

Celestial Botany: Entheogenic Traces in Islamic Mysticism

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Abstract

This paper will highlight some of primary evidence for entheogenic plant use in Islamic cults that partake of a vastly older legacy of ritual plant use. The accumulated research on entheogens and religions demands that certain traditions be reevaluated in light a continuing and coherent symbolism that enshrines holy plants as high mysteries in diverse faiths. Following the *soma/haoma* complex through Asia and Chinese Shamanism and into Persian and Islamic cults the use of entheogens meets with traditions in the ancient Middle East that shared doctrines of magic plants and cup rituals of visionary wine. The Greek, Semitic and Hermetic traditions merge with the shamanic techniques that persist in the esoteric symbolism of the Shia Muslims and Sufi as demonstrated in their holy books, art and poetry. The alchemical tradition thus emerges has having a definite entheogenic context that was cherished and protected by initiates from the profane. This speculative hypothesis rests on the collective evidence of religious traditions surrounding Islam that possessed similar rituals and reverence for plants that becomes a hidden aspect of mystical Islam.

Keywords: Shia, Sufi, Soma, Hoama, entheogen, *Amanita muscaria*.

An Entheogenic Heritage

The world's oldest religions clearly have a heritage of entheogens at their ritual core. While the debates and speculations will no doubt continue as to precise species or preparation, the role of these plants and their extracts becomes more and more self-evident. The pioneering research of various scholars have made very persuasive arguments for sacramental plant use in various cultures from Vedic Brahmins (Wasson 1968; Houben 1999) to Greek mystery religions (Ruck 1992) and Christian mystics and Manicheans (Allegro 1970; Ruck, Heinrich and Staples 2000; Hoffman and Ruck 2007). Researchers have further focused their attentions on various myths, folklore and art to articulate the central and ancient role of "magical plants" from an Irish Soma (Wilson 1999) to Tantric Buddhist sects (Hajicek-Dobberstein 1995, Crowley 2005, Strickmann 1966). This extends to the heirs of these ancient religions in such traditions as Islam (Dannaway, Piper, and Webster 2006; Piper 2002) alchemy and Grail mythology (Heinrich 2002, Shelly 1995) and Freemasonry (Hoffman and Ruck 2002).

This paper will offer some additional evidence that would support a similar complex of plant use into various Islamic cults. The utterly ancient Epic of Gilgamesh must be cited as a precedent for such ideas, as it is a quest for a "plant of immortality" that spreads and inspires doctrine of similarly described soma/haoma plants found throughout the ancient world. Likewise, the Egyptians seem to have had various entheogenic wines or beers and plants at their disposal with some suggestions of various mushroom species (Berlant 2005). The works of Joseph Needham (1975), an early collaborator with Wasson, on China and its sciences becomes most revealing in the field of alchemy which will prove a link for these cultures across space and time. Here the older influences and precursors to the elaborate and increasingly esoteric world of elixir alchemy unite and disperse into the Persian and Islamic world ending in Europe, which may well have retained the entheogenic legacy (Ruck 2007). For it is in China that Vedic, Daoist, Buddhist, Tantric, and indigenous shamanism combine into a dynamic and yet esoteric doctrine that makes sense of the Prophet Muhammad's hadith to "seek knowledge, even unto China." This often took the form of metallurgical symbolism effused with mystical teachings that evolved into alchemy (Needham 1954, 1975; Giradot 1983; Kalyanaraman 2004). The word *Sufi* may itself be Chinese and intimately connected with Chinese Shamanism which preserved the ancient associations of magic plants (Needham 1954; Mahdihassan 1959, 1990).

Needham's insightful research distills some essentials about this complex of plants and metals that combine in the alchemical arts, which he associates with the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom and other entheogenic preparations. The earliest Chinese texts use the language of "searching for" (chhiu) the herb or plant of immortality (often described as a fungus) while later it came to be "effecting a chemical transformation" or "preparing by heating" which is startling to contemplate though the implications go far beyond the scope of this discussion.

What is essential is that there was a fundamental shift in finding the singular entheogen in whatever cultural context to basically producing it by more and more sophisticated means as the alchemical literature amply illustrates. While this may delve into the issues of the loss of the soma identity and the related attempts to define it with a single plant identification on one level, what is more important for our purposes here is that alchemical tradition as essentially "entheogenic" in nature and there was a transition from a search to manipulation and production (Needham 1974). Yet a further dimension that combines the inner (*nei dan*) and outer alchemy (*wei dan*) could be the adept as alchemical vessel where his own body transmutes the active principles of the mushroom (ibotenic acid decarboxylated to muscimol) excreted in the urine which accords with the Vedic descriptions. This is not to reduce alchemy to the search for or manipulations of alkaloids but to express that entheogens represent an aspect of elixir alchemy.

While much of the theology, philosophy and medicines of the Islamic mystics no doubt comes from the Greeks (Tibb-e-Unani), there is sparse evidence of a Hellenistic elixir alchemy proper (though there is a rich entheogenic tradition such as the *kykeon*, *pharmakon athanasius*, etc.) and likewise, except for some apocryphal works, in the Jewish-Alexandrian tradition (Needham 1974). We must again rely on Needham to establish three provisional categories of alchemy: "gold-faking, gold-making, and the preparation of the drug of deathlessness" to which we may add that the terminologies of the various branches overlap and are interchangeable. Needham discusses the quintessential alchemical term "elixir" as having a possible Chinese origin and further links with the familiar "philosopher's stone and powders of projection" familiar in the Middle Ages. Madhihassan (1951) in discussing the etymology of elixir was dissatisfied with Arabic or Greek roots favored an origin from the complex of Chinese phrases such as *yao chi* "medicinal dose" and *yao chih* "medicinal mushroom" though he would offer other suggestions and the matter is hardly settled. Madhihassan's (2002) etymological treatment of elixir alchemy combines metallurgical and botanical associations with *kimiya* as a root for alchemy meaning "gold-making juice."

There are hidden realms in esoteric Islam that hint of a continued use of entheogens in the forebears of the Prophet, the Prophet Muhammad, and his extended house the Shia, and the cults that coalesced around various charismatic messianic figures. These cults preserve core doctrines and cosmologies as well as a tendency to radical autonomy and militant fervor to protect themselves and their religion.

Muhammad the Prophet Shaman

The prophet Muhammad spoke to the angelic messenger of God and underwent visionary initiatory voyages to the heavenly and infernal regions (1). He mounted the mysterious shamanic beast, *al-buraaq*, which means "lightning" in Arabic and which begins to draw associations with mushrooms, as they have ancient folklore links with lightning and thunder perhaps due to their sudden appearances after rains. Wasson notes that *Banat'u'rrad*, "Daughters of Thunder" are used as an expression for fungus, but an unnamed species, in the dictionary of classical Arabic in his discussion of "Lightningbolt and Mushrooms" (Wasson 1986). Though described in Islamic literature as being white and something like a donkey or a mule, the fabulous creature is curiously depicted in some examples of Islamic art as being red and white in a design consistent with *Amanita muscaria* mushroom, the entheogen suspected to be a major candidate for the soama/haoma and the symbolic colors of alchemy.



Note the angel is pointing down towards the tree where a mushroom is found and Buraq is red/white as in *Amanita muscaria*.



(2)

In the above images, Muhammad is seen riding the red and white creature, again the colors of the *Amanita* mushroom, in his shamanic night journey *isra'* and ascension to heaven *mi'raj* reminiscent of the ascent of Arda Viraf who takes a narcotic and takes a visionary flight through heaven and hell (Seguy 1977). This representation of *Buraq* may indicate that regional cults viewed the Islamic revelation through their own shamanic traditions or that Islam retained the ritual heritages of the ancient world. These traditions would be enshrouded in the mysteries of Shia gnosis, alchemy and Sufism that spread into Europe. The other image depicts Imam Ali on a similar creature with the red and white colors and in a scene entitled "Gabriel Shows Ali's Valor to the Prophet" from the 15th century Persian epic of Ali, the *Khavaran Nameh*, which shows his steed in these colors particularly in scenes of battle where it is grey in other scenes though more research is needed to fully develop these curious depictions of the changing mounts (Birjandi 2004). Another uncle of the Prophet Muhammad is Amir Hamza, whose folktales date back to the time of the Prophet and whose exploits unite Chinese, Indian, Persian, Greek and Arabian cultures, also rides a similarly described winged-demon steed *Ashqar* Devzad (Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007). This series of tales involves treasures under trees and occult lore of the Prophet Khizir and Imam Ali (even before he was born) in aiding in battles and traveling to the land of the *jinn*s for temporal and spiritual *jihad* for the True Faith anticipating the coming of the Prophet Muhammad.

The mixture of *Peganum harmala/Amanita muscaria* (or a coded reference to the *haoma* type plant/mushroom) may have been used by early Muslims for entheogenic and military purposes as the etymology of *Peganum* has been linked with the flying-horse *Pegasus*. Flattery (1989) reports of another epithet of *haoma* that links "swiftness" and horses, like the flying horse *Buraq* which is as "quick" as lightning. There is the precedent for courage giving herbs in *hadith* such as is found in the collection of the theologian Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, whose collections are widely considered authentic in the Shia world. Amongst other more magical/medicinal uses of *harmal* in connection with the 6th Imam Jafar, there is related an incident wherein the Prophet complains to Allah the fighters are cowardly. Muhammad receives a revelation from God that the people should ingest *isfand* "by means of it they might become brave" (Flattery 1989). Other less reliable, yet still widespread *hadith* (controversial today in modern Egypt) record strange incidents of urine drinking (usually and obviously this would be *haram*) one of which is:

"the Prophet SAW used to have a wooden bowl in which he used to urinate and place under His bed. One night, He searched for it but did not find it and asked for it saying, where is the bowl? The members of the house replied 'Umm Salamah's slave girl Barraah drank it' who came from Habashah with her. The Prophet replied, 'surely she has protected herself from the fire with a great wall'."

This is a most extraordinary *hadith* as are others that concern people going "berserk" after the Prophet told them to drink the urine of a certain camel, suggestive of ancient shamanic practices of drinking reindeer urine. Mixing bull urine with *harmel* is mentioned in Old Iranian rituals (Flattery 1989) and the incidents of "urine-drinking" incidents in Islamic lore, which are more than expected given the obsession with hygiene especially in toiletry, align with some of the key points of the identifications of *soma* and shamanic plants as suggested by Wasson (1978). The epithets of *haoma* of having a "hundred waters" are suggestive of a diuretic effects as well as the profuse perspiration experienced when ingesting *Amanita muscaria/Peganum harmala*.

There is an argument to be made for the initiation of Muhammad at a very young age into a desert brotherhood that definitely was Eucharistic in character. This complex included a "Shiite grail liturgy" (Corbin 1998) that accords with the research of Eisenmann (1997) in linking exoteric and esoteric doctrines of the Shia Gnostics with the early Christian mystics. Muhammad declares his son-in-law and cousin (though again in the literature this relationship is sometimes conflated to nephew/uncle) Imam Ali: "Thou art the Knight of this community" and performs a "ritual of the Cup" that might point to pre-Islamic rituals of which will be discussed below. But considering the decidedly Gnostic and increasingly mystical revelations of each Shia Imam, especially the 6th Imam Ja'far, the Shia tradition through Imam Ali can be seen to represent rituals and contexts more in sympathy with ancient mystery schools than Sunni Islam (Corbin 1994). Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib, is controversial in Islam with the Sunni slander that he was never a Muslim which contrasts the Shia veneration that dismisses the Sunni version as a plot against the family of the Prophet in collusion with the Umayyad, the rival clan of the Hashimites of the Prophet Muhammad (Shirazi 2001). (3)

These symbolic rituals of cups and military brotherhoods partakes of an entheogenic legacy extending back

into the earliest Indo-Iranian cults discussed at length by Eliade and Dumézil. The groups become literally berserk with intoxication, and their lycanthropic ritual consisted of "those who change themselves into wolves (*varka*) in the ecstasy brought on by soma (*hauma*) (Eliade 2006). The mushroom *Amanita muscaria* is at once ritual sacrament and entheogen, medicine, and combat stimulant and its powers may well have been a factor in the military success of the early Muslim fighters who had their own warrior brotherhoods waging *jihad*. The Indian verses of soma connect to furious battle with such verses as "Indra, the man god who drinks soma, becomes stimulated for battle after drinking soma" (Rig Veda 9.44.3; 9:97.37; 5.44.13). Converging on these syncretic Islamic traditions from multiple angles of influence is the knightly mysteries of Mithras. The military nature of these fraternal devotees also contained an initiatory ritual for the soldiers that were connected with a sacred cup and visionary Eucharist (Hoffman, Ruck and Staples 2002; Ruck *et al.* 2004). Mithras is also associated with caves, cups and ecstatic mystery rites and it must be remembered that Muhammad received many of his revelations in a cave The Cave of Thor (Ghar Thour).

Franz Cumont (1956) mentions there are many similarities in cosmologies with the Gnostic Mazdeans that retained much of the fleeing teachings attributed to what Eisenman called the "Opposition Alliance." This military alliance reveals the strange mix of herbalists and healers with military mystics. As Cumont (1956) again states, "the Mithraists' most profound religious beliefs were associated with the miraculous creation of "beneficent plants" and further that their symbolism is often grouped with a "krater" or cup that was used in "divine feast and probably drank of the wine which conferred immortality." It was the clear connections of Eucharistic meal, of communion of "bread" and "blood" and immortality that prompted Justin Marty to presume the entire affair was a blasphemous parody of the Christian Eucharist. Dr. Moghdam (1975) writes of the Iranian origin of "the divine meal, the Lord's Supper, apparently the Cup used for the 'nushabe' (water of immortality, in Islam becomes the *Maul-hayat*) became the holiest object in the service. That cup figures very prominently in Persian literature and especially in the mystical poems. The cup has seven lines or measures corresponding to the seven degrees in Mithraism. The full cup is for the Pir or the Father, who is known as the Pir of the seven lines. In the West it gave rise to the 'Graded cup', Latin 'gradalis' or grail. The lore of the Holy Grail and Arthurian legends are discussed in terms of entheogens by Heinrich (2002) and related folklore by Ruck (2007) demonstrating the persistence of these associations. Moghdam (1975) further states "As to remnants of Mithraism in Iran, at its best it survives in Iranian mysticism represented by the Divan-e Shams, the Golshan-e Raz, and above all, in the poems of Hafez, and of course in the strong influence it exerted on Islamic Sufism, which is quite distinct from Iranian mysticism." He adds "In sects, there is a survival of Mithraism in the Ahl-e Haq and the Yazidis, and other small sects scattered in closed communities" which I have already discussed in terms of entheogens (Dannaway *et al.* 2008). The "red-heads" or Qizilbash, extremist devotees of the Imam Ali, are a mystical calvary, "convinced of the invincibility" and throw themselves into battle with no armor after wild orgiastic parties, and they are even accused of lycanthropic cannibalism (Rudi 2005). This group might suggest a continued use of entheogens in extremist, militant sects that would exploit the herbal uses for war purposes as discussed above in the context of Shia hadith.

The radically Gnostic and syncretic traditions of the earliest Shia, such as the first Imam Ali who speaks of alchemy in the highest praise, presents a problem that is solved when Shia Islam is viewed as the fruition of a coherent doctrine of visionary plants and alchemical elixirs. Either the Shia are immediately arch-heretics to Islam, as the Sunni maintain, foregoing and betraying their Prophet, Uncle/Father/Grandfather the moment he is buried or they, and they alone, retain the true doctrines of Islam as taught by the Prophet. This would require the belief that the Imams themselves spontaneously adopted extremely complex esoteric doctrines over the assumption that these practices represented a core occult doctrine of Islam taught to the chosen few. The previously discussed currents that find exact and clear examples in the Shia gnosis can be linked with the Syrian and Sabian traditions in such a way as to make Muhammad's protection to them make perfect sense. Muhammad's recognition of "People of the Book" (*Ahl al-Kitab*) raises him to the level of a reformer of the religion of Abraham that had degenerated into corrupt idolatry. The Prophet was initially accused of being a Sabian ("washed ones") by his adversaries and they had nearly identical practices of ablution and obsession with purity that still characterizes the Shia today (Green 1992). The living, breathing and actively appropriating force that could be described roughly as Hermeticism is the thread that binds these traditions. The Syrian city of Harran possessed the old astrotheological lore that was certainly one essential component to these mystery cults Green (1992). The city's location and Syria's in general, makes it a fertile area for cross-influence from the well known entheogenic mysteries of Greece and Rome from one direction and the *soma/haoma* astronomy cults coming from the other.

The Semitic material, via fleeing Gnostics and converts, met with a region familiar with the passing fancy of exoteric doctrines of what amounted to the same "mystery." This mystery is undoubtedly that of spiritual immortality and the reverence for the plants that produces the visionary experience that imparts the feeling of death and rebirth in the context of the Logos made flesh either in the Prophet or Imam. The Krater as the vessel for this pressed (*haoma/soma*: Indo-Iranian root *sav- "to press") substance that bestows immortality always appears with similar descriptions. From the "Lady with the Mead Cup" Indo-European cup rituals to the indigenous "grail" myths of Ireland its associations always retain the same striking characteristics (Enright 1996).

The Hermetic material, which was preserved in Harran, was given prophetic status as a revealed book in Islam and garnered the fascination of mystics in every tradition with which it made contact. The Hermetic *Krater* combines the baptismal, or bathing purity cult, and the "symbolic drinking of knowledge" together with mystic piety and "initiatory brotherhood." The Hermetic material also provides the common terminology that characterized much of these ancient mystery schools of the "universal man/perfect man/Logos/standing-one/Imam" that is evident from the Mithraic and Christian cults to the Shia gnostic and Sufi. The Logos-Nous is described in its liquid form as a holy beverage, or as one Hermetic treatise states, "And I sowed in the words of wisdom and they were nourished with the ambrosian water." A variant is, "Those who are able to imbibe somewhat more than others of that vision attain to full fruition of that most lovely sight." The astrotheological connection with the constellation Krater is discussed in the Hermetic material as being the "drink of oblivion" (lethe) that souls drink from on their descent into the earth. It is therefore an act of cyclical "rebirth" to drink of the earthly cup of knowledge, the Krater, and to imbibe the divine fluid that wakes one from the sleep of forgetfulness that overtakes the soul. The symbolic drinking of knowledge or "drinking the Word" gives the vision of God and grants immortality echoing the praises of the *soma/haoma* of the Vedic and Iranian Gaokerena of which it is said, "those who drink of the life-giving juice of this plant will obtain perfect welfare, including deathlessness" (Corbin 1989).

The alchemist Zosimus, an immensely significant figure combining Greek and Egyptian traditions in Islamic alchemical literature, has writings which discuss:

"the uncommunicated mystery which none of the prophets dared to divulge in words but revealed only to the initiated. In their symbolical scriptures they called it the stone which is not a stone, the thing unknown yet known to everyone, the despised thing of great price, the thing given by God and yet not given. For my part I shall praise it under the name of the thing given by God and yet not given, for in all our works it is the only thing which dominates matter. Such is the drug of power, the mithriac mystery" (Needham 1980).

Likewise, the *Kitab al-Zibaq al-Gharbi* (Book of the Western Medicine) discusses this stone that is not a stone, with "Know that this 'water' has been named Divine because it brings the qualities out among the qualities and revivifies the dead; therefore it has been called the 'Water of the Living Things,' just as the stone has been called the 'Animate Stone'. It is the Water of Life and he that has drunk of it can never die..." (Needham 1980).

The celestial Krater is linked in Vedic star lore with the *soma* cult of immortality, and of course the constellation that retains that name. The Krater as "cup of immortality" acquires a sophisticated level of technology in the Hermetic material. Some scholars maintain that "the topos of the Krater as a vessel filled with divine substance is a gnostic continuation of the Jewish Sophiaspekulation" and "it is closely related, within the frame of pneumatic doctrine of grace, to the other gnostic topos of the potion of gnosis, where the receiving of knowledge is compared to a drink. The entheogenic aspect is quite clear with the observation that "the expression 'to drink gnosis' has basically reached the status of a technical term." It is this same "technical" language which prompted John Allegro to make his radical case about the true nature of the Jewish religion and connection with the manna, or mushroom of immortality, which Robert Graves also suggested as discussed below.

Littleton and Malcor (2000) take a bold step following Dumézil and then going him one better to make a solid argument for a "Scythian" influence that converges in the pre-Christian grail myths. The obvious guess is that all traditions proceed from some yet unknown proto-Indo-European like race that even in a remote time possessed some complex "ecstatic wisdom." The Grail myths themselves yield evidence for nearly all possible origins, from the Iranian and Scythian/Alanic sword in the stone to the discussed cup/military

correspondences. The circumstances that surround the Grail do seem to nearly always retain a Middle Eastern characteristic, no doubt from Crusade influences, but they are many and persistent enough to lend credence to both Kahane and Littleton/Malcor's conclusions as to a pre-Christian tradition which was subsequently Christianized. There are abounding textual references to Saracen comrades and Moorish persons appearing at the strangest times and places in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (Eschenbach 2006). Various instances such as the heathen "kyot" who was skilled in stars and herbs is deciphered by scholars as having to be either of Jewish or Muslim origins.

This Guyot (kyot) is the source for Eschenbach's version which Wolfram is clear to distinguish as the "true version." *Parzival* is at various times described as either being "Moorish" or related to a Moor, or involved with a Moorish Princess. Eschenbach claims his source is a Moorish document claiming the secrets of the Holy Grail and the brotherhood that guards it from the profane. Corbin (1998) describes the appropriate context of the Shia Grail liturgy with the word *futuwwat* of which an approximate translation may be "knightly chivalry." He describes it as "deeply rooted in Shiism, and more generally in Islamic esotericism." Corbin notes the similarity with rituals appears in the "flowering of the European trade-guilds, such as the 'Compagnon du Devoir' in France" as well noting the affinity with the "signs of recognition" associated with the Druze and Scottish Rite Freemasons (Corbin 1989). Mohammad instituted the "ritual of the cup" and also symbolically passed the Mantle (*al-kisa'*) of Prophecy to Imam Ali which in turn spread throughout the Islamic world in both Sunni and Shia groups. The lore of Imam Ali and his famous sword 'zulfikar' bear a strong association with the Excalibur of Arthurian tradition. Another of many links to grail lore parallels with King Arthur who was said to be the only one to pull the sword out of the stone there is a very popular Shia legend that none but Ali could pull Zulfikar from its sheath and various cults in the region worship a sword stuck in the earth. Corbin notes the Prophetic tradition that records that in Mohammad's youth there "existed a chivalric order (*futuwwat-dari*) whose ritual involved a cup of wine," though this could well be a common term for any intoxicating liquor. This tradition does involve Muhammad's same uncle (he was a *widow's son* like the Grail heroes) that took him to Syria, Abu Jahl, who completed the ritual "with four hundred comrades." (4)

This would go further in supporting the Syrian initiation claim of Muhammad with his uncle. Syria mystery traditions had special rites for foreign children in a "secret house" (*bayt sirr*) and "dark temple" (*haykal muzlim*) (Green 1992). Corbin's research also highlights the all important distinction that there were two "cup rituals" within the Muslim community. The Shiite version was for the "servants of light," again recalling the Qumran terminology, and was a cup with the "Wine of Malakut" which is a liquefied substance that, whatever it was, induced powerful visionary results into the realms of light. The ritual of the "drink (wine)" is as Corbin again states, "named for the Malakut (the spiritual word which includes the *mundus imaginalis* '*alm al-mithal*' or world governed by Angels) ...(which) shows that we are dealing with a sacred ritual, and that its action occurs in the visionary world." The situation then becomes of an initiatory ritual of a liquid substance that launches one into the visionary world that was instituted by the Prophet Muhammad and sustained in the Shia community. The secretive Nusayri/Alawi are already discussed by Eisenman as retaining exact terminology and symbolism of the earliest "gnostic" Christian that persisted and mixed with the other discussed traditions in Syria. These Nusayri have their hymns and liturgy drinking their wines of "servant of light" (*'abd al-nur*) which isn't likely alcoholic in the Islamic tradition Sunni or Shia (Bar Asher et. a. 2002). Then the hadith presents stories of Muhammad learning a cup ritual from his uncle with whom he journeyed to Syria. This ecstatic tradition is characterized in visionary experience and angelology that mixes Mithraic and Persian terminology freely with esoteric Shia doctrine and is quite distinct from the Sunni version. The Shia versions for the knightly "servants of light" has all the characteristics of the European grail as in various traditions of immortality, "always full" of the "source of life" (*'ayn alhayat*). (4) One devoted extremist Shia sect, the *Kizilbash*, or the "red heads" seem a likely group to continue these traditions as they were militant supporters of the Shia Imami tradition.

Henry Corbin's (1994, 1998) work on Mazdean and Shi'ite traditions in Iran reveals several dimensions to an "esoteric Islam" that include some aspects directly related to ancient entheogenic traditions. Corbin discusses integration of the rituals of the old Mazdean divinities into the angelic hosts of the Gnostic Shia Muslims including a *haoma*, Gaokarena, "of which it is said, 'He who partakes of it becomes immortal'" and it is an Elixir of immortality (Corbin 1989). These symbolic associations transfer with the revelation of Islam to a host of angels, where each has a botanical association with a flower or plant in a very eloquent "sacred botany." The folklore of various plants in the region associated with *haoma*, such as the *harmal* or *isphand* plant *Peganum harmala* are well discussed (Flattery 1989) and recently in an article of Moses and the burning bush, though

this theory has been suggested before (Shannon 2008). The *harmal* of *isphand* (*Pegaganum harmala*) ingested alone is entheogenic, and intimately linked with the Shia Imams, could be active by a subcutaneous ingestion by way of dyeing the elaborate geometrical carpets famous throughout the Islamic world, a principle use of the plant to obtain the brilliant red hue, and the use in the dyeing of the fez may well "color" the sweating spinning dervishes of certain Sufi orders. Bioassay of entheogenic doses of *Pegaganum harmala* have reported the feeling of "contact" with an invisible being which might recall the initiatory prophet Khidir, in whose steps flowers grow. Modern Mazdean Gnostics employ the stimulant herb *Ephedera* which was an early substitute for the haoma but there is some interesting research on the interaction of *Ephedera* and *Pegaganum harmala* (Flattery 2004).

In the same context of the recent theory published on the use of DMT producing plants and Biblical prophets (Shannon 2008), the pre-Islamic cult of the goddess Al-Uzza yields similar plant species. It is said the goddess would reveal herself in a grove of three acacia trees in Mecca, which contain the powerful entheogenic DMT in *ayahuasca*, and whose symbol was the crescent moon and the morning star. In ancient times she was considered enshrined in the Ka'aba where she was served by an order of priestesses. The black stone to this day is cared for by the Beni Shaybah, "the sons of the old woman." AlUzza becomes a source of serious contention, famous in the "Satanic Verses" as one of the daughters of Allah and though her sanctuary was destroyed some scholars note she is still called upon in times of sickness of certain of the faithful. Alexander Shulgin (1996) in his classic *Tihkal* cites ancient beliefs from the Near East and Egypt of "a balsam or oil peddled to the priests of yore by Bedouins, which claim it to have come from the "original" Tree of Knowledge" which existed at the lowest point on earth near the Dead Sea and Sinai Desert." Of course this oil is from the acacia. The goddess revealed in an acacia grove is suggestive of an entheogenic experience and at least places two plants that combine to form an ayahuasca like potion in the same region and in cults that formed the syncretic faith of Islam. I have argued for the Islamic use of ergot and other psychoactive plants elsewhere (Dannaway, Piper, and Webster 2006) and speculate that either specific plants represented different cults or sects, with the predominance of the specified ritual plant evolving with the various religious expressions pre-Islamic and Islamic, or else there was no single ritual plant and many psychoactive plants were used in various ritual and initiatory capacities. Perhaps Muhammad's cult of the mushroom supplanted the pagan DMT cult, or perhaps it was appropriated into the Shia rites as discussed below. Perhaps Muhammad reformed traditions that were originally monotheistic and which had lapsed into a degraded and corrupt religious hierarchy that would continue to assault his house.

Interestingly, the much maligned and increasingly vindicated linguist John Allegro (1970) writes of various "rue" species, which could be *Pegaganum harmala* or *Syrian Rue*, in connection with *Amanita* mushrooms perhaps to potentiate the effects in some species and to alleviate overdose in others. Allegro sees an esoteric word play "between the Aramaic *mestebit ha'* "submissive" and the mushroom name MASH-TAB-BA-RI-TI and its possible source for Muhammad's teachings", as his followers are called Muslims "the submissive ones." Allegro also suggests entheogenic fungi at the heart of the Ismaili of the Old Man and the Mountain and his famous Assassins, popularly but not necessarily linked with the use of *Cannabis sativa*, though the term hashish can mean any dried herb. The very interesting speculation of the Day of the Zulu involving the consumption of *Amanita muscaria* as a war drug to give superhuman strength and fearlessness (Knight 2006) is an attractive hypothesis to the military success of the Muslims against some insurmountable odds. The Koran speaks of the Battle of Badr:

Allah had helped you at Badr, when ye were a contemptible little force; then fear Allah; thus May ye show your gratitude. Remember thou saidst to the Faithful: "Is it not enough for you that Allah should help you with three thousand angels (Specially) sent down? "Yea, - if ye remain firm, and act aright, even if the enemy should rush here on you in hot haste, your Lord would help you with five thousand angels Making a terrific onslaught. Qur'an: Sura 3:123-125

This could allude to mushrooms as "angels" taken by the faithful before raging into battle. Ruck (2007) has reexamined the role of *Amanita muscaria* in the war-fury of the Berserkers and if this "technology" was known throughout the ancient world then perhaps the Muslim armies made use of the mushrooms to their ultimate success. The PBS documentary also featured to martial artists equally matched in the past in an experiment in which one is given a placebo and the other *Amanita muscaria* with the results of the bemushroomed fighter abandoning his technique and just dominating his opponent in every way in a combative fury (Knight 2006).

Yet another source of entheogenic traditions could derive from the Zoroastrian Magi Salman al-Farsi who went on a mystic quest that brought him to Syria and finally, after being sold into slavery, into company with the Prophet Muhammad where he is highly honored as a mystical patriarch. In the mystical Alawi tradition that splintered after the 6th Imam Jafar, the Imam Ali, Muhammad, and Salman al-Farsi are the "Idea, the Name, and the Door (to God)" respectively in a trinity which is a doctrine that both unites and divides various Christian churches. The Nusayri-Alawi venerate Imam Ali as the *amir al-nahi* as the "prince of bees" which also has entheogenic connotations with bee's and honey in a vast array of folklore and alchemical literature (Ruck 2007).

Spiritual Flight and The Cult of the Severed-Head

Yet another curious recurrent theme amongst these various groups is the oracular or prophetic "talking heads" that partake of associations with *soma* from ancient times (Kramrisch in Wasson 1986). The "Secret of the Cut-Off Heads" is one of entheogenic mushrooms, particularly the sacrifice of the mushroom's "head" perhaps with the intent of keeping the mycorrhiza intact. Kramrisch decodes myths of those "losing their heads" with mushroom intoxication and magical horses that reveal "the sweet secret" of the *Soma*. There is a tradition of "Headless Magicians" with *Soma* links and the "act of truth" in an initiatory complex that extends this ritual symbolism into the fringes of the occult in the ancient world (Coomaraswamy 1944). Heinrich (2002) links the beheading with mushrooms and the initiatory circumcision as well as the prophetic head of John the Baptizer. He quotes the *Apocryphon of James*, of the Nag Hammadi texts, linking John's severed head with prophecy and a riddle by Jesus that begins with, "When you come to know what "head" means, and that prophecy issues from the head, then understand the meaning of "Its head was removed." Heinrich also links the severed head motif in alchemical manuscripts, such as in the *Splendor Solis*, with the Vedic legends, such as the six headed god Skanda that indicate the mushrooms were cultivated by careful harvest and other techniques to ensure the supply.

One finds many legendary beheadings in pre-Islamic and Islamic legends but some definitely conform to these established connections of magic heads and mushrooms. One of the previously mentioned uncles of Muhammad, Amir Hamza, beheads many foes but in a garden of jinns and might *ifrit* he beheads a youth and proceeds into a series of magical chambers that ultimately leads him to his magic steed. The head of the third Imam Hussain was said to speak after the massacre at Karbala and a legend maintained by the Kizilbash (red head, as in the mushroom) Kurds describes an Armenian priest who, recognizing the head as supernatural, wanted to retain the head then on its way to the Umayyad Caliph Yazid (Moosa 1988). The priest's eldest son offers his own head as a substitute to fool the Sunni and the priest instantly deprives his son of his head. He cuts off six heads out of seven sons to convince the murderers, which must remind one of the six-headed Skanda mushroom-god who is similarly beheaded. The ruse does not convince the Sunni murderer's until the seventh son is decapitated which apparently somehow convinced their foes. The priest thus retains the head in secret and adorns it with precious metals where it eventually impregnates the sole daughter of the priest having transformed into a bowl of honey, and the legend explains this as the origins of the birth of the 5th Shia Imam al-Baqir.

The implications of a complex of oracular-heads and entheogens must wait for a future paper, but some revealing clues are scattered around in popular myths such as is found in the Knights Templars and their strange talking-head Baphomet which has been discussed as a possible corruption of Mahomet. The somewhat controversial Sufi Idris Shah (2002), working with Robert Graves, speculates an Arabic origin meaning "Father of Understanding" and links with the Sufi *ras el-fahmat* (head of knowledge) that has an oracular function. The Sufi master and Persian poet Farid al-Din 'Attar (the druggist) has many poems that describe the Seeker as wandering, "iterant and headless" though his poetry on wine and drugs are treated metaphorically such as the scholarly discussion of his "spiritual flight" which contains a chapter *On Losing One's Head...* though in the context of spiritual boasting and authority (Lewisohn and Shackle 2006). 'Attar's poems offer complex symbolism, such as this verse which is consistent with heads and entheogenic wines and the Sufi mystic Hallaj who was executed because he declared "I am the Truth" (*Ana'l Haq*) in religious ecstasy.

"They saw Hallaj in a dream one night, his head cut off, but with cup in hand. They asked, " How is it your head is cut off? Tell-how long you have chosen this cup? He said, "The king of blessed name gave this cup to the headless one. Those who forget their own heads can drink from this spiritual cup." Clearly there is some

relationship between these headless mystics, the "Grail-head" and the various oracular heads as well as perhaps the *caput mortem* (dead head) of alchemy and "cult of the severed head" in Ireland. Scholars debate these associations but not attempt to place the overwhelmingly similar and shared themes that inform the myths of the Templars and the Grail legends (Nicholason 2001), though Ruck (2007) and his fellow scholars have unearthed many details of "heads" in European fairytales. Sufi seekers such as in the Nimatullahi Order bring a whole nutmeg (*juz*), symbolic of the head, as representing their head sacrificed to the Master (Netton 2000). This might reflect a substitution from the mushroom for the potential initiate for the symbolic nutmeg as Sufism became more institutionalized.

The theory of Syrian initiations is bolstered by the research of Green (1992) that links these cults of the head with alchemical and astrotheological lore of the Hermetic center of learning that was Harran. This research discusses a secret metallurgical guild of alchemical initiates who have a cult of a prophetic head (*al-r'as*) and Harranians were accused of being "Adherents of the Head" (*Ashab al-r'as*) which is described as resembling the god Mercury (*'Utarid*). The head is pulled off in chemical operation at certain times when the planet Mercury is exalted and "it spoke" is similar to other "prophetic heads" found in Arabian magical texts and in the Jabirian corpus, which gives instructions for using prophetic severed heads. These traditions are discussed in the context of Indian astrology and alchemy and Sabian magical texts that discuss oracular heads. The Syrian mystery cults that are linked with the esoteric Shia sects retain the curious lore of the "heads" that may well be the source for the reemergence of the cult in Europe and the charges against the Templar Knights in worshipping the idol head Baphomet as well as "Grail-head" myths from Irish folklore.

Shia and Sufi: and the Mantle of Gnostic Islam

"Alchemy is the Sister of prophecy"

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib

The religion of Islam is too often studied, even by scholars, through the eyes of the Sunni and much of the information on the Shia (the party of Imam Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson and son-in-law) is fragmentary, misunderstood or from polemical sources. I have a perhaps radical theory of the Shia, in that I view them as in many senses a much more "legitimate" representation of Islamic theology and cosmology. An example would be the Shia insistence that the Prophet could not only read but was well read and highly educated, a fact which Sunni and many scholars deny, and I suspect because this makes the Koran appear more of a miracle if from an illiterate camel driver, even though it contains some very pagan elements obviously incorporated into the text to link with and either replace or fulfill prior traditions (Stetkevych 1996).

Flattery (1989) collects several Hadith and poems that illustrate nearly identical phrasing in praise of the Syrian rue or *harmal* plant and quotes the 6th Imam Ja'far and his teaching that *harmal* seeds ward off evil influence which resonates with its continued use in Turkey and Iran as a method to avert the evil eye. But Imam Ja'far, perhaps the most "esoteric" of all the Shia Imams, which traditions holds as the revered master of the alchemist Abu Musa Jabir ibn Hayyan, known and translated into Europe under the Latinized moniker Geber (though this is debated as to what extent). The word gibberish is said to have originated from Jabir and his near hopelessly obscure alchemical writings but his work is laced with metaphors of red lions and special mention of the "elixir of the prophets." Jabir (likely a complex of initiates writing under one name) called Imam Ja'far his master and he wrote an interesting alchemical treatise called the "Book of Venus" that deals with matters of a "special red sulphur." There is an anecdote about a sick concubine and our alchemist has "a certain elixir with me, and gave her a draught...with vinegar and honey," effecting a cure much to the relief of the Caliph (Holymard 1957) *harmal* is still used for heat exhaustion and "magical" illnesses. It is interesting to note the possible role of *harmal* both as medicine and entheogen, and we might note that vinegar or acetic acid removes the "lion's share" of alkaloids, and yet-to-be translated botanical Hadith of the early Imams prescribe such concoctions with honey for a variety of illness. Scholars, such as Syed Nomanul Haq (1994), trying to make sense of Jabir's immense body of work suggest that the intermittent scholarship that is interrupted by nonsense and irrelevant interjections does not indicate a lack of substance but rather indicates that Jabir was following a specific tradition to obscure his language for the uninitiated.

The "Principle of the Dispersion of Knowledge" (*Tabdid al-ilm*) is like modern artistic deconstruction in which the work is completed, cut up and placed at random throughout the entire work. The final product thus hides

behind scattered references like a puzzle in which the dedicated must have the entire corpus in order to make sense of the "secret." In the Works of Geber there is constant reference to the "red stone" and the meaning is clear that these are not the common materials known by the names such as mercury and cinnabar, but rather "hypothetical" substances that induce a spiritual transmutation. The language of an alchemical entheogenic cinnabar is familiar, with similar references in the diverse alchemical traditions. The Mao Shan tradition of Taoism is known to employ just such precise language of a red cinnabar and practiced rituals that were made fragrant by "hemp-laced incense" (Saso 1990) and Needham repeatedly suggests "hallucinogens" at the very heart of the Taoist cannon and Chinese alchemy (Needham 1975). Al-Hakim, another alchemist, also the Mad Caliph of certain infamy, is said to have written a document of a "Red elixir of Moses and the rest of the Prophets" (Holmyard 1990).

This preserves a tradition passed down from antiquity to the 6th Imam Ja'far whose legacy is draped in occult insinuations. Imam Ja'far was the last Imam held in common between the different Shia sects of the Twelver, who continue the line through Ja'far's younger son, and the Sevener who believe the position of Imam went to the senior brother Ismail of which the Ismaili trace their ascent to the present day through the Aga Kahn. The alchemist Dubais ibn Malik records this tradition in his writings of a fine jeweled amulet of which he comes into possession. He relates that on the inside there were two manuscripts of two recipes written in the shaky handwriting of Al-Hakim of which he was certainly familiar given Malik's somewhat privileged position in Hakim's court. Al-Hakim was accorded divine status by some followers, the Druze, who persist to this day in Israel, Syria and Lebanon despite incessant warfare and persecution. Many, perhaps credulous, writers assume Masonic connections with the Druze in terms of symbolism and structure. Further investigations might include their noted use of a botanical as means of identification amongst themselves. Al-Hakim was also castigated as a lunatic by others but his links with Hermetic documents and connections with the Brethren of Purity (*Rasa'il-e Ikhwan us Safa*) and the *al-batiniyyah* (the esotericists), suggest more than just a simple case of a deranged monarch.

Alchemical historian E.J. Holmyard (1923) translates an alchemical treatise by Al-'Iraqi, Knowledge Acquired Concerning the Cultivation of Gold, which discusses the necessary elixirs (al-iksir). This partakes of the language of the Indian and Chinese "potable gold" that finds its way through Islamic alchemists into Europe (Needham 1975). The emphasis is that one should be hot and red, the second cold and white, which is the constant theme of the work, and sometimes uses the designations of silver for the white and the gold for the red in keeping with the metallurgical code. 'Iraqi informs his readers these secrets are guarded by the sages and "all were very jealous of it even with their sons, and more so with the rest of men." His discussion on the "first matter" of the operation proceeds to the language of an alchemically prepared food or salt which is the seed of a "metallic-plant."

This prima materia is further described as a tree that grows "in the lands of the West" with blossoms of red and the second is a blossom between red and black, divulging the recurrent themes of these specific colors of the *haoma* and *soma*. 'Iraqi says of this tree that whoever eats of it 'man and jinn will obey' and also notes "this is the tree of which Adam was forbidden to eat." These alchemists describe their potion or elixir or stone in various terms of which many identify the familiar red sulphur, or the Ruby or Red lion known throughout the universal works of alchemy. This is the Philosopher's stone or "Red stone" that is the goal of alchemy. Needham (1954) curiously mentions a "laughing mad stone" which was called "*al-bahit*" which drove people mad when they saw it, laughing them selves to death. There are scattered mythological references to such a stone, such as in the "Alexander-Romance," but most interesting is that it garners an entire section in the alchemist writings of Jabir, the *Kitab al-Bahit* or Book of the Surprising. It shows up again in the *Kitab al-Sumum* or Book of Poisons of Ibn al-Wahshiya and even in the Latin Picatrix which was of an Arabic source as well as being mentioned by the Sufi saint Ibn Arabi (Elmore 1999). Needham writes, that "it may well be something very solid beyond these mythological ghosts and shadows. For was indeed in China a hallucinogenic mushroom which leads to uncontrollable laughter and may well kill in excessive doses." Whatever the implications of this, there seems to be a connection to mushrooms and Needham is perhaps the first author to directly discuss alchemy in the context of psychoactive plants and entheogens.

Friends of God

The Gnostic Shia have multiple sects, including the Fiver (Zaydi), Sevenser (Ismaili), and Twelver (*Ithnā'ashariyya*) and if one counts with the latter eleven of the 12 were martyred. The Shia Gnostics seemed to have publicly split with the Sufi at the time of the 8th Imam al-Rida perhaps in another act of dissimulation ("al-Taqiyya") discussing their wisdom as the gnosis (*irfan*) as the Shia suffered ironically from being called "people of innovation" (*Ahlul Bida'ah*). What is critical to this discussion is to establish what would seem to be a line of transmission that is pre-Islamic in origin that came to fruition in Shia Islam with the divergent currents of the Twelver and the Sevenser or Ismaili Muslims and in some Sufi sects. That the former transmission spread to Turkey is not open to debate, though how much of the original Iranian influence filtered through the predominately Sunni country of Turkey is still an issue in academic circles. The Shia influence merged with an existing Asiatic current is well established as in "the golden chain of Sufism in Shi'ite Islam," or *Tuhfah yi-Abbasi* (Khursani 2008) and the various chivalrous orders of Islam (Shah-Kazemi and Lewison 2007).

The Bektashi order of dervishes displays a wealth of indigenous shamanic influence from incantations and ritual dance to the ritual sacrifice of sheep or ram to the miracles and shape-shifting of saints so there would be a ready understanding of new initiations involving entheogens, they would likely even be expected. Their veneration for nature and sacred groves further suggest Asiatic influence and as Prof. McElwain (1983) of Stockholm notes in his article "Ritual Change in a Turkish Village," there is a plethora of evidence to "indicate a possibility of a Jewish or occult strand in a tradition already swollen with syncretic origins." Later in the same article Dr. McElwain describes the difficulties of translating these mystic poems and for our purposes we might note his comment that certain episodes present particular challenges of which some consist of, "drug-induced trips in some cases or pantheistic flights of ecstasy "which becomes extremely pertinent to this discussion.

The poem he translates under the name of Ali Hayder seems to originate in the 16th century and the author is noted to be Muhammet Amet. The verse is a lamentation of a ritual nature dealing with, as the title suggests, sacrifice, a concept emotionally and spiritually linked with the plight of the party of Ali, the Shia, who have faced unbelievable horrors and persecution. Here the act is in honor of the Twelve Imams and the brutal history of the house of the Prophet that was heir to the "green mantle" of authority through the offspring of the Prophet's daughter Fatima and Imam Ali, the prophet's cousin and son-in-law. This poem has a particular focus on the first three Imams Ali, Hasan and Huseyin. The language reflects possible ancient connections between man and the welfare of the land and people and is even suggestive of prehistorical human sacrifice, an idea which might still impact the now metaphysical self-sacrifice to the glory, honor and service of the Twelve Imams.

A sixth pillar in Shia Islam is social justice and it is interesting to note that these Shia dervish orders represented a struggle against the corruption of the Ottoman Sultans, a further connection with this theme of sacrifice. In the third portion of the work the poem conjures a tension that is consistent with themes of an ordeal and subsequent initiation. There is the imagery of knives and lances and a naked candidate. There is an inner light in a sip of wine, while the Pir, shakyh or master, whispers into the ear of the aspirant and an oath is taken binding the initiates into a ceremony designed to occupy all the senses to facilitate the sacrifice and rebirth, recalling not only the wise words of Christ but also the rituals of Freemasons. The wording in the poem suggest that some impending theophany is to occur, the sacrifice of the ego into the unity of Allah, and this direct interface with reality as in "Lets hand in hand on the Truth take hold" while the innocent is in a "pit of misery on one dark night" of the soul we might assume and "to be satiated with the drink came I" again recalls the Iranian motif of the haoma. The next verse is so crucial to this line of discussion that it must be quoted in full:

"The juice of the pounded peony was giving Made drunk whom for love of Truth gave up living,
Shouted Shah Huseyin then to tears were driven, To taste the ecstasy of that drink came I."

Here we have linguistic evidence of entheogenic ritual in Bektashi Lineage of dervishes. The line in the original Turkish has possible cognates with a mix of Hebrew and Arabic of which the literal meaning might suggest a "heavenly sherbert." The first striking bit of evidence is the act of pounding a plant to produce

ecstasy in a ritual context which is consistent with the *soma/haoma* lore which is discussed at length in Wasson, *et al.*, the very word having suggested etymological links meaning, "to pound." The haoma rituals and the mortar and pestle theme seem to be always present on some level of the ceremony from China to Turkey.

While the peony is not psychoactive it is reasonable to suggest that given the rather extensive research of a number of scholars who have described the confounding of this species with a host of other plants, all "active," this could very well indicate either a code word to hide the true nature of the rite from the profane or to further signify a gradual substitution that eventually left the ritual 'watered-down.' The peony seems to be the subject of entheogenic allusions with connections to mandrake or the "aglaophotis" mention by Aelian and Dioscorides which links both together as "dog-dragged" suggesting a further connection with the mandrake with possible celestial implications of the harvest and the Dog Star, Sirius. John Allegro (1970) finds evidence of such connections in Pliny and sundry botanical folk lore, identifying it with the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom through Greek appellations of the sun god and Sumerian linguistic implications of a "capsule of fecundity or a womb." Certainly many of the ancient descriptions of "their" peony are not consistent with the flowery herbaceous plant known today by Pliny's description of capsules full of seeds that are red and black which also makes Syrian rue or harmal another possible candidate that was a likely choice to these opportunistic sects in the situation where the mushroom was scarce or not in season.

Allegro further elaborates at length throughout his controversial book of the further identification, or in his words, "code" that consists of a language of plants of which the primary species are the peony, mandrake, mushroom *Amanita*, and the added *harmal* (*isfand* of the Prophets) or Syrian rue (*Peganum Harmala*). The idea of sacrifice and death-like effects of the mandrake along with its human-like root, complement the themes of "redness" that suggest blood. I suggest that the ritual was the subject of a gradual substitution with a keen eye towards appropriate symbolism from human sacrifice to animal sacrifice and entheogens to the eventual substitution of alcohol, the red raki of Turkey. Dr. McElwain also notes that the raki he saw in the Turkish village was of a white color (its usually red), possibly recalling the white haoma discussed by Corbin, and he notes the other name for this raki is "arslan sutu" or lion's milk again increasing the many linguistic connections between the alchemical terminology to the filtering and pounding of the haoma as strained through milk as in the Iranian material. The lion was also the symbol of Ali as the roaring warrior-scholar that was the model Sufi and Shia. The half naked Abdals of Rum have also been described as using botanicals in religious functions such as "certain youth called *cucegler*, who carry in certain hand-trays a pulverized herb called *asseral*, which, when eaten, makes one just as merry as if one drunk wine" (Karamustafa 1994).

Allegro's discussion on the mandrake/peony/mushroom centers on evidence that is rather clear from his overall conclusions. The continued support he gives of cognates and allusions across alphabets and cultures with the main focus on the Sumerian, Hebrew and Arabic gives further credence with his scrutiny of Koranic language and the legends of the Assassins.. But this is a precedent for this paper to trace briefly the diverse entheogenic culture that is hidden in different Shia factions, and their use of plants in a ritual context. To trace this theme towards its logical conclusion is beyond the scope of this work, but brief mention of further evidence brought to light by Robert Eisenman (1998) suggests a common language of religious terminology that is so specific that it can be traced in the earliest Hebrew scriptures, especially the apocryphal offerings that are primarily concerned with the elusive sect of the Nasserites. These specific phrasings and epithets can be found as early as Genesis in the descriptions of Noah through the Psalms and into the Gospels. The current research tends to suggest that giving the ensuing inquisitional efforts to formalize Roman doctrine the Gnostic heresies were pushed out into the deserts of Arabia only to come to fruition again in Islam, and through the Shia resistance to the pretended representatives or Caliphs of the Sunni. The pivotal mélange of entheogens, political activism and mystical aspiration conspire against the root of fundamentalism. The ritual described in the poem uses a lyrical recitation in a ceremonial atmosphere in which the candidate's senses are enraptured and seduced by the romance and mystery of a true sacramental cult. His initiation into a larger spiritual context based on spiritual and social justice express the original foundations of Islam as a mission against oppression.

Conclusion

The Apple of Khidr

At that time I was ignorant of the sciences of realities. And I saw...Khidr..., and he gave me an apple, and I ate a piece of it. Then he said, "Eat all of it, for that is how much of it I ate." And I saw as it were an ocean from the throne to the earth, and I saw nothing but this; it was like the radiance of the sun. My mouth opened involuntarily, and all of it entered into my mouth. I drank until not a single drop of it remained.

Sufi Master Ruzbihan Baqli from his *Unveiling of Secrets*

This admittedly speculative hypothesis perhaps begins to define the growing evidence for entheogens in the various related religions of the ancient world. There are numerous gaps in the growing field of ethnobotany and ethnomycology especially with respect to Islamic culture. Certainly any cultures that have a ritual that speaks of some plant/wine/cup that confers immortality offers a clue that entheogens may well have a place in their theology. Alchemical lore is another link as metallurgical guilds were intimately linked with the shamanic arts from the beginning of recorded history and the Islamic material is saturated with the alchemical search for an elixir to such an extent that the fervor passed into Europe. The use of "magical" plants/elixirs/potions/mushrooms in these various cultures suggests that these various mystics either accessed some intact initiatory tradition that conveyed the "ecstatic technology" of entheogens across time or they rediscovered them in the course of consistent and widespread ancient legends.

I end this essay with the words of a female Sufi mystic who seems to speak of the various bright colors of the *A. muscaria* var. *formosa* found at the base of a tree, as they are known to take on caps of bright yellow sometimes. She writes of these other worldly fruits in the walled garden that is paradise and, I would ask, what other fruits grow at the base of a tree than the fruiting mushroom?

...I saw, then, in a dream a tree of incomparable verdant freshness, beauty and magnitude; on this tree three kinds of fruit were growing that bore no resemblance to the fruits of this world and were plump like a virgin's breast: a white fruit, a red fruit and a yellow fruit, shining like stars on the green base of the tree...

Rabia Al Adawiya (c. 714 - 801 A.D.)

Footnotes

1. I have heard in two separate university religious classes suggesting the prophet Muhammad was epileptic though the professors quoted Christopher Hitchens as their source. There is also, of course, a similar prejudice that is subtle in attributing theophany to entheogens, as is the case with the recent article by Shannon (2008) where Moses is mocked as a hippy drug user in the mainstream press.
2. These images can be seen in color in the exquisite book of Seguy (1977) or online http://www.zombietime.com/mohammed_image_archive/islamic_mo_full/ My past co-author Alan Piper and I arrived at the conclusion this image of Buraq as *Amanita muscaria* independently and simultaneously following sometimes identical lines of research. He must be cited as a pioneer in the study Islamic entheogens as well as credited with this contribution.
3. We take the perhaps radical step in taking the Shia as the true representation of Muhammad's Islam, and it seems scholar Henry Corbin agreed. There is even a Shia tradition of how those that supported the Caliphate, i.e. the Meccan hierarchy now nominally Muslim, refused a copy of Imam Ali's Koran in favor for their own "version." There is little love between many Shia and Sunni as recent troubles in Iraq illustrate, and Shia celebrate the demise of Sunni, such as the abhorred Caliph Omar. It must be remembered that the massacre of the Prophet's family at Karbala influenced Shia activities for years to come as most Shia Imams were martyred. I believe this situation reached such proportions that the 6th Imam split the lineage on purpose, even at the risk of sectarian strife to preserve the Hidden Imam,

whose existence is necessary for the existence of the world as the Spiritual Pole, essentially confusing which was the real Imam into such sects as the Alawi/Nusayri and Ismaili who are both prime candidates for the passing of the Grail mythos into Western Culture during the crusades. One must not the sudden appearance of Grail, alchemical cults with severed heads and "widow's son" doctrines in Europe and perhaps the Wasteland motif represents the Arabian Desert. The cup rituals might contain any number of entheogenic substances, such as the dried mushroom that is rehydrated and "pressed" and the liquid "wine" is drunk by the "drinkers of fire" (nusadir). In the course of researching this theory, I must note the Imam Ali is often described as the nephew of the prophet in the literature, even in peer-reviewed Islamic journals, so clearly there are indications that this described the relationship between Muhammad and his cousin/son-in-law, and this is a common theme in much of the Iranian Shia literature.

4. Graves remarks in *Food for Centaurs* as to *Amanita muscaria's* "fox-like" color in Palestine. p.273 Nan-e-saghta; peculiarly enough, the Egyptian-Arabic word for mushroom ('aysh-al-ghorab) also translates to "raven's bread". [In the Afdari (Semnani) language of Iran, the name kalagh-nun (crow's bread) is given to an unidentified species of mushroom. (Georg Morgenstierne, "'Mushroom' and 'toadstool' in Indo-Iranian", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 20:451- 457 (1957), pg. 453.) - PGW] The Parzifal Grail myth retain that heavenly bread motif: Today is Good Friday, and they await there a dove, winging down from Heaven. It always brings a small white water, and leaves it on the stone." Parzifal 827.9 ".the true tale was sent to us..." as opposed to the false Troyes version Wolfram's stress on the fact the kyot was baptized, as well as multilingual, could mean he was either a Muslim or Jew. Graves (1962) also writes: I learned only last week from an Arabic scholar, that the root-word F.T.R. means, in Arabic, first "toadstool," then "divine rapture," then "sacred pellets of bread." This points to a pre-Islamic hallucinogenic practice of immense age. This wine is described in part of the liturgy as taught by their sects Master, Al-Khasibi who was an intimate with the 6th Imam, with "Oh God, this is your servant 'abd al-nur, a substance you have grace, extolled, and absolutely permitted to your devotees who know you,...less by it with security and protection, and [sound] health and against sickness, and remove us worry and sorrow" and that it is a "substance of fire which God made his His greatest sacrifice and most noble substance" (Bar-Asher et. al. 2002). The Ismaili apparently had a amrita like substance, *ami* associated with a nectar of immortality, that was mixed with the soil of Karbala, where the Prophet's family was massacred (Khan in White 2000).
5. There are many interesting speculations on Templar and Islamic contacts with the Ismaili and perhaps the Alawi as well. The wasteland of the Grail myths are the hot deserts. The "widow's son" symbolism is often associated with military brotherhoods in the knightly romances of Perceval and showing up in Finnish folklore and persisting to at least the Civil War as De Santillana notices in his audacious *Hamlet's Mill*. He relates the curious incident of Gen. Armistead who fell at Picket's Charge in Gettysburg yelling repeatedly to his captors "I am a Son of the Widow" which De Santillana notes "is obviously the password of a secret military brotherhood that his captors did not understand, nor the historian either" and Littleton and Malcor do not attach any importance the recurrence of the phrase. The metallurgical connections with the "Widow's son" may well relate to the master-builder and caster of the Brazen Sea for the Temple, Hiram Abiff who is a "son of a widow" (1 Kings 7:14). I suspect a cult of immortality associated of the "widow's son" being raised from the dead as by Elisha (2 Kings 4:32-37) and Elijah (1 Kings 17:22-24) as well as Jesus (Luke 7:11). Alchemical enigmas can be found that describe the process in terms of mystery of the widow, stone of the widow, or orphans stone. The *Codex Marcianus*, a collection of early Greek/Egyptian alchemical fragments contains a line that links the widow cult with a drug of deathlessness with Isis talking to her son Horus, a widow's son himself, "Now realize the mystery, my son, the drug, the elixir of the widow."

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