The Ascent and Spread of Psilocybian Mushroom Consciousness

by
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THE SEARCH FOR A HIGHER POWER

It has become increasingly evident with the current 'Drug War' mentality that it is in fact the freedom for the individual to alter their own consciousness that religion and government do not approve of nor want in most contemporary societies. Why you may ask? Because there have been several plants made illegal that are used to alter consciousness that have absolutely no documented evidence that they are either harmful nor addictive to humans. In fact quite the opposite is true, many of these plants have been touted as non-addictive and beneficial to humans for a wide range of reasons. This brings to question the real motivations behind prohibition of plants that have been recognized as valuable teachers for thousands of years by indigenous cultures all over the world.

The whole thing wreaks of a dumbing-down of humanity through lies and dis-information geared to pasteurize and homogenize the masses into good little state citizens conforming to the model of what someone else thinks life is all about. And of course there is money. Great thinkers, poets and philosophers throughout the ages have imbibed in a myriad of consciousness altering substances. The results of which usually entail a dis-satisfaction or even a disdain for the current paradigm and movement towards revolution. This presents a new answer to the questions of prohibition. It is a simple thing to see that dumb people make good followers and intelligent people incite revolution. Because a change of consciousness causes one to think out of the box and this is not permissible in a controlled society, especially if it exposes flaws in the box. Mushrooms are exactly the type of substance that opens the mind to see outside the box. In fact they allow one to examine the box itself quite extensively. These experiential visionary states that millions of humans have discovered are the reason these words are on this paper and the fire is in the mind of mankind.

As a child growing up in Chicago, I first became aware of drugs when I was just about 6 or 7-years-old. About one block from my home was a small poster pasted on the wall of an apartment building. It was the most famous anti-marijuana propaganda poster created from the paranoiac minds of the likes of Harry Anslinger and the FBI. The famous "Warning" - This may be handed to you by a friend or stranger poster. Of course, as a child, I had no comprehension of the implications of this poster at such an early age. Or that marijuana, when smoked, also produced an altered state of consciousness.

Like Andrew Weil (1972), noted in his book "The Natural Mind", one method employed by young children to achieve a state of altered consciousness was to play "ring around the Rosie." Well, I too played "ring around the Rosie." until I got so dizzy I would fall to the earth. I also remember as a child having someone hold my stomach real tight while I would take ten deep breaths and then pass out from hyperventilating. Looking back on these moments in my childhood I realized that I could remember the dizzy effects of light-headedness but was totally unaware at that time that this was an alteration of my consciousness and that these sensations were naturally induced for the effects.

By the time I was 13-14-years-old, I became aware of another form of an altered state. This one caused by a mixture of chemicals. One hot summer day in July in the middle 1950s, my mother was preparing a bucket of soap, ammonia, kitchen cleanser and other cleaning chemicals to soak my dirty clothes. She had gone to the back of the house for over an hour and we wondered why she was taking so long getting back. My grandmother found my mom lying on the stairs in a state of confusion, babbling and making no common sense at all. My mom was looking up in the air exalting, "look at the pretty snowflakes" and describing how beautiful the rainbow butterflies were. Of course, my brother and sister and I, along with my grandmother, saw nothing except the usual everyday Chicago factory skyline from our backyard. I spent three days with her in the mental ward of the hospital worrying that she was going crazy and would never return

to normal. This was my first experience baby-sitting a hallucinatory 'bad' trip, which according to my mom, was a strange trip. She did not recognize anyone or me. She was totally whacked for three days and so I had my first inkling of what chemicals can do to the mental condition of a person. Of course this opened up my mind to future possibilities in life.

Throughout the ages, human beings have sought to alter their consciousness through the use of certain plants and fungi. The fascination of humans with dung-growing visionary mushrooms may go back to the earliest times.

It was perfectly natural to seek out the effects these plants would have when merged with human consciousness, and repeat the experience. Many such plants slowly became known to humankind and some of these very plants generated a change in human consciousness far beyond anything-primitive mankind had previously experienced Which plants, how to prepare them and the experience they provided was valuable information to share with family, friends and loved ones.

In their search for edible foods, early hunter-gatherers followed the manure trails of the large migratory herds. When the weather conditions were right, they would find mushrooms growing from the manure deposits of ungulates along the corridor routes the mammals were following. Being hungry and curious, early humans naturally consumed the small meaty mushrooms, some of which were psychoactive. Some of the mushrooms found in the manure of four legged ruminants were Psilocybe cubensis, Copelandia spp., and some species of Panaeolus.

These fungi presumably were valued not as food sources, but for the expansion of consciousness and perception they induced. Over the ages, a growing body of knowledge accumulated about which plants and fungi brought about what effects and how to prepare them. Archeological records suggest that early humans knew about these mushrooms' special effects and consumed them intentionally for this very reason. Several writers have suggested that major religious ideas were inspired by the intake of such entheogenic mushrooms and plants (Wasson, 1968; Allegro, 1970; Arthur, 2000).

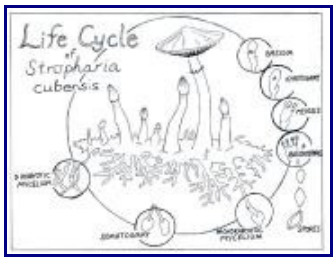
We can be assured that the intake of these entheogenic mushrooms provided the consumers with fantastic visions and images far beyond anything the hunter-gatherers had ever imagined as being humanly possible without them. Thus we have early mankind to thank for bringing certain mushrooms to the attention of our species and introducing the mushroom-altered mind to human
Consciousness.

This work will delve into four families of mushrooms known to cause cerebral mycetisms in humans and animals when consumed as a food source. However, primary focus will be on mushrooms containing the tryptamine alkaloids psilocine and psilocybine in archaeological records. Examining archaeological records will show that early humanity knew about these mushrooms, their effects and consumed them for this very reason.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A MUSHROOM

Approximately 100,000 species of fungi are known. Wild psychoactive mushrooms, known scientifically as basidiomycetes (club fungi), are the fruiting bodies of saprophytes, meaning they obtain their food by direct absorption of nutrients from the soil or other medium, such as the decomposing manure of ruminants or the decaying leaves, twigs and wood of plants. The nutrients are dissolved by enzymes, and then absorbed through the fungi's thin cell walls. Since they lack chlorophyll, they always feed on live or dead matter bringing about the decay and decomposition of all organic matter on our planet.

Most fungi reproduce by spores (fig. 1),



tiny particles of protoplasm enclosed in sturdy cell walls. A common mushroom produces 10 billion or more spores on its fruiting body, while giant puffballs produce as many as several trillion. Spores are the seeds of a mushroom. They are found on the gill plates on the underside of the cap of a gilled mushroom. When the mushroom cap has fully opened and separated from its veil, the mature spores are dispersed by the wind or fall directly beneath the mushroom. Various small animals and insects, notably dung beetles and millipedes, feed on mushrooms and are instrumental in spore distribution. When the spores land on a habitable medium, they germinate and form hyphae, which grow and spread under the surface into many small fine silk-like hairs that collectively form the mushroom mycelium (spawn). The mycelium grows, radiating outward into large, occasionally vast mats that permeate the material in which it is growing. When conditions are correct, the mycelium fruits and a mushroom appear above the ground. One primary medium is the manure of four-legged ruminants such as cattle, buffalo, horses and sheep. Additionally some groups of insects are known to cultivate mushrooms as food (ambrosia beetles, tropical leaf-cutting ants, and certain groups of termites). (Encarta, 2000).

WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION OF TRYPTAMINE-CONTAING MUSHROOMS

Mushrooms come in many different sizes, shapes and colors and the mushrooms under discussion here are those capable of producing altered states of consciousness brought on by the alkaloids psilocine and psilocybine. Mushrooms with these properties are referred to as, hallucinogenic, narcotic, magic, sacred, psychedelic, psychoactive, entheogenic and neurotropic. They have a great diversity and a large world distribution and in 1957, only seven species were known to the world. However, numerous species of neurotropic mushrooms have since been identified.

More than 180 species of fungi are recognized as containing the tryptamine alkaloids psilocine and/or psilocybine. They are Agaricales and include the genera Psilocybe (117 species), Gymnopilus (13 species), Panaeolus (7 species), Copelandia (12 species), Hypholoma (6 species), Pluteus (6 species), Inocybe (6 species), Conocybe (4 species), and Agrocybe, Galerina and Mycena (one each). Concerning the distribution of Psilocybe, the majority of the species are found in the subtropical humid forests of Mexico and New Guinea. Mexico has the highest number of neurotropic fungi, with 76 species), of which 44 belong to Psilocybe (39 % of the world).

Neurotropic mushrooms have been identified as far north as Alaska and Siberia in the northern hemisphere and as far south as Chile, Australia, and New Zealand in the southern hemisphere. They gro wild from California in the western United States of North America to China and Japan, and from sea level to the high mountan regions up to 4,000 m elevation (e.g. Psilocybe aztecorum in high mountains of Mexico at 4000 m elevation). As Gartz (1996) has pointed out, "The mushrooms occur in abundance wherever mycologists abound" (Guzmán, Allen & Gartz, 2000).

Although neurotropic fungi occur worldwide, knowledge of their distribution is still poorly developed. When they were first rediscovered and documented (Heim, 1956a, 1956b; Singer, 1949), for a time it was beleived that they occurred only in Mexico. Later, numerous species were found in Nprth and South America, Europe, Siberia, southwestern Asia and Japan (Singer & Smith, 1958). Guzmán, in his 1983 monograph on the genus Psilocybe showed distribution in all the continents. Recently, Allen & Merlin (1992) and Guzmán (1995) described new species Psilocybe in the U.S.A., Mexico, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Spain, Thailand and New Zealand. Gartz et al. (1995) and Stamets and Gartz (1995) reported new species from South Africa and the U.S.A., respectively, confirming the broad distribution of these peculiar fungi. In this way it seems that the diversity, ecological and geographical distribution of the neurotropic fungi

is so vast and complex, that Guzmán, Allen and Gartz (2000) decided to publish a check-list of the known species and their distribution throughout the world and presented a map of that distribution (fig. 2).

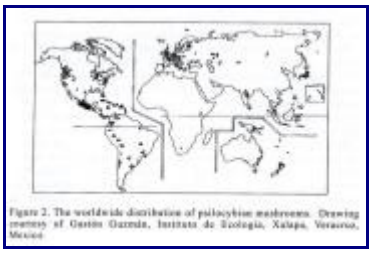


Figure 2. The worldwide distribution of psilocybian mushrooms. Drawing courtesy of Gastón Guzmán, Instituto de Ecología, Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico.

Today we lack records of neurotropic fungi from several parts of the world, including Russia, Mongolia, Arabia and Turkey, and many regions of Africa or the Middle East, but this is not to say they don't exist. Kmagic mushrooms enjoy growing popularity amongst young teenagers in Russia, Africa and Israel, where western influence brings knowledge of their existence. There are no presently known records of wild Psilocybe from Korea, and Hawaii,. Enen in the U. S. A., mycological research is somewhat limited in several states, such as Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania, where there are no records of neurotropic species of Psilocybe. Most recently, two new species have been docymented in Georgia, Psilocybe weilii and Psilocybe atlantis and a new species are now reported from Czeckoslovakia (Psilocybe arcana) and Cambodia (psilocybe angkoria, sp. Nov).

ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF ANCIENT USE OF MUSHROOMS

At an archeological site in the Non Nak Tha region of northern Thailand, the bones of Bos indicus cattle were recently unearthed in conjunction with human remains. We know that Psilocybe cubensis flourishes in the manure of cattle and buffalo in this region of northeastern Thailand. Terence McKenna has suggested that the temporal and physical relationship between the human bones and the bones of cattle is conclusive evidence that psychoactive mushrooms were known to the people who frequented this region around 15,000 B.P., (McKenna, 1992). He suggested that the consumption of these types of mushrooms provided a certain impetus to humanity's intellectual evolution.

On the Tassili Plains in northern Algeria, cave paintings dating as far back as 9000 B. C. E. (Samorini. 1992; Gartz, 1996) portray anthropomorphic figures with mushroom images on their bodies, evidence that mushrooms were known and used in a mystic manner. Emboden (1979) describes, among traditional folk remedies from the 2nd century Chin dynasty in China, a cure for
'the laughing sickness," mushroom intoxication attributed to the accidental ingestion of psilocybian mushrooms. In 11th century Japanese folklore there is a story of a group of woodcutters and nuns who became lost, hungry, and then quite inebriated after consuming what is believed to have been psilocybian-containing fungi. This exciting tale is recorded in the Japanese classic 'Tales of Long Ago' and cited in (Sanford, 1972).

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION OF FUNGAL SACRAMENTS

Ethnomycologist R. Gordon and Valentina P. Wasson first reported the use of certain fungi as divinatory sacraments in mainstream western media publications. They documented such use, first in article published by Life magazine and in several books and numerous journal publications (Wasson, 1957; Wasson, 1958; Wasson and Wasson, 1957; Schultes, 1939, 1940). This discovery and dispensation guided the course of many in western society and eventually reached the consciousnesses of millions of interested peoples. They also brought to the attention of the world three other families of fungi capable of invoking cerebral mycetisms in both humans and animals. These include the Soma fungi Amanita muscaria and related species, the ergot fungi Claviceps purpurea, and certain fungi belonging to the genera's, Boletus, Heimiella, and Russula.

The following notes provide a brief history of the use of *Amanita muscaria* in the Old World as well as in the New World. Additionally, we note the use of the ergot mushrooms from which Albert Hofmann accidentally discovered LSD. It has been suggested that the Kykeon of the ancient Greeks employed ritualistically at the Temple of Dionysus, may have been from ergot compounds extracted from wild grasses in the Mediterranean (Wasson, Hofmann & Ruck, 1978). And furthermore, we will mention the use of certain species of Boletus, Russulas and Heimiellas by aborigines in the New Guinea Highlands.

Amanita muscaria

The earliest record of the possible use of Amanita muscaria as an inebriant is in the ancient Vedic Hymns of India. Urine drinking associated with mushroom intoxication is mentioned in the Rig Veda (9th and 10th mandalas).

Travelers and explorers in Siberia reported this practice during the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. In her books, "Windmills of the Mind" and "Hallucinogens: Cross Cultural Perspectives," Marlene Dobkin de Rios (1976, 1984) discusses the custom of Amanita urine?drinking by the reindeer herdsmen of Siberia. It is likely that some psilocybian mushrooms were also historically used in Siberian shamanism (Wasson, 1968). Recent research shows that certain isolated groups of Finn?Ugrian people, the Ostyak and the Vogul of western Siberia, today employ Amanita muscaria shamanistically, as do the Chukchee, Koryak and Kamchadal people of northeastern Siberia (Heizer, 1944; Brekham & Sam, 1967; Wasson, 1968; LaBarre, 1975).

The contemporary use of Amanita muscaria is not restricted geographically to Siberia (Arthur, 2000; Ruck & Staples, 2001). Graves (1960) and Schultes (1976) have revealed that some Finns and Lapps, as well as Afghanis use this species. Its use is also well documented in Japan and the Philippines.

Among some groups of North American Indians (Wasson, 1979), the Dogrib Athabascan (Schultes & Hofmann 1979) and the Ojibway of Northern Michigan and Ontario (Keewaydinoquay, 1978, 1979, 1998; Wasson, 1979b), use of Amanita species as a sacrament dates back over four hundred years. Several tribes (Ojibway, Chippewa, Iroquois and others), have stories of little people associated with mushrooms which imply a hidden widespread knowledge of entheogenic mushrooms among North American tribes.

The active ingredients isolated from Amanita muscaria include ibotenic acid and muscimol (Saleminck, 1963; Eugster, Muller & Good, 1965). The same causative agents have also been isolated from a similar species; Amanita pantherina (Takemoto, Nakajima & Sakuma, 1964). Both species are sometimes employed recreationally in the Pacific Northwest region of the North America (Ott, 1978b; Weil, 1977, 1980) and in Europe (Fericgla, 1992, 1993; Festi and Bianchi, 1991). There are several other species of Amanita, which also contain these classical agents (Ott, 1993; Guzmán, Allen & Gartz, 2000), but have no history of sacramental or recreational use. The chemical compounds found in Amanita species are vastly different in action to those fungi known to contain the alkaloids psilocine and/or psilocybine.

Claviceps purpurea and LSD

A psychoactive fungus, Claviceps purpurea, is the most likely basis of another historically significant sacramental substance, the ‘kykeon’ beverage of the ancient Greek rites of Demeter and Persephone, which were held annually for over 2,000 years at Eleusis, outside of Athens, at the temple of Dionysus in the Elysian Fields. This ergot fungus is found on several wild grasses common in the Mediterranean region (Ott, 1978a; Wasson, Ruck & Hofmann. 1978; Schultes and Hofmann, 1973, 1979). Lysergic acid is a component of ergot, a small purple fungus that deforms the grains (Hofmann, 1980, 1983). From this, Albert Hofmann derived LSD in the Sandoz laboratories in Basel, Switzerland. Ergot fungi belong to the genus Claviceps, of the family Clavicipitaceae.

Boletus, Heimella and Russula

There is substantial evidence of the continuing use on the islands of New Guinea of several other families of fungi,

Boletus, Heimiella, and Russula (Singer, 1958b; Reay, 1959, 1960; Singer, 1960; Heim & Wasson, 1964, 1965; Nelson, 1970; Heim, 1972; Rios, 1976, 1984). The Kuma people of the Western Highlands know these mushrooms as nonda. Tribes belonging to the Nangamp (the Danga) call them Nong'n. Effects attributed to these fungi appear to resemble chronic states of hysteria and madness. It is reported that this madness may last for up to two days. The term therogen [becoming a beast] has been adopted to describe New Guinea context of such use. Species used by these natives include: Boletus flammeus Heim, B. reayi Heim, B. kumeus Heim, B. manicus Heim, and B. nigroviolaceus Heim; Heimella anguiformis Heim and H. retispora Heim; Russula agglutinata Heim, R. maenadum Heim, R. kirinea Heim, R. pseudomaenadum Heim, R. nondorbingi Singer and R. wahgiensis Singer. Stearic acids have been found in two species of Russula. Causative agents in the other species of mushrooms used by Nangamp natives are as yet unidentified.

Another species of fungus found in New Guinea is Psilocybe kumaenorum Heim, and it has been suggested by Guzmán (1983) that its psychoactive properties may be known of and used by these aborigines.

PSILOCYBINE MUSHROOM USE IN MESOAMERICA

Central and North America psychoactive and other mushrooms were first documented in the writings of early Spanish chroniclers, which included naturalists, botanists and members of the clergy. Knowledge of these mushrooms and other sacred plants became known to the western world due to the writings of Schultes (1939, 1940), Singer (1949, 1958), Singer and Smith (1958), Heim (1956a, b, 1957a), Wasson and Wasson (1957, 1958), Heim & Wasson (1958) and Wasson, V. (1958).

While the Spanish may or may not have been the first to explore this brave new world of ours, they were the first to have recorded the history of their discoveries in the New World. Furthermore, these Spanish invaders, as explorers, were also seeking such treasures as Coronado's "Seven Cities of Cibola" (the lost city of gold or "El Dorado" as it later became known), the "fountain of youth" and even aphrodisiacs to seduce young women. There are numerous references in the literature alluring to the fact that the mushrooms were a possible aphrodisiac (Wasson, 1980; Allen, 1997).

As the conquest spread through Central America and Mexico, the historians observed the Aztec priests and their followers being served the sacred fungi at festivals and other celebrations. The Nahuatl speaking Aztec priests called the mushrooms teonanácatl (Teunamacatlth), translatable as "Flesh of the Gods." According to Wasson (1980), "teo" probably meant awesome or wondrous and "nanacatl" implied mushroom or even meat.

The magic mushroom was only one of many fungi described in codices written by the Spanish in the 15th century. They relate that the mushrooms were often administered among the common people, merchants, visiting dignitaries. The wealthy consumed them served with honey or chocolate. Botanists and historians, eager to please their masters back in Spain, reported the effects of the mushrooms in diabolical terms. They described the effects of these mushrooms and other plants as leaving their users in uncontrollable fits, claiming that when under the influence, native people would even commit violent acts towards themselves and each other.

They reported that many would fall into rages or into a stupor. While this may indeed be simply symptoms of ignorance regarding Shamanic trance and it's outward appearances it is most likely that this ignorance was useful to those who could profit from the strangeness rather than trying to understand it. These descriptions could very well describe an alcoholic syndrome in contemporary society, but can also be compared in context to indicate strange plant usage and pagan practices. To the god-fearing Europeans of those days, this was reason enough for the devil-possessed natives. The Spanish were also a very mycophobic (mushroom-fearing) people who deplored the Aztec rituals and the priests who employed mushrooms and other magical plants as divinatory substances (Sahagún, 1956).

During this period of conquest, the Spanish invaders proceeded to rape the land of its many resources and strip away

the native peoples of their culture, heritage and religion. Soon they thus began their indoctrination of their way of life into that of the native population. This was achieved largely through the fear of death. Soon the conquerors began to indoctrinate and enslave the Native Americans and converted many Aztecs into the world of Christendom. Eventually, the conquerors succeeded in their endeavor to devour the land they now laid claim to while the botanists and clergy began to initiate the long and somewhat tedious task of cataloging and recording on paper all that they had discovered in the new world.

The numerous descriptions recorded by the Spanish clergy and historians concerning the effects of these drug/herb plants and their use by the Aztec people treats the subject with loathing and fear, rife in bigotry and this is somehow justified by demonizing them as evil or some type of heresy. All of the typical mind-control tactics were used to discredit the practice of religious plant consumption, effectively duping the feeble-minded into thinking that plants and their unauthorized usage was evil and of the Devil. For example: one author described the mushrooms as "Hongol demonico ydolo" (for more terms and names of the sacred mushrooms, see Allen, 1997c and Guzmán, 1997).

The Spanish persecuted, often murderously, those who did not adhere to the Catholic ways. This persecution caused the native population to hide the use of these mushrooms from their Spanish peers and over the intervening centuries, the native people concealed their use of the sacred mushrooms from outsiders. Thus the sacred mushrooms remained a secret until the Wassons celebrated velada with Dona María Sabina in 1955. While the ludible use of psilocybian mushrooms is worldwide, the traditional use of these mushrooms is best documented in certain mountain areas of the Mexican State of Oaxaca in the Sierra Mazateca region of Southern Mexico. It is there where local Shamans still employ the sacred mushrooms in magico-religious ceremonies as their ancestors the Olmecs, Toltecs, and Aztecs did for almost two millennia. Such use and practice once flourished amongst the Nahuatl peoples and today seven tribes of indigenous native inhabitants currently employ more than two dozen species of the sacred mushrooms in a ritual context for the purpose of healing and curing through divination and/or via magico-religious veladas (Wasson & Wasson; Schultes, 1939, 1940; Singer, 1958a).

We would know little or nothing of these indigenous peoples' use of the mushrooms was it not for Doña María Sabina, a Mazatec curandera who shared her secrets with R. Gordon Wasson and photographer Alan Richardson and made it possible for all of us to experience her ecstatic and sacred knowledge.

Additionally, Mayan cultures of Central America may also have employed the mushroom entheogens ceremoniously (J. M. Jenkins 1998).

Guzmán (1997) reported more than two hundred common names were used by various groups of Indians living in the Sierra Mazateca of Oaxaca, but now the rare word teonanácatl, first reported by Sahagún (1569-1582) and then by Schultes (1939), is now commonly used by western society to name any Mexican hallucinogenic fungi. However, teonanácatl is not known of nor used by any local indigenous peoples currently residing in Mesoamerica. Among the most common Spanish names used to refer tothe sacred mushrooms are: San Isidros (a saint of agriculture), pajaritos ("little birds") and derrumbes ("landslides"). These are the most common names used when describing Psilocybe cubensis and/or P. subcubensis, P. mexicana and P. zapotecorum, respectively (Guzmán, 1997; Guzmán, Allen & Gartz, 2000; Allen, 1997).

MUSHROOM CULTURE IN THE 20th CENTURY

The use of entheogenic fungi for ludible purposes first gained public recognition through research initiated by Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert, Ralph Metzger, and others at Harvard University in the early 1960's (Graves, 1962; Weil, 1963; Leary, 1968). Timothy Leary had consumed seven sacred mushrooms while on vacation with friends in Cuernavaca, Mexico. After returning to Harvard, Leary believed that the mushrooms and the special effects imbued in those who consumed them, could be a beneficial tool in psychiatric medicine. Ten years after Leary brought psilocybine to

Harvard, mushroom use slowly spread from México (Ott, 1975; Sandford, 1973; Pollock, 1977-1978; Weil 1973, 1975-1976) to the northeast United States and Australia (Stocks, 1963; McCarthy, 1971; Southcott, 1974) and back to Mexico. By the early 1970s, mushroom use became popular in Bali (Schultes and Hofmann, 1980 [1973]), Hawaii (Pollock, 1974) and the Pacific Northwest of America (Weil, 1975). Fifteen years after the announcement of the rediscovery of the ceremonial use of sacred mushrooms in México, recreational use of psilocybian fungi had become widespread in the Pacific Northwest and several Southeastern states of America (Pollock, 1976, Weil, 1977; 0tt, 1978; Singer, 1978).

In Canada, the recreational use of entheogenic mushrooms, particularly (Psilocybe semilanceata, was first reported from British Colombia by Heim et al. in 1966. By the early 1970s, public awareness that psilocybian fungi occurred in British Columbia and other Canadian territories soon became common knowledge to astute members of the drug sub-culture (Oakenbough, 1975; Padmore, 1980a, 1980b).

By the late 1960's, entheogenic mushroom awareness had arrived in the British Isles (Young et al., 1982; Harries and Evans, 1981; Peden et al., 1982), spreading to Scandinavia (Christiansen et al., 1981, 1984; Ohenoja et al., 1987), and other European countries (Gartz, 1993). In the early 1970s, psilocybian mushrooms gained large followings in Indonesia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Such use is now widespread amongst tourist populations in several third world countries (Allen & Merlin, 1992; Allen & Gartz, 1997). Liberty cap mushrooms (Psilocybe semilanceata) are common in Peru as is Copelandia cyanescens. Both Psilocybe cubensis and/or Psilocybe subcubensis are common in Colombia and other South American countries and several new species have recently been identified from Brazil.

The sale of magic mushrooms, whether sold separately or in food items, was common amongst certain groups of indigenous peoples living in third world countries. Tourists were able to gain the confidence of local indigents in the matter of the mushrooms and their desire to purchase said fungi through financial offerings definitely influenced many poor Indian peasants as well as some Mexicans, especially those living in and around the Oaxacan village of Huautla de Jiménez. Singer (1958, 1978) reported that Mexicans were debasing the mushroom rites of the Mazateca people of Oaxaca, especially in and around villages where shamans and curanderos still practice sacred healing and curing ceremonies.

Throughout Mexico (Ott, 1975), and Guatemala (Lowy, 1977), many adults, as well as their children, have both been observed gathering and selling entheogenic fungi to foreigners. Ott (1975) reported that students in México city were selling mushrooms to other students at schools and to tourists. For many poor people residing in undeveloped regions of Mexico, Central and South America, the mushrooms were a welcome economic boon.

Young Harvard students, graduates, authors and professionals, soon began a mass pilgrimage to México in search of the "magic mushrooms." Their only source of information in finding the mushrooms came from a few local native informants who claimed to know where the sacred mushrooms grew. Eventually, many native adults, as well as their children, soon began to seek out the fungi. Innocently enough, the indigents were only selling the fungi in order to provide their families with extra food and clothing. Predictably, by the middle 1960s, various scoundrels had learned the fine art of selling mushrooms that had no entheogenic properties, though this deception appeared to have subsided by the late 1970's.

Between 1960-1970, thousands of foreigners embarked on a pilgrimage to Oaxaca in search of the "magic mushrooms." Many of the young foreigners and their peers who encroached on Oaxaca, hoped to experience the magic of the sacred fungi. Many did, while at the same time, as noted above, many eventually ended up with phony non-hallucinogenic fungi. Ott (1975, 1978, 1979) later confirmed that these practices are common in México and still occur.

Wasson later wrote that, "Starting in the summer of 1967, army and federal authorities intervened in Huautla to expel the young foreigners and Mexicans who had made the place a center of psychedelic experimentation. The conduct of the young Mexicans, among many who were delinquents and not a few children of the rich in search of adventure, was

lamentable. The presence of the young foreigners was not scandalous but notorious. The irresponsible intrusion of the young outsiders into Huautla encouraged the Mexican authorities to prohibit the hallucinogens--their traffic and use--by including them (January 1971) in the health code of the Republic of México at the initiative of president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. Federal surveillance over the area continued until recently, when the youthful visitors in search of drugs ceased to be so numerous. At present [1980] the municipal authorities are in charge of the local situation."

As more people became aware of and experimented with hallucinogenic mushrooms, unenlightened governments of many countries proceeded to forbid their use and commerce. However, in the United States, Canadá, Europe and Australia, thousands of individuals continue using the mushrooms recreationally, but in an illegal commerce (Pollock 1974, 1975-1976, 1975, 1976, 1977-1978); Oldridge et al., 1989; Rumack and Salzman, 1978; Southcott, 1974, Weil, 1980; Allen 2002). Indoor illicit cultivation of the tropical fungus Psilocybe cubensis floutishes on most continents and the Pacific Northwest cold weather species Psilocybe azurescens is now reported from Europe, but only from cultures and imported woodchips with natural spawn or from sporeprints collected from the Pacific Northwestern United States. Presently, Psilocybe cubensis, Copelandia (Panaeolus) cyanescens and the sclerotia of Psilocybe tampanensis are legally cultivated and sold in Smart Shops throughout the Nederlands. Fresh mushrooms (Psilocybe cubensis and Copelandia cyanescens) are cultivated clandistinely and sold openly in shops in Christiana, Denmark. Until the summer of 2002, fresh and dried mushrooms were sold in vending machines and shops in Japan when the Japanese Ministry of Health enacted laws which described psilocybian mushrooms as dangerous narcotics, thus making the mushrooms illegal in Japan (Unsigned, May 29, 2002). Under the old law, the mushrooms were not considered illegal as long as they were not sold as food items. In the British Isles, possession of wild and/or cultivated magic mushrooms is not illegal as long as the mushrooms are fresh (Guardian, 2003). Additionally, fresh specimens of Psilocybe cubensis are legal in the State of Florida.

In the early 1970s, Australian and European backpackers, seeking alternate affordable vacation resources became ecstatic after becoming aware that entheogenic mushrooms were common on the island of Bali. They communicated this message to their friends and eventually Balinese natives learned the economic value of the mushrooms. This came about due to tourist influence amongst local native populations at resort areas in third world countries. By the early 1980's, magic mushroom omelets and smoothies had become popular numerous resort locations in Thailand, Nepal, and on both coasts of the Indian continent (Allen and Merlin, 1992; Allen and Gartz, 1997). It was recently reported that some species of magic mushrooms are now being served to tourists in the Philippine Islands.

THE POPULAR SPECIES

Among the 180 known varieties of the neurotropic species, four are currently sought after and used by hundreds of thousands of individuals as a source of communication amongst peoples with similar interests, but most use them not in a ritual setting or context nor for healing or curing, but rather as a form of recreation.

These four mushrooms include Psilocybe cubensis (fig. 3) and Psilocybe subcubensis (fig. 3),

the former a coprophilous (dung-inhabiting) species common in subtropical regions but unknown in the tropics and the latter a pantropical and subtropical species macroscopically indistinguishable from Psilocybe cubensis only by the size of its spores. Psilocybe cubensis is also cultivated (fig. 4)

clandestinely throughout much of the world; Psilocybe semilanceata (fig. 5),

often referred to as the liberty cap is common in Europe, Russia, India, Peru and the Pacific Northwest United States and Northeastern North America; and the famous blue meanies mushroom, Copelandia cyanescens and related species (fig.6)

found in the tropics and neotropics of both hemispheres. Finally we must report that Amanita muscaria (fig. 7)

is also sought after and used recreationally by some members of the drug subculture and such recreational use is limited to the west coast of the United States and in Western Europe. It is from these species that many dreamers find their common ground in forming a symbiotic relationship with these sacred mushrooms and it is here that some of those magical tales are told. And now with the Internet, one may also give thanks to the ‘world wide web’ for the symbiotic relationship it shares with these sacred plants and those who know and love them. It is the Internet that is now spreading the word of the mushrooms to millions of interested individuals throughout the world. It is up to the individual to stand up to the imposing governments that would rob humanity of this valuable birthright; the direct experience of psilocybian mushroom consciousness.

A FINAL THOUGHT

The study of fungi is called mycology and it was R. Gordon and Tina Wasson, whose life long interest and love of recording the history of mushrooms and their relationship with mankind, who coined the term used to describe that particular field of study as 'ethnomycology'. The term has been in use for 20 years or so, increasing in its popularity, ever since.

We, as humans, also share this quest for knowledge and to change the way we think through the application of healing plants that bring about an altered state of being is a new way at looking at life and what life is really all about. We owe a large debt of gratitude to R. Gordon and Tina Wasson for bringing these plants to the attention of the public.

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