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Persia, Haoma & Greek Mystery

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Persia, Haoma and the Greek Mysteries

Carl Anton Paul Ruck

Abstract:

In the mythological tradition, the Greeks traced tribal affiliations with the Persians through Perseus, the son of the hero Perseus, and with the Medes through the sorceress Medea's son Medos. They also traced family ties with the Egyptians through the Argive Greek cow-maiden Io and with Phoenicia through Europa, abducted by Zeus metamorphosed into a bull, and through Perseus' Phoenician bride Andromeda, and through Cadmus of Boeotian Thebes, and further ties with Egypt through Perseus' visit to his great female ancestor's African homeland. These traditions pertain to the Greek Mystery religions and to the psychoactive sacrament involved in the rites of initiation. One version of this sacrament was the Persian *haoma*, which in the Sanskrit Vedic rite was the not-personified plant deity Soma. The same sacrament seems to have originated in Africa, perhaps stimulating humankind's first awareness of a spiritual dimension beyond the perceived reality. This was the psychoactive *Amanita muscaria* mushroom. Its assimilation into Hellenic theology underlies the identity of the Greek deities Dionysus and Demeter, and the various groups of dwarfish highly sexualized African grotesqueries that apparently materialized in the Mystery initiations of the Great Gods on the island of Samothrace and elsewhere, and in the great rite of the Eleusinian sanctuary.

KEY WORDS: *haoma*, lycanthropy, Dionysus, Medea, Demeter, toxin

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Perseus and Medea

The Achaemenid tribe of ancient Iranian Persians claimed descent from a probably mythologized apical eponymous early-seventh-century ancestor, Achaemenes, whose name is traditionally derived from *haxā-* (Sanskrit Sakha) 'friend companion' and *manah* 'mind,' indicating a cohesive tribal group (Schmitt 1983).

They rose to prominence when Cyrus the Great displaced Astyages, the ruler of another tribal group of related Iranian people called the Medes, probably named for the central area they inhabited in the mountainous region 'between' northwestern Iran and eastern Mesopotamia, cognate with 'middle.' The Scythians were a large nomadic group of these same Iranian people. -1)



Their name is variously derived, designating them as either 'archers' (*skuda*), cognate with 'shoot,' or 'roamers' (*sak-*). The Persians took their name from the region they inhabited near the Zagros mountains (which forms Iran's western border, today inhabited by Kurds, named Pars, now called the Province of Fars. (Fig-1).

As assimilated into the mythologized history of the Greeks, the eponymous ancestor of the Persians was Perses (Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 129e), the first son of the hero **Perseus** and the Phoenician Andromeda. **Perseus** decapitated the head of the Gorgon Medusa and used it as his weapon to free Andromeda as his bride. Their two daughters commemorated this episode of his heroic career: Gorgophone, the 'Gorgon-killer,' and Autochthe, 'Autochthon.' The Medes were anciently called Aryans (Árioi), but changed their name when the sorceress **Medea** of Colchis came among them fleeing Athens with her bastard son Medos, begotten with Aegeus, the legendary king of Athens (Herodotus, 7. 62.1.). The Medes thus claimed either **Medea** or her son Medos as their eponymous ancestor. (Fig-2)



Fig-1: Cyrus the Great, with hemhem Egyptian crown, redrawn from the bas-relief of Cyrus, Pasargadae, sixth century BCE.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Illustrerad_Verldshistoria_band_1_III_058.jpg

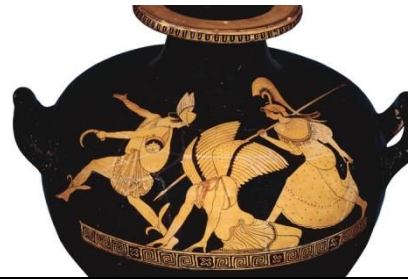


Fig-2: Perseus with decapitated Gorgon head.
<https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/P23.7.html>

Alternatively, however, Medos was cited as **Medea's** son by Jason, the hero of the quest for the Golden Fleece (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 1000-1002). In Euripides' *Medea*, she has two sons by Jason, but kills them at Corinth. The Hesiodic account, has just one, who apparently survives, raised by the centaur Chiron in the mountains, a repetition of his father Jason's early schooling. (Fig-3)



Fig-3: Medea killing her son Ancient History
<https://www.ancient.eu/medea/>

In both cases, it is significant that Medos is named after his mother. Perses, the brother of **Medea's** father Aeëtes, homonymous with the son of **Perseus**, and Medos were rival claimants to the throne of Colchis, and **Medea** intervened, slaughtering Perses, to save him from the same fate that Perses intended for him. Again, Medea functions in the role of empowering her son's kingship. Alternatively, Perses was the father of Hecate.

Echidna and Heracles

As for the Scythians, the Greeks de-



rived their name from a serpent zoomorphism of a creature like the Gorgon Medusa, the 'Viper' Echidna, a nymph of Scythia, the ancient precedent for the fairy queen Melusina, who would emerge in the medieval folklore of Europe as the empowering mythical ancestor of both the royal Plantagenet and Valois lineage (Ruck and González Celdrán 2007). The hero Heracles slept with the Scythian nymph and begot three sons, Agathyrsos, Gelonos, and Scythes. The last, who was the youngest, assumed the role of eponymous founder and ancestor of the dynastic kingship when he alone, as directed by his mother, could string the bow that his father had left behind as a test. Like **Medea** and Melusina, the nymph of Scythia empowers the kingship. (Fig-4)



Fig-4: Melusina bathing, ca. 1450-1500, illumination on parchment.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Melusinediscovered.jpg>

The inheritance by the youngest son represents a cultural transition from matrilineal custom, where the youngest daughter is the heir, as was the case with Helen of Sparta, who empowered Menelaus by her marriage, supplanting the inheritance by either of her twin brothers. The seven early kings of Rome were all related through marriage of the youngest daughter. Heracles, although the son of Zeus, is named for his putative mother Hera, whose birthing of him was finally ritualized, as an act of adoption, as he passed between her legs upon his ascension to Olympus to claim his

divine status after his death (Diodorus Siculus, 4.39.2; Ruck 2018b), empowered through his marriage to her daughter Hebe. Similarly, by some accounts Hera was present at the parturition with her legs crossed to prevent his birth from Alcmene), and was tricked into playing wet nurse to the infant, an episode depicted with Zeus witnessing and Heracles as already a bearded adult in Etruscan tradition (Etruscan mirror from Volterra, Museo Archeologico, Florence; Thompson 2006). It is significant that Hebe, named as the personification of 'Youthful Puberty,' served the divine drink of nectar to the gods.

Heracles had also left behind with the Scythian Echidna viper his belt whose clasp was the golden *phiále* saucer-shaped drinking cup with which the hero had caroused with the nymph. The empowered son Scythes wore it, too, and the Scythians supposedly bore such a drinking vessel thereafter affixed upon their belts in the form of a golden disk (Herodotus, 4.9-10; cf. Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, 6.48). It was Scythes who gave his name to the Scythians.

People of the Thyrsus

Agathyrsos became the eponymous ancestor of the Agathyrsoi, a mixed Dacian-Scythian people, who in the time of Herodotus occupied a plain in the mountains of ancient Dacia, now known as Transylvania in central Romania. The name of the Agathyrsoi suggests the obvious derivation from the thyrsus of **Dionysus** (Suidas; Stephanus Byzantinus, citing a Peisander, either the seventh-century BCE poet of Rhodes or the third-century CE Lycian poet of Laranda). The intensifying prefix *aga-* ('very') is probably a vocalization of *mga-*, as in *méga* for 'big.' Gelonos lent his name to the Gelonians, also known as Helonians, a Greek people who had moved inland from the Pontic coast and settled on the upper Don among the Finno-Ugric Bhudi-



noi. Gelonos was their capital city (Belsk, Ukraine), an extensive wooden fortified settlement, and they were bilingual in Greek and Scythian. They were tattooed and painted their bodies, and were later cited as the homeland of the Celtic Picts (Miles 2011). They were also sometimes placed east of the Danube. In general, the tribes of Thrace and Scythia were blue-eyed and had red hair (Xenophon, frag. B16 Diels-Kranz), associating them with the physical appearance characteristic of the Celts.

Zoroaster

The religion of the Persians was Zoroastrian Mithraism (Mazdaism, named for the solar deity Ahura Mazda, 'Lord Wisdom'). It was clearly the religion of the Achaemenid Dynasty (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 10.45, citing Ctesias of Cnidus and Douris of Samos). An autobiography of Darius I, dated to sometime between his coronation in 522 BCE and his death in the autumn of 486, is preserved written on a large rock face relief on a mountain cliff near Kermanshah in western Iran and in the Behistum Inscription. The latter is a multilingual version of the same document in three different cuneiform script languages: Old Persian, Elamite (the Pre-Indo-European language of Iran), and Babylonian (a variety of Akkadian). Like the Rosetta Stone for Egyptian hieroglyphics, it was crucial in the decipherment of a previously lost writing system. (Fig-5)



Fig-5: Behistum Inscription.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Behistun_inscription_reliefs.jpg

Zoroaster (Zarathustra) was traditionally dated to 258 years before the fall of Persepolis to Alexander the Great in 330 BCE. Zoroaster, however, merely meant 'astrologer' and was a title of a priesthood, with a mythologized eponymous founder, and hence there would have been a succession of claimants to the name. The religion is probably more correctly dateable back to the mid second millennium BCE (Boyce 2010; West 2010), contemporary with the time of Moses and the heretical Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten. Plutarch (*De Iside and Osiride*, 46) dated the religion to five-thousand years before the Trojan War, which should probably be corrected to five-hundred. It was the dominant religion of the Sassanid Empire until the Muslim conquest in 651 CE, and it still survives greatly diminished until today outside Iran as the religion of the Parsi, primarily in India and southern Asia, but also elsewhere. The religion of the ancient Scythians was an archaic version of this same Indo-Aryan tradition, reflecting the pantheon (like Vedic Hinduism) before the monotheistic solar revisionism attributed to Zoroaster. It is argued that the Greeks knew little about Zoroaster or the religion except as a fanciful construct (Beck 2002). (Fig-6)



Fig-6: Zoroastrian Magus, with barsom and haoma cup, Museum for Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara.
<https://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/barsom/index.htm>



Haoma

This is not true, nor is it likely that the Greeks had no curiosity about neighboring peoples with whom they had frequent contact. Central to the religion was a psychoactive sacrament called *haoma*, the Persian equivalent of the Soma of Vedic Hinduism in the Indus Valley of modern Pakistan and northwestern India, both representing the religious tradition of the Indo-European peoples who migrated south from the Pontic steppes of the central Asiatic plateau, starting in the fifth millennium BCE. Soma was the deified intoxicating drink derived from a plant, characterized by no describable flower, branches, or roots. This lack of defining attributes, other than its tawny red color, seems applicable to no botanical specimen other than a fungus, and probably the species *Amanita muscaria*, which is richly documented in the folkloric tradition (Wasson 1968). (Fig-7)



Fig-7: *Peganum harmala*, Syrian rue.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peganum_harmala1.jpg

A Bundle of Phalli

Soma became a generic designation and other plants were employed as analogues. The barsom originally composed of a bundle of twigs and branches as an emblem of priestly empowerment (later replaced with rods of brass or silver) may suggest Syrian rue (psychoactive *Peganum*) (Flattery and Swartz 1989; critical response: Ott 1993, 1996; Ruck, Hoffman and González Celdrán 2011), although often com-

posed of tamarisk, pomegranate, or myrtle. These trees are associated with the empowering goddess and are also either symbolic or actual sources of mind altering agents. The tamarisk (salt cedar, *Tamarix aphylla*, acacia) is a source of DMT (dimethyltryptamine); Isis found the corpse of Osiris lodged in a tamarisk. It functions as a marker for **lycanthropy** for the Homeric Odysseus in the Dolon-Rhesus episode (Homer, *Iliad*,10: Ruck *et al.* 2007). The pomegranate first sprouted from the blood of the castrated consort of the goddess, and it was associated with **Demeter** and Persephone. The blood was interchangeable with semen as male menses, and the pomegranate in Greek (*rhoa*) is named for the menstrual 'flux,' personified in the goddess Rhea. The fruit resembles the capsules of opium poppy. Like opium, the myrtle is an anxiolytic soporific, with aphrodisiac connotations, sacred to Aphrodite and emblematic of marriage (Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 845 *et seq.*; Ruck 2017b). Similarly, traces of cannabis have been found in sanctuaries presumably where the Soma ritual was performed (Gonur Tepe, sanctuary in the Bactrian-Margiana archaeological site in Turkmenistan, dating from the second millennium: Sariandi 2003).

Until just a few decades ago, however, among the Kurdish ethnic Yezidi, a people marginalized and persecuted by the dominant Islamic culture, the Zoroastrian rite was still being performed with *Amanita muscaria* as the sacrament (Ruck, Hoffman and González Celdrán 2011). The discovery of a 2,000-year-old Scythian burial tapestry in a necropolis in the Noin-Ula Mountains of Northern Mongolia depicts a procession of Zoroastrian Magi warrior priests marching toward an altar; one of them, standing at the altar presents a large mushroom, which the archaeologist identifies as belonging to the psychoactive Strophareaceae family, although the aging discoloration of the tapestry would not preclude identifica-



tion as the *Amanita muscaria* ("We drank Soma, we became immortal...", *Science Journal*, electronic format, 02-09-2015). (Fig-8)

The Roman fasces, which Livy considered an adoption of an Etruscan emblem (Livy, 1.8), may be a related Indo-European analogue of the barsom, implicating rituals of mimetic flagellation of the sacrificial victim or initiate, as in Dionysian cultic enactments (Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii). The fasces is etymologically derived from the *fascinus* (cognate with 'fascinate') as a 'magical spell,' implying psychoactive potential; Pliny called it a *medicus invidiae*, a 'doctor' being someone adept with **toxins** (Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.39). The *fascinus* was personified as the deity Fascinus and was commonly represented as the phallus, suggesting that the original botanical specimen might resemble the erect male member.



Fig-8: Zoroastrian Magus presenting a large mushroom at an altar, Mongolian burial tapestry, ca. first century CE.
<https://scfh.ru/en/papers/we-drank-soma-we-became-immortal/>

The *haoma* was sometimes identified as the resinous exudation of a tree, which implicates many other surrogates, including mistletoe, but such gummy exudations were considered the source of all mushrooms (Pliny, *Natural History*, 22.96.1: '[mushrooms have no source] no source except from the pitch of trees'). Mistletoe itself is named as the 'urine twig': 'mistletoe' (and German *Mistel*) is derived from Sanskrit *mehati* ('he urinates') and is cognate with Greek *omeich-ein* ('to urinate'), cognate with English 'micturate'; This implicates the urinous metabolite as a sacred effluent, and the mistletoe and the *Amanita*

muscaria are equally fruits of their host tree, both thought to be inseminated by the bolt of lightning (Ruck, Staples and Heinrich 2001). Since the drinking of urine offers opportunity for derogatory pejorative prejudice, it is often the most secret and strenuously denied ritual (Keewaydinquay-Peschal 1984; Wasson 2001). (Fig-9)

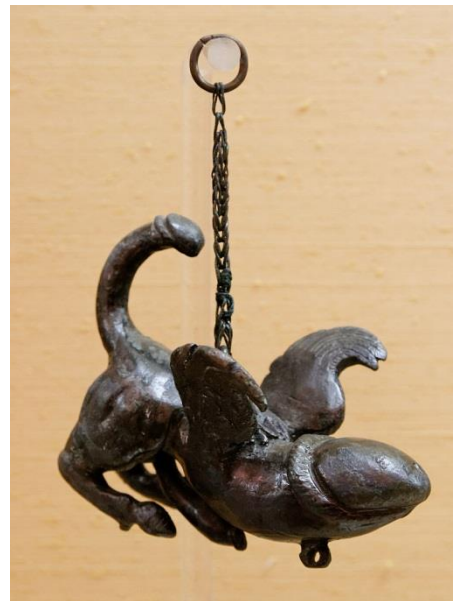


Fig-9: Bronze fascinus, from Pompeii, first century CE, bird-shaped with scorpion phallic tail and two insects on its back, National Archaeological Museum, Naples.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tintinnabulum_Pompeii_MAN_Napoli_Inv27839.jpg

Greek Haoma

The Greeks themselves were part of this great Indo-European migration starting at the end of the third millennium; they mythologized this original homeland as the realm of the Hyperborean people. The Greeks spoke a version of the same Proto-Indo-European language (PIE) and shared similar theological motifs. Darius invaded Greece in 490 BCE, followed by the second invasion led by his son Xerxes ten years later. The Persian kings never entered battle without their Magi priests. Before these invasions, the Greek colonies of Anatolia and the shore of the Black Sea were in contact with neighbors controlled by the Persians, and interaction with their Asiatic culture was responsible for the Ionian Enlightenment of the sixth century (Burkert 1998). (Fig-10)



In addition, prominent aristocratic political refugees from the Greek cities often sought asylum with Persian satraps or provincial governors and were initiated into their *haoma* sacrament. The Athenian Themistocles, who had led the victorious forces against Xerxes, later fell from power and was banished from the city. He sought asylum with Xerxes' son Artaxerxes, and was awarded the governorship of Magnesia-on-the-Maeander in Asia Minor, where he died. The grateful subjects of his province erected a statue of him in the marketplace as Mithras, the bull-slayer, standing nude in the act of pouring a libation over an altar, below which lay the slain bull (Plutarch, *Themistocles*, 31; Diodorus Siculus, 11.58). In addition, the Thracians were commonly engaged as slaves in the Greek cities, from the custom of selling off their unwanted children into servitude. The slaves portrayed in Attic comedy often bear Scythian names. Scythians, moreover, were frequently employed as mercenaries, and the Scythians as foreign residents in Athens comprised the public police force. They brought with them their religion and its observances.



Fig-10: Darius the Great, relief from Persepolis
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Darius_in_Parse.JPG

The Greeks knew of *haoma* as [*h*]ómomi, the same word, with characteristic loss of the initial aspiration (Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 36). It was apparently known as early as the Homeric tradition as *mólu* (Rahner 1957; Ruck 2017a), the moly of the sorceress Circe, **Medea's** aunt, with which Odysseus fended off her enchantment, and which figured in the Mystery religion tradition of the dwarfish ithyphallic crab-men grotesqueries known as the Kabeiroi (Ruck 2017b).

Lycanthropy

The *haoma* sacrament of the Persians was associated with **lycanthropy** and the warrior bonding of their elite forces (Ruck 2016c). In the funeral inscription of Darius at his grave in Naqsh-e-Rustam near Persepolis, at the end of the uppermost row in a list of twenty-nine countries that brought tribute appears the name *Saka Haomavarga*, which means the 'Scythian *haoma*-wolves,' a confraternity of wolf-warriors bound by the sacrament (Gerhenson 1991; Kershaw 2000). The site is an ancient necropolis, about twelve kilometers northwest of Persepolis in Fars Province, Iran, with graves from both the Achaemenid and Sassanid periods, dating back to ca. 1000 BCE. It is unlikely that the Scythian contingent was unique in this regard. The **lycanthropy** is metaphoric for the state of altered consciousness induced by the *haoma* sacrament, probably suggested by the wolf's fondness for ingesting the *haoma* plant. (Fig-11)

In this motif, other canines are interchangeable analogues. The Thracian/Scythian warriors customarily wore the pelt of foxes upon their heads (Herodotus, 7.75).

The metamorphosis of the warrior into a wolf upon the battlefield is documented as a literary motif in the Dolon episode of Odysseus' encounter with the Thracian horseman Rhesus, as recorded in



the Homeric tradition in book ten of the *Iliad*, and as staged in Euripides' *Rhesus* tragedy (Homer, *Iliad*, 10; Euripides, *Rhesus*; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 12; Ruck et al. 2007).



Fig-11: Dolon disguised as wolf, Attic red-figure lekythos, 460 BCE, Louvre, Paris. [Wikimedia Commons]

For the Greeks, the metamorphosis was associated with Apollo. The fox pelt headgear was stylized as the red Phrygian cap, whose shape imitated the canine's pointed snout. As the traditional headgear of the Thracian bacchantes, who were called *Bassarides*, for the *bassára* 'fox pelt,' it obviously was emblematic of ecstatic altered states of mind. The Thracian equivalent of Apollo's twin sister Artemis was Bendis, and the deity was also often portrayed wearing the entire fox pelt as headgear. The bacchantes were so costumed in Euripides' *Bacchae* tragedy (405 BCE), and even earlier in the *Lycurgeia* tetralogy of Aeschylus, which makes it obvious that the symbolism was well known to the Athenian audience and was associated as well with **Dionysus**, the non-Olympian half-brother of Apollo and Artemis. A version of **Dionysus** among the Phrygians and Thracians was Sabazios, which merged his identity with Zeus and with the Thracian mounted

horseman as deity, who is the model for Rhesus. Sabazios was worshipped with cultic Bacchic rites of ecstatic intoxication in the streets of Athens of the fourth century BCE (Demosthenes, *De corona*, 18.260), and probably earlier as well.

Persian Military Sleeping Trance

The Athenian audience was also well-aware of *haoma* as the sacrament of the Persian military. In Aristophanes' *Wasps* comedy (422 BCE), as the play opens, two Thracian slaves, posted on guard duty, induce a visionary sleep of Sabazios, designated by the metaphor of 'tending cows,' which causes them to nod off, like a Persian military campaign marching across their eyelids (Ruck 2012). It is something they have done before, but never have the visions been so intense. The obscene routine is probably masturbatory.

—Hey, motherfucker, what're doing!
—I'm learning how to relieve the night watch.

The play ends with an obscene dance of children as Kabeiroi impersonating little pubic crabs around the gigantic erection of the carousing old juror, with the punning refrain of *múkter mukátai*, the 'snotty [so-called] nose is bellowing forth its ejaculate of mucus.' The mucus is the common descriptive attribute of the mushroom, as in the term mycology, with the slime interchangeable with semen. The two Thracian slaves, and the Athenian audience, obviously know that the *haoma* sacrament of the Persian elite troops was metaphorically a bovine manifestation of their deity Sabazios.

—I need some relief.
—Me, too. Careful! It's getting to my eyeballs.
—You OK? Getting out of it?
—Ah, this sleep of Sabazios is getting to me!
—Then, you're herding the same bull as me. A Persian nod-off! Wow, I just fought a whole campaign right across



my eyelids. Ah, the most amazing dream.

—Me, too. Like nothing I've ever seen before. I know the future.

In a similar scene in Aristophanes' *Knights*, the two slaves bear the names of two Athenian politicians displaced from favor in the house of their master, Democracy. They attempt to relieve their suffering, first by fellatio, playing each other's 'flute,' then by perhaps 'deserting' their duty, which in Greek is 'come by yourself' or masturbation. Finally, they propose suicide, by a 'manful' drink of bull's blood, the way that Themistocles did it. Themistocles was, in fact, initiated by his Persian overlord as the Zoroastrian Mithras, but there is nothing lethal in a drink of bull's blood, except in the scenario of initiation (Ruck, Hoffman and González Celdrán 2011). The two slaves drink the intoxicating drink straight, sucking off each other's phallus 'manfully.' A common metaphor for the male genitals was the wine sack. The drink again appears to nourish the mind with visionary inspiration.

Scythian Fumigation Tents

In the *Clouds* (423 BCE), Aristophanes employed the Scythian cannabis fumigation tents (Herodotus, 4.75), which may represent a version of the *haoma* ritual, as the paradigm for the parody of Socrates' school for his pro-Spartan disciples (Ruck 2014, 2017c). Socrates was staged 'high,' visibly dangling in a basket above the school, with his students identified as coals of burning resin, and above the chorus of *Clouds*, more exactly designated as 'smoke,' with the obligatory comic phallus worn by these male dancers impersonating female deities identified as their 'noses,' so that they get high by inhaling the smoky essence of their own nebulous state. It is unlikely that Socrates was not similarly costumed with an erect 'nose.' When the Scythians emerge from the tents of their

fumigation ritual, according to Herodotus, they howl like wolves, and Aristophanes implies that the Spartan troops encircling and attacking the city in the Peloponnesian War are such packs of hostile wolves. It is likely that many members of the audience in the Theater of **Dionysus** had personally heard these ecstatically howling Scythians from those resident in Athens at their funeral rites. The **lycanthropy** induced by the cannabis may represent a transposition from the tradition of the mushroom, perhaps reinforced by the resemblance of the fragrance of the resinous buds of cannabis to the urine pheromone of canines.

Wolf-Worker

The Spartan puberty indoctrination of their young men as wolves was an element in the organization of their government under their legendary lawgiver, Lycurgus, a name that designates him as 'doing the work of a wolf.' The Scythians and the Dorian Greek tribal affiliation of the Spartans claimed a common mythical relationship through the legendary hero Heracles (Hinge 2003). The Scythians maintained close affiliation with the Spartans (Herodotus, 6.84.2), and the Spartan king Cleomenes died *ca.* 489 BCE from his associating with Scythians and becoming accustomed to their manner of drinking what is called 'wine undiluted with water,' which was termed the 'Scythian style' (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 10.29).

Apollo was named for the Dorian word *apélla*, designating the 'assembly' of the people, the equivalent of the *ecclesia* in Athens (Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, 6; Hecsyhius, *s.v. apelázein*; substantiated in inscriptions, first century BCE, from Spartan Glytheion), a 'group' summoned together,' French *église*, which developed into the Christian 'church,' the analogue of the Jewish 'synagogue'), but *apélla* implies the metaphor of a 'herd' or 'pack' of the herdsman. *Nomós*, 'pasturage, common feeding ground,' as



homonymous with *nómos*, meaning 'law, common usage' of civilized society, provided the fundamental pun upon which Aristophanes constructed his *Birds* comedy (415 BCE) (Arrowsmith 1973). The herdsman protects his flock from the predation of wolves. It is also the herdsman's task, however, to cull his flock, and hence he is himself the wolf. Thus, Apollo's name had the folk etymology that derived it from the verb to 'destroy' (*apóllu-mi*) (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1085-1086), and he and his sister Artemis were involved in traditions of human victims offered for sacrifice.

In their Olympian transmutation, they were strenuously purified from all contamination with death. Thus, Artemis cannot look upon her beloved Hippolytus as he dies; and no one was allowed to die or be buried on Delos, the site of their rebirth into their Olympian identities, nor were canines permitted to come ashore on the island.

As such, Apollo in the persona of the wolf-god played a beneficial role in overseeing puberty initiations into the tribal brotherhoods organized as 'packs' of males, eliminating the weak and unqualified. The more ancient manifestations of his persona as predatory wolf were involved in **lycanthropy** and its metaphoric ecstatic intoxication of 'rabidity,' as in the annual war that Sparta declared upon their resident slave populaces, and in the warrior cults attested among the Thracians. The rabid animal turns upon its master, as in the myth of the death of Actaeon. A vase painting depicts the 'rabidity' personified as Lyssa, the goddess of 'madness,' literally the 'she-wolf,' costumed with Thracian boots and a wolf headgear (Attic red-figure bell-krater, ca. 440, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). At Sparta, moreover, the puberty initiate was required to spend a year as an outcast, living by thievery, during which time he was considered a wolf. After that ordeal, he was admitted into the wolf packs

that comprised the army, thus enacting the two aspects of their patron, the wolf-god. (Fig-12)



Fig-12: Death of Actaeon, Attic red-figure bell-krater, ca. 440 BCE, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
<https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/K6.1B.html>

Mythologized History

The Dorians appear to have originated in northern and northwestern Greece (Macedonia and Epirus) and to have swept southward through central Greece and the southern Aegean in successive migrations beginning around 1100 BCE, at the end of the Bronze Age, displacing the last of the declining Mycenaean and Minoan civilizations. This scenario, however, is much debated. The arrival of the Dorians was termed either an invasion or migration in early nineteenth-century scholarship. Neither is reflected in ancient sources. It is possible that the Dorians were the 'People from the Sea' referred to in ancient Egyptian accounts, in which case they are perhaps Nordic arrivals (Thomas and Conant 2005).

The Dorians, moreover, may simply represent an uprising of disenfranchised populaces already resident, with Dorian a verbal derivation of 'slave' (*doúlos*) (Chadwick 1976). Their arrival was mythologized as the return of the sons of Heracles, claiming back the heritage of their father (Euripides, *Sons of Heracles*; Herodotus, 9.27; etc.). The earlier tribal groups were the Ionians (to which the Athenians belonged) and Achaeans, both resident in the northern Peloponnesus, and the Aeolians, who sup-



posedly originated in Thessaly and moved south into Boeotia and the northern Peloponnesus. As ethnic Indo-Europeans, none of the tribal groups could have been native to the region of southern Greece, but the three earlier tribes had assimilated with the Minoan tradition and adapted their system of writing, so that they considered the Peloponnesus their fatherland. In the mythical tradition of the Hyperborean people, however, they also remembered some mystical realm in the steppes of Scythia beyond the north-wind Boreas as their ancestral homeland. A similar merging of the Asiatic steppes and the north-central Arcadian highlands of the Peloponnesus occurs in the Roman account of the origin of their sacred Penates. (Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.163 *et seq.*). In legend, the arrival of the Indo-Europeans in the Greek lands was narrated as the amorous conquests of their patriarchal god Zeus, and in the heroic exploits of the heroes.

The Age of Heroes

Perseus and Heracles were both counted sons of Zeus. Although Zeus had pre-Indo-European analogues (most notably, the Cretan Minoan Zeus born in the Psychro Cave on Mount Dicte, later equated with him. His appearance as a mid-aged patriarch in the Greek lands with his family of Olympian deities signaled the arrival of the Indo-European migrants, whose language would eventually supplant the pre-existent indigenous populaces, and result in an amalgamation of cultural traditions. The god's insemination of **Perseus'** mother Danaë was three generations earlier than his insemination of her great-granddaughter Alcmena, the mother of Heracles. The first insemination by Zeus with the common ancestor of them all was Io, calculated as eight generations before Danaë. Io was native to Argos/Mycenae (northern Peloponnesus), but the consummation of the affair, after an extended pur-

suit, occurred in Ethiopia/Phoenicia, which was also the homeland of **Perseus'** bride Andromeda. The 'African' scenario for these 'brides' or nymphs identifies them as versions of the Great Goddess being assimilated into patriarchal traditions. A similar Phoenician origin is traced in the myth of Cadmus (grandson of Ba'al and nephew of Aegyptus or 'Egypt'), who also had both foreign and indigenous manifestations (Pausanias, 9.5.1).

The affair with Io as the first cause of the lineage of the heroes and the first instance of Zeus, as an Indo-European deity, imposing masculine supremacy over matriarchal traditions, was dateable to the mid second millennium BCE. Io had metamorphosed into a cow in Greece to disguise her from the jealous watch of Zeus's wife Hera, and then was tethered to a tree. The son of Io and Zeus, was Epaphus, named as the child of the 'Touch,' conceived when Zeus alleviated the estrus of the cow-maiden with his 'finger' among the 'black-faced' Ethiopian pygmies, an event that strongly implies the dwarfish ithyphallic grotesqueries of the Kabeiric Mysteries. For Danaë, he had materialized as a golden winter rainfall upon the maiden secreted underground. Both the cow's conception from the touch of the dwarf's erect finger and the subterranean maiden's swelling with the spongy absorption of the rainfall suggest fungal motifs. For Alcmena, Zeus simply had appeared disguised as her absent husband. (Fig-13)

In an analogous mythical tradition, Zeus as a bull inseminated Cadmus' sister, the Ethiopian/Phoenician Europa, a descendent of the cow-maiden Io and who lent her name to Europe, and he abducted her to Crete. The union according to legend, produced Minos of Crete, and presumably the events that would transition Minoan matriarchal culture to Indo-European masculine control as the heroic exploit of Theseus (Castleden 1997). These



events are dateable roughly to the same mid second millennium. Minos took Pasiphaë for wife, who was a sister of the great sorceress Circe and of **Medea's** father Aeëtes. Pasiphaë was driven to lust for a bull in her husband's herd, and she hid in a decoy cow to conceive her bastard son, the Minotaur, a taurine-human hybrid.



Fig-13: Kabeiric Odysseus and Circe, black-figure skyphos, British Museum, London.
https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online

The Great Flood

The transition to patriarchal traditions occurred in the generation before the Trojan War, traditionally dated to 1190-1180 BCE. This generation was roughly estimated as spread over several centuries, and the Trojan War and its aftermath represented the final stabilizing of the patriarchal manifestations of the deities of the Olympian family, although they disappear from the historical record for four centuries, reappearing, after the 'dark age,' at the end of the eighth century. This period of transition was further constricted to the latter half of the second millennium by dating the Great Flood of Deucalion to 1529/28 BCE (*Marmor Parium*, a Greek chronology inscribed on a stele found on the island of Paros, which dates events backwards from the time of its erection in 299 BCE, Asmolean Museum, Oxford). This would place the creation of man at just one generation earlier, although the Greeks would have known that there obviously were Egyptians, Anatolians, Phoenicians, Minoans and other humans existing well before that date. The creation myth is thus

understandable as a mythologized account of the new age of humans created for the Olympian Covenant with the new evolving age of Indo-European deities.

The mythologized history derived the four tribal groups of the Hellenic people as all descended from the eponymous Hellen of Thessaly, in the first generations after the Flood, with his sons Dorus and Aeolus, the eponyms of the Dorians and the Aeolians, and his third son Xuthus, as the father of Achaeus and Ion, the eponyms of the Achaeans and the Ionians (Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, frags. 9, 10a). Prometheus supposedly created man in the generation before the Flood, but since it involved a Covenant with Zeus, it presumably could not have occurred before that god's arrival in his Indo-European manifestation, and probably coincided with it. It was hence a remaking or redefinition of man and his relationship to deity.

Autochthony

The Greeks, however, also claimed pre-existent autochthony. These creatures sprung from the earth traditionally are characterized with lameness or difficulty in ambulation. This implies a botanical identity (Lévi-Strauss 1955, 1963):

In mythology, it is a universal character of men born from the earth that at the moment they emerge from the depth, they either cannot walk or do it clumsily.

In Greek accounts, the botanical autochthony also implies toxicity since the first crop of men was sown with the fangs of a primordial serpent as seminal seeds. There was a well-known tradition that the humans of the primordial age metamorphosed as anthropomorphized mushrooms (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7.392-393; cf. Pseudo-Apollodorus, 1.9.3):

*hic aevo veteres mortalia primo
corpora vulgarunt pluvialibus edita
fungis.*



'Here the common story told since primordial time is that mortal bodies were brought forth from mushrooms in a rainstorm'

Since this event occurred in the same region where Prometheus sealed the Covenant (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 510-616), the primordial autochthony is apparently analogous to the creatures of Prometheus, with Prometheus' theft of fire and the implanting of it in man as another version of the same motif.

Thus, at Athens it was no secret that Ion was not really the son of Xuthus, but a bastard, just a ruse of patrilineal descent, and that he was really the son of his mother Creusa, a daughter of Erectheus, a doublet of the serpent Erichthonios, born from the earth, upon the arrival of Athena as the daughter of her Olympian father Zeus. The father of Erichthonios was Hephaestus, with Gaia substituting for the intended mother Athena; Athena and Hephaestus were Olympians, but each with only a single parent, a trait they shared with the love goddess Aphrodite. The Athenians counted themselves Erechtheidae, descendants of the autochthonous serpent-man (Homer, *Iliad*, 2.546-556). Ion had a psychoactive botanical identity (Ruck 1976). (Fig-14)

This plant was the so-called crocus, but it was analogous to the mushroom as the plant that sprouted from the liver of the tormented Prometheus and served as food for the thunderbird (Ruck 2017b). Aristophanes in his *Birds* (415 BCE) portrayed Prometheus himself impersonating a fungal anthropomorphism on the comic stage, which indicates that this motif was common knowledge in fifth-century Athens (Ruck 1981, 1986).



Fig-14: Birth of autochthonous Erichthonius, Attic red-figure stamnos, ca. 460 BCE, Staatliche Antikensammlung, Munich.

<https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/T1.3.html>

The Age of Heroes

Heracles, Jason, and Theseus of Athens all belonged to this generation before the Trojan War, after which the age of heroes dwindled and disappeared. As Jason's mate, **Medea** was of his age, although she was also of the previous generation as the step-mother of Theseus. As the niece of Pasiphaë, the Cretan Minotaur would have been her cousin. His half-sisters Ariadne and Phaedra were the 'brides' of Theseus.

The lineage of Heracles and Theseus traced common descent through Pelops, the eponym of the Peloponnese, and his bride Hippodamia, via their son Pittheus and daughter Lysidice, the former being the grandfather of Theseus, and the latter the grandmother of Heracles (Euripides, *Children of Heracles*, 205-214; Plutarch, *Theseus*, 7.7). This would make them both cousins of Agamemnon of Mycenae, but their heroic careers definitely predate the Trojan War, coinciding in the abduction of the Amazon queen Hippolyta. Like the Trojan War, in which the Amazons fought as allies of Priam, the defeat of the Amazons signaled the assertion of patriarchy. Both Heracles and Theseus sailed with Jason and the Argonauts, but Heracles aban-



done ship, and Apollonius of Rhodes in his *Argonautica* eliminates Theseus on the voyage, claiming that he was still stuck in the underworld (Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 1.100), since the presence of two such preeminent heroes as Heracles and Theseus among the other sailors would have impeded the narrative of the heroic encounter of Jason with **Medea**. The episode of Theseus' imprisonment in the underworld was dated to the infancy of Helen, for whom the Trojan War was fought. The Dioskouroi also sailed with the Argonauts, but as twin brothers of their twin sisters Clytemnestra and Helen, they should belong to the next generation, that of the Trojan War.

Fungal Zoomorphism

The mythical association of the Mycenaean **Perseus** with Perses, the eponym of the Persians, and of the Corinthian **Medea** and her son Medos, the alternative eponyms of the Medes, relates to the tradition of the *haoma* as the sacred mushroom. **Medea** was the daughter of Aeëtes, king of Colchis at the far eastern shore of the Black Sea (in modern-day Georgia), but he was an emigrant from his native Corinth, of the lineage of Helios in the northern Peloponnese. The sacred mushroom has four major mythical representations in Greek tradition. These are [1] as an anthropomorphized zoomorphism known as the Gorgon Medusa, [2] the Golden Apple of the Hesperides, [3] the analogous Golden Fleece of Jason, and [4] the divinatory liver of Prometheus.

It is also a fungal additive to the undiluted Thracian wine that rendered it so potent (Ruck 2017b). This wine was known to the Homeric tradition as the Apollonian wine of Maron that Odysseus used to intoxicate the Cyclops Polyphemus (Homer, *Odyssey*, 9.193-255). The legendary wine required dilution with twenty parts water (Homer, *Odyssey*, 9.208-211), and it

still existed in the Roman period, and by the testimony of the proconsul assigned to the province, it still required eight-fold dilution to be drunk safely (Pliny, *Natural History*, 14.53. cf. Pollux, 6.10). This wine was associated with the religious initiation into the Mystery of the Kabeiroi, as practiced at several sites.



Fig-15: Wine of Maron, hydria, Museum of Edirne, Turkey. Author's photo.

A fifth-century red-figure hydria found in the cemetery of ancient Thracian Ainos (modern Enez, Turkey) depicts a cultic scene, in which a mushroom is being added, along with other plants, to a pithos of wine (Ruck 2017a; Museum of Edirne). The wine from the sanctuary on the island of Samothrace dedicated to the Great Gods appears to have been responsible for the wine marketed as Maronian in the Roman period (Ruck 2017b). Hence [5], the grotesque creatures associated with the Mystery initiations are also anthropomorphisms of the fungal sacrament. (Fig-15)

Although the mushroom in Greece is associated with the arrival of the Indo-Europeans and the tradition of the *haoma* sacrament, traceable throughout Europe as the common Celtic and Nordic heritage of berserker warriors and fairy creatures and similar gnomish beings (Ruck *et al.* 2007), there were analogous fungal sacraments already practiced in northern Africa and Europe well before their arrival, and they probably figured in the shamanic inauguration of the early Egyptian pharaohs (Pu-



harich 1959), assimilated into Ptolemaic Mysteries of Isis and Osiris. The rock paintings of Tassili n'Ajjer in the mountainous plateau of southern Algeria and in southern Spain date from the Neolithic, well before the Indo-European migration. Most notable is the Algerian depiction of the antlered bee-faced shaman whose body is sprouting with mushrooms (McKenna 1992; Lajoux 1963).



Fig-16: Selva Pasquala rock painting. Author's photo.

Similarly, the Neolithic rock shelter at Selva Pasquala in Catalonian Spain displays the natural stone relief of a large bull that has been enhanced by painting. It was a sanctuary that apparently functioned as a solstice marker, with an additional painted chorus line of anthropomorphized mushrooms dancing (Akers *et al.* 2011). The megalithic sanctuary uncovered at Göbekli Tepe in Turkey near the Syrian border dates to the tenth millennium BCE, perhaps the earliest religious site discovered. The megaliths, aligned to the constellation Cygnus which once marked the polar axis in the mid second millennium BCE, are mushroom-shaped and some are carved with fungal symbolism (Collins 2006). The Greek myth of Persephone's abduction by Hades when she picked a narcotic flower placed the event on the shore of the Ocean stream which encircled the disk of earth. This probably indicates sub-Saharan Africa, where Herodotus recorded that everyone was a shaman (Herodotus, 2.33). The mushroom cult may have originated with the common genome of humankind, before

the dispersal of the species throughout the planet. (Fig-16)

As the fruit of the tree in Eden, the mushroom figured in ancient Judaism (Allegro 1970), and was perpetuated as a sacrament in early Christianity (Fabbro 1999), surviving as a secret of the elite into the Renaissance (Ruck *et al.*, 2007; Ruck and Hoffman 2012). The ubiquity of the mushroom cult is perhaps explicable by considering the psychoactive botanical agent as itself functioning as the common denominator in communication of plant spirits with shamans (Narby 1998; Geniusz 2009). (Fig-17)

Thus, similar metamorphic motifs appear apparently spontaneously among unrelated peoples. The wolf metamorphosis with *Amanita muscaria* is documented as well for an elite group in the shamanism of the Huichol of North America (Hoffman 2001).



Fig-17: Basket of *Amanita* mushrooms, fourth-century mosaic floor, Basilica of Aquileia, Italy. <http://www.entheomedia.org/eden4.htm>

Bellowing Bovines

There is no name for the mushroom in English, only metaphors. This is characteristic of things too sacred to name. Mushroom is one of those metaphors, assimilated as early as the Elizabethan era from the French *mousseron*, itself derived from Late Latin *mussare*, to 'moo/bellow,' from Greek *muká-esthai*, to 'bellow.' Mushroom is onomatopoeic for this bellowing sound, which as early as the Classical period of Greece mushrooms emitted as they sprouted from



the ground (Aristeas, frag. 6, probably from his *Perseus* tragedy, quoted by Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 2.69B; Ruck 2017b). (Fig-18)



Fig-18: Eden Tree, twelfth-century fresco, Plaincourault, France.
<https://www.faust.com/forbidden-fruit/>

The words for 'mystery' (*mu-stérion*) and 'initiate' (*mú-stes*) have the same *mu* syllable, which was written with the glyph for a bullhead in the Mycenaean syllabary. It represents the voiced nasal labial, made with the lips pursed, emitting no sound, for a secret well kept, like the English 'mum's the word.' Rainfall, moreover, was seen as the seminal milk of heaven, as well as the urine and penile ejaculate of deity, representing a kind of sacred wedding, milk and semen together, milked from the udders of the heavenly herd of cows in an action interchangeable with masturbation, and caught on earth in fungal cups carved into the megalithic mushroom monuments now documented in Alpine Europe (Gosso and Webster 2013) and throughout Thrace (Markov 2017; Kiotsekoglou 2017), identifying the rainfall obviously with a divine potion of a mushroom.

The fungal identity of the herd of cloud formations was known to the Homeric tradition as the cattle of the Sun (Homer, *Odyssey*, 12.303-419; Ruck *et al.*, 2007). As Odysseus' starving men roasted the pieces of flesh on the spits, they began to bellow with the lowing of cattle, but the men ate the repulsive writhing and mooing bits. Bovine metaphors are frequent in the

Persian *Avesta* and Sanskrit *Rig Veda* in identifying the *haoma*-Soma sacrament, and in Greece, Prometheus established the primordial etiquette for eating when he tricked the gods with the deceptive bundle of cowhide at the same site where men first sprouted as mushrooms (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 536; Mekone or 'poppy,' Corinth; Ripinsky-Naxon 1993: Mekone puns upon Mykene, for mushroom), an etiology recalled at every ritual feasting thereafter. The trick established the boundary between the commonly edible and inedible. The repulsiveness of bits of mooing flesh in the Homeric account indicates the taboo upon eating the sacred bellowing herd. This repulsive food, with the same referent, figures also in the 'mushroom tables' defiled with the white scabby white harpy bird droppings that served as inspiring food for the Greek prophet Phineas in the tale of the Argonauts, and in Virgil's account of the curse of the harpies and the edible tables (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3.254-257) that would signal the site where Aeneas would found the new city of Rome (Lycophron, *Alexandra*, 1250-1252; Ruck and Larner 2013).

It would seem obvious to connect this bovine zoomorphism to the fact that the cow pie (disk of cattle dung) commonly serves as host for the psychoactive *Psilocybe* mushrooms (Wasson and Wasson 1957). All entheogenic mushrooms are probably analogous and interchangeable. Thus, the dancing mushrooms of the Selva Pasquala rock shelter probably belong to the *psilocybin* species (Akers *et al.* 2011). The identification is based on the crooked stipes, although that may merely represent an attempt to depict them as dancing. Similarly, the liberty cap mushrooms (*Psilocybe semilanceata*), commonly called the 'magic mushrooms,' have inherited the symbolism of the Phrygian cap, although they are not red. The folkloric tradition, however, is well documented that the sacred mushroom imparts enhanced stamina, is the



mycorrhizal fruit of its host tree, is red, with a cap splotched with white scabs, and is associated with flies.

The altered vision and intoxication it accesses is commonly described with metaphors of **lycanthropy**, as in the initiatory folktale of *Rotkäppchen* ('Little Red-cap') (Ruck *et al.* 2007), whose red, so-called 'riding-hood' is a version of the initiatory Phrygian cap. The 'little red cap' as a *pileolus* is worn as the ecclesiastical skullcap, called the zucchetto or 'little gourd.' This is a bizarre nomenclature that probably perpetuates the symbolism of the squirting cucumber or bryony associated with **Dionysus** and the **lycanthropy** of his bacchant maenads, who wore the red fox pelt as headgear and engaged in the revel as packs of hounds led by the personification of rabidity as the 'she-wolf' Lyssa. Both Mithras and his twin torchbearers could be depicted as only their heads, with Phrygian caps, hanging as the fruit of the host tree (Ruck, Hoffman and González Celdrán 2011; Frankfurt-Heddernheim Mithraeum, Dieburg Mithraeum, Vermaseren *CIMRM* 247). Among the North American Anishinaabeg, the *Amanita muscaria* is known as the 'tree-mushroom' (*miskwedo*) (Kee-waydinoquay 1984).

Bovine Mushrooms in Estrus

The cows in Greek mythology are constantly mooing in estrus, on the model of the zoomorphism of the cow-maiden Io (Ruck 2017b), whose herdsman Argo metamorphosed into the cow-fly *Tabanus bovinus*, which is called *oistros* (cognate with English 'estrus'). In this form, he stings her womb with his cow-prod (*boupléx*), like the 'wolf-man' Lycurgus in his attack upon the Thracian bacchants celebrating the mountain revel of **Dionysus** (Homer, *Iliad*, 6.129 *et seq.*), the deity of intoxication. The rabid she-wolf Lyssa commonly materialized amidst the female vixens of the revel (Euripides, *Bacchae*, 977 *et seq.*). In Aeschylus'

Prometheus, Io describes her torment, troubled with sexual dreams, as she started to grow her horns and metamorphosed into a cow, 'anointed' (*christheísa*, cognate with 'chrism') with the madness of the sharp-mouthed cow-fly (*múops*), driven, 'estrusmitten' (*oistropléx*), by the 'divine whip' (*mástix theía*) into uncontrollable dancing (Aeschylus, *Prometheus*, 674-672). The metaphors were obviously understandable to the Athenian audience.

Múops as an alternative name for the *oistros* is cognate with 'myopic,' literally 'squint-eyed,' implying not only altered vision, but also the pursed lips or closed eyes of a religious 'Mystery' (*mú-sterion*). In the myth about the sisters of **Perseus**, as they turned into bacchanalian cows, they experienced a dermatological affliction, turning red, splotched with white scabs, and ran around in what seemed a lewd manner to everyone who saw them (Pausanias, 2.24.7; Ruck 2016b). **Dionysus** himself could materialize as a bull among them (Euripides, *Bacchae*, 918-921).

The Gorgon Medusa

The Gorgons of Greek myth moored like cows (Eustathius, *on Iliad* 2.498; Stephanus of Byzantium, *s.v. Mukale, Mukenai*). This is totally expectable since their 'Queen' called the Medusa is a zoomorphism of the sacred mushroom. The mooing would be an inevitable attribute of the sisterhood of Gorgons and their Queen, traceable back to the Minoan goddess, one version of whom became the Olympian Hera, wife and sister of Zeus; she bore the epithet of 'cow-faced,' *boópis*, and he mate could transmogrify into a bull. The hero **Perseus** harvested the Medusa's head with a pruning hook (*hárpe*), the same implausible agricultural tool that Mithras employed to slaughter the Cosmic Bull. The *hárpe* is not a scimitar, and its curved blade is not honed on its upper edge; it would be impossible to plunge it straight down into the



back of the bull, as depicted in the Mithraic tauroctony.



Fig-19: Perseus with fruit-pickers sack, Attic red-figure hydria, 450 BCE, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. http://www.goddessathena.org/Museum/Paintings/Perseus/Athena_Perseus_Medusa_Nausicaa.htm

Perseus then placed the harvested Gorgon head in a special receptacle, the *kibisis*, a sack slung upon the arm, identifiable as what is still used today by people picking apples and other fruits. The *hárpe* and the *kibisis* are depicted in numerous vase paintings. (Fig-19)

It is also traditional to depict that the pruning of the monster occasions her botanical metamorphosis into an olive tree, a tree that requires annual pruning to tame it from its wild state as a useless thicket and induce it to fruit (Ruck 2018a). It also is a tree that serves as host for the *Amanita muscaria* (Teeter 2007).

On the pine trees and on the sacred olive there grow some big red mushrooms with a terrible poison.... The shepherds wonder how it comes about that the olive produces bad mushrooms. (Wasson Archives, Harvard University: F. Angelis, Greek newspaper *Eleftheria*, 1962).

In the myth of the hero Heracles, he harvested it as the golden antler of a female reindeer, a hind, among the Hyperboreans of the Scythian steppes, and it metamorphosed into the olive tree as he returned from that realm, whereupon he planted it as the first grove of sacred olives in the Altis at the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia.

The hind was sacred to Artemis, and is thus a version of the stag-hunter Actaeon and his hounds, and it establishes Artemis as enemy of Heracles, in her persona as twin of her brother Apollo, whose Delphic tripod the hero tried to steal. (Fig-20)

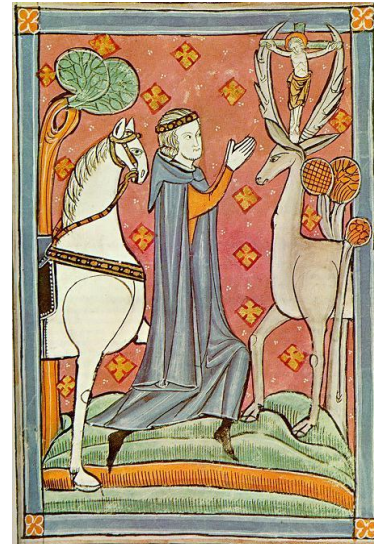


Fig-20: Vision of Saint Eustatius or Hubertus, medieval manuscript illumination. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint_eustace.jpg

The *Cervidae* are notably fond of mushrooms, including the *Amanita's* metabolite in urine. The motif of the deer-hunt in medieval and Renaissance art probably always had the gathering of the mushroom as its referent. Both Saints Hubertus and Eustatius experienced a vision of the Christ suspended between the antlers of a stag while out on the hunt. In addition to the tauroctony, Mithras is depicted hunting deer (Dura-Europos Mithraeum, Rostovtzeff 1939). The folkloric attributes of the stag in medieval bestiaries are traceable back to pre-Christian Classical sources (Pliny, *Natural History*, 8.41, 8.50; Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 6.794-797). These include its association with **toxins**. It could flush serpents from their dens with its breath or its spit or by flooding it with water, and when poisoned they could eject the **toxin** as urine by copious drinking. The spittle is interchangeable with mucous as an attribute of the mushroom, and the flood of its water



suggests the urine as its only probable fountain. Like the serpent shedding its skin, stags could shed their horns as annual rejuvenation, and the horn, if found, was the source of a powerful drug. Their ability to play the panpipe suggests the bacchanalian revel. The pun upon the hart made it an aphrodisiac, but even in antiquity; venison was considered the food of venerary and Venus. Its antagonism to the serpent became emblematic of Christ's battle with the devil.

From the severed neck of the Medusa emerged a flying horse, named Pegasus for the springs of magical, inspiring 'fountains' (*pegé*) that burst forth, analogous to the 'water miracle' attributed to Mithras (Ruck, Hoffman and González Celdrán 2011), wherever it touches earth. As the son of Poseidon, the springs of Pegasus suggest his father's watery realm where he consorted with fountain nymphs like the Medusa, whose lower body could be either equine or ichthyomorphic. The identity of the Medusa as a picked mushroom is explicitly recorded by the antiquarian second-century CE traveler Pausanias as a local version of the myth at Mycenae (Pausanias, 2.16.2-6), and it is so depicted on a fourth-century BCE amphora surviving from Southern Italy (Pergamonmuseum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, inv. no. F. 3022, third quarter of the fourth century BCE; Ruck 1978). (Fig-21)

In picking the mushroom at the site of Mycenae, **Perseus** was supposedly instrumental in causing the **Perseus** spring (*Persérion*) to flow as the water source in the cistern below the citadel and in reinterpreting the name of the city as *Mykenai* (Mycenae), as derived from the *múkes* ('mushroom,' *mykes*, a metaphor as 'mucous'), the place of the 'Mushroom-sisterhood,' whose Queen was the Medusa, a punning calque upon its probable previous name as *Mekónai*, the place of the 'Opi-

um-poppy-sisterhood.' Such a previous matriarchal culture is proclaimed by the symbolism of the citadel's Lion Gate, and in the mythical tradition of Clytemnestra's conflict with Agamemnon. The sister of Clytemnestra's mother Leda was Althaea; she was perhaps the younger daughter and appears to have inherited the Aetolian 'kingship' of Calydon. The Calydonian Boar Hunt marked the transition to patriarchy. Her murder of her son Meleager was paralleled with Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon (Aeschylus, *Choephoroe*, 598-625).

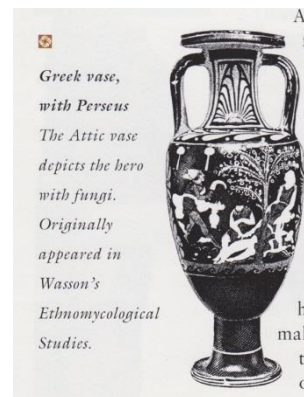


Fig-21: Perseus and the Gorgons with Tree of the Hesperides, red-figure fourth-century amphora from Southern Italy. Originally author's photo.

Perseus thus marks the imposition of the Indo-European sacrament as a replacement upon the pre-existent Minoan-Pelasgian citadel. The association of the Minoan goddess with the opium poppy is clearly indicated by the opium-crowned figurine from Gazi, Crete (1400-1100 BCE, Archaeological Museum, Heraklion). The depiction of the decapitation on the Southern Italian amphora places the event in the Garden of the Hesperides and identifies the severed head as a Golden Apple harvested from the tree, clothes **Perseus** with the Phrygian cap, and further glosses the cap and the severed head as mushrooms. The vase survives since it was apparently sequestered in a tomb and suggests that the deceased was privy to its religious symbolism. A similar transition to the Indo-



European mushroom sacrament is signaled by the birthing of the Curetes, who attended the birth of Zeus on the island of Minoan Crete. This was the birth of Zeus into his new evolving persona as the head of the Olympian family of deities. Like the autochthonous primordial mushroom creatures at Corinth, the Curetes sprouted on the mountainside, sown by a great rainfall (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.282).

Haoma Skull Skyphos Cup

In 1975, the art historian Stella Kramrisch, a specialist in Indian art and Hinduism, who held the professorship of South Asian Art at the University of Pennsylvania and was a curator at the Pennsylvania Museum of Art, demonstrated that one of the first surrogates for Soma was a mushroom, not a psychoactive variety, but chosen for its symbolism as a mediator between death and spiritual transcendence (Kramrisch 1975). Its corpse-like putrid stench was transmuted into fragrance in the firing of a ritual clay vessel, which represented the decapitated head of the deity Makha, analogous to the fungal materialization of the Greek Gorgon. One of the earliest depictions of the Gorgons occurs on a colossal seventh-century pithos urn that once served as a grave monument along the sacred road to the Mystery sanctuary of Eleusis (Eleusis Museum, Greece). It depicts them with pots for heads, suggesting that the pot-headed females were anthropomorphisms of the potion that was the original contents of the vessel. From late antiquity (fifth-sixth century CE) survives an account that **Perseus** invented the Zoroastrian religion. He made a 'skull-cup' (skyphos, such employed in the Kabairic Mystery at Thebes) from the head of a hideous Libyan girl named Medusa and consecrated it with mystical power (John Malalas, a Christian chronographer, whose source was probably the fourth-century CE (?) historian Pausanias of Antioch; Ogden

2008; Ruck, Hoffman, and González Celadrán 2011). (Fig-22)

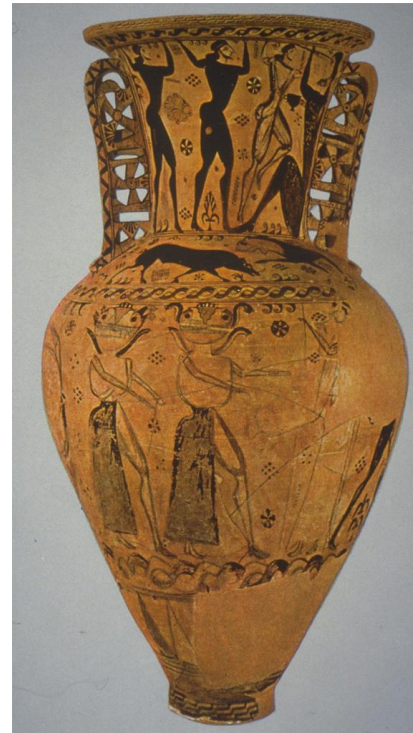


Fig-22: Eleusinian pithos, Museum of Eleusis, Greece. Author's photo.

The decapitation of the Medusa represents an aspect of the transition of the goddess Athena to her pacified Olympian identity. She wears the Gorgon head as a commemoration of her former matriarchal role. For her rebirth as the daughter of Zeus, her father swallowed her pregnant mother when, during a succession of bestial metamorphoses in their sexual course, she materialized as a cow fly (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 886, with scholiast, quoting a variant wording). When Jason and the Argonauts visited the Tree of the Golden Apples, on the day after Heracles, who also fetched its fruit and slew the serpent guarding its trunk, they found the tail of the serpent still writhing from the toxins of the hero's arrows, but its head was dead, with flies dried up in the rotting wounds (Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 4.1400 et seq.; Ruck, Staples and Heinrich 2001).

Golden Fleece

'Fleece' and 'apple' are homony-



mous in Greek (*mélon*) (so acknowledged in Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 4.26.2), and the Golden Fleece of the sacrificed magical ram *Chysó-melos*, that hung on the Tree in **Medea's** Colchis, is an analogue of the Hesperides tree, traditionally located in the region of the Straits of Gibraltar and the Atlas Mountains of the northern African coast. The homonym is elaborated in the Latin *Argonautica* (Diodorus Siculus, *Argonautica*, 4.26.2), where the Serpent is the name of a herdsman who is guarding a flock of golden-fleeced sheep. The serpent of the Hesperides and the one at Colchis were equated (Philostratus, *Imagines*, 2.17). It was an apple from the Hesperides Tree which was also the first cause of the war fought at Troy (Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Epitome*, 3.2). In antiquity, Iberia was both the name for the Roman province of Spain (derived from the Celtic name for the Ebro River) and fortuitously also for the region at the far end of the Black Sea, inland from Colchis (modern Georgia, derived from an ancient Caucasian or Colchian word). **Medea** is an adjectival version of the same queenly designation as occurs as a verbal participle in Medusa, and (with a different verb) as verbal participle in the name of Ion's mother at Athens as Kreousa (Creusa). Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece is an analogue of the exploit of the heroes **Perseus** and Heracles in the Hesperides.

Jason (Greek Iason) is a name like Ion, formed upon the homonymous word for 'arrow' and '**toxin**' (*iós*), which yields also *ia-trós* as doctor or 'drug-man,' and the name of Iamos, the eponymous founder of the brotherhood of shamans who practiced at the sanctuary of Olympia (Ruck 1976). Jason was named for the protective chrismation that **Medea** compounded to protect him from the serpent guarding the tree. The multiple involvement of **Medea** in the traditions of both Aegaeus and Jason probably devolves from her analogous identity

as Medusa.

The Divinatory Liver of Prometheus

As Apollonius Rhodius narrated the episode of the chrismation in his Hellenistic epic, the *Argonautica*, **Medea** picked a special plant for the compounding. It sprang from the earth, the primordial botanical growth (*protophués*), sprouting from the *ichor* that dripped from the immortal liver of Prometheus, as it was gnawed by the eagle that visited him each day, chained to the mountain in the Caucasus, eternally in torment as the punishment that Zeus demanded for his creation of man (Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 3.838 et seq.). *Ichor* was the fluid that flowed in the veins of the gods instead of blood.

Since the liver is essential for life, the largest and weightiest of the entrails and containing the greatest amount of the life force in the form of blood, it was considered the center of personal existence (Ruck 2016d). The markings of the universe could supposedly be read off its surface, and thus it was a microcosm of the vitality of the celestial realm (Etruscan bronze liver, marked as a celestial map, ca. 100 BCE, labeled with the names of the gods controlling each area, Piacenza Museo Civico, Piacenza, Italy). Prometheus is the mythical prototype of the clairvoyant seer, named for his 'Fore-thought' or prognostication. The liver was considered the primordial organ of the body, the part that developed first in the fetus, around which the rest of the person grew in the womb. It is the organ that functions in hemolysis, the cleansing of the blood from **toxins**, and thus it is a motif in botanical agencies for shamanic rapture. Although it is unlikely that the ancients knew of the filtering function of the liver, it was thought to be the organ through which the digested food from the stomach entered the bloodstream. The liver would have the highest concentration of psychoactive **toxins**, reabsorbing what the



kidneys did not eliminate into the urine. The liver is the most frequent target for the arrows shot in the *Iliad*. The theft of fire, hidden in the narthex, involves the motif of root-cutters and herb-gatherers. The narthex was the emblem of the Dionysian bacchants as the receptacle for the plants gathered, named as the 'narcotic-storehouse' (Theophrastus, *History of Plants*, 9.12.2). (Fig-23)



Fig-23: Torment of Prometheus, with Atlas, Laconian black-figure amphoriskos, ca. 530 BCE, Vatican Museum, Rome.
<https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/T20.1.html>

The narthex was interchangeable with the thyrsus as a repository for the gathered herbal drugs. The thyrsus in common culinary nomenclature was also the word for the stipe of the mushroom (Apicius, *De re culinarian*, third-fourth-century CE Roman cookbook, 7.15.6; Ruck 2006, 2017a). In the case of the *Amanita muscaria*, the psychoactive chemical is confined mainly to the red rind of the cap, making it a perfect example of the toxic agent stuffed into the stalk of the narthex. Significantly, petrified stipes of mushrooms were discovered amid the debris in the Paleolithic Chauvet Cave, but not their caps (unverified report, Werner Herzog, interview on German television). The redness of the *muscaria*, moreover, would suggest the glowing embers of the fire stolen from heaven, since the narthex was used to transport fire from one hearth to another. The bitter brownish or greenish-yellow

secretion of the liver called bile or gall (Latin *bilis*, Greek *cholé*, both derived from the Indo-European root *ghel-* for 'shine,' yellow like 'gold,' with which it is cognate) is another element in this motif. It is listed as two of the basic humors of the body (melancholic, choleric) and was associated in Roman thought with rancor and madness. 'Gall' was further implicated in the motif of psychoactive **toxins** by its association with the venom of serpents, which it was thought contaminate plants by contagion. Eating your enemy's liver was equivalent to mastering his soul. The flesh of animals that have eaten **toxins** is contaminated with those **toxins** (Piper 2013), and the liver of Prometheus would encapsulate the essence of his visionary mentality.

Eagle Fare

The liver of Prometheus and the magical plant that sprouted from it is the fare of eagles. In indigenous North American tradition, the eagle is the thunderbird, nourished by the *Amanita muscaria* (Kee-waydinoquay 1984). In the case of quails, which are immune to many deadly **toxins**, the flesh can be fatal to humans, and it was recognized in antiquity as the source of 'quail madness' (*ortugomanía*), considered the same seizure as the sacred disease of epilepsy (Pliny, *Natural History*, 10.69; Ruck 2017b) The motif occurs in the European and Arabic folkloric identification of the *Amanita muscaria* as 'raven's bread' (Klapp 2013). The folk name was well-known and was depicted in works of Renaissance art (Saints Anthony of Egypt and the hermit Paul of Thebes, fed by raven's bread, Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece; Ruck *et al.*, 2007); and is recorded as the food that fed the prophet Elijah in the desert (*1 Kings*, 17.6).

Raven (*Corax*) was the initial stage in the seven personae of the initiation in Zoroastrian Mithraism. It represented the sin of incarnation, the soul's thirsty absorp-



tion of water like a sponge or fungus, imprisoning celestial fire in the wetness of matter. The Raven served as cupbearer at the final divine banquet (Vermaseren, *CIMRM*, 1896: Mithraic communion, bas-relief fragment, Konjica Mithraum, Bosnia), and he delivers the initial command to slaughter the cosmic 'bull' for the final liberating sacrament of heavenly bread. Mithraic iconography identifies the so-called bovine flesh as Raven's bread, with the bird seen pecking at bits of the 'bull,' and equates Raven to the symbolism of the Phrygian cap (Vermaseren, *CIMRM*, 1584, altar, banquet of Heliodromus and Sol, Poetovio Mithraeum). The metaphor of bread involves the concept that heaven was something heaved up, expanding with its fungal leavening to create the outer crust of the cosmos (Ruck, Hoffman and González Celdrán 2011). The crossed legs of the two Mithraic torchbearers symbolized the entrapment of matter (a pose that **Perseus** often also assumes in vase paintings), but the cross was also incised on the sacramental loaves of bread, signifying the intersection of the equatorial belt of the zodiac and the solar elliptic, which traced the retrograde precession of the equinoxes caused by a wobble in the Earth's axis, as time moved toward the dawning of a new age every 26,000 years. Mithraic symbolism marked the end of the Age of Taurus as it moved into the Age of the Ram Aries. Astrology had as its basic premise that the worlds above and below were interconnected and reciprocally influenced, which is also the motif exemplified in the divinatory liver.

Twinned Stipe

Medea cut the root of this Promethean plant amid the sound of bellowing and mooing from the earth, and it is described as growing with a double stem (*kaúlos didúmos*), not a branching stem Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 3.856). It is, more exactly, a 'twin' stem. The epithet

of the Dioskouroi was the 'Twins,' *Didúmoi*, and they became the constellation Gemini.



Fig-24: *Amanita muscaria*, dumbbell-shaped, twinned stem.

<http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/wong/BOT135/Lect015.htm>

This encodes a riddle since no plant grows from the earth with a twinned stem, side by side, except the Amanitas. As the subterranean nodule or egg that develops from the mycelium into the fruiting mushroom expands, the stem or stipe/trunk extends in both directions, pushing the base apart from the cap, shattering the eggshell, producing a shape like a dumbbell, easily recognizable when plucked from the ground. It is also the traditional shape of the sacred thunderbolt that inseminated the mushroom at its conception from the heavens, enmeshing celestial fire in the wet matrix of matter. The thunderbolt of Zeus in this dumbbell shape, often with conventional lighting flashes attached and sometimes with wings, is the Greek version of the *vajra* thunderbolt of Indra, and in Buddhism it is symbolic of the thunderbolt experience of *Bodhi* or 'awakening' (Ruck 2016a, 2017b). (Fig-24)

When Medea cut the root, it was like 'newly cut flesh' (*sárx neotméto*s) and the Titan chained to the mountain groaned, as if she were harvesting him. It is further described as like the 'Corycian crocus' (*Korúkios krókos*). This implicates **lycanthropy**. The Corycian cave is Apollo's Wolf Cave on Mount Parnassus (identified by the rock formation resembling a wolf beyond its entrance) above the sanctuary of



Delphi, where Xuthus believes he begot his son Ion, the eponym of the Ionian tribal group, in a bacchanalian revel, whereas Ion is actually his mother's son, conceived as the Queen Kreousa (Medusa) gathered petals of crocus into her lap (vulva), flowers that materialized as her divine inseminator Apollo (Euripides, *Ion*, 881; Ruck 2018c). The Corycian Cave, of which there were several, was named as a 'wallet' or receptacle like the *kibisis* for edible provisions. Ion was of autochthonous lineage, abandoned as an infant. Kreousa wears two drops of Gorgon blood, of opposite efficacy, suspended in vials from her bracelet, and she placed the infant in a basket with tokens of his autochthony: golden serpents and a tapestry she wove depicting the decapitated head of the Medusa. These details make clear that the playwright Euripides conceived of Kreousa as an analogue of the Medusa herself (Ruck, Staples and Heinrich 2001).

Dioskouroi (Dioscuri)

The twin sons of Zeus called *Didúmoi* (Didymi), Gemini, and Dioskouroi hatched from a single egg and wore the half eggshells as their skull caps or pileus, the cap of the mushroom, which as a metaphor obviously implies a little creature below wearing it. In botanical lore, they were associated with this so-called crocus (Pseudo-Dioscorides, 1.26). The Dioskouroi could also be depicted as two aniconic posts, representing the half eggshells of the curved red caps, joined by a crossbeam, as if they were conjoined twins, before their separation. In this configuration, they resembled their cousins, the Moliones, who were similarly hatched from a single egg, but joined at the waist as conjoined twins. They are the mythical prototype of the spherical primordial humans that were sliced in half like an egg in Aristophanes' fanciful tale of the Hermaphrodite in Plato's *Symposium*. The Dioskouroi were

commonly identified as presiding in the Mystery religion of the Great Gods on the island of Samothrace, with its sacrament of mushroom-infused Maronian wine. They were customarily imagined as idealized male adolescents, but there were other analogous and interchangeable versions of these patrons of the Mystery.

As the Corybants, they were still idealized as male youths, the warriors who clashed their shields to obscure with their din the cries of the infant Zeus at his birth in the cave on Crete. This is the myth that signals the birth of Zeus as the replacement for the divine child of Minoan tradition; it is the tale of his rebirth into his new identity, that will replace the Goddess with his family of evolving Olympian deities. Typically, the Corybants were depicted characteristically dancing, with one foot raised, and with their shields uplifted above their heads. It was a pose also used to depict Mithras (Ruck, Hoffman and González Celdrán 2011). In the second century CE, Lucian's burlesque of a traveler's memoirs titled a *True History*, a fantasy account of a trip to the moon, these Corybants with uplifted shield were parodied, among various tribes of fantastic creatures, revealed in their fungal identity as tiny beings, the *Kaulomykétes*, 'Cover-stem Mushrooms' (Ruck and Hoffman 2012: on the caul, which in Latin was called *caput galeatum*, 'helmet-head'). They are a tribe of mushroom warriors, whose cap is employed as the shield above their heads (Lucian, *True History*, 1.16). For weapons, they use stalks of asparagus, a botanical metaphor for their monstrously ithyphallic state. Asparagus is slang for 'penis,' probably suggested by the odor it imparts to urine, as well as its obvious obscene shape. It was reputed to have magical sympathetic efficacy as an aphrodisiac.

Kabeiroi (Cabiri)

These obscene mushroom anthropomorphisms reveal the natures of analo-



gous other creatures of the Mystery, where no attempt was made to idealize them as youths. Among them were the daktyls (dactyls), materialized as 'fingers' as Rhea grasped the earth in birthing Zeus. They obviously were quite small creatures, but the dactylic metaphor implies the obscenity of their ithyphallic 'fingers' (Henderson 1975).

Samothace is a volcanic island, implying the metallurgy of Hephaestus at the alchemical subterranean forge of spiritual transcendence at its molten caldera. The Mystery creatures were also identified as the deity's assistants (Statius, *Thebaid*, 2.265 *et seq.*; Detienne and Vernant 1974). Among these were the Telchines, who were reputedly great wizards (*thélgein* 'enchant'), but with bodies as seals, the equivalent of the selkies of Celtic lore, from Old English *seolh* meaning 'seal' (Spence 1948). They also were thought to have metamorphosed from Actaeon's hounds and thus are involved in the motif of **lycanthropy** (Eustathius on Homer, *Iliad*, 18.535), and certain of their names suggest that they were werewolves. Since the hind limbs of the seal are bound together, causing it to drag its way forward, rocking back and forth, leaving a zigzag trail like a serpent, they appear drunken. The Homeric seal-herder Proteus (designated as the 'first-born') was renowned for his clairvoyance (Homer, *Odyssey*, 412 *et seq.*). His name is responsible for the adjective 'protean' in English, and he could even metamorphose into a plant.

The Cyclopes (the tribal brothers of the Polyphemus whom Odysseus intoxicated with the potent Samothracian wine of Maron) were another grouping, characterized as great lovers of drunkenness, and with a single eye, another metaphoric fungal anthropomorphism. The single eye was also an attribute of the Graeae, who were sisters of the Gorgons. Although Polyphemus was monstrously huge, gigantism has

its complement in miniscule creatures, indicative of the oscillating experience of macro and microscopic vision accessed with the *Amanita muscaria*, as popularized in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), with the key of the door to the fairy world beyond (Theis 2009). The giant Antaeus, whom Heracles defeated, had tiny pygmy brothers (Philostratus, *Imagines*, 2.22), who are the referent for Jonathan Swift's Lilliputians in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) (Marciano 2010; Lutero/Dosso Dosso 1486). In mythopoeia, the alternating gigantism and dwarfism is descriptive of the male erection.

These creatures were all interchangeable with the Kabeiroi, who were of both sexes, but equally obscene, the males with a gross erection, and the females tending the loom, whose 'comb' (*kteis*) that holds the threads apart to admit the oscillating penetration of the shuttlecock, is the female counterpart to the phallus as a sacred replica of the vulva (see skyphos vase, Fig-13, *supra*: a dwarfish, black Circe, abandoning her loom, presents the ithyphallic and black Odysseus, wearing the Phrygian cap, with the potion). The Kabeiroi were depicted as pygmies, no larger than a thumb, the dactylic finger people, popularized as the *Tale of Tom Thumb* (1621) (*The Cornish Thumb Chronicles*, the first collection of fairytales printed in English). The dwarfish African grotesqueries of the Mystery creatures existed in Greek mythical tradition, named as the fingers as of the fist (pugilist), before reports of the actual tribe in Africa, and then the name was applied to them, derived from the *pygmé*, the length of a cubit or forearm. Hephaestus was considered their father by a selkie seal mother or at least their divine ancestor (Strabo, *Geographica*, 10.3.21; Stephanus of Byzantium, *s.v. Kabeiria*), and they inherited their drunken gait from their metallurgist patron, who was maimed, with feet turned backwards (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 925: *amphiguéis*). (Fig-25)



Fig-25: Hephaestus, riding an ass, both his feet turned backwards, Caeretan black-figure hydria, ca. 540 BCE, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. <https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/K7.8.html>

The lameness was metaphoric of the difficulty in ambulation when impeded by the gigantism of the erection (Henderson 1975). Aristophanes staged them as the doubled chorus of obscene males and females in his *Lysistrata* comedy (411 BCE) (Ruck 2017b). The Kabeiroi were explicitly identified as 'crabs' (Hesychius, s.v. *Kabeiroi*), which walk sidewise. Hence, like the folkloric motif of the dwarfs and like figures from the land of the fairy people, they could be expected to display backward feet (De Ciantis 2005).

Hephaestus was traditionally depicted carrying the pincers with which he manipulated the metal in his forge, and the clawed arms of his Kabeiric assistants provided the name for the tool as the 'crab' (*kárkinos*). (Fig-26)



Fig-26: Hephaestus with pincers, Attic red-figure skyphos, ca. 430-420, Toledo Museum, Toledo, OH. <https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/K7.1.html>

The Primordial Plowman

These fungal anthropomorphisms represented the pre-agricultural world, the

wilderness where they are found growing spontaneously, without cultivation and with no discernible seeds, a totally wild growth. Mushrooms belong to neither the animal nor botanical realms, but they represent a unique category (Toporov 1985). The intermediary status of the mushroom's classification is reflected in its abundant occurrences in folkloric tradition, where it functions as the ultimate mediator between oppositional forces and concepts. This dichotomy inevitably suggests the divide between the realms of life and death, and the mushroom lends itself readily to zoomorphism and anthropomorphic materializations as guides or modes of transport across the intervening frontier between realms of existence. Thus, they function like catalysts or henchmen in the service of the volcano's divine blacksmith for the alchemical ennobling of the baser metals of the soul (Plato, *Republic*, 3.414e-415c, the 'noble lie,' *gennaion pseudos*), symbolic of transcendence from primordial man to civilized modes of culture. The smelter's vessel, which was like the maternal womb of creation (Blakely 2006), links agricultural fertility and the warfare of soldiery since the two main products of the metallurgist's forge are the tools for farming and the weapons of war (Eliade 1968).

Another of the creatures of the Mystery was the primordial plowman. In Etruscan tradition, he was customarily linked with the aged tiny oxymoronic child named Tages (Grummond 2006), who popped up in front of the primordial farmer's plowshare and taught him the art of divination by the markings on the liver (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.553-559). The plowman and the dwarfish creature who sprouts from the land in front of him not yet furrowed by the blade are complementary aspects of the same entity. Tages was either autochthonous or the child of the personified creative spirit called Genius (Festus, *De verborum significatu*, 359.14),



who was usually depicted with the wings characteristic of the Celtic fairies (red-figure oinochoë, ca. 320 BCE, from Magna Graecia, British Museum, London: winged Genius facing a woman with a tambourine and mirror). Tages inspired the norms of civilization and its ritual procedures, linking them to the realm of nature and the cosmos.

An early-third-century BCE small bronze figure of a child, presented as an antique treasure to Pope Clement XIV in 1771, is thought to represent Tages. It depicts him as an infant, seated on the ground, one thigh horizontal, the other with knee raised, exposing his penis, and with his head incongruously as a wise old man turned upward toward the heavens. He has a pouch or *bulla* suspended as a locket around his neck, of the sort that Roman male children customarily wore as a protective amulet, usually containing phallic symbols, until the age of visible puberty and then stored as a memento of the moment of access to male sexuality and brought out for display at special adult honorary occasions. (Fig-27)

Thus, the idealized identity of Tages is nevertheless essentially ithyphallic, like the Kabeiroi. Virgil in the *Aeneid* developed an ancient arcane tradition that the Etruscans were really Trojans, descended from Dardanus, who was cited as one of the founders of the Mystery of the Kabeiroi. Although the Penates of historical times were depicted as idealized young males, they were always figurines, not life-sized statues, miniature males, and the supposed antique originals that Aeneas carried out of Troy and which were stored, probably as a pious forgery, in a temple in the Roman suburbs on the Tiber once in former times resembled the obscene grotesqueries of the Mystery. As guardians of the household, they fulfil the same role as the Dioskouroi at Sparta, alternating on successive days between the life and death

that they vowed to share together as loving brothers.

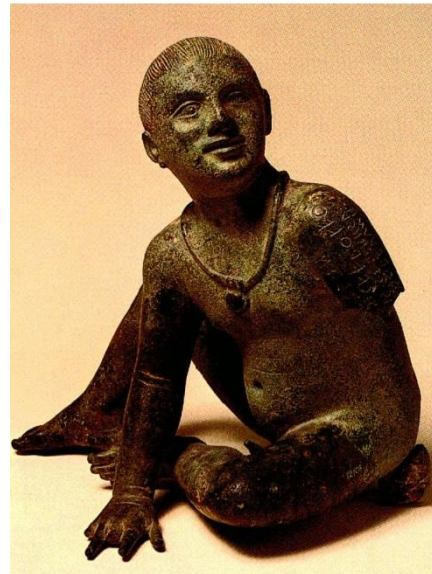


Fig-27: Tages, Etruscan bronze, Vatican museum.
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/229402174740000272/?lp=true>

Murder in the Fallows

At Samothrace and elsewhere that similar Mystery rites were celebrated, the primordial plowman had the name of Iasion or Iasos or Iasus (a doublet of **Medea's** Iason/Jason). He coupled sexually with **Demeter** in the plow field, and was killed by a thunderbolt from Zeus. It was claimed by male chauvinist sources that it was an outrageous indignant assault upon her chastity (Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, frag. 102, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1359, frag. 2), but actually she appears to have been quite willing (Pseudo-Hyginus, *Astronomica*, 2.22; *Fabulae*, 270); and Calypso in the *Odyssey*, when she is forced to relinquish her beloved hero, cites the affair of **Demeter** and Iasion as an example of how the gods always begrudge the female deities the enjoyment of their lovers (Homer, *Odyssey*, 5.125-129). There was also a tradition that Iasion never did lay sexual hands upon **Demeter** and that it was all a misunderstanding of his having merely received the rites of the Mystery from the goddess and her daughter Kore/Persephone (Eustathius,



on *Odyssey*, 5.125); **Demeter** merely taught him the art of agriculture. There was even a tradition that the lightning bolt, in fact, never did destroy Iasion, but they journeyed together forever, goddess and lover, teaching how to 'plow the field.' **Demeter**/Ceres in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, complains about him growing old with gray hair (Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, 9.422-423). Compare the tradition that Zeus killed Anchises like Iasion with a thunderbolt for having told over wine that he slept with Aphrodite (Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 94). He similarly appears to have obviously survived (Vergil, *Aeneid*).

The Prick Stick Plow

Iasion was a brother of Dardanus, and the two are cited as the original Kabeiroi (Servius, on Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.167; 7.207; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 1.917, with scholia), and hence they must have been characteristically ithyphallic and quite sexually attractive to the goddesses. Aeneas was similarly paired with a brother, Lyrus, about whom little is known except that he died childless; surprisingly little and various is known also about the death of Aeneas.

The ceremonial plow was probably phallic in its shape or ornamentation. It was certainly that in its symbolism. The penetration of the ground with a sharpened object, originally just a pointed stick of wood pulled or pushed along by the plowman, replaced by the metallurgist's improved implement, is suggestive of primordial copulation, and it was the custom to make the bridal bed in the plow field for the consummation of the marriage, still commemorated in the baking of the 'wheaten' wedding cake, ornamented with the marriage couple in the flowering bower. The 'plow' (*árotos*) was the penis and so recognized in the legal wording of the formal marriage contract in Athens for the 'plowing of legitimate children' (Martin

1996).

The sexuality of plowing is fully developed in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* (*Trachinae*). Heracles' wife Deianeira describes herself as a field on the far margin of a farmer's estate that he visits rarely, only to plow her and then reap the crop. She later admonishes the chorus of maidens for their sexual inexperience: they are a field that has never yet felt the impregnating fall of rain or the heat of the sun (Sophocles, *Trachiniai*, 31-33; 142 *et seq.*). In Egyptian, the glyph for the phallus represents the hoe or the plow. In contemporary slang, 'to plow her field' is an obscenity, and ancient comedy developed the theme of the husband with an erection who needs to strip and work the land. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Creon tells Ismene that his son Haemon doesn't need his intended bride, but has other fields to plow (Sophocles, *Antigone*, 569). The obscene f-word in English has a plausible etymology that traces it back to Germanic *Pflug* for 'plow.' An antique vase discovered in an archaeological excavation near Florence, Italy, depicts a row of six males with erections carrying a plow (Jung 1916; Dieterich 1905).

Giving Back to the Land

The death of the plowman Iasion represents the offering of a sacrificial victim in recompense for the sequestering of the cultivated land apart from its primordial primitivism. The plowman or his equivalent as the primordial plant are the expectedly suitable victim. It may even have been Iasion's brother Dardanus who murdered his fellow Kabeiros (Servius, on Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.167), like the motif of the shared antithetical destinies of the Dioskouroi twins.

The locale of **Demeter's** sexual escapade with Iasion was variously cited, because it was a ritual event that was ubiquitous in its enactment, but some knew that it was as far off as Minoan Crete. Another



name or epithet for Iasion on Crete was Karmanor (Pausanias, 2.30; Diodorus Siculus, 5.76.3), named for the 'cut-harvest' (*keír-ein*, 'cut'). The *trípolos* field where the goddess united with Iasion has been variously explained as a reference to three annual plowings in Greek agriculture, or a field thrice plowed and harrowed but left fallow without seed to increase its fertility. It probably, however, indicates a ritual, documented worldwide, where the priest, chieftain, or sovereign marks a sacred field with three symbolic initial furrows as an act of dedication, often adjacent to a temple, altar, or shrine (Armstrong 1943). The triple furrows would symbolically implicate the traditional triple manifestations of the goddess, unified in the tripled personae of Hekate. Such a symbolic holy field at Athens lay beside the so-called 'bull-tender' (*boukoleíon*) Temple (Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 3.5) where the titular queen of the city united each year with the 'bellowing' manifestation of the god **Dionysus** as an event in the celebration of the February Anthesteria Festival (Pseudo-Demosthenes, *Against Neaera* (59), 74; Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 3.5; Farnell 1907). A similar altar was in the Rarian plain of Eleusis, where **Demeter** first taught humankind the art of agriculture and the Great Mystery, which involved the mediation between wild toxicity and the cultivated grain crop. She taught this Mystery to the prince Triptolemos, whose name is plausibly derived from the *trípolos* field (Scholiast, probably Agallis of Kerkyra, a female grammarian, perhaps a *hetaera*, second century BCE, on *Iliad*, 18.483), with a likely implication of trinity and warriorhood as the 'triple-warrior' (*ptólemos*, 'war'), hinting at his involvement with Hekate as the Mystery Child born of the triple manifested goddess (Ruck 1978).

The name Ptolemaeus/Ptolemaios was common, indicating a 'son of War' or 'warlike.' The Macedonian Greek rulers of

Egypt bore the name Anglicized as Ptolemy. *Ptólemos* is a Homeric form of *pólemos*, 'war.' A Ptolemy is listed as an ancestral king of Greek Thebes in the twelfth century BCE. (Fig-28)



Fig-28: Triptolemos, Attic red-figure stamnos, ca. 470-460 BCE, Getty Museum, Malibu, CA.

<https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/O28.2.html>

Like Iasion, Triptolemos may have been murdered, although he also survived to journey with the goddess on the proselytizing mission to be sacrificed again and again as the annual commemorative offering in the persona of the sacrificial pig slaughtered as victim to appease the spirits of the plow field drafted into service for cultivation. At Eleusis, an analogue of Triptolemos as sacrificial offering was his princely brother Demophoön, the child that **Demeter** burned nightly in the hearth to remove his mortality, until she was forced to abandon the effort by his uncomprehending mother and sisters and relinquish his destiny to that of a hero fated to die (Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (2), 231 *et seq.*). Demophoön has a name that means the 'victim offered for the populace' (Pache, 2004). Another analogue of Triptolemos was Eubouleus, the swineherd who witnessed Hades' abduction of Persephone and was swallowed with her along with his pigs down the so-called 'chasm' that opened to the netherworld. In commemoration of him, the pig became the symbolic victim offered by each initiate in substitution for the primordial plowman and his princely analogues or Kabeiric brethren.



Stinking Piglets

The choice of the pig as victim is significant. Not only was it sacred to **Demeter**, but more importantly, the 'piglet' was common slang for the female pudendum (Henderson 1975), well recognized as such, as enacted in the obscene routine in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (425 BCE), where the impoverished Megarian farmer tries to sell his daughters' young pubis as pigs hidden in a sack (Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 729-817). In Semonides' abusive misogynist critique of females (seventh century BCE), the first animal to which he likens a woman is the dirty sow lying in excrement (Semonides of Amorgos, frag. 7). The genesis of the obscene metaphor is the pheromone of the pig, which is interchangeable with the human pheromone, since the boar is attracted to the scent of a woman in estrus. This is apparently the reason for the pig attributes of the fearsome, snake-infested Gorgon Medusa, who has porcine tusks, nose, and ears. The pigs are another animal notoriously fond of mushrooms, for which they are employed in scenting out truffles. It was said that Triptolemos invented the Thesmophoria festival, in which women sequestered themselves from men and bivouacked together with prostitutes, conversing upon obscenities to rekindle their sexual fires. The festival was celebrated at the end of the dry hot summer months, when the rains would soon return, making the earth again suitable to receive the seeds for the grain crop that would grow through the winter months (Ruck 2017b).

Part of the secret rite involved the sacrifice of piglets that were tossed into chasms (*mégara*, 'chambers') beneath the Acropolis, infested with serpents. The 'pit' (*báraithron*, specifically, the cleft in the Acropolis rock into which criminals were tossed to their death.) was an obscene term for the vagina (Aristophanes, frag. 332 KA; *Plutus*, 431; Henderson 1975), and the chasms/chambers of the Thesmophoria rite

had the same symbolism (Brumfield 1996). Subsequently, chosen women descended into the terrifying serpent-infested chasm, offering obscene dough figurines of the male genitalia as food for the serpents and retrieving the piglet remains. There is no doubt that these remains, whether from the present offerings or from the previous year, were 'rotten' (*sapénta*) and obviously noisome, with connotations of the menses, since the designated retrievers are called 'bailers' (*antlétriai*), which is a verb that describes the 'bailing' of a foul-smelling liquid like bilge-water or vaginal discharges. The etiology for the Thesmophorian sequestration was the notorious Lemnian stench, the overpowering stench of the female pheromone as a curse from Aphrodite (Ruck 1917b).

The stinking, rotten sludge of pig-flesh was then either spread upon the sacred inaugural plow land or more probably simply placed on its altar as a symbol or magical charm of agricultural fertility. Filth and decay were associated with fertility and wealth, as in the phrase 'filthy rich' (Edwards 1991). The Byzantine scholar's note on Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* explains that the rite assured the generation, not only of the crops, but the procreation of humankind. The 'ordinance' (*thesmós*) that is enacted by the Thesmophoria is the ratification of the principle that men must labor to extract food from the earth, applied to the labor of sexual concourse. Although Triptolemos is always imagined as an idealized youth, no doubt he also belongs to the motif of grotesque ithyphallic obscenity. (Fig-29)

Eubouleus was a deity at Eleusis, also depicted as a handsome idealized youth. He was interchangeable with Plutos, the personification of 'Wealth' as the netherworld deity Hades or Plouton, His name means the 'good plan or the grand design.'



Fig 29: Triptolemos, Attic red-figure stamnos, ca. 470-460 BCE, Getty Museum, Malibu, CA.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NAMA_2650_Eubouleus.JPG

It was so announced as the conspiracy of Earth, Zeus, and Hades for the abduction of Persephone (Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (2), 9: *boul-eísi*). Eubouleus personified the significance of the Mystery, which was the stabilizing of the evolving world of civilization by incorporating a Covenant with Gaia and the realm of death. An analogue of him was Euboulos, the son that **Demeter** bore to the 'cut-harvest' Karmanor. The suffix *-eus* designates the 'agent'; whereas *-os* is adjectival. Euboulos is plausibly named for the good 'clod of earth' (*bólos*) 'turned over by the plow' (*bolostrophé-ein*), probably an autochthonous creature like Tages.

The Founding of Civilization

Demeter's sexual indiscretion with the plowman Iasion occurred at the marriage feast of Cadmus (Kadmos) and Harmonia. Like the indiscretion, this event also had several locales since it was symbolically ubiquitous, but its two precise citations are the founding of the Mystery on the island of Samothrace (Stephanus Byzantius, *Ethnica*, s.v. Dardanus) and the founding of the Greek city of Thebes (Ovid, *Metamor-*

phoses, 3.1.137, 4.563-603) in the Boeotian plain east of Apollo's Delphic sanctuary on Mount Parnassus. One of the Samothracian deities was Kadmilus/Kasmilos (a Kabeiros and father of the Kabeiroi by a Kabeiric wife: Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 1.917, scholia; Strabo, 10.3.19), which derives from *camillus*, an old Latin word assimilated from Etruscan to designate a boy-attendant or acolyte in a cult ritual. He is the same little version, also known simply as the 'boy' (*País*) among the Mystery deities, who is linked with the primordial plowman as the equivalent representative of the primordial crop and the acolyte as the sacrificial offering. *Kádmos* is a Cretan word for 'spear' (*dóru*) and 'shield' (*áspis*) and 'helmet' (*lóphos*) (Hesychius, s.v. *kádmos*) which implies that he was a Corybant and a Kabeiric version of the Kaulomycetes mushroom warriors.

In the myth of Cadmus, he plowed the field and sowed the toxic fangs of the guardian serpent as seeds, from which sprouted the crop of autochthonous men at the future city's site. It was a so-called mooing 'cow' (perhaps his sister) that selected the site. These 'Spartoi' ('Sownmen') he tricked into internecine fraternal battle, until only a fistful of five little dactyl grotesqueries remained, with whom he linked his lineage from the marriage with Harmonia, named as 'harmony' and the daughter of Love and War in the divine personae of Aphrodite and Ares. The internecine strife that selected or culled the surviving autochthons represents the 'thinning' of the seedlings, an essential act of agriculture, contrary to wild growths, and the murder of the others weeded out was blamed upon their brothers, like the motif of the Kabeiric Dardanus and Iasion and that of the Dioskouroi alternating between death and immortality.

This sowing of the 'toxic' (*iobóloi*: Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, 4.426) fangs was also the task required of Jason (Iason) to win the



Golden Fleece. The adjective *iobólōi* is interchangeable as meaning 'shooting arrows' or 'poisons,' and it was the generic classification for 'venomous animals.' Ovid called them 'seeds tinctured with venom (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7.123) and 'envenomed teeth instead of seeds' (Ovid, *Heroides*, 12.95). Jason's bag of seeds was the other half of the same serpent's teeth, left over from the sowing by Cadmus (Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 3.1179). In the case of Jason, it wasn't the sown-men who sprouted, but bellowing brazen bulls, although the tale was also rationalized making the bulls into men, mercenaries hired from Crimean Taurus ('Bull'), one of them named Serpent (Diodorus Siculus, 4.47.3).

From Bull to Barley

Edible plants were considered selectively hybridized improved evolutions of wild toxic antecedents. In the case of grain, whose most civilized exemplar was the barley (*Hordeum vulgare*, Greek *krithé*), its full sheaf of kernels or spikelets contrasted with its most primitive ancestor spelt, which originally produced 'two' (hence cognate with 'split') or even more primitively just a 'single kernel', called *Einkorn* in German (*Triticum monococcum*), what the Greeks called *zeia*, wild goat grass (*Aegilops tauschii*) (Watkins 1973), known in the bible as emmer wheat. Selective hybridizing has improved upon the evolution to produce Mayan maize in the New World and modern American corn. If allowed to seed itself, the full cob of seedlings would crowd each other, impeding growth and reversing the process.

Weeds invading the field of cultivated grain also threaten the crop and represent an incursion of primitivism. A common grassy weed in the grain crop is darnel, tares, *Lolium temulentum*, whose specific nomenclature in Latin designates it as 'drunken' *lolium*, because it always is infested with the fungal parasite of ergot

(*Claviceps purpurea*). In antiquity darnel was recognized as causing altered eyesight or hallucinations, and cheap and obviously poisonous bread was made from it (Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 315-323; Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.691):

—No wonder that you see things that aren't there.] Obviously, you've been eating cheap *lolium* bread as your diet.

—May our fields be free of eyesight corrupting darnel.

Bovines that graze on it become drunken, swoon, in 'cow-staggers,' or sicken and die. (Fig-30)

These effects are due entirely to the ergot **toxins** since darnel, itself, is completely devoid of toxicity (Hofmann 1978; Katz 1949). LSA (lysergic acid amide, a natural substance like LSD) is extractable from the ergot parasite by hydrolysis in an alkaline (base) aqueous environment from the complex of multiple potentially lethal **toxins**.

Hydrolysis is not solution in water but the addition of a molecule of H₂O to a substance. The result is identical with the main psychoactive chemical found naturally in Mexican morning glory seeds (*Turbina/Rivea corymbosa*), employed in indigenous Mesoamerican shamanism as the sacrament called *ololiuqui* (Webster, Perrine and Ruck 2000; Webster and Ruck 2006). The psychoactive agent from ergotamine (one of the variable two hundred or so alkaloids in ergot) is an oscillating stasis of ergine and its mirrored isoergine.

Albert Hofmann originally had proposed ergonovine as the only ergot alkaloid that is soluble in water, but ergonovine demonstrates little psychoactive potential. Ergotamine is a vasodilator marketed as a treatment for migraine. The aqueous alkaline environment could be easily achieved by the addition of bone ash to the water.



Fig-30: *Lolium temulentum*.

https://war.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lolium_temulentum#/media/File:Lolium_temulentum_%E2%80%94_Flora_Batava_%E2%80%94_Volume_v11.jpg



Fig-31: Ergot, *Claviceps purpurea*.

[Atrium, University of Guelph]:
<https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/handle/10214/5725>

The ashes would have been supplied from the burnt bone remains of the pig victims offered in sacrifice, thus symbolically enlisting the primordial plowman in the evolutionary process that yielded the visionary sacrament, mediating between the primitivism and cultivation. Euripides enlists the tradition of human victims at Eleusis in his *Suppliants* tragedy (423 BCE) in the voluntary immolation of the wife Euadne.

The ergot is named from the Old French *argot* for its resemblance to the 'cock's spur' or cockle, which is also used as a metaphor for the extremity of a dead branch. They thus resemble the talons of the Harpies that defiled the food of the prophet Phineas with their 'barbed hands' (*uncaequae manus*) (Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.217). (Fig-31)

In folkloric tradition, the metaphor of **lycanthropy** describes the madness that it accesses. The demonic grain (*Roggen*, 'rye') mother was thought to pass like a wind rustling through the field with her pack of rye wolves (*Roggenwulf*, *Roggenhund*) infecting the sheaves with ergot or *Tolkorn* ('mad corn/kernels') (Hofmann 1978).

Children, seduced by the goblin creatures into the fields, nurse on the kernels like the iron teats of the *Roggenmutter* and are rendered maddened. The enlarged ergot infected kernels are called 'wolf teeth' (*Wulfzahn*). The enlarged red ergot-infested 'wolf-teeth' protruding from the spikes resemble the red kernels of spelt, as if the infection from the invasive weedy grass were reversing the hybridizing of the barley. Ergot's red color is described with the metaphor of 'rust,' as in antiquity (Latin *robigo*, Greek *erysībe*) which implies metallurgy and the corrupting degeneration of the iron back to the primitive ore. A red dog (fox/wolf) was offered as sacrificial victim to ward off infestations of ergot. Thus, the rust from the knife employed in the sacrificial rite was cited as a medicinal cure for penile dysfunction (ED) and emblematic of the transition from the offering of human victims to animal surrogates (Pseudo-Apollodorus, 1.9.12: Melampus and Iphyclyus).

The symbolism of the tauroctony of Mithras encodes the transition from the bellowing bull to barley by depicting the tail of the bull slaughtered with the pruning hook as sprouting with a sheaf of fruit-



ing grain (Neuenheim Mithraeum, Tauroctony, Vermaseren *CIMRM* 1083). The spilled blood may also turn into a sheaf of barley, or into a bunch of grapes, indicating that the bull blood is apparently an intoxicant (Clauss 1990). Mithras is sometimes depicted harvesting a field of grain, and In the seven stages of initiation, the fifth Perses grade was awarded the emblem of the barbed pruning hook (with which **Perseus** harvested the mooring Medusa head) and the scythe.

In Egyptian iconography, a similar code adds the motif of **lycanthropy**. An unidentifiable canine known as the *sha* animal represented the forces of primitivism, functioning as an apotropaic emblem for the passage of the solar boat, repelling the engulfing darkness of the serpent of Chaos. The *sha* canine was characterized by its long erect ears and stiffly bifurcated tail. It was stylized as the *was*-scepter, comprised of a tilted canine's head with eyes, pointed vulpine snout, and long back-thrust ears, as the finial for the standard, which terminated at the bottom with the stylized bifurcation. The tail resembles the primitive spelt grain, analogous to two split kernels of ergot. The erect ears, moreover, represent the folkloric name for ergot as 'asses' ears' and the fox snout suggests the tradition of King Midas who tried to hide them beneath his Phrygian cap (Ruck, Hoffman and González Celdrán 2011). (Fig-32)

Mushroom Seeds

The grains are characterized by nothing so much as their seeds; the mushrooms, in contrast, by the complete lack of the same.

Mushrooms are propagated by microscopic spores, invisible to the naked eye and unknown in antiquity. The ergot is really a mushroom, like its analogues among the higher fungi, like the *Amanita muscaria*, for which it appears to function as a symbolic substitute, mediating the wild



Fig-32: Egyptian shu beast, was scepter.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Was_Sceptre.png

mushroom with the cultivated grain crop upon which it is parasitic, and mediating as well between its deadly **toxins** and its visionary component. Tomb-markers in the shape of mushrooms occur throughout the ancient Greco-Roman world from all periods (Kurtz and Boardman 1971), and the design can be linked to prehistoric sanctuaries in ancient Thrace marked by megalithic stone monuments, often showing signs of additional carving to improve the resemblance to fungi (Markov 2017).

The mycelium of the ergot completely permeates the host seed kernel, but it is clearly visible to the naked eye as a fungus when the sclerotia or dried and hardened mycelium mass under suitable conditions fruits into a cluster of tiny red mushrooms, discernible to the naked eye, thus appearing to have been the magical seed for the otherwise seedless and thus totally wild mushroom. In themselves, the ergots are a deadly poison, and hence a tabooed food, like the folkloric prohibition upon the sacred mushroom, reinforced by the deadly species among the *Amanitas* ('death cap' *A. phalloides*, and 'destroying angel' *A. bisporigera*, *A. virosa*), which resemble edible species (*A. caesaria*, *Volvariella*



volvacea). Without the requisite pharmaceutical science for accessing their potential, the visions and the ecstasy that the ergots induce are the prelude to death. (Fig-33)

Ergot infested breads have been documented to produce mass hysteria, with those afflicted suffering a red itching rash and gangrenous edema with loss of the infected limbs (Saint Anthony's fire), spasmodic twitching convulsions (Saint Vitus dance), hallucinations, mania, and death. Although ancient herbal lore knew procedures for extracting and isolating the visionary components from the toxic complex, it is also probable that occasional ingestion could access the visionary and other pharmaceutical properties without incurring the severe symptoms of deadly ergot poisoning caused by a continued dietary regime. The ergots were employed medically in antiquity to induce uterine contraction and to treat postpartum bleeding, linking it to the special pharmaceutical expertise of midwives and the mysteries of birthing, over which Hekate presided as goddess (Schiff 2006).

Fermentation of the Earth

For the Greeks, the cultivated foodstuffs were typologically divided into the dry and the wet (Euripides, *Bacchae*, 273-280), of which the harvest of the grain of **Demeter** and the fermentation of the wine of **Dionysus** were both prototypic transmutations from primitive antecedents.

Although yeasts are microscopic, the process of fermentation was correctly recognized in antiquity as a fungal growth, since mushrooms themselves were called a 'fermentation of earth' (*zúoma*) (Nicander, *Alexipharmaca*, 521).

A similar yeasting growth yielded the leavening (*zúme*) for bread. Both words are related to the concept of 'seething, bubbling' (*zé-ein*), which implies 'boiling,' a culinary technique like beneficial putrefaction (Lévi-Strauss 1964).



Fig-33: Ergot, *Claviceps purpurea*, fruiting stage.

<http://misidentifyingfungi.blogspot.com/2018/08/desperate-times.html>

Corresponding to the evolution of barley from spelt and the mediating role of ergot were the naturally toxic and psychoactive trailing and cluster-fruiting vines like ivy (*kíssos*), bindweed or wild morning glory (*smilax*), and wild squirting cucumber (*bryony*), which were thought to be the ancestors of the grapevine (*ámpelos*), innocuous itself and with edible leaves, but upon whose fruit the manufactured intoxicant of the wine was grown through fermentation. These wild antecedents of the grapevine were the prototypic plants honored in the bacchanalian revels in the mountainous wilderness, which were a symbolic enactment of gathering them into the thyrsus/narthex wand. It was customarily depicted stuffed with wild ivy, sometimes replaced with a pinecone, indicating that the wand stuffed with its psychoactive specimens signified transcendent vision. The pineal gland is named for its resemblance to the pinecone, and it was thought in antiquity to be the third mystical eye, the gateway of the soul for shamanic flight (Galen, *De usu partium*, 8.14).

Since the thyrsus wand is fundamentally phallic in symbolism, the pinecone as its finial also suggests the resemblance of the blood-suffused aroused glans penis to a pinecone, with its connotation of the tree that is the most common host for the red *Amanita muscaria*. The *glans* is so named as the 'nut' of a forest tree, often the



acorn. The metaphor is universal, the *bálanos* in Greek, which provides an opportunity for obscene punning upon 'bolt' (*baleín*) (Henderson 1975).

The 'bolt' or 'key' in antiquity was a short rod with a knob for inserting into the keyhole, providing a name for the mushroom as the 'bolt-plant,' the key to the kingdom (Allegro 1970). Unlocking a door suggested phallic insertion. In Celtic lore, the 'nut' becomes the nut of the fairy hazelnut tree, which feeds the sacred salmon in the pool below with knowledge (Ruck and Hoffman 2012). Fionn Mac Cumhail (a hunter-warrior of the *Fenian Cycle*), who absorbed the knowledge of the salmon, never died; he merely sleeps. His childhood name means 'stag.'

The hazelnut tree is anthropomorphized in the columns of the Caryatids porch on the Erechtheum Temple on the Athenian Acropolis. In Egyptian papyrus paintings, the dead enter the hall of judgment in the otherworld with a pinecone atop their heads (Budge 1895). Pope Boniface VIII in 1302 commissioned a golden crown in the shape of the pinecone to celebrate his dominion over the entire planet with the papal bull *Unam Sanctam*.

In the metaphors of for the herbalist ritual, the bacchants were said to have even harvested and rendered 'bulls' with their bare hands, which can only be understandable as metaphorically referring to the bellowing or mooing botanical zoomorphism. Like the murder of the primordial plowman, they also harvested the head of the plant's anthropomorphism as sacrificial victim, personifying the primordial wilderness, as mythologized in the death of Pentheus, whose decapitated head was placed atop the thyrsus, amid the ivy leaves (Euripides, *Bacchae*, 1165-1172).

Krasi, the Mix

The ethanol produced by the activity of the yeasts upon the sugars of the juice

eventually results in an alcoholic concentration that renders the juice too toxic for further growth of the yeasts. This occurs around a concentration of 12 to 14 percent ethanol. Wine in antiquity, however, was customarily drunk diluted with three or four-parts water, producing a drink roughly equivalent to a weak beer of approximately 3% ethanol. The tradition continues in the Modern Greek folk wine called *retsina* for the psychoactive pine resin tropanes added for its flavoring and to retard the spoilage of the wine by oxidation into vinegar ('sour wine'). The Demotic term for 'wine' is not the ancient [*w*]oínos, but *krasi* as the 'mix.' Distillation to concentrate and extract ethanol to produce stronger drinks was not known in antiquity. Instead various other intoxicants were added to the wine to fortify its potency, a fact that has now been confirmed by the discovery of an intact wine cellar from Canaan, dated to the beginning of the second millennium BCE (Ritter 2013). These included even deadly **toxins** like hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), in sub-lethal dosages (Hillman 2008). Nicander (*Aexipharmaca*, 186-194) describes people wandering the streets of Alexandria high on hemlock, obviously all not escapes from public executions.

The wine mix itself was symbolic of the integration of the wild precedents of viticulture into the sophisticated potion, which thus mediated between the primordial world and culture. There was no better exemplar of viticulture's antecedents than the wild mushroom itself, as in the extraordinarily potent wine of Maron, marketed as provenance of the Mystery of the Kabeiric grotesqueries and their brethren and sisters.

The Grotesque Dwarf Who Served the Potion

For only one of the great Mysteries of antiquity is the exact formula for the



drink recorded. At Eleusis, the ingredients were barley groats (*alphí*), water and fleabane (*gléchon*) (Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (2), 208-209). This is not a beer, since groats are specified, and barley will not ferment unless it is mashed to convert its starches into sugar. Moreover, no time is provided for it to ferment. The potion was called the *kykeón*, since it was simply 'stirred' in a circular manner, cognate with 'circle,' and drunk immediately. It was a generic term for other mixtures stirred, like porridges, which bore no other similarity to the sacred potion. The fleabane is an insecticide, suggesting the symbolism of fly-kill, although its toxicity would not be accessible in the miniscule amount of the *kykeón*. Its presence was symbolic. *Bléchon* (*gléchon*) is onomatopoeic for the 'bleating' of sheep (*blech-ázein*), hence suggesting a bovine zoomorphism: *Caprinae* are a subfamily of the *Bovidae*. Obviously, bleating is analogous to mooing, which again suggests that it represents the motif of the wild mushroom associated with flies, since a flea is an insect on an animal. Fly and flea are interchangeable in folkloric tradition (Wasson and Wasson 1957).

Unlike ergot, which is efficacious in birthing, fleabane additionally is an abortifacient, hence representing death rather than life. Fleabane, moreover is a mint and has passed into botanical nomenclature with unwarranted connotations of royalty inherited from its presence in the Mystery potion. It is called *Mentha pulegium*, where the specific name is an adjectival form of *pulex*, the Latin for 'flea.' In English, it is commonly called 'pennyroyal,' where 'penny' is a corruption of *pulegium*, but 'royal' derives from Old French *pouliol royale*. In mythical tradition, Menthe was a nymph in a river of the netherworld (a mermaid, like the Gorgon Medusa and the fountain maid Melusina and the nymph of Scythia), perfumed with her fragrant overmastering whorish scent, and the ab-

ducted concubine of Hades, a union not sanctified as marriage, destined to produce a bastard and preferably aborted child. *Bléchon* was an obscene metaphor for the female's pubic hair (Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 89). Drinking a *kykeon* of *bléchon* (Aristophanes, *Peace*, 712) mean 'have sex,' with an obscene reference to the Eleusinian Mystery as restoring agricultural fertility (Henderson 1975). **Demeter** turned Menthe into the fleabane mint and ground her with a pestle and mortar (Strabo, 8.3.14). The fragrant poultice was used at funerals to offset the stench of decay, and perfumes in general signified the arts of the prostitute, masking her corruption.

The creature who served the potion to **Demeter** was a grotesque 'clever and jesting' obscenity, an 'autochthon' (*gegeineis*) who went by the name of Iambe (Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (2), 202), a personification of the 'iambic' rhythm originally used for scurrilous verse and dance (Ruck 2019). The name is also another calque upon the whole series of names punning upon the *io/a-* root for the homonymous *iós* for 'drug' and 'arrow' **toxin**. Numerous figurines present her revealing her vulva, and she is a version of the worldwide figure of the squatting goddess caught in the moment of parturition (Orphic *Hymns*, frag. 52), offering a view through her gateway to a world beyond, like the Celtic Sheila-na-gig, an old woman with withered breasts and spindly ribcage. Iambe was caught just as her son Iakkchos (Iacchus) was about to emerge. Iakkchos is a calque upon the *io/a-* root and upon Bacchus, and he is a personification of the joyous shout (*Iá Iá*) (*íá-ein*, to 'shout') of the initiates as they returned from the otherworld. He represents the chthonic **Dionysus**, who is interchangeable with Hades, and another analogue of the Eleusinian princes, the primordial plowman. (Fig-34)

She was also called Baubo (Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation*, 2.20.1-3), which



reveals the nature of her obscenity, since she is the personification of the *baubón* (Herodas, *Mimes*, 6.19) or dildo, more commonly called *ólisthos* or 'slipper.' *Baubá-ein* is obscene for 'copulate.' Baubo is hermaphroditic (Delcourt 1956; Devereux 1983), which is implicit in her birthing her phallic son. Figurines depict this version of her with legs joined together as a single support, as a Monopod ('one-foot') and sometimes holding a lyre for the music to accompany her scurrilous dance. One version shows her with lyre squatting, revealing her vulva and riding upon a pig (ca. 100 BCE, Antikensammlung, Berlin). The plucked strings of the lyre have the same obscene reference as the 'comb' of the loom (Henderson 1975). *Kteis* is an augmented form of the verb 'to comb' *pék-ein*. Latin *pecten* 'comb' can designate the vulva. English 'plectrum' for the quill that plucks the strings is obscene for 'penis' (Adams 1989).

Baubo also is a word for the 'belly' (Empedocles, frag., 153). Figurines show her with her face displaced to her belly, above which she wears her (pubic) hair tied into a top knot. In this version, she is a 'Tongue-in-Belly' (*Englottogástor*). The 'tongue' is obscene referring either to the clitoris in the vagina or 'tongue case' (*glossokomeíon*) or cunnilingus (Henderson 1975).

The Necromancy of Socrates

Aristophanes parodied Socrates in the *Birds* comedy (414 BCE) as performing a rite of necromancy in the cemetery of the *Kerameikos* just outside the western gate of the city of Athens, summoning the 'Tongue-in-Bellies' as an act of profanation of the Mysteries of Eleusis.

In fact, the cemetery was located at the beginning of the Sacred Road that the initiates would follow through the Holy Swamp on route to Eleusis for the Mystery (Ruck 1981).



Fig-34: Baubo, terracotta figurine, from Priene, Anatolia.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Terracotta_Baubo_figurine.jpg

The Swamp appears again in the *Frogs* comedy (405 BCE), where Aristophanes staged the deity **Dionysus** meeting a chorus of initiates as they crossed the Swamp. In this Swamp was also the very ancient Temple of **Dionysus**, that was opened just once a year for the Lesser Mystery, a secret ritual that commemorated the abduction of Persephone. This was the 'bull-tender' residence where the Queen enacted her shamanic union with the 'bellying' mushroom version of the deity in his primordial identity that predated viticulture. It was for this reason that **Demeter**, in dictating the recipe for the *kykeón*, had specified it as a substitution for a cup of red wine. (Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (2), 206-208). The Greater Mystery celebrated the evolution of culture, supplanting the primordial commemoration of the Lesser Mystery.

Aristophanes presents Socrates as profaning the Mystery, a reference to the recent scandal of the Mutilation of the Hermes, in which it was uncovered that many prominent Athenians were abusing the Eleusinian *kykeón* as a recreational drug in their private drinking parties. Socrates is parodied as summoning a group of the dwarfish grotesqueries, which obviously



were identifiable to the Athenian audience as personifications of the sacramental mushroom. Along with the 'Tongue-in-Bellies' appear the Monopods, both being versions of Iambe/Baubo. The Monopods are presented as 'Shade-Foots' (*Skiápodēs*), little creatures with only a single broad foot, who jump vigorously about on their sturdy leg, and then when they tire, they fall upon their backs and rest in the shade of their single wide foot like a parasol. The sunshade is a common metaphor for a mushroom. It appears to have been the Sanskrit word for 'mushroom' as late as the fifth century BCE as 'cover,' applied to the honorific sunshade after the migration from the northern homeland, where it obviously was not a required implement. It survives as the name of a mushroom marketed in the stalls of Old Delhi (Wasson 1968).

In later tradition, these 'Shade-foots' and their like were perpetuated in medieval lore and are depicted in sacred Christian architecture, but their fungal anthropomorphism is well known, as indicated by C.S. Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), a series of narratives for children titled *The Chronicles of Narnia*:

"And what are those mushroom things? They had been lying flat on their backs each with its single leg straight up in the air and its enormous foot spread out above it."

The jumping, as in the dancing mushrooms of the Selva Pasquala rock painting, imitates the sudden bursting of the mushrooms from the ground, and the parasol is a metaphor for the mushroom traceable back to Sanskrit and the Vedic Soma sacrament. Siberian tribesmen intoxicated by the mushroom mimic the mushroom bursting from the ground by thrusting their head through restraining membranes.

One further creature summoned in

the rite of necromancy was the sycophant, a term applied to someone who laid false witness in the law-court, but a term that literally meant someone 'who exposed the fig,' which was slang for the vulva and exposing it signified sex (Henderson 1975). The sycophant is a doublet for the 'Tongue-in-Belly,' since the fig sign (*manus ficus*) is also the obscene gesture with the thumb as the penis-clitoris protruding between the fingers.

Celebration of Primitivism

The mixture in the *kykeón* was symbolic of the Greater Mystery, which was the experience offered to the hundreds of annual initiates at the autumn celebration/Whereas they may have attended the February Lesser Mystery as preparatory indoctrination, there was no provision for their participation in the rite enacted in the *boulekeíon* Temple, which was certainly too small to accommodate so large a group. The Lesser Mystery commemorated the abduction of Persephone; the Greater her return, elevated from illicit abduction (*bléchon*, *nárkissos*, wild mushroom) to queen and wife of Hades (barley). The ergot, parasitic on the cultivated grain mediated the polarity. The initiates had journeyed in the spirit to the netherworld, visited the chthonic deities, and returned with the Goddess just as she gave birth, each initiate reborn along with the parturition of the Mystery Child. In the *kykeón*, the fleabane represented the symbolism of the wild fly-infested mushroom and the barley the evolution of agriculture. The ergot provided the altered consciousness that allowed the experience to happen expectedly on schedule simultaneously for hundreds of initiates together for each performance of the Mystery.

The Meaning of the Mystery

Plato explicitly described that what was experienced in the Mystery initiation



was a face to face encounter with deity (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250e et seq.). As a Neoplatonist, the Christian Paul described his own mystical rapture in the same terms (Paul, *I Corinthians*, 13.12; *2 Corinthians*, 12.2-5). As enacted in all the scenarios for such Mysteries, the initiate experienced a symbolic death as a preparation for enhanced living. At Eleusis, the initiate, in the words of Cicero, 'learned the beginnings of life and gained the power not only to live happily, but to die with better hope' (Cicero, *Laus*, 2.14.36). The entire evolution of civilized modes of culture and the analogous hybridizing of primitive toxic plants into the foodstuffs upon which life depends became a personal experience in the vast expanse of limitless time. Life henceforth was lived with confidence in its antecedents and its cosmic projection.

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