Reading rather belatedly the interesting article by Reid W. Kaplan (Man (N.S.) 10, 72-9), in which he propounds the identification of a certain Scandinavian Bronze Age motif as representing the fly agaric or Amanita muscaria, I have been struck by a somewhat curious omission on his part. He writes: "On the simple principle that some-thing is what it looks like, it must be identified as the effigy of a mushroom". However, it does not look like a mushroom at all, but like an "X-ray drawing" or median cross-section of a mushroom. He remarks at one point that all the examples suggest a rounded, almost spherical, cross section with an incurved pileus (where one must wonder whether a spherical cross-section could mist), but no-where does he draw explicit attention to the fact that he is interpreting the motif as an X-ray. Perhaps such interpretations are so common in Scandinavian archaeology as not to be worth mentioning, but for those of us for whom it is a rare phenomenon, some defense of its use seems called for before Occam’s razor is unsheathed.

Another small, but rather similar. Point occurs to me when he refers (p. 76) to "rays emanating from the mushrooms of figs. 1e,f and g, which seem to indicate brightness". Is there any evidence for the occurrence in ancient art of this well-known form of comic-strip symbolism?

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