



MEXICAN drawing of 16th Century shows three mushrooms, a man eating them and a god behind him, who is speaking through the mushroom.

MUSHROOMS CONTINUED

carry you there where God is," an answer that we have received on several occasions, from Indians in different cultural areas, almost as though it were in a sort of catechism. At all times there have been rare souls—the mystics and certain poets—who have had access without the aid of drugs to the visionary world for which the mushrooms hold the key. William Blake possessed the secret: "He who does not imagine in . . . stronger and better light than his perishing mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all." But I can testify that the mushrooms make those visions accessible to a much larger number. The visions that we saw must have come from within us, obviously. But they did not recall anything that we had seen with our own eyes. Somewhere within us there must lie a repository where these visions sleep until they are called forth. Are the visions a subconscious transmutation of things read and seen and imagined, so transmuted that when they are conjured forth from the depths we no longer recognize them? Or do the mushrooms stir greater depths still, depths that are truly the Unknown?

IN each of our successive trips to the Indian peoples of southern Mexico, we have enlarged our knowledge of the use of the divine mushrooms, and as our knowledge has increased, new and exciting questions keep arising. We have found five distinct cultural areas where the Indians invoke the mushrooms, but the usage varies widely in every area. What is needed is a perceptive approach by trained anthropologists in every area, cooperating with mushroom specialists. Of these latter there are in the whole world relatively few: mushrooms are a neglected field in the natural sciences. In this field Professor Roger Heim is known the world over. He is not only a man with vast experience in the field of mushrooms: he is an outstanding scientist in other fields, a man steeped in the humanities, the head of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. At an early stage of our inquiries he had lent us his counsel, and in 1956 our progress had been such as to justify him in accompanying us on another field trip. There came with us also a chemist, Professor James A. Moore of the University of Delaware; an anthropologist, Guy Stresser-Péan of the Sorbonne; and once again our loyal friend Allan Richardson as photographer.

This time the immediate problem was to identify the hallucinogenic mushrooms and to command a steady supply of them for laboratory study. This is harder than a layman would think. Though the early Spanish writers wrote about the divine mushrooms four centuries ago, no anthropologist and no mycologist had been sufficiently interested to pursue the problem until our own generation. Those who know these mushrooms are Indians belonging to tribes farthest removed from us culturally, locked

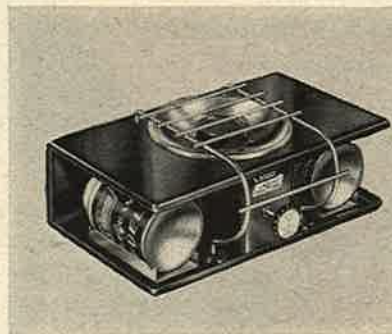
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