

## HALLUCINATORY DRUGS AND HOBGOBLINS IN THE MAYA LOWLANDS

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A good part of this material has been published (Thompson, 1970:185-86; 1971:42-43), each citation covering only part of the subject. As interested persons are unlikely to consult the latter paper and as new information is available, the data are here presented as a whole.

Archaeological evidence of a mushroom cult in the Maya lowlands is scant. Pottery mushrooms have been found at the Tabascan sites of El Bellote, Classic Maya, and at Isla and Ceiba, in association with proto-Classic pottery (Borhegyi 1961; 1963). Because of their proximity to El Bellote, we may infer that the latter sites were Maya. All three fall within former territory of the Putun (Chontal) Maya and lie close to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, present-day region of the narcotic mushroom and *Ololiuhqui* (*Ipomoea violacea*) variant. A stone mushroom, labelled merely "Tabasco," is in the Villahermosa museum.

As for the rest of the peninsula, a stone representation of a mushroom comes from Morales, a site said to be in Belize, but which I cannot locate. Perhaps it lies on the west bank of the Río Hondo, in Quintana Roo (Gann, 1911: 87 and pl. xix). The possible cap of another mushroom stone was found in a cave near Mayapan (Strömshvik, 1956:466). Altar de Sacrificios has yielded pottery mushrooms (Borhegyi, 1963:330).

Colonial and modern sources, including manuscripts of yerbateros and *Ritual of the Bacabs* (Roys, 1931; 1966), say nothing of hallucinatory drugs in Yucatan, nor is there any pertinent entry in Maya vocabularies. In fact, neither the climate nor the altitude of Yucatan would appear propitious for the cultivation of mushrooms with narcotic properties. At least, that eaten by the Mixe grows only at high altitudes (Ravicz, 1961:74). Presumably, mushrooms eaten in Yucatan

would have been brought in dry, and no doubt that trade ended with the Spanish conquest. Both the *corymbosa* and *violacea* varieties of *ololiuhqui* grow in Yucatan (Stanley, 1945:456, 458). The first is called *xTabentun* in Yucatec. The flowers produce a mead much appreciated in Yucatan; the second is named *Yaxce'lil*, with the meaning "associated with malaria" (*yaxceel*).

In view of the widespread use of plants with hallucinatory properties in Mexico, it is hard to believe that the Peninsula of Yucatan should have been free of such vices or pleasures, particularly as the *ololiuhquis* grow there. Nevertheless, one must bear in mind our ignorance of mushroom cults until Johnson and Weitlaner brought them to our attention and Miller made his investigations. Furthermore, colonial sources for the lowland Maya are meager compared with central Mexico.

Notwithstanding those handicaps, there are, I am reasonably satisfied, indirect references to the use of hallucinatory drugs in Yucatan. To set them in their cultural context, a brief review of some present-day practices in southern Mexico is called for, bearing in mind that we are not dealing with a single uniform cult, but local variations perhaps arising from contacts with local folk practices in the field of divination.

#### COMPARATIVE MATERIAL

Miller (1956:37, 219; 1966:322) relates that the Mixe shaman, when under the influence of *teonanacatl*, hallucinatory mushrooms, makes divinations with the aid of duendes which appear to him in the shape of an "adult" couple of small stature (65-75 cm.) "as though they were a boy and a girl" (*un chamaco y una chamaca*). They are likewise described as dwarfs (*enanos*). It is clear that these are personifications of the mushrooms. One informant says the eater sees visions of snakes; another gives a different version, namely that the mushrooms punish anyone who shows them disrespect by sending them visions of jaguars and snakes. When the mushroom speaks through an eater, the latter's voice changes. For another part of the Mixe area somewhat different manifestations are reported (Hoogshagen, 1959). A boy who ate mushrooms saw snakes of all sizes crawling around and

over his body. For another informant the roof poles of the hut seemed to become snakes and, descending, to surround the mushroom eater.

According to an ancient tradition of the Nahuatl-speaking people of Amatlan de los Reyes, near Córdoba, Veracruz, the creatures who appear to one under the influence of *teonanacatl* are little men, *tlakatatsitsin*; they are personifications of the mushroom, and, according to the author's commentary, they are infants who died unbaptised; they are "blue lightnings" and residents of Tlalocan (Reyes, 1970).

Among the Mazatec, figures seen under the influence of *teonanacatl* take the shapes of the Lord of the Mountain, the apostles or even Christ. Elsewhere, an old man or snakes (A. Villa in the introduction to Miller 1956).

One other feature may have significance: At Amatlan de los Reyes the mushrooms are deposited in a red jícara and red flowers are placed over them. Among the Mixtec the candles on the altar are red and white and of the seven flowers, four are rose-colored, three are white (Ravicz, 1961:80).

The Mixtec also believe that when the mushroom talks to the eater, one must not look at the spot from which the voice comes. If a person does so, he will go mad (Ravicz, 1961:77n).

There are archaeological parallels for the associations of beings in human and animal form with the mushrooms. Stone mushrooms from Late Formative onward found in the highlands of Guatemala often have the stems supported or replaced by carvings in the round representing old or young men, women, monkeys, jaguars or pumas, birds, pisotes, rabbits or deer and frogs or toads (Borhegyi, 1961).

Hobgoblins, sometimes in association with small animals, are particularly common at the non-Maya sites at Santa Lucía Cotzumalhuapa and Palo Verde, on the Guatemalan Pacific slope. A number of mushroom stones, dominantly of the tripod type, but all without effigies, have been found at the Cotzumalhuapa sites, a type apparently contemporaneous with much of the local sculpture (Thompson, 1948; Parsons, 1967-69, 2:79).

#### NARCOTIC TRANCES AND HOBGOBLINS IN YUCATAN

A passage in the *Book of Chilam Balam of Tizimin* (pp.

13-14) repeated almost in the same words in the *Chilam Balam of Mani* (Código Pérez, p. 65) almost surely treats of narcotic-induced trances in Yucatan. I have made a fresh translation largely dependent on that by Roys (1954:6-7), but with a crucial emendment in that Roys failed to realize that in the context *maax* is to be translated as duende or hobgoblin. Apparently, taking it to be the interrogative "who?", he rendered it as "a certain one." *Maax* is normally spider monkey, but it also signifies hobgoblin: Duende, *ah maax*, San Francisco dictionary; *Dz'utu max*, duende, Motul dictionary; Duende de cassa [sic], *dz'utumax*, Vienna dictionary.

The passage deals with obtaining the prophecy for the *katun*, in Maya eyes of supreme importance, by the *chilan* or prophet. *Chilan*, defined in the Motul dictionary as interpreter and to serve as intermediary, means in the Yucatec dialect of Lake Peten lying or laid down, past participle of *chital*, to lie down, *acostarse* (Schumann, 1971). This was surely once *chital* ( *l* tends to disappear before *t* ). In Yucatec *chital* is a variant of *cheltal*, to lie down (Beltran de Santa Rosa, 1859:119). Thus *chilan* corresponds to *chelan*, past participle of *cheltal*, to lie down laid down or stretched out. Pretty clearly the original meaning of *chilan* was one stretched out or lying down, and referred to the manner that person received the prophecy, as described below. It must, therefore have been a common practice.

After describing how various priests and prophets assembled to receive the prophecy, the passage continues:

Then they gathered at the house of the Ah Nacom Balam, the *chilan*. Then was the message above the house of the *chilan*; then was the interpreting of the words of counsel given to them. Then was given to them the hidden message, but they did not understand it because of the reciting of the speech by the *chilan* because he is mouth to ground. He does not move, he does not rise from where he is, within the small room, within the house, as long as the duende speaks above the rafters [?] of the house because he was crossways above the rafters [?] of the house.

Then will begin the declaring to the priests

assembled in the house of the *chilan* of the message which came to them. They did not know who was speaking to them. Then they said "True god, Great Snake Father." Those were their words. Then they turned their faces down to the earth. Then, as they lay listening, they heard the message of that Chilam Balam, the great priest.

It is a fair assumption that the above describes the *chilan* in a narcotic-induced trance and in the role of a ventriloquist, speaking the prophecy imparted by the *maax*, the duende. For that reason and because the *chilan* spoke with his mouth to the ground, the words were slurred and not well understood by the audience.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARALLELS

The non-Maya archaeological site of Santa Lucía Cotzumalhuapa, on the Pacific slope of Guatemala, supplies archaeological parallels for the above ceremony. There, two stone reliefs depict hobgoblins - one a death figure, the other an equally small creature, half human half deer - talking to a human figure reclining on the ground who holds out a hand to them. The death figure points with his index finger in a somewhat threatening way at the recumbent figure; the deer hobgoblin holds what might be a heart or a cacao pod (the latter symbolized the former in Mexican metaphorical phraseology). These are illustrated by Thompson (1948, fig. 3 *d, e*) and Parsons (1967-69, vol. 2, pl. 42 *a, b*). As already noted, the Santa Lucía sites have yielded other representations of hobgoblins as well as many stone reliefs of mushrooms. Furthermore, both archaeological and ethnological investigations link various animals with the mushroom cult (Borhegyi, 1961).

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF HOBGOBLINS

Four scenes depict confrontations between dwarfs and rulers. On a painted capstone from Sacniete, Yucatan (Kutscher, 1972; Thompson, 1973) a hunchback dwarf, on the left, wearing a barkcloth (?) headdress roughly like a harp with high point to rear, has his left hand clenched but with index finger pointing upward at the personage; right arm and fingers, both slightly flexed, extend earthward.

On a vase from Yaloch (Gordon and Mason, 1925-43, Pls. 17, 18) a chubby dwarf in precisely the same attitude (left index finger pointing at the personage; right hand extended earthward) faces a ruler with mouth wide open (shouting or in surprise?) The dwarf may have a flower with stem attached to his headdress (see Gann, 1918, Pl. 27).

A Tepeu 2 sherd from Uaxactun (Smith, 1955, fig. 2 b ) pictures a dwarf with grotesque features looking aggressively (?) at a richly clad personage. The dwarf may be hunchbacked (details are not clear). His left hand extends forward at 45° below horizontal with fingers pointed downwards; his right hand rests on his stomach. The damaged headdress seems reminiscent of that of the Sacnité humpback. Headband, loincloth and wristlet are black.

On the Santa Rita murals (Gann, 1900, Pl. xxx) a deity or god impersonator holds aloft a tied container of uncertain material on which is seated a dwarf, pale blue and wearing a pointed helmet rather like that of Norman knights. His left arm is bent at the elbow so that the forearm is raised. The hand is clenched with index finger pointing upward, an attitude similar to those of the dwarfs on the Cotzumalhuapa monument, the Yaloch vase and the Sacnité capstone. Conceivably he is humpbacked. A stalk terminating in a trilobal flower issues from his back or arm.

On Stela 10, Xultun (Morley, 1937-38, Pl. 80) the ruler holds before him on the palm of his outstretched hand a small animal, apparently a jaguar or puma, with left paw extended toward the ruler and with what may be a stalk ending in a flower emerging from his stomach. An uncertain element - Morley calls it a flower, but that is a dubious identification - emerges from the mouth. The ruler holds in the crook of his left arm a manikin who faces towards him. The creature's fierce features are not human. He has what seems to be a snarling mouth and the "dundreary" whiskers which characterize the jaguar god of Number 7. The round eye indicates an animal origin, and strengthens the suggested jaguar identification. What might be a sort of flowered vine rises from before the mouth. The stela is very late (10.3.0.0.0.). Stela 29, Calakmul, may also show a dwarf.

Each of the three known monuments of Palo Verde, a non-Maya site of the Pacific slope culturally related to Santa

Lucía Cotzumahuapa, depict a personage holding aloft a creature. One of these is a death manikin, the other two are seemingly a conventionalized snake and perhaps a jaguar (note spots on body) (Thompson, 1948, fig. 6a-c ).

Associations are loose. In four cases the manikin points a finger at the personage. The creature may have human or animal features, if the former, he may be humpbacked. He may face the human personage, be held by him aloft or in the palm of his hand or be tucked under the personage's arm. What appears to be a flowering plant may issue from his mouth or body.

### HOBGOBLINS IN FOLK-LORE

The Dominican Fray Agustín Cano tells of the treatment meted out to some Chol Maya sent by the Spaniards to treat with the Peten Maya of Tayasal. The latter "did not kill them, but gave them a thorough beating and immediately practised their witchcraft and frauds (*brujerías y embelecós*), threatening them with some little wooden boys (*muchachitos de palo*), in which doubtlessly they had pacts with the devil (Ximénez, 1929 - 71, bk. 5, ch. 73).

Sánchez de Aguilar (1893-80-81) one of the first Yucatan-born Spaniards to enter the priesthood, describes the visitation in 1560 to Spanish and mestizo families in Valladolid of a duende. His aunt, annoyed by its malicious pranks, slapped the duende, leaving it with a face more scarlet than cochineal. The creature, appearing only in completely dark rooms, foretold future events in the voice of a parrot. Some of its activities were of a kind normally attributed to a poltergeist.

Twenty years after the Spanish conquest of Yucatán there was a mere handful of whites in the east of the peninsula. Hobgoblins, of course, are a firm feature of Old-World beliefs. Here, I suggest, we are dealing with a mixture of Spanish and Maya ideas, but the scarlet face, the parrot-like voice and perhaps the ability to foretell events were Maya beliefs transmitted to the new ruling class by household servants. The emphasis on the deep scarlet face is of particular interest - note that Sánchez de Aguilar's aunt could hardly have observed that feature in the dark - in view of the matter which follows and because we have already come upon

the importance of red in the mushroom eating at Amatlan de los Reyes, in which "the little men" play a dominant part.

A 260-day almanac on Dresden codex page 8c may treat of the taking of the prophecy by the *chilan* (Thompson, 1972:42-43). In both scenes a god impersonator or god strides toward a temple in one of which is a diminutive figure of the enigmatic God C, in the other is set the *kaz*, evil, glyph (Thompson Catalogue no. 648), which can be personified as a hobgoblin generally with death symbols (e.g. Dresden 18c). We are reminded of the death hobgoblin who points a minatory finger at the recumbent figure on the Santa Lucía Cotzumalhuapa figure.

The opening glyph in the text accompanying each picture is a compound not found elsewhere. It comprises the affix *chac*, red, above a fist with death symbols (Gl. 669), to which I had previously assigned the phonetic value *lah*. In addition there is a variable prefix and the lunar postfix 181, a verbal auxiliary, for which I have suggested the value action or act (*kal*); it converts nouns to verbs.

The *chac* prefix and main sign would read *chacalah*. The term *chactun lah* is defined in the Motul dictionary as colored bright red with a face like a flamingo or a Flemish person (*colorado vermejo, de rostro como flamenco*). Other colors are similarly compounded: *kan* is yellow; *kantun lah uinic* is a man with face turned yellow by some disease. *Tun* is used here as an intensifier, and presumably can be omitted to give *chacalah*, as the glyphic elements translate; *lah* in the compound signifies "all." The whole would read "made red all over."

The second glyph, the subject, a head with God C's headdress and closed eye, a death symbol, certainly refers to the diminutive representation of God C (probably a general symbol for a god). Read with the first glyph, it informs us that this being has become red faced, reminding us of the scarlet-faced duende of Valladolid.

That this almanac treats of divination under the influence of hallucinatory drugs is conjectural, but there is a fair-to-good chance that that interpretation is correct. I toyed with the idea that gods burning copal to manikin figures, death opossum and birds (two owls) might be related to the above Dresden scenes (see *Codex Féjervary-Mayer 33b-34b; Cospi 12-13*) but that

idea seems to be negated by similar pictures on *Borgia 49b* and *52b*, for those are clearly in a world-directional context. All the same, there may be something to the idea, for animals are closely involved in narcotic mushroom rites.

Another class of reddish-faced duendes exist, although here we cannot be certain whether their redness is an outcome of their origin or whether they have merged with duendes because of their color. These are called *alux* (*ah lux?*) or *kat*, term for clay, natural or fired, and by extension, clay vessels. They are incense burners which come to life and lurk around ruins, particularly at night. They are about 30 cm. tall, look like small children and are mischievous. For the last reason a Maya will smash any incense burner he chances to find, to the distress of Maya students.

Their faces are the color of *kat*, but as they are incense burners that means the color of fired clay, that is with a reddish hue. Nevertheless, I doubt if this class of duendes has anything to do with hallucinatory drugs.

Whether the various items, archaeological, colonial and modern, outlined above cohere or are merely a jumble of unrelated elements is the major problem.

The description of the taking of the katun prophecy in the Chilam Balam of Tizimin hints very strongly indeed at a rite involving hallucinatory drugs. The intervention of the *maax*, the great awe in which he was held, his prophetic abilities, the ventriloquism, the lack of movement during the ceremony, the averting of eyes are reminiscent of mushroom-eating rites in present-day Oaxaca.

The Santa Lucía Cotzumalhuapa reliefs with a death-manikin pointing menacingly at a recumbent figure and a small anthropomorphic deer figure in the same relationship to another recumbent figure obviously fit the above pattern, especially when we recollect the importance of a mushroom cult in that area demonstrated by stone mushrooms in archaeological contexts.

The next step takes us farther from reasonably evident connections with hallucinatory drugs. Minatory hobgoblins, reminiscent in their attitudes of the Cotzumalhuapa reliefs, raise a pointing finger at standing personages who show no signs of being under the influence of drugs. These are on the Santa Rita murals, the Yaloch vase and the Sacnicte capstone.

In the first case the ruler holds aloft the hobgoblin; in the second case the hobgoblin stands before the ruler. Next, we have rulers or priests who hold aloft manikins, of human or animal form, who do not have a minatory aspect (Palo Verde and Stela 10 Xultun). In the second case the ruler tucks a manikin under his arm as though he were a naughty child.

In all these cases the rites directly involve members of the nobility or high priesthood. Clearly these are not folk practices of peasants.

If the Dresden pages are correctly identified, they treat of positions in the 260-day almanac suitable for consultation with manikin creatures, reminding us that the Mixe mushroom rites are in some way geared to the 260-day count of the Mixe in Miller's opinion.

The incidents involving Sánchez de Aguilar's aunt and also beliefs concerning the *alux* fall rather in the category of folk-lore. Yet there are features which link them to "state" practices. The parrot voice of the first case seems to parallel the muffled, semi-unintelligible speech of the *chilan* and the changed voice of the Mixe mushroom eater, when the mushroom speaks through him.

The scarlet face of the Valladolid duende may connect with ceremonies in Dresden codex and perhaps even with the red elements in the Amatlan de Los Reyes and Mixtec mushroom rites, but that is a weak point.

The hobgoblins in animal (jaguar?) and perhaps divine (jaguar god of number 7) shape on the Xultun stela echo the animal and snake creatures of Santa Lucía Cotzumalhuapa and Palo Verde (there held aloft as at Xultun) and animals carved on stone mushrooms, and they in turn are perhaps re-echoed in the jaguars and snakes which manifest themselves in mushroom-eating rites in Oaxaca.

The apparent association of hobgoblins with flowers is worth noting, although the latter are clearly not the trumpet blooms of *ololiuhqui*-producing vines.

It is strange that although the two main producers of *ololiuhqui* seeds grow in Yucatan, there is not a word about their utilization for divinatory purposes, past or present. The close commercial relations throughout Middle America would, one supposes, have spread the peculiar qualities of those seeds everywhere they grow. Could it be that the ruling class was

able to confine the use of narcotics for divination to the higher ranks of priests? If so, such knowledge would have died with the extinction of that class. Had only *nanacatl* been thus employed, the closing by the Spanish conquest of old trade routes (notably the Putun sea voyagings) would speedily have ended consumption and then knowledge of that drug.

Like the psalmist, "I do not exercise myself in great matters which are too high for me," but I would underline the importance of these hobgoblins in their ancient contexts. Rulers permitted publication of scenes in which dwarfs or hobgoblins - surely not comparable to the hunchbacks at Moctezuma's court - confront, indeed, appear to threaten them. That these were *maax* with prophetic messages is a good possibility. To such alone would be permitted *lèse majesté*.

As always, more facts are needed to confirm or quash speculation.

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#### RESUMEN

No es seguro que haya existido el culto de los hongos alucinantes en la Península Yucateca en la época precolombina. Si existió, probablemente la droga era importada, importación que debe haber terminado con la conquista española. Sabemos, sin embargo, que el *ololiuhqui* se da en Yucatán.

El autor proporciona datos comparativos sobre el culto de alucinógenos entre los mixes, nahuas de Veracruz, mazatecos, mixtecos y de algunas culturas antiguas conocidas por la arqueología. Encuentra que las creencias y representaciones mayas de duendes se pueden coordinar con las alucinaciones inducidas por las drogas entre estos otros pueblos mesoamericanos y sugiere que el culto de alucinógenos puede haber florecido en la zona maya baja.