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. Although there are many compounds found in the cactus, some of which may be PSYCHOACTIVE, the principal HALLUCINOGENIC substance found in peyote is MESCALINE. As the other psychoactive substances may make some contribution to the PSYCHEDELIC experience, there may be some slight difference in the behavioral effects produced by taking peyote and pure mescaline, but the overall effects of peyote are very similar to those produced by mescaline.

Peyote, one of the oldest psychedelic agents known, was used by the Aztecs of pre-Columbian Mexico who considered it magical and divine. Its use spread to other Native American groups who used it to treat various illnesses, as a vehicle to communicate with the spirits, and in highly structured tribal religious rituals. For these rituals, 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 formalized 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

Psilocybin)

Bibliography

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