



The other striking thing about this story is that there is, among scholars devoted to the study of this very important site, a school among which noted personalities for over a century and a half, have developed the thesis of an Indo-European origin and influence on this site, going back to the very beginning of the *Vedas*. Incredibly, none of them—as far as I know—has identified the small motif over the head of the lightning-struck “Chief” as being a mushroom of the species *A. muscaria*. (It is worth noting that *A. muscaria* grow all over the foothills of these mountains.) Instead these scholars have developed all kinds of sophisticated interpretations about this so-called “abstract design.”

There was a very ancient cult, 4500-years-old, in the Maritimes Alps of southeast France. Its origins go back to the end of the Neolithic, 2500 BC, and it lasted all through the Bronze and Iron ages, up to the coming of the Romans in 14 BC. This cult of shamanic practices was linked with some kind of Vedic or pre-Vedic religious influence.

Now, if we accept that the motif is a representation of an *A. muscaria*, and also R. GORDON WASSON’s proposition that this mushroom was the principal original component of the Vedic Soma, then we have to conclude that both had in common the ritual use of the sacred Siberian mushroom for religious and shamanic purpose. Hey people, this is quite a finding!

In turn, if the scholars who suggest a Vedic influence on this neolithic European cult are right and the motif is an *A. muscaria*, this might then be the first archeological discovery able to prove R. GORDON WASSON’s proposition about identity of the Vedic Soma. — P.D., France

After receiving the information above, ER contacted GIORGIO SAMORINI, editor of Eleusis (see page 49), and a noted expert on ancient mushroomic art. He kindly provided his additional thoughts, as well as the photograph (see FIGURE 6) and a related bibliography (included on page 55). We are grateful for his input.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MUSHROOM EFFIGY OF MOUNT BEGO

I have been familiar with the rock art of MOUNT BEGO for many years and I always believed that the famous “Altar Rock” features an explicit representation of *Amanita muscaria*.

Apart from the mushroom images of Scandinavian rock art (KAPLAN 1975), this is the only other representation of the fly agaric in European prehistoric art discovered to date. The rock engravings of MOUNT BEGO are part of a larger group of rock art works in the Alpine arc dating from late Paleolithic to historic times. The largest concentration of rock engravings (more than 100,000 images) is in Valcamonica (Lombardy, Italy) and is the work of the Camuns people (cf. ANATI 1982). I noted in an earlier work that there were many psychoactive mushrooms, *Amanita* and *Psilocybe* in the area of the engraved rocks of Valcamonica and suggested that these mushrooms may have had a part to play in the cults and rituals of the Camuns (SAMORINI 1988). Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that all the rock art of the Camuns and Alpine rock art in general are closely associated with religious cults.

The second series of rock art works of major importance in the Alpine arc (over 30,000 images) is at MOUNT BEGO and the “Valley of Wonders.” Studies of this prehistoric site go back one hundred years (cf. BERNARDINI 1971; BLAIN 1976). The main peculiarity of this rock art is the altitude of the site (2000–2500 meters) and the significant—one might say obsessive—presence of horned zoomorphic images (essentially Bovidae). A further peculiarity is that practically all these horned figures are engraved in such a manner that the horns point toward the peak of the mountain. This is not a chance occurrence. It has been observed that MOUNT BEGO is one of the Maritime Alps mountains most frequently struck by lightning, and it has been hypothesized on more than one occasion that MOUNT BEGO was selected by prehistoric peoples as a “sanctuary” precisely because of this meteorological characteristic (cf. for example, MARRO 1945–46). In ancient times it was widely believed that the sacredness of certain localities could be derived from this characteristic. It is also worth noting the zigzag form of many of the MOUNT BEGO horns, reminiscent of lightning. A number of scholars have already pointed this out (cf. for example, MARRO 1944–45). We should now turn our attention to the “Altar Rock” with the engraved scene inappropriately called the “Tribal Chieftain,” about which I’ll make my own observations, adding these to the observations mentioned by P.D. in the previous article.

The anthropomorphic figure originally called “Tribal Chief” was then considered a sacrificial victim, due to the knife pointing toward the right of his head. Since there is a cow skull adorning the drape-like vestment of the anthropomorphic figure, for a long time it was thought that this was a scene associated with a Mithraic-style sacrificial act. How-





ever, according to the more precise dating techniques subsequently adopted by archeologists, these rock engravings date much further back than the Mithraic cult adopted by the Roman legions passing through this area, and this interpretation was therefore abandoned (DUFRENNE 1986). There is more justification for the interpretation offered by those researchers who see the figure as “adorant” or “officiant” (DUFRENNE 1985; MARINGER 1979).

My own opinion is that this scene presents shamanistic connotations due to the presence of the mushroom image and a stepladder—basic elements of the ritual of shamanistic initiation (ÉLIADE 1964; SAMORINI 1990). Researchers have noted surprising analogies between the prehistoric stones of Valcamonica and Valtellina (Italy) and Indo-European symbolic and religious concepts (ANATI 1977; PIANTELLI 1983). In the wake of this discovery, ROLAND DUFRENNE (1985, 1986) found even closer analogies between the symbolism of the rock art of MOUNT BEGO and that of the Indian *Vedas*. In Vedic sacrifice, we may note assimilation of sacred utterances and prayer on the one hand and, on the other, arrows or daggers pointing toward the head of the officiant and which reach his heart. This, according to DUFRENNE, is what we find in the MOUNT BEGO scene with the dagger touching the head of the adorant. The mushroom image is generally considered a stylized cow skull, a dagger or some other ritual arm—however difficult it is to see in it an arm of any kind. The way it thickens out at the “handle” or “blade” brings to mind the ring of the stalk of *A. muscaria*, and the engraved dots on the upper part of the figure are very similar to the punctiform spots on the cap of fly agaric. DUFRENNE notes seven dots and finds a correspondence between these and the seven mysterious powers sustaining the universe or the seven original prayers of Vedic cosmogony. However, we know that the number seven is also associated with Siberian shamanistic symbolism and the use of fly agaric. Lappish shamans, for example, consume *A. muscaria* mushrooms with seven spots (T. I. ITKONEN, see WASSON 1968: 279). — GIORGIO SAMORINI
E-mail: giorgio.samorini@iol.it

TRICHOCEREUS CONSUMPTION DETAILS

The following letter comes from the individual who was mentioned in K. TROUT's article titled *Trichocereus peruvianus?* in the last issue of ER (see VERNAL EQUINOX 1998, page 17). He is the correspondent who originally reported that L.E.R.'s *T. peruvianus* was inactive.

Thanks for your new and improved journal. I am impressed that you are trying to be more detailed and scientific. I have tried where possible to remember all facts regarding the extraction procedure; this is a much needed addition for accurate comparisons.

I purchased three feet of “*Trichocereus peruvianus*” from L.E.R. in July 1996 for \$135.00 (\$45.00 per foot). The diameter of the plants was 3.5 inches. I removed the spines, using gloves and pliers. In all cases, the cacti was consumed after extraction.

When extracting, I used just enough water to cover the cactus mass, adding a shot glass of lemon juice to acidify, and then heating slightly below a boil for two hours. This was then strained in a colander with a neckerchief as a filter. The pulp was then rung out by squeezing the neckerchief into a ball. The same extraction process was again repeated for another two hours with fresh water and lemon juice, then strained again. The combined fluids were then drunk, or dried into a tar and put into capsules, as described below.

EXPERIMENT ONE: With prior *T. pachanoi* bioassays in mind, and based on information from *Pharmacotheon*, which states that *T. peruvianus* is stronger (OTT 1993), I used only ½ foot of fresh L.E.R. “*T. peruvianus*.” This was pulverized in a blender, and extracted as described above. After drinking the tea, no effects were felt.

EXPERIMENT TWO: I then dried the remaining 2.5 feet (a lot of cacti!), which was about 125 grams dried—using ¼ inch cuttings of the skin and pith, but not the center of the cactus. This was dried at about 90°F in an attic, then reduced to a powder in a blender. After being extracted as described above, the liquid was then heated (at the lowest setting) on a teflon frying pan, to reduce the amount of liquid. Finally, this was placed in a warm area, drying into a tar after two days. The tar was rolled into capsules, to avoid tasting the muck when swallowed. Teflon pans make it easy to roll up the tar! I split these capsules with a friend, and neither of us felt any activity.

I don't know how old the cacti were, though they were alive and had ¼ inch roots sprouting from their bases. I didn't count the number of ribs on the plants, and I don't know at what time of the year they were harvested. In my opinion, the L.E.R. cactus is not the same *T. peruvianus* that OTT is talking about in *Pharmacotheon*.





BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AGHAJANIAN, G.K. 1994. "Serotonin and the Action of LSD in the Brain" *Psychiatric Annals* 24(3): 137–141.
- ANATI, E. 1977. "Origine e significato storico-religioso delle statue-stele" *Boll. Cam. St. Preist.*, 16: 45–56.
- ANATI, E. 1982. *I Camuni*. Milano, Jaka.
- BERNARDINI, E. 1971. *Monte Bego*. Bordighera (TO), CAI.
- BERT, M. et al. 1988. "Non-Amphetamine Central Stimulation by Alkaloids from the Ibogane [sic] and Vobasine Series" *Planta Medica* 54: 191–192.
- BLAIN, A. 1976. "Les gravures rupestres de la Vallée des Merveilles" *Boll. Cam. St. Preist.*, 13/14: 91–120.
- BOIRE, R.G. 1995. "Concerning the Legal Status of *Catha edulis* (Khat)" *The Entheogen Law Reporter* No. 7: 60–62.
- BOIRE, R.G. 1997. *Sacred Mushrooms and the Law*. Second Edition. SPECTRAL INDUSTRIES.
- BONSON, K.R. 1994. "Psychedelics and Psychiatric Drugs: NIMH Update" *MAPS Bulletin* 4(4): 59.
- BONSON, K.R. et al. 1995. "Chronic administration of serotonergic antidepressants attenuates the subjective effects of LSD in humans" *Neuropsychopharmacology* 14(6): 425–436.
- BONSON, K.R. and DENNIS L. MURPHY 1996. "Alterations in responses to LSD in humans associated with chronic administration of tricyclic antidepressants, monoamine oxidase inhibitors or lithium" *Behavioural Brain Research* 73: 229–233.
- BONSON, K.R. 1997. "National Institute of Mental Health researcher studies co-administration of antidepressants and entheogens" *MAPS Bulletin* 7(3): 55.
- BONSON, K.R. 1998. Personal correspondence via e-mail.
- DOBLIN, R. 1998. Personal correspondence via e-mail.
- DUFRENNE, R. 1985. "Interpretation des gravures rupestres de la Vallée des Merveilles à la lumière de la tradition védique" *Boll. Cam. St. Preist.*, 22: 110–116; also in *Atlantis*, 59: 221–231.
- DUFRENNE, R. 1986. *Merveilles et Veda. Interprétation des gravures rupestres du Mont Bègo*, unpubl.
- ELIADE, M. 1964. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. PANTHEON.
- FERNANDEZ, J.W. 1972. "Tabernanthe iboga: Narcotic ecstasis and the work of the ancestors" In: FURST, P.T. (Ed.) *Flesh of the Gods: The Ritual Use of Hallucinogens*. PRAEGER. pp. 237–260.
- FISH, F. et al. 1960. "Alkaloids of *Voacanga schweinfurthii* Stapf. Part I. Voacamine and Vobtusine" *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology*, 12(suppl.): 41T–44T.
- GOLDBLATT, A. et al. 1970. "The Alkaloids of *Voacanga thoursii* var. *obtusata*" *Phytochemistry* 9: 1293–1298.
- IWU, M.M. 1993. *Handbook of African Medicinal Plants*. CRC PRESS.
- KAPLAN, R.W. 1975. "The sacred mushroom in Scandinavia" *Man*, 10: 72–79.
- LA BARRE, J. 1960. "A propos des effets renforçateurs et bradycardisants de l'association strophanthine-voacamine" *Comptes Rendus des Séances de la Société de Biologie et de ses Filiales* 154: 473–474.
- MAPS BULLETIN Fall 1990. "Dr. Nichols Confirms that Prozac Blocks MDMA Neurotoxicity."
- MARINGER 1979. "Adorants in prehistoric art" *Numen*, 26: 215–230.
- MARRO, G. 1944–45. "L'elemento magico nelle figurazioni rupestri delle Alpi Marittime" *Atti Acc. Sci. Torino*, 81: 91–95.
- MARRO, G. 1945–46. "Le istoriazioni rupestri preistoriche dell'Italia settentrionale. I. Alpi Marittime" *Atti Acc. Sci. Torino*, 82: 16–21.
- MEDICAL ECONOMICS COMPANY 1998. *Physician's Desk Reference*.
- OLIVER-BEVER, B. 1967. "Quelques Apocynacées et Asclepiadacées cardiotoniques et une plante hypoglycémiant au Nigéria" *Quarterly Journal of Crude Drug Research* 7(1): 982–989.
- OLIVER-BEVER, B. 1982. "Medicinal Plants in Tropical West Africa. I. Plants Acting On the Cardiovascular System" *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 5: 1–71.
- OLIVER-BEVER, B. 1983. "Medicinal Plants in Tropical West Africa. II. Plants Acting On the Nervous System" *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 7: 1–93.
- OLIVER-BEVER, B. 1986. *Medicinal Plants in Tropical West Africa*. CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS.
- OTT, J. 1976. "Psycho-Mycolological Studies Of Amanita—From Ancient Sacrament To Modern Phobia" *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 8(1): 27–35.
- OTT, J. 1993. *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic drugs, their plant sources and history*. NATURAL PRODUCTS Co. (Also 1996 Second Edition Densified)
- PARIS, R. and CLAUDE VAIREL 1949. "De l'action physiologique de l'Iboga (*Tabernanthe iboga* H. Bn.) et de l'ibogaïne; effet sur chronaxie musculaire" *Comptes Rendus Hebdomadaires des Séances de l'Académie des Sciences* 228: 436–437.
- PERCHERON, F. et al. 1957. "Ibogaine et voacangine" *Comptes Rendus Hebdomadaires des Séances de l'Académie des Sciences* 245: 1141–1143.
- PIANTELLI, M. 1983. "L'interpretazione di uno schema iconografico complesso rinvenibile nelle stele monumentali camune e valtelinesi" *Boll. Cam. St. Preist.*, 20: 33–54.
- PSYCHIATRY ON-LINE.
<http://www.priory.com/locus1.html#Definition>
- QUEVAUVILLER, M.A. and O. BLANPIN (1957) *Ann. Pharm. Franç* 15: 617. [Was not available as the UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS' subscription started with 1960. Abstracted 1958 "Voacamine and Voacarine, Alkaloids of *Voacanga africana* Stapf., Comparative Pharmacological Study Of" *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* 10: 528.





- QUEVAUVILLER, M.A. and O. BLANPIN 1957. "Sur la voacordine, alcaloïde du *Voacanga africana* (Apocynacées)" *Comptes Rendus des Séances de la Société de Biologie et de Ses Filiales* 151: 1864–1865.
- QUEVAUVILLER, M.A. *et al.* 1965. "Sur la vobtusine, alcaloïde de *Voacanga africana* Apocynacées" *Comptes Rendus des Séances de la Société de Biologie et de Ses Filiales* 159: 821–825.
- RAO, K.V. 1958. "Alkaloids of *Voacanga africana* Stapf. I. Voacafrine and Voacafricine—Two New Alkaloids" *Journal of Organic Chemistry* 23: 1455–1456.
- RÄTSCH, C. 1992. *The Dictionary of Sacred and Magical Plants*. PRISM PRESS.
- SAMORINI, G. 1988. "Sulla presenza di funghi e piante allucinogene in Valcamonica" *Boll. Cam. St. Preist.*, 24: 132–136.
- SAMORINI, G. 1990. "Sciamanesimo, funghi psicotropi e stati alterati di coscienza: un rapporto da chiarire" *Boll. Cam. St. Preist.*, 25/26: 147–150.
- SHULGIN, A.T., and ANN SHULGIN 1997. *TIHKAL: The Continuation*. TRANSFORM PRESS.
- SMILKSTEIN, M.J. *et al.* 1987. "A Case of MAO Inhibitor/MDMA Interaction: Agony After Ecstasy" *Journal of Toxicology. Clinical Toxicology* 25(1 & 2): 149–159.
- STAFFORD, P. 1992. *Psychedelics Encyclopedia*. Third Edition. RONIN PUBLISHING, INC.
- TAESOTIKUL, T. *et al.* 1989. "Hippocratic screening of ethanolic extracts from two *Tabernaemontana* species" *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 27: 99–106.
- TAYLOR, W.I. 1965. "The *Iboga* and *Voacanga* alkaloids" pp 203–235 in R.H.F. MANSKE (ed.) *The Alkaloids. Chemistry and Physiology. Volume VIII. The Indole Alkaloids*. ACADEMIC PRESS: New York and London.
- THEOBALD, W. 1963. Personal communication with G. ZETLER.
- THOMAS, D.W. and K. BIEMAN 1968. "The Alkaloids of *Voacanga africana*" *Lloydia* 31(1): 1–8.
- UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND DRUG INFORMATION SERVICE:
http://pharminfo.com/drugfaq/efxr_html#2
- USDIN, E. and Daniel H. EFRON 1979. *Psychotropic Drugs and Related Compounds*, Second Edition. PERGAMON PRESS. Originally published in 1972 by US DEPT. OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE. (First Edition; PHS Pub. No. 1589/ Supplement; PHS Pub. No. 1589-A)
- VAN BEEK, T.A. *et al.* 1984. "*Tabernaemontana* L. (Apocynaceae): A review of its taxonomy, phytochemistry, ethnobotany and pharmacology" *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 10(1): 1–156.
- VOGEL, G. and HORST UEBEL 1961. "Zur Pharmakologie der Alkaloïde aus *Voacanga africana* Stapf" *Arzneimittel-Forschung* 11(8): 787–793.
- WASSON, R.G. 1968. *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality*. HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVICH.
- ZETLER, G. 1963. "Einige pharmakologische Eigenschaften von 12 natürlichen und 11 partialsynthetisch abgewandelten Indol-Alkaloiden aus tropischen Apocynaceen des Subtribus *Tabernaemontaninae*" *Arzneimittel-Forschung* 14(12): 1277–1286.
- ZETLER, G. *et al.* 1968. *Naunyn Schmiedeberg's Archiv für Pharmakologie* 220: 26. (from OTT 1993)
- ZETLER, G. and K.R. UNNA 1959. *Arch. Exptl. Pathol. Pharmacol.* 236: 122. (from TAYLOR 1965 and also ZETLER 1963)

