Peyote Encyclopedia Article

Peyote

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Peyote

Peyote (or peyotl) is the common name for the cactus *Lophophra williamsii* or *Anhalonium lewinii,* which is found in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Peyote contains mescaline, a **hallucinogenic** substance. People who seek a **psychedelic** drug experience may take peyote or pure mescaline.

Peyote was one of the first psychedelic substances that people tried. The Aztecs of Mexico considered it magical and divine. Its use spread to other Native American groups, who used it to treat various illnesses, to communicate with the spirits, and as part of religious rituals. Peyote is still used by some Native Americans, and there are laws in place to protect its use by certain religious groups (such as the Native American Church and the American Indian Church) in specific religious practices. Some states require that the religious group be registered, and others require that peyote users prove that they are at least one-quarter Native American. Peyote suppliers must register with the state and provide proof that they are selling the sub- stance only for ceremonial use to approved groups.

For religious rituals involving peyote, the dried tops of the cactus—the buttons—are chewed or made into a tea. Since peyote may cause some initial nausea and vomiting, the participant may prepare for the ceremony by fasting prior to eating the buttons. Peyote is usually taken as part of a formal group experience and over an extended period of time. The peyote ceremonies may take place at night and around a communal fire to increase the hallucinogenic effects and visions.

See Also

Ayahuasca; Hallucinogens.