.

*"One day it will be all as you have seen it there in Wirikuta."*



*The first people will come back.  
The fields will be pure and crystalline.  
The world will end and it will all be pure again” (Internet).*



A personal peyote quest: El Catorce Real, the old Spanish silver mining town on Wirikuta. A desert twister in the Yucca and barrel cactus-strewn desert below. Peyote in natural habitat (CK).

*Speak to the peyote with your heart, with your thoughts.  
And the peyote sees your heart...  
And if you have luck, you will hear things  
and receive things that are invisible to others,  
but that god has given you to pursue your path  
(Schultes and Hofmann 138).*

Although children under three are not given peyote, older ones are generally offered some as an omen of their potential as a mara'akáme. "After slight hesitation ten-year-old Fracisco who had not tasted peyote before began to chew vigorously. He nodded - yes he liked it. He danced for hours and fell asleep smiling happily. Veradera, a strikingly handsome girl under twenty ate more peyote than anyone with the exception of Ramón and Lupe and later that night fell into a deep trance that lasted for many hours and caused everyone to regard her as specially sacred" (Furst 176).

"As the bowl was handed round the others lead by Ramón exhorted them to chew well for that is how you will see your life'. Lupe then took a sizeable whole plant, sliced off at the bottom lifted her magnificently embroidered skirt made specially for the occasion and rubbed the moist end on her legs, explaining that peyote not only discourages hunger and thirst and restores one's spirit but also heals wounds and prevents infection. Lupe sometimes wept. The night was spent singing and dancing round the ceremonial fire chewing peyote in astounding quantities and listening to the ancient stories. Veradera had been sitting motionless for hours. Lupe placed candles around her to protect her against attacks from sorcerers while her soul was travelling outside her body' (Furst 177).

One of the most outstanding Huichol peyote shamans of modern times is don Jose Matsuwa who at 1990 was the venerable age of 109. Besides walking in the sacred journey to Wirikuta, "don Jose spent many years living alone in the Huichol sierra learning directly from the ancient ones who reside there in the caves and mountains. In order to become a shaman in the Huichol tradition one



must learn to dream consciously and lucidly, for after a healing has been performed, that night the shaman tries to dream about the patient and find out the reason for the illness. Each day the Huichols tell their dreams to 'Grandfather fire'. Dreams help to bring together the past, present and the future" (Halifax 249).



Ramon Medina Silva (p 149) on the Peyote Hunt (Campbell 1987). Don Jose Matsuwa in Peyote trance during an evening session by the sacred fire (Schultes and Hofmann).

*"The shaman's path is unending.  
I am an old, old man and still a nunutsi (baby)  
standing before the mystery of the world"*  
Don Jose Matsuwa (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 138).

Brant Secunda became his apprentice after walking from Ixtlan into the mountains. "On the third day of my journey, I became completely lost after walking down a deer trail. I became terrified and lay down to die, from sun exposure and dehydration. I then began to have vivid visions of colourful circles filled with deer and birds, but was suddenly awakened by Indians standing over me sprinkling water over me. They told me the shaman of their village had had a dream about me two days earlier and they had been sent out to rescue me" (Rainbow Network Aug 90 4).

"There is a doorway within our minds that usually remains hidden and secret until the time of death. The Huichol word for it is *nierika*. Nierika is a cosmic portway or interface between so-called ordinary and non-ordinary realities. It is a passageway and at the same time a barrier between the worlds" - Prem Dass (Halifax 242).

"I have pursued my apprenticeship for sixty-four years. During these years, many, many times I have gone into the mountains alone. Yes I have endured much suffering in my life. Yet to learn to see, to learn to hear, you must do this - go into the wilderness alone. For it is not I who can teach you the ways of the gods. Such things are learned only in solitude." - Don Jose Matsuwa (Halifax) 238).

My body had fallen asleep, yet my mind was ascending on a breeze chant that had now turned into a jet stream upon which I was ascending ... I could see my hut and the village below. I was free and flying with such a feeling of exhilaration that I



wanted to cry, for now I was experiencing the true meaning of Don Jose's song ... various kinds of light and form passed ... Each song lifted me higher to a warm, blissful and radiant light. As I came closer to the great brilliant sphere, time was slowing to a stop. Intuitively, I knew I was dead and had absolutely no knowledge of who and where I came from. Yet I knew and felt totally at home, as if I had returned from a journey in a far away land. - Prem Das (Halifax 239).



Tatewari - Great Grandfather fire.

“When the mara’akáme passes through the nierika [visionary tunnel] he moves just as the smoke moves; hidden currents carry him up and in all directions at once ... as if upon waves, flowing into and through other waves ... the urucate. As the mara’akáme descends and passes through the nierika on the return, his memory of the urucate and their world fades; only a glimmer remains of the fantastic journey that he has made (Halifax 242).

*Listen my children we are the ones  
The path is clear, the danger is gone  
Káuyumari will guide us only he knows the way  
Light your candles, the gods have come  
They were people, yet they were gods  
Follow the eagle, see where she goes  
From there they come, and the path unfolds  
So then the example is set, we must follow along.  
Look to the sky, to our Father above,  
we are all his children, dance to the song.  
As the Ancient Ones knew, the time has come,  
The nierika is opening, and we pass on to the sun.  
Don José Matsuwa (Halifax 239)*

Back in the first times after the sun [Tayaupá] had a dream of a new world he sent Káuyumari to find it. The Little Deer Spirit was informed by the sun where a great swirling tunnel of light existed, through which he was to pass. This is the nierika. He was led by Tatewari, Great Grandfather Fire, and quite a number of uricate. They travelled through the portal arriving in the world in which we now live. They created everything. So beautiful was the new world that even the sun travelled through to take his place in the sky.” Because Káuyumari became too enamoured of the Huichol girls and disrupted the sacred rituals dedicated to the sun with jealousies, resulting in suffering and prompting the sun to free them from their misery, he caused rains to come and flood the entire world. Only one Huichol Wátákame was saved, being warned by Nakawé Great Grandmother Growth that he should gather seeds, build a canoe and prepare himself. The world repopulated quickly after Wátákame was given a wife, but he found that his offspring had no memory of the nierika and did not have the psychic powers of their forebears. From this time on only those who were willing to suffer the rigours of self-sacrifice would know nierika.

“The Earth is sick and dying. The lands of the Huichol Indians, hidden high in the



remote Sierra Madre mountains of northwestern Mexico, are dying. The forests are shrinking, water is becoming scarce, and the animals are disappearing. Mankind must be a steward of the Earth; Caretakers for all that dwells upon it; To be of one heart with all things. Human beings must learn to share the tears of every living thing, To feel in his heart the pain of the wounded animal, each crushed blade of grass; Mother Earth is our flesh; the rocks, our bones; The rivers are the blood of our veins."



Huichol yarn painting depicting themes from the genesis myth: The Nierika or cosmic portal of Kauyumari or Elder Brother Deer, linking the underworld with Mother Earth, through which the gods came. Through it all life came into being. It unifies the spirit of all things and all worlds. (Schultes & Hofmann 1979).

"When the world ends, it will be like when the names of things are changed during the peyote hunt. All will be different, the opposite of what it is now. Now there are two eyes in the heavens, Dios Sol and Dios Fuego. Then, the moon will open his eye and become brighter. The sun will become dimmer. There will be no more differences. No more men and women. No child and no adult. All will change places..."

Huichol Proverb: "The teachings are for all, not just for Indians. ...The white people never wanted to learn before. They thought we were savages. Now they have a different understanding, and they do want to learn. We are all children of God. The tradition is open to anyone who wants to learn. But who really wants to learn?" - Don Jose Matsuwa, Huichol, 1989.

The Huichol shamans say we are perdido, lost. They say we are bringing doom and destruction to Yurianaka, Mother Earth, and that Taupa, Father Sun, is coming



closer to the earth to purify it. They are concerned for the future and for the life of their children.” But they know they cannot do it themselves, for they are not the ones soiling the collective nest. We are. We are the ones who have to wake up, who have to find our lives.



The Shaman's Dream - Huichol Yarn Painting (Campbell 1987 302)

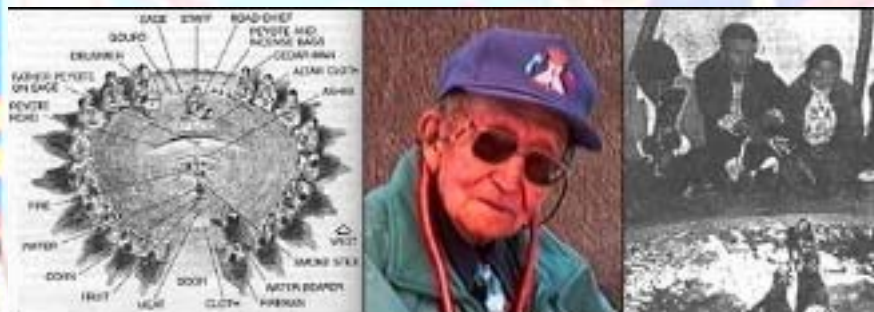
For the Huichols, this is the purpose of their sacred pilgrimage to the holy land of Wiricuta--to find their lives. Their purpose is to get a more accurate reading of the nature of reality. They seek entrance through the *nierica* into the numinous universe underlying the limited, material world of the sensory--the “mysterious, ubiquitous, concentrated form of non-material energy . . . loose about the world and contained in a more or less condensed degree by all objects” (Calahan).

Entering into the depths of the mystery is not something to take lightly, for the mystery is all about power and power can manifest itself in many ways. Out of respect, the Wisdom Elders observe, listen, and commune with this power in all its manifestations. From this base of phenomenological data of mind in nature, nature in mind, they came to learn the order and structure of life's connectedness and that all things are dependent upon each other and thus related. Balanced reciprocity with all of creation is observed at all costs, for without this practice, the fragile web of life is irreversibly damaged, a fate that faces us today.

“When I eat *hikuri* the world becomes radiant with glowing colour. *Káuyumari* the little deer comes, like a mirror and shows me how it all is, what you must do. When you hear me chanting the sacred songs, it is not I who sing, but it is *Káuyumari* who is singing into my ear” (Halifax 137) “When you do ceremonies, sending out your love in the five directions - the north, south east, west and the center - brings life force into you. That love brings in the rain ... We will have to gather together and with the ceremonies, begin to tune ourselves with the environment, bringing it back into balance again. ... You must study these things I am say-



ing ... You have your own way of learning ... But you have seen the flower of my vision on my face, and you must know that it is important to think of these things each day and each night. ... I will check you by lifting up the nierfka, like a mirror, and I will see what you have done, how you have gone in the world” (ibid 252).



(a) The Form of the Plains Ceremony (Anderson) (b) Tellus Goodmorning at 91 (c) Peyote meeting (Scientific American)

Peyote is also enjoyed as a sacrament among more than 40 American Indian tribes in many parts of the US and Canada in the form of the Native American Church. This was an adaption of the Mexican ritual that was adopted by tribes in the north who were facing a crisis of cultural disintegration. Peyote helped to bring a spirit of toleration and understanding in these difficult circumstances.

I made a pilgrimage to participate in a traditional Peyote meeting in 1980. I returned twelve years later to find the original Roadman, Tellus Goodmorning at the age of 91, missing one eye, and having spent six months in hospital with a broken pelvis, but nevertheless full of enthusiasm to spend the entire night taking his turn to chant at the peyote meeting held in honour of his son with the very substantial teepee held up with his own teepee poles.

I had had to visit him for a second time before he decided to confide that there was a big meeting in honour of his son the next week. When I arrived, he said “Why you come?” almost as if he'd never seen me, but he told me that the teepee was up. Every one greeted Tellus as the great old man he was. The roadman, Junior was accompanied by his mother and her husband.

The sunset dragged slowly into senescence by the time everyone gathered in line and walked clockwise round the teepee, entered and shut the door. The practitioners all had boxes with rattles and feather regalia and cushions and blankets to last out the early morning chill. A fire is lit in a ceremonial vee in the middle of the teepee and around this is a crescent altar of sand. This also has to be circumambulated on entry to the teepee. At this point the roadman makes an initial speech to thank everyone who has contributed to the meeting and to explain how it has been called interspersed with many ‘you knows’. Everyone rolls a corn husk cigarette and takes a smoke. Prayers are given up and the butts are placed around the crescent altar.

The water drum assembled from an iron pot and goat skin sloshed from inside with water is then brought into action with the roadman's feather kit and rattle. The practitioners sing and drum in pairs. The drum is an intense shamanic beat and the



rattler chants a syllabic chant of Hei-hei-hei-wichi-hei-ho-ho-ho-ho which runs on like a river of concentration. The mood is intense. The sacred medicine was passed around the circle. There are strict rituals. Everyone must move to the right, no one can walk past a person with the sacred medicine in their mouth. No one is allowed out, except during brief interludes between songs with the permission of the roadman or fireman. At intervals corn leaf cigarettes were smoked as an offering to heal a sick person. At midnight the roadman blew a whistle and went out to pray to the four winds. We cannot relax for a moment because the roadman is out there praying and needs our help! The Peyote road is 'a hard road'. A session is always accompanied by nausea and occasional vomiting. I have more than once been on the point of retching, only to be prodded by a severe participant "No lounging about!" After midnight everyone dons their feathers and rattles to sing their own chants. The fire was brightly coloured. As the intensity of the evening bore relentlessly into the small hours the energy built up to a fever pitch. An Indian lady broke out into a wailing lament about her family's health which caused the chanting to weave into a frenzy, becoming an unearthly dance of the guardian spirits at the gate of the underworld. Various people with disabilities and family problems took a smoke on these in prayer. Gradually the light of dawn drew on with ever more songs. Finally the roadman blew his whistle to the winds again. And all the butts were burned in the fire.

There followed the invocation from Bertha as mother waters, the mother of all creation. She sat with a pot of water and began a long speech and prayer and an explanation that our concerns should be addressed to people because it was human action which was the source of all folly. She said not to be worried about the environment or the state of the world, because Mother Nature was coming in her own way to set things right and bring the affairs of the world to a natural conclusion. This extended to a blessing of all people present and all things in which they have concern which fanned out into a great prayer in Native American, English and Spanish. Afterwards the water bucket was passed around everyone. Then the younger women came back circumnavigating the tepee once outside and once inside, placing a bowls of corn porridge and sweet raisin pork. The drummer and roadman did one last song, dismantled the water drum and handed it round the principal practitioners to drink from. Finally the breakfast was handed clockwise around everyone in the ring.

After we went out again ringing the tipi, everyone exchanged a formal "Good Morning" with their eyes riveted on one another in great sincerity. Telles, who had been eyeing me through his one not too good eye very alertly during the evening beamed at me and said "So you made it!". Hence his name 'Tell-us-goodmorn-ing'. The morning protocol continued to a formal lunch opened with a traditional grace saying how 'these people have gathered together to hear your wisdom through the sacred medicine dear god, and all their relatives have gathered dear god, to eat this sacred food dear god'.

Mother Waters had spent twenty years often missing two nights sleep in a week to attend far-flung meetings. She explained that non-ordinary reality was the real reality and everyday reality was only a shadow into which the greater reality was condensed. How it was manifest in all things from the birds to the wind and how she could see and travel to distant cities in the peyote fire. She told us this story of how she threw the ceremonial water pot over her husband in play and it rained for



a week solid everywhere she went until she sat in a medicine meeting a week later and vowed never to abuse the sacred water again. She knew the rain would stop at midnight and sure enough it did. Mother Waters has a history that goes all the way back to Chalchihuitlicue, Jade Skirt, the mother of springs, steams, lakes and water holes.

### **The Christian Prophecies**

It is commented that Jesus came to the white man as flesh and blood, but to the Native American as peyote. John Wilson, who many claim as the 'founder' of the peyote religion in the United States claimed that he was continually translated in spirit to the 'sky realm' by peyote and it was there that he learned the events of Christ's life and the relative position of several of the spirit forces such as sun, moon and fire. He reported that he had seen Christ's grave, now empty and that peyote had instructed him about the 'Peyote Road' which led from Christ's grave to the moon (this had been the Road in the sky which Christ had travelled in his ascent (Anderson 36).

"Most peyotists strongly affirm the Christian elements as an important part of their religion (Anderson 51):

*"God told the Delawares to do good even before  
He sent Christ to the whites who killed him ...  
God made Peyote It is His power.  
It is the power of Jesus.  
Jesus came afterwards on this earth, after peyote."*

"You white people needed a man to show you the way, but we Indians have always been friends with the plants and understood them ... "The white man goes into a church and talks about Jesus , but the Indian goes into a teepee and talks to Jesus." (Anderson 52).

However, it is Christ in his second-self who came to give the peyote ritual to the Menomini: "This old man was a chief of a whole tribe, and he have his son to be a chief. He said, "I'm going to go, and you take my place. Take care of this [tribe]." And the boy, he went out hunting; He was lost for about four days. He began to get dry and hungry, tired out; so he gave up. ... So he went, lay himself down on his back; he stretched out his arms like this [extending his arms horizontally], and lay like that. Pretty soon he felt something kind of damp [in] each hand. So he took them, and after he took them, then he passed away" (Anderson 23-4).

"Just as soon as he - I suppose his soul - came to, he see somebody coming on clouds. There's a cloud; something coming. That's a man coming this way, with a buckskin suit on; he got long hair. He come right straight for him; it's Jesus himself. So he told this boy, "Well, one time you was crying, and your prayers were answered that time. So I come here. I'm not supposed to come; I said I wasn't going to come before two thousand years," he said. "But I come for you, to come tell you why that's you [are] lost. But we're going to bring you something, so you can take care of your people. ... So they went up a hill there. There's a tipi there, all ready. So Christ, before he went in it, offered a prayer. ...Take this medicine along, over there. Whoever takes this medicine, he will do it in my name." So that's how it represents almost the first beginning." (Anderson 23-4)

There is an apocryphal story that peyote had a role in the evolution of Adolf Hit-



ler's messianic ideas. As the story goes, during 1911, Hitler met a bookseller named Ernst Pretzsche whose father had been an apothecary in México City and had spent leisure hours in an extensive study of the customs and ritual magic of the Aztecs. He lead Hitler through an exploration of von Eschenbach's "Parsival" in which initiates acquired the art of reading from the cosmic chronicle of human destiny in which past, present and future were united in one uncoiling ribbon of time. He persuaded him to take the meditative initiations before taking peyote as a short cut to realization. In 1913, Walter Stein travelled with Hitler up the Danube. After they had left Hitler disclosed that he was planning to stay with the herbalist Hans Lodz who had previously prepared a potion of peyote with which he had had his first experience of the Macrocosm and an insight into the mysteries of Reincarnation. He admitted to Stein that he had not cherished the idea of compromising his own will to a process over which he might have little control. Although his interest was primarily in discovering the meaning of his own destiny within the historical process, he did remark to Stein on his visions of the physiological processes of his body biochemistry (Andrews 1975 417). However this story is not supported by meticulous historical research about this period of Hitlers life.

In any case neither the power plants nor the substances they contain can be held responsible for the twisted vision of the partaker, nor what may result from their application to dark ends. Aldous Huxley who made mescaline famous to the post-war generation set a completely different example, dying peacefully under LSD. Peyote has a great reputation as both a spiritual and a physical medicine and has 250,000 adherents in the Native American Church alone.



Chavin culture 1200 - 600 BC San Pedro and Leopard. *Trichocereus pachanoi*. Eduardo Calderon Palomino Peruvian shaman with mesa and San Pedro (left) (Furst, CK, Sharon).

A second cactus, San Pedro, cactus of the Four Winds, *Trichocereus pachanoi* also bearing mescaline, has been in very prolonged sacred use in the Andes. A variety of archaeological finds from 1500 BC on display San Pedro as a ritual power plant associated with gods and jaguars. It is still consumed as a sacred drink Cimora, sometimes along with *Brugmansia* species, particularly in rites along the shores of lagoons high in the Andes. The name San Pedro intimates the cactus holds the



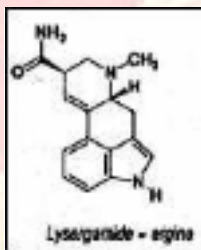
keys to the gates of heaven. The rituals surrounding its use also have a prominent lunar character. During the ritual the participants are 'set free from matter' and engage in flight through the cosmic regions (Schultes and Hofmann 156).

### 6: The Black Seed of the Aztecs and the Fires of St. Anthony

Four centuries ago a Spanish missionary wrote: "Ololiuqui ... deprives all who use it of their reason ... The natives communicate in this way with the devil, for they usually talk when they become intoxicated with Ololiuqui and they are deceived by various hallucinations which they attribute to the diety which they say resides in the seeds. ... Its plant was termed 'coatl-xoxo uhqui' the green snake". Today in most villages of Oaxaca one finds the seeds still serving the natives as an ever-present help in times of trouble (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 158).



The Mother Goddess with Morning Glory Vine - Teotihuacan (Berrin). Preparing Ololiuqui for a shamanic healing (Schultes & Hofmann 1979). Flowers of Tliltliltzin (CK).



In 1651 Hernandez physician to Philip II "Ololiuqui which some call Coaxihuitl or 'snake plant' is a twining herb with thin green cordate leaves, slender green terate stems, and long white flowers. Its seed is like like coriander whence the name [in Nahuatl - round thing] of the plant. It cures syphilis, relieves flatulence and removes tumors, ... banishes chills and helps in dislocations and fractures. ... Formerly when the priests wanted to communicate with their gods and to receive a message from them they ate this plant to induce a delirium. A thousand visions and satanic hallucinations appeared to them." In Aztec confessions the

Indian said: "I have believed in dreams, in magic herbs, in Peyote, in Ololiuqui, in the owl ..." (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 158)

Like the other power plants, Ololiuqui is traditionally used to cure either by the shaman or the patient or both drinking the ground up seeds which have been steeped in water to form a liquor, and consulting the resulting visions for a source to the cure, generally alone in the night in contrast to the group use of Peyote and sacred mushrooms. Although its descriptions at first caused it to be confused with *Datura*, in 1937 Rivea (*Turbina*) *corymbosa* seeds of the 'medicine for divination' were finally collected among the Chinantec and Zapotec of Oaxaca. A second morning glory *Ipomoea violacea* was also used by the Aztecs under the



name Tliltliltzin. These have long black seeds 'badoh negro' and are sometimes referred to as male while the Ololiuqui are female and taken by women.

The active principles in both these seeds are lysergic acid amide and hydroxethyl -amide. These have an effect reminiscent of LSD the diethyl-amide form of the same lysergide molecule. This has a somewhat more narcotic effect and is two orders of magnitude less potent by weight, but does induce a somewhat similar visionary aspect, although significantly less pleasant. One could say that evolution has not quite completed its task in this respect, one which genetic engineering may eventually come to do.

As Christian influence has seeped in the morning glory has come to be named Semilla de Virgin 'Seed of the Virgin' and Hierba Maria 'Herb of Mary' indicating the trasferrance of their perceived divine nature. This naming is consistent with the appearance of the plant back in ancient Teotihuacan, were there is a temple freeze of the Mother Goddess and her priestly attendants with the 'snake vine' issuing from behind her (Schultes and Hofmann 158).

There is a complete homology between the substances in the morning glories and another ancient source of hallucinatory disturbance, in the ergot of rye *Claviceps purpurea*, along with other vasoconstrictive indoles. This homology suggests the possibility that the genes for synthesis may have been transferred from ergot to the genus of the morning glory at some stage through viral transfer. The enclosed seed capsule of this genus is liable to harbour fungi.

Reference to ergot as a contaminant of grain crops goes back to the Assyrians of 600 BC who refer to it as a "noxious pustule in the ear of the grain". In 350 BD the Parsees noted: "among the evil things ... are noxious grasses that cause pregnant women to drop the womb and die in childbed" It has been suggested that a related fungus *Claviceps paspali* may have been used as the intoxicant in the mysteries of Eleusis. Several members of this genus infect a number of wild grasses in Greece (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 102-3).



Temptation of St. Anthony- Grunwald (Pevsner and Meier).

The Greeks did not use Rye because of the "black malodorous produce of Thrace and Macedonia" (Schulktes and Hofmann 1979 103). When Rye began to be widely cultivated in Europe in the Christian era, epidemic poisoning occurred, particularly during times of famine when contaminated grain was eaten because good

produce was in short supply, particularly to the poor. These epidemics had two

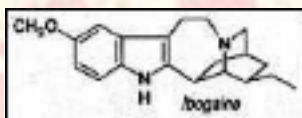


manifestations, those with nervous convulsions delirium and hallucinations and those with gangrene, sometimes causing the loss of extremities. The name given to the burning sensation in the extremities is called St. Anthony's fire, after the religious hermit who died in AD 356 leaving a heritage of bizarre hallucinations of torment by sexual licentiousness and savage animals - the renowned Temptations of St. Anthony. His bones were brought back by the crusaders to Dauphine and it was here by ironic 'coincidence' that the earliest plague of 'holy fire' occurred in 1039, leading to the establishment of the Order of St. Anthony, who became in effect the patron saint of the 'holy fire'. The real cause of the infection was not to be discovered for another 500 years until 1676, thus covering much of the demented period of the Inquisition and witch burnings (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 104).. European midwives had long known that ergot was helpful in cases of difficult childbirth, a purpose for which the ergot alkaloids such as ergotamine are still used in modern medicine.

### 7: Tabernanthe Iboga: The Spirit of the Ancestors

Like ayahuasca, Eboka has a Dionysian origin in sacrifice of the divine son':

*Zame the last of the creator gods gave us Eboka  
One day he saw the pygmy Bitamu  
high in the Atanga tree gathering fruit  
He made him fall.  
He died and Zame brought his spirit  
He took the fingers and the little toes  
and planted them in various parts of the forest  
They grew into the Eboka bush (Furst 245)..*



Eboka is extracted from the roots of Tabernanthe iboga in the Congo and Gabon. It is used both as a stimulant and in much higher quantities in a rite of visitation of the ancestors, once or twice during initiation into the Bwiti cult - 'break open the head' and thus make contact with the ancestors

through the resulting visions. No one can enter the cult until he has seen Bwiti and to do that they must eat Iboga. Sorcerers and leaders of the cult also take Eboka to seek information from the spirit world or to ask advice from the ancestors (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 114-5).



T. iboga (CK) Initiates at an eboka ceremony visit the ancestors, T. iboga (Schultes and Hofmann 1979)



The plant is a 'generic ancestor' who can so highly value or despise an individual that it can carry them away to the realm of the dead. Indeed the rite is so demanding that occasional deaths are reported. When the participants are lost in deep comatose trance they are carried to a special forest hideout where the soul is believed to wander from the body to the ancestors in the land of the dead. The 'angels' or initiates say: I wanted to know God - to know things of the dead and the land beyond. I walked or flew over a long multi-coloured road or over many rivers which led me to my ancestors, who then took me to the great Gods". Negative visions of stinking skeletons may precede seeing Bwiti which has a very characteristic expectation in the way it is seen in the cult.

In smaller doses it is a stimulant which increases strength and endurance and may have an aphrodisiac or sensual affect as it is similar to Yohimbine in structure, although another aphrodisiac plant may also be added (Dobkin de Rios 170). It is sometimes consumed with cannabis, a cultural introduction and euphorbaceous latex applied to the eye to induce visual effects.

The Bwiti cult has been growing in numbers and social strength in the last half-century. It represents a strong native element in a changing society in which disintegration of collective values is occurring. It thus promotes traditional values over the incursions of Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam. Bwiti is seen as a living religion, true to life, while Christianity is acquired and leaned but not felt or experienced through ecstatic revelation .. which promotes a state of one-heartedness (Dobkin de Rios 168) However, Mary is often identified with the cult's first woman. The Bwiti cult numbers men among its principal members, although Mbiri, a sister cult admits women (Dobkin de Rios 165). Bwiti grew prodigiously from 1920 to 1930 spreading across the Cameroons and the Amban region. Those villages where Bwiti is established have a temple that occupies a position of privilege in the village. In past times the founding of a 'temple of the universe' was accompanied by human sacrifice but nowadays the human victim has been replaced by a chicken (Dobkin de Rios 165).

Recently ibogaine has become an item of interest as a one-dose cure for addiction marketed under the name 'endabuse' a pun on the antabuse which causes alcoholics to become punitively nauseous on taking alcohol. There is some suggestion that large doses of ibogaine could cause damage to the cerebellum.

### ***The Drumming of Eboka - Jane King***

*People of Mbiri, what are you chanting?*

*Your drumming pierces me;*

*I'm throbbing to your beat, not my own.*

*My sight is transfixed, my body jerking..*

*Are you ghosts? You seem so alive,  
here in this small opalescent universe.*

*You flash by so solemnly, so knowingly.*

*You watch me with*

*Resignation in your sad eyes,  
and hold up to my enraptured gaze  
Jewels, spears, bones and shields.*

*Perhaps it is me who is flashing by.*

*Native mother, in your gleaming canoe  
With iridescent symbols, and your glowing,*



*breathing hair so comforting and long,  
Where are you paddling me?*

*Your Brave, so solid, so strong,  
laughing because he is with you,  
Is deeply reading your thoughts and mine,  
while you, reading the river with every stroke,  
laugh gently at me, for I desire to splash the water,  
but am fearful of making a sound.*

*Are we all together, precious mother, or  
Am I lying here, suppressed, repressed,  
and rigid, while you go flashing by?*

*Where are our bodies? Is the pain that we feel  
The same as the pain we inflict?  
Does the stern god push us, so we have to fly?  
If we then fall, break open upon impact,*

*How many images go dancing,  
glistening and bright, along the horizon,  
Just as you dance, people of Bwiti and Mbiri, along the shore?  
I paddle by you; you are watching me, people of Bwiti.  
Your native mother, so much like mine, increases the flow of the rivers,  
As she swells the tides.*

*Is that what makes you drum so loudly?  
Do you respond to her with throbbing?  
I have heard her singing--like your drums,  
her voice throbs and pierces.  
It is too beautiful; you cannot hold your body  
in one piece any longer and it becomes  
a flock of gulls, who rise with the sun, and flash by.  
What's left of you, what can't ascend with them,  
sees trails in the sky.*

*Such yearning. Such sparkling.*

*If you go to the center, if you try to find the palace in the river,  
Red and bright, solid and cubic, you will meet her -  
She is there with the god; she is teaching him the tricks of ascendance.  
These tricks are simple, but not easy.*

*She will put things inside you,  
for you will open to her like a sluice gate in the river.  
You will open your mouth for the wafer of communion,  
And she will give you the whole god.*

*He needs you too, for he is always going deeper;  
for him descent is ascent.  
His path is spiral like a rain forest plant  
or the mind of this woman or a galaxy of stars.  
He seeks out those who wish to entwine.  
from inside, the god will push you off the ramparts,*

*But flight is not what you imagined it to be.  
You will split open,  
and will become dancing particles of love, like fire flies  
When they ascend from being glowworms.*

*Mother, mother, consciousness is sweet and pulsing,*



*but you paddle so softly  
 And the canoe is so warm; it is hard to leave.  
 This god you put in me teaches me to burst;  
 now, please, you teach me to gather.  
 And then my love can glow like your canoe,  
 With its iridescent symbols and its swift,  
 smooth flow on the water,  
 As I paddle past the people of Mbiri, and their drums  
 Declare my presence, and that of  
 your transcendent love that flows through us  
 And binds us to each other,  
 As paradoxically we both entwine and fly,  
 and as we gaze, and listen, and drum and chant together  
 the songs of jewels and spears, of bones and shields  
 and then flash by.*

### **Why natural? Can a power plant give true illumination?**

I have grouped these plants by molecular type, as their common effects are traced to key bioactive molecules, which because of their specific interaction with neurotransmitter receptor proteins cause their profound effects on consciousness. Thus one can consider that it is the quantum nature of the molecular arrangement that is the key issue. Many people are used to thinking of drugs primarily as chemicals and not at all in the same sense as food, despite the fact that the food plants themselves are a veritable mine of chemicals of equal significance as vitamins and anti-cancer or anti-oxidant activity, which promote future health and long life.

There are many new psychoactive drugs from ecstasy to angel dust, so why pick these plants with their often difficult side-effects of bitterness or nausea? It is by stepping back from their chemical nature and recognizing them as a natural evolutionary heritage that we can learn to understand their potential role in human culture, just as we accept the role of the food plants as a necessary complement to the human species. We cannot and should not convert our own diet from a natural one to a purely chemical one, so we should try to think in the same way about the psychic plants.

The idea that illumination with drugs cannot be the true enlightenment is a fallacy. One could argue that setting one's feet back on the ground gives a more realistic vision of sustainable spirituality than the worldless ranting of the monotheist ascetic who drifts skyward issuing religious edicts to followers, who are expected to faithfully trust in an invisible other world, and sacrifice their personal gnosis of the real nature of existence. Ayahuasca, the mescaline-bearing cacti and sacred mushrooms have been tested for millennia as a traditional part of human religious life and there is a reasonable body of scientific evidence that they are not physically harmful by comparison with recreational drugs such as alcohol. Because evolution has provided these agents, it makes it possible for us to come to terms with the idea that they form some sort of natural widening of the scope of human consciousness, which brings us into closer harmony with other life-forms, thus helping to keep the biosphere whole, and which may be a resource for us in trying to comprehend the future avenues to be taken by evolution under our guidance and stewardship. It is in this wholesomeness and natural flow of life that they bring us far closer to the spiri-



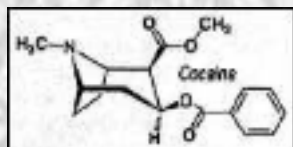
tual truth than any etheric vision of the Godhead arising from the bloody crucifixion of Jesus.

## 8: *Erythroxylum coca*: White Nemesis of the Conquistadore

"To the ancient Inca culture of Peru, and later to the indigenous people and the mestizo colonistas Coca was a goddess, a kind of New World echo of Graves's white goddess Leucothea" (McKenna 211). The goddess Mama Coca is shown with feather headdress holding the moon sickle and offering the saving branch of coca to the Spanish conqueror. Some people might now say coca is a scourge, but like the poppy of the goddess it is the failure to recognize the spiritual significance of these agents and their relationship to the healing nature of the Earth Mother that leads to such grave error in our society.



Coca leaf being dried Amazonia. *Erythroxylum coca*. Mama Coca - the White Goddess (Schultes & Rauffauf, McKenna).



Coca has always been a sacred plant of the Qechua speaking Indians of the Andes. There are also distinct cultivars of coca in the Amazon basin, which appear to be of ancient sacred use from the time required to develop such distinctive cultivars and the fact that manioc, yaje and coca are the three sacred plants in the canoe containing the first man and woman drawn by the anaconda itself. Perhaps the most ancient use of coca in South America is its employment in various shamanic practices and religious rituals ... enabling the shaman to enter more easily into a trance state in which he can communicate with the spiritual forces of nature and summon them to his aid" (Schultes and Raffauf 112) It was the Catholic church which first condemned its use, largely on account of its role in traditional spiritual life (Rudgley 112).

The use of coca leaves in the highlands of Peru and Bolivia remains legal as it is a central cultural practice upon which many depend to be able to carry out their activities. Bundles of coca leaves can be freely found in the markets along with the slaked lime which is required to free base the alkaloid to absorb coca in chewed form. In this form it is not addictive in the manner of street cocaine and pasta, but is



more of a vitalizing tonic, which is highly regarded.

Coca street stall Urkupina Bolivia

Some of the healthiest and hardest-working Indians of the Columbian Amazonia the Yukunas consume enormous amounts coca leaves daily, but this is not a problem as they have time to raise their crops, hunt, fish and supply their food (Schultes and Raffauf 99). A catch word is "Hoja de coca no es drogare". The Cogi Indians of Columbia who isolated themselves in the highlands at the time of the Spanish conquest and only entered into communication with civilization to issue a warning about the destruction of the earth when they discovered global warming destroying the ecology of the upper Andes revere coca and chew it as their central divine sacrament. They use lime balls associated with coca as a life meditation taking an entire lifetime to gather mana.



Coca in legitimate plantation at Coroico in Bolivia, gathering the leaves, flowers and seed pods of coca in early September (CK).

In Bolivia and Peru coca is grown legally as a traditional crop quite separately from the illegal plantations which spring up in the forest to supply the drug trade and cause destruction of the tropical forest as a result of running drug wars.. Coca is legally available both as leaves and as coca tea, which is commonly available as a cure for altitude sickness and in supermarkets as a mild stimulating drink in the form of commercial tea bags.



## 9: The Path of the Fly Agaric Shamans

Further to the north and east the shamans of Siberia had been using the hallucinogenic fly-agaric mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*) since time immemorial. This practice continues in isolated pockets to this day.

"The role of intoxicants in the shamanic traditions of North Asia has been the subject of some disagreement. Mircea Eliade, ... has claimed that although mushroom intoxication produces contact with the spiritual world it does so in a 'passive and crude' way. He describes such practices as decadent, late and derivative in their attempts to imitate an earlier 'purer' form of shamanism. The spiritual journeys of these lesser shamans are achieved in a 'mechanical and corrupt' fashion. Here it is not Eliade's scholarly impartiality speaking, but rather his aversion to intoxication in relation to religious life ... and it is a matter of some concern that Eliade's book 'Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy', probably the most widely consulted comparative study of the shamanic complex, includes such a basic misrepresentation of the facts. This fault is compounded in his discussion of the Americas (and beyond), where shamanic intoxication is also well attested but likewise receives only superficial attention from the author." (Rudgley 38).

Chuckchee sketch of the winding paths of the fly-agaric men.

*Amanita muscaria*.  
Finno-Ugrian shaman-priestess in a ritual trance dance (Schultes and Hofmann 1979).



"The first known account is found in a journal written in

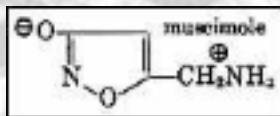
1658 by a Polish prisoner of war, who describes its use among the Ostyak of Western Siberia. The myths of many Siberian peoples contain fly-agaric themes. In many Finno-Ugrian languages words meaning 'ecstasy', 'intoxication' and 'drunkenness' are traceable to names meaning fungus or fly-agaric. Among the Vogul peoples the consumption of the fly-agaric was restricted to sacred occasions, and it was abused on peril of death. To the Ugrian shaman it was as essential to his vocation as the drum. Among the Selkup it was believed that consumption of the fly-agaric by those who were not shamans could be fatal. Only some shamans among them used it; others preferred alternative methods of achieving spiritual ecstasy" (Rudgley 39).

The effects of *Amanita muscaria* are diverse and vary according to dosage, method of preparation and the cultural and psychological expectations of the consumer. A small dose (or the initial effect of a larger one) causes bodily stimulation and a desire for movement and physical exercise. Under its influence a Koryak man is reported to have carried a 120 lb. (some 55 kg.) sack of flour a distance of ten miles, something he would not have been able to do normally. Such feats of physical strength and endurance have their mythic precedents.

In one Koryak myth Big Raven (the Creator) asked Existence for help to lift a heavy load. This deity told him to eat fly-agaric. He did so and was able to lift the load with ease. That the Creator himself is associated with the consumption of mushrooms again demonstrates the weakness of Eliade's view of the use of hallucinogens as a late and decadent aspect of Siberian spirituality.

Responses to the fly-agaric varied widely even among the Koryak. Sometimes an intoxicated individual had to be restrained from over-exerting himself, whilst on other occasions it would induce a tranquil state of bliss in which beautiful visions appeared before the eyes. The Russian anthropologist Waldemar Bogoras, who witnessed the Chukchee use of fly-agaric on many occasions at the turn of the century, notes that the effects can be divided into three basic stages, which sometimes overlap. About fifteen minutes after taking the mushrooms the stimulating effects begin and there is much loud singing and laughing. This stage is followed by auditory and visual hallucinations in conjunction with the sensation that things increase in size (in this state a tub of water is said to seem as deep as the sea). It is still taken in Northern Canada:

*"Cleansed and ripe for vision  
I arise, a bursting ball of seeds in space ...  
I have sung the note that shatters structure.  
And the note that shatters chaos, and been bloody ...  
I have been with the dead and attempted the labyrinth"  
(Schultes and Hofmann 1979 85).*



Because the active ingredient is excreted unchanged in the urine the urine of other people has also been used traditionally: "the poorer sort ... post themselves around the huts of the rich and watch the opportunity of the guests and hold a wooden bowl to receive their urine and by this way also get drunk". This feature has

also been suggested to be an ancient feature of the Soma rite, along with its ruddy complexion. Veda 9:74: "Acting in concert, those charged with the office richly gifted do full honour to Soma. The swollen men piss the flowing [soma]". Yasna 48:10 "When will thou do away with this piss of drunkenness with which the priests delude the people." In the Mahabharata Krishna offers a disciple the urine of an out-cast hunter who also happens to be Indra. This has lead Gordon Wasson to postulate that Soma was Amanita, although there are other possibilities including Peganum (p 89), and some doubts about the Yasna translation.

## 10: The Devil's Witching Weeds

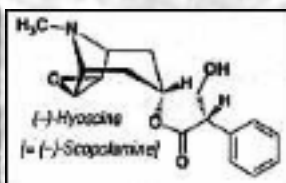
The hideous episodes of witch burning in Europe can be attributed to many things. To the firebrand visions of sex and the devil of the christian patriarchs from the Pope to the fundamentalistic protestants, possibly aggravated mass-poisoning by through ergot-contaminated rye with its hallucinations accompanying St. Anthony's fire. However, it is to the hexing herbs of the ancient mother that we may find the actual roots of the witchcraft practice so-reviled by the medieval Christian fathers.

Mandrake has a very long cultural history. The mandrakes figure in Genesis 30:16 "And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's



mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.” According to the Juliana Codex, Dioscorides received the Mandrake from Heuresis, Goddess of Discovery, illustrating the early belief in its sacred nature. The likeness of the root to a man gave rise to all manner of bizarre myth concerning the plant and its death-dealing shriek when dug from the ground. Early Christians believed the Mandrake was a precursor for God's invention of Adam in the Garden.

Likewise Deadly Nightshade - The Apple of Sodom has been woven into early Greek myth as of the of three Fates - Atropos the inflexible one who cuts the thread of life from whom atropine is named. It is from its use to dilate the pupils of women's eyes to make them ‘dolorous’ that its name belladonna or beautiful lady comes. It is said that in the orgies of the Maenads the wine of Dionysus was often adulterated with nightshade as they ‘dilated their eyes’ as they fell into the arms of the male worshippers or with ‘flaming eyes’ fell upon men to tear them apart. It was supposed to be tended by Satan himself except on Walpurgis night when he retires to wait for the sabbath.



All of mandrake, belladonna and henbane contain atropine alkaloids, of which scopolamine is known as the hallucinogenic component. It is from the admixture of these three, along with the fat of a stillborn child that the ointments of medieval witches were prepared: “But the vulgar believe and the witches confess that on certain days and nights they anoint a staff and ride on it to the appointed place or anoint themselves

under the arms and in other hairy places” (Schultes and Hofmann 1971 88). The witch riding on her broom is believed to be specifically associated with the application of such an ointment to the vaginal mucosae which forms an ideal method of cutaneous entry. The inclusion of toads legs would also be consistent with the bufotenine present in the skin of the genus Bufo.

Witches flying to the sabbath on a broomstick -

Ulrich Molitor 1489. The earliest picture of a witch on a broomstick (Rudgley). *Datura meteloides* (CK).

A Shiva *Datura yoni-lingum* (Schultes and Hofmann 1979).

It was believed that such witches would



ride on their broomsticks to black sabbaths where they would cavort with male sexual manifestations of the devil himself in the form of an incubus. A truer picture would be sensation of flying produced by tropane intoxication and the use of the forest as a meeting place for worshippers of the ancient Earth Goddess, possibly in a fertility rite involving the use of the hexing herbs as power plants.

A fanciful account of the second century AD from Lucius Apuleius notes: "It contained an ointment which she worked about with her fingers and then smeared all over her body from the soles of her feet to the crown of her head ... as I watched her limbs became gradually fledged with feathers ... her nose grew crooked and horny, her nails turned into talons" (Rudgeley 90).

However, the use of this plant is associated with severe derangement and loss of memory. Porta, a colleague of Galileo reported a "man would sometimes seem to be changed into a fish, and flinging about his arms would swim on the ground, another would believe himself turned into a goose and eat grass, beat the ground with his teeth and flap his wings. My teeth were clenched, and a dizzy rage took possession of me. I knew that I trembled with horror, but also that I was permeated with a sense of well-being. My feet were growing lighter, expanding loose and breaking from my body. Each part of my body seemed to be going off on its own. At the same time I experienced an intoxicating sense of flying. The frightening certainty that my end was near through the dissolution was balanced by an animal joy in flight ... the clouds the lowering sky, herds of beasts, falling leaves quite unlike ordinary leaves, billowing streamers of steam and rivers of molten metal." (Rudgeley 95).



The Witches Sabbath - Gustave Dore. Witch preparing herself on a broomstick. Dioscorides receiving mandrake from Heuresis (Schultes & Hofmann 1979).

Johannes Nieder of 1692 gives the following account of a woman who believed herself to be literally transported through the air during the night with Diana and the other women and invited a priest to witness the event goes as follows: "having placed a large bowl on top of a stool, she stepped into it and sat herself down. Then rubbing

ointment on herself to the accompaniment of magic incantations, she lay her head back and fell asleep. With the labour of the devil she dreamed of Mistress Venus and other superstitions so vividly that crying out with a shout and striking her hands about, she jarred the bowl in which she was sitting and falling down from the stool seriously injured herself about the head. As she lay there awakened the priest cried out "Where are you? You are not with Diana ... you never left this bowl!" (Harner 1973 131). Remy in the late 16th century makes this matter clear: "Now if witches, after being aroused from an 'iron' sleep tell of things they have seen in places so far distant as compared with the short period of their sleep, the only conclusion is that there had been some substantial journey like that of the soul" (Harner a 132). A similar explanation applies to lycanthropy the belief that one can change



into the form of an animal (Harner 1973 140).

Frequent references can be found in the middle ages to maids found unconscious and naked who had rubbed themselves with a green ointment “in such a way that they imagine they are carried a long distance”. The link with the Inquisition is also clear. “Dominus Augustinus de Turre the most cultivated physician of his tie notes: when the Inquisition of Como was being carried out, in Lugano the wife of a notary of the Inquisition was accused of being a witch and sorceress. Her husband, who was troubled and thought her a holy woman, early on Good Friday when he missed her found her naked in a corner of the pigsty displaying her genitals, completely unconscious and smeared wit the excrement of the pigs. He went to draw his sword but hesitating she awoke and prostrated herself before him confessing that she had gone that night on the journey. When the accusers came to take her for burning she had vanished, possibly drowned in the lake nearby (Harner 1973 134).

It is also clear that knowledge of the details of such use of herbs was carefully gleaned by the Papal office. The physician of Pope Julius II in 1545 took the jar of ointment of an accused couple seized as witches, which was so heavy and offensive and soporiferos to the ultimate degree that it showed it was composed of hemlock, nightshade, henbane and mandrake, was anointed from head to toe on the wife of the hangman who was restless with suspicion of her husband. She became comatose and could be wakened by no one for 36 hours with her eyes open like a rabbit. Her first words were “Why do you wake me at such an inopportune time? I was surrounded by all the pleasures and delights of the world” and to her husband “Knavish one, know that I have made you a cuckold, and with a lover younger and better than you” (Harner 1973 135).

*Datura* is one of the most widespread genuses on the plant kingdom and various *Daturas* (*Dhatura* Sanscrit) from China through India to Europe and the Americas have been used as sacred plants since time immemorial because they also possess scopolamine and other tropanes. A Taoist legend maintains that *Datura metel* is one of the circumpolar stars and that envoys to earth from this star carry a flower of the plant in their hand. It is also an offering in Shiva-Shakti worship as illustrated in the lingam-yoni (p 349).. It has been used in addition with wine as an intoxicant and to drug people to stupor. Tropane intoxication can lead to permanent brain damage.

Various species of *Datura* were also revered as sacred plants by te Aztecs, and used in manhood rites to cause boys coming of age to ‘lose their memories of childhood’ in becoming a man. It is the most sacred plant of the Zunis who say it sprouted from the place where the primordial humans with magical vision disappeared into the earth when chased by sky gods jealous of their prophetic powers (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 106).

The use of *Brugmansia* - Huaca - Plant of the Tomb- a set of tree species of the *Datura* family from South America probably evolved from the knowledge of *Datura* brought to the new world in the late Paleolithic by the proto-Indian Mongoloids (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 128). Von Humbolt the early explorer remarked on the use of Tonga (*Brugmansia sanguinea*) as a sacred plant of the priests of the Temple of the Sun at Sogamoza in Columbia. The women and slaves of a dead Muisca chief were also given the brew so they would not recognize their impending burial with their chief.



Salvador Chindoy a shaman of the Kamsa displays great composure before embarking on a Brugmansia-induced divination. Brugmansia sanguinea. The Tree of the Evil Eagle (Schultes & Hofmann 1979).

*How pleasant is the perfume of the bell-like flowers of the Yas  
as one inhales it in the afternoon*

*But the tree has a spirit in the form of an eagle  
which has been seen to come flying and then disappear*

*The spirit is so evil that if a weak person  
stops at its foot they will forget everything.*

*If a girl rests under its shade,  
she will dream about men of the Paez tribe  
and a figure will be left in her womb,  
which will later become the pips of the tree.  
(Schultes and Hofmann 1979 128).*

Brugmansia is often still used as an admixture with ayahuasca or San Pedro but the uncomfortable syndromes and unpleasant after-effects have probably contributed to its limitation, except in the most difficult cases of divination: "The native fell into a heavy stupor, his eyes vacantly fixed on the ground, his mouth convulsively closed, and his nostrils dilated. Over fifteen minutes his eyes began to roll, foam issued from his mouth and his whole body was agitated by frightful convulsions. After these frightful symptoms had passed, a profound sleep of several hours followed after which he related the particulars of his visit with his forefathers" (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 129).

They are plants of the gods, but not the agreeable gifts of the gods like peyote, the sacred mushroom and Ayahuasca. Their powerful and wholly unpleasant effects, periods of violence and temporary insanity, and their sickening after-effects have put them in a second category - reminding us that the gods do not always strive to make life easy for man (Schultes and Hofmann 1979 131).

### **11: Alcohol: Inebriant of the Patriarchy**

"The origin of alcohol use is to be traced to the fourth millennium and Mesopotamia. The earliest alcoholic beverages were probably drawn from the fruit and sap of the date palm, which is one of the most concentrated sources of naturally occurring sugar. Cultivated vines (*Vitis vinifera*) also contain sufficient sugar, as well as natu-



ral yeasts. Beer (probably barley beer) is referred to in early Sumerian and Akkadian texts, and from the Protoliterate period of Mesopotamia (c. 3200 BC) we find illustrations of drinking straws, needed to consume beer in which the cereal grains had not been de-husked. Egyptian figurines dating from the Predynastic period show the use of brewing vats” (Rudgley 31).



Baden drinking set 3000-2000 BC. Ritual use of Tobacco in the Amazon (Rudgley, Schultes & Raffauf).

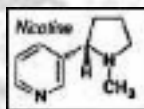
The Early Bronze Age cultures of the Aegean and Anatolia in the early period from 3500 to 2000 BC provide the immediate origins of the diffusion of alcohol throughout Europe. These communities consumed their wine from metal drinking vessels, and their more northerly neighbours of the Baden culture in central Europe have echoed the design of these vessels in their own pottery. They probably drank mead, rather than grape-wine. Not long after this, another distinctive complex of vessels for holding liquids, known as Globular Amphoras, appeared over an area of Europe from Hamburg to Kiev. This new ceramic style was influenced both by Baden pottery and by the cord decoration of the steppe cultures. It is possible, on this line of argument, that their brews may have combined alcohol and *Cannabis sativa* in a potent infusion! ... These beakers were decorated with rows of cord impressions; their great cultural importance is attested by the fact that they recur again and again in the burials of the period alongside two other types of distinctive male artefacts - the flint dagger and the shaft-hole stone battle-axe. (Rudgley 31).

The spread of the drinking complex ... took place during a period of unusually rapid social, cultural and economic change. During this time, Europe was opened up - both literally, in terms of the further deforestation of its landscapes, and metaphorically, in terms of its new contacts and social opportunities. Fundamental to this process was the increasing importance of livestock, and the emergence of male warrior elites whose sub-culture was portrayed in the characteristic combination of weaponry and drinking vessels in their graves” (Rudgley 33).

“Organic residues from later pre-historic vessels show that cereal grains, honey and fruits were all mixed together to make a composite drink which was at once a mead, an ale and a fruit wine. The use of this new liquid intoxicant may initially have been combined with opium or hemp, but it was soon to establish itself as the primary intoxicant of Western culture, a position it still maintains” (Rudgley 33).

Ethyl alcohol is not the actual inebriant that causes inebriation but fatty acids which are a product of its metabolism.

## 12: Tobacco: The Butt End of the Visionary Quest



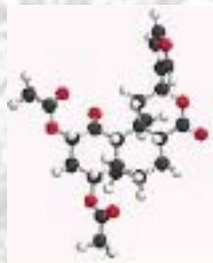
Although from a Western point of view tobacco has its origin in America, species of the *Nicotiana* genus have been used as stimulants by indigenous populations in other parts of the world in particular among the Australian aborigines (Rudgley 135). Although tobacco smoking in western cultures is a recreational drug of perhaps the most significant health impact and the greatest addictive power of all drugs, its traditional use has been as a visionary drug, often consumed as a more potent cultivar as a snuff and only on ritual occasions.

Although it is not classified as a true hallucinogen, Indians from Canada to Patagonia esteemed tobacco as one of their most important medicinal and magical plants. The process of becoming intoxicated by the smoke combined with the rhythm of song and dance is called 'calling the spirit'. Among the Warao of Venezuela this role becomes paramount. Tobacco also plays a prominent part in the ritual of Peyote use both among the Huichols and Native American Church. "Tobacco belongs to Our Grandfather the Fire shaman who led the first peyote hunt" (Furst 80). However my experience with the lost voices and desperate coughing of the participants leads me to feel concern at the intrusion of such an unhealthy practice of little hallucinogenic value into a visionary ceremony of spiritual healing.

## 13: The Goddess' Share: Herb of the Shepherdess or Virgin

*Salvia divinorum* (above) is a coleus-like *salvia* which grows in deep ravines kept by the Mazatecs as an alternative to sacred mushrooms in times these are unavailable for divining.

It contains a terpenoid salvinorin, of unique action and very high potency, requiring only 500 micrograms of the pure substance. Any more is extremely dislocating. It has a very unusual psychedelic effect full of rippling waves rather than geometric kaleidoscopes. It is not active through the stomach but quite potent through the gums and linings of the mouth or by smoking



*Salvia divinorum* (King) [see 13 below]. .