Sacred Mushrooms and the Law

by Richard Glen Boire

Foreword by Terence McKenna

Richard Glen Boire is an attorney who specializes in divining the law constellation around ancient and modern shamanic inheritances. He is editor of The Entheogen Law Reporter (TEL R), and author of the Marijuana Law and Sacred Mushrooms and the Law. For more information on these publications send a long SASE to: Spectral Ministries, POB 73401-ER, Davis, CA 95617-3401.

For questions for possible inclusion in this column can be sent to Mr. Boire in care of ER at: Pharmacop Prohibita, c/o The Entheogen Review, 564 Mission Street, Box 808, San Francisco, CA 94105-2918.

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 in 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-striken “Chief” as being a mushroom of the species A. muscaria. (It is worth noting that A. muscaria grows 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, 4,500-years-old, in the Maritime 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

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.
Network Feedback

AMANITA MUSCARIA
ANCIENT HISTORY

In southern France stands a beautiful mountainous massif named the Maritime Alps, the last one of the Alps chain just before it meets with the Mediterranean sea.

In the highest and most remote part of this area stands an ancient sacred mountain named Bego. This mountain is surrounded with thousands of prehistoric engravings. The core of these engravings have been dated from 2500 BC to 14 BC. It is one of the oldest and most important cultural sites of this type in Europe.

There are three impressive wild valleys conducting toward this mountain, which have been considered as being three different sacred paths. The valley that surrounds Mount Bego is named the “Valley of Wonders.” The higher part of this valley opens to the most important sites of engravings. At the top of it, just at the feet of the sacred mount, there is the most central and significant site—the “Altar Rock.”

It is a big red-purple rough rock standing on a large plaque of a different smooth rock covered with thousands of engravings. From a tiny hole in that plaque springs a small source of living water. This carving also has one of the fairly rare anthropomorphic figures of the site, which is a unique case in this context. This engraving is in many regards noteworthy. It is a very central one, and it stands on the sacred path of this valley exactly like the front on a medieval church. This site might then represent and summarize the central element of a very ancient cult.

This carving also has one of the fairly rare anthropomorphic figures of the site, and it has been named the “Chief of the Tribe.” Now look at the reproduction of it (see back cover), and it is even more obvious in a photograph (see FIGURE 6).

The “Chief of the Tribe” might rather be the representation of a shaman whose plant ally or plant of vision was the mythic mushroom Amanita muscaria. Exactly like with the Siberian or the Ojibway shamans for whom the mushroom Amanita muscaria was also closely linked with lightning (STAFFORD 1992); our “Chief of the Tribe” is enlightened (symbolized by the lightning bolt) with the power of the mushroom.

The primary source for legal information concerning visionary plants and drugs…

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Schedule II substance. This means it is unlawful to possess cocaine or E. coca leaves in the US without a doctor’s prescription (21 CFR 1308.12, subd. (b)(4); 21 USC sec. 802 (17)(c)). No other part of the plant—other than the leaves—is explicitly mentioned. For this reason, it is reasonable to assume that the seeds are not controlled.

However, the same potential problem mentioned regarding T. iboga seeds exists with respect to the seeds of E. coca; if the seeds are found to contain cocaine or any other controlled substance, a prosecutor could theoretically argue that they are illegal "material[s]… mixtures[,]… etc. But if the seeds do not contain a controlled substance, then I see no provision of federal law that would make them illegal.

A. muscaria (Rätsch 1992). This would seem to include the seeds of the plant, although I am not aware of any study specifically reporting ibogaine in the seeds of T. iboga. Perhaps they have never been tested; I don’t know. If the seeds do contain ibogaine, a federal prosecutor could theoretically argue that the seeds are outlawed "material[s], compound[s], mixture[s], or preparation[s], which contain" a controlled substance. As I have written before (see BORE 1997), however, such an argument would strain the meaning of the provision, which was designed to cover street drugs that are often sold diluted, suspended in binder material, or placed on some sort of carrier medium. Morning glory seeds are openly sold through advertisements in High Times magazine, and are well-known to contain lysergic acid amide, a Schedule III substance. I am not aware of any prosecution based on the theory that such seeds are illegal materials, compounds, mixtures, or preparations containing a controlled substance. As an aside, I have heard reports that the seeds of other plants, for example certain Voacanga species, may contain ibogaine. If this is true, it is certainly possible that a prosecutor could argue that such seeds, although not explicitly listed in the federal law, fall into the above provision. But again, the feds have not gone after sellers of morning glory seeds, so it seems unlikely they’d move on much more obscure seeds. Also, if the seeds of T. iboga do contain ibogaine, a person arrested in possession of them could argue that the seeds of T. iboga were intentionally excluded from Schedule I. The argument would assert that the seeds of T. iboga are not expressly mentioned in federal law because Congress never intended to outlaw these seeds. Had it intended to outlaw them, it would have done so explicitly, as it did with viable Cannabis seeds, and the seeds of peyote. In other words, one might argue that when Congress specifically intends to outlaw seeds of a plant, it does so explicitly. Since it did not do so with T. iboga seeds, this indicates that Congress never intended them to be included in Schedule I. Finally, considering how murky this area is, an argument exists that any prosecution for possessing the seeds of T. iboga runs afoul of the constitutional requirement that criminal laws be written clearly, so that the average person does not have to guess whether an action is criminal rather than legal.

QUESTIONS: Are Erythroxylum coca seeds illegal in the US?

RESPONSE: Under federal law, cocaine is a Schedule II substance. Additionally, “[c]oca leaves… and any salt, compound, derivative or preparation of coca leaves (including cocaine… and ergotine… and their salts, isomers…)” are a

indole alkaloids…” (Rätsch 1992). This would seem to include the seeds of the plant, although I am not aware of any study specifically reporting ibogaine in the seeds of T. iboga. Perhaps they have never been tested; I don’t know. If the seeds do contain ibogaine, a federal prosecutor could theoretically argue that the seeds are outlawed “material[s], compound[s], mixture[s], or preparation[s], which contain” a controlled substance. As I have written before (see BORE 1997), however, such an argument would strain the meaning of the provision, which was designed to cover street drugs that are often sold diluted, suspended in binder material, or placed on some sort of carrier medium. Morning glory seeds are openly sold through advertisements in High Times magazine, and are well-known to contain lysergic acid amide, a Schedule III substance. I am not aware of any prosecution based on the theory that such seeds are illegal materials, compounds, mixtures, or preparations containing a controlled substance. As an aside, I have heard reports that the seeds of other plants, for example certain Voacanga species, may contain ibogaine. If this is true, it is certainly possible that a prosecutor could argue that such seeds, although not explicitly listed in the federal law, fall into the above provision. But again, the feds have not gone after sellers of morning glory seeds, so it seems unlikely they’d move on much more obscure seeds. Also, if the seeds of T. iboga do contain ibogaine, a person arrested in possession of them could argue that the seeds of T. iboga were intentionally excluded from Schedule I. The argument would assert that the seeds of T. iboga are not expressly mentioned in federal law because Congress never intended to outlaw these seeds. Had it intended to outlaw them, it would have done so explicitly, as it did with viable Cannabis seeds, and the seeds of peyote. In other words, one might argue that when Congress specifically intends to outlaw seeds of a plant, it does so explicitly. Since it did not do so with T. iboga seeds, this indicates that Congress never intended them to be included in Schedule I. Finally, considering how murky this area is, an argument exists that any prosecution for possessing the seeds of T. iboga runs afoul of the constitutional requirement that criminal laws be written clearly, so that the average person does not have to guess whether an action is criminal rather than legal.

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