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In the last two decades historians of precolumbian art have been occupied, mainly, in the comprehension of images in sculpture in stone and clay or painted in vessels and in murals. Nevertheless the scarce information in written sources, difficults the correct understanding of such images, and attributions about precise themes are frequently uncertain. In fact, in this kind of studies, scholars proceed to from elemental recognition of the image to cultural interpretation that might be either social or religious.

So iconographical studies have been more concerned with images of deities and with those that have historical meaning, very few deal with aspects related to rituals. In this paper, I will present for the first time, two slabs discovered at Tula in the actual state of Hidalgo; the images depicted in them illuminates an aspect not fully recognized in precolumbian art: that is the use of hallocinogenous that provoke insolite experiences in mind. The slabs of Tula, carved between X to XII century, have depictions of men and plants. Men are shown half recumbent, static and ritual; plants are hallucinogenous. The identity of these ones, allows a better aproximation to its original meaning.

In murals of Teotihuacan, from around the VI century, are depicted mushrooms named Psylocibe mexicano and seeds and plants with flowers of ololiuhqui, in ceramics of Western Mexico, from 200 B.C . to 100 of our Era a mushroom of high stem with umbrella also Psylocibe, is the center around which dances a group of people holding their hands; in a Terracota from central Veracruz, from the late classic period, VII to VIII century, the same mushroom is like a small drum played by an officiant; from the maya aerea there

are many sculptures in stone, from the first centuries of our Era, with representations of the mushroom, they have frequently in the lower part images of animals some of them are toads of the species who produce bufotenin, and powerful hallucinogenous substance. In codex Magliabecchi and Vindobonensis there are figures of mushrooms related to gods and ritual activities. The franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún wrote versions from their nahualt speaking informants about the use, among the aztecs, of the Teonanácatl that means flesh of the gods the wondrous mushroom that is illustrated as possessed by demons in the Florentine Codex from the Biblioteca Laurentiana. R. Gordon Wasson made a study of botanic iconography from the well known aztec sculpture of Xochipilli god of flowers, of spring festivities and renovation of life with the assistance of specialists he recognized the plants carved in its body. Among them are the already mentioned sacred mushrooms, morning glory, sinicuiehi, a Sacred auditive hallucinogen, the plant of tobacco, the cacahuixóchitl with its flower poyomatli a visual hallucinogen. All the information given above indicates that people of Mesoamerica depicted and render cult to plants and animals that modify, in various ways, the conscience when they are ingested. In the Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentilicias que oy viven entre los indios naturales desta Nueva España, dated 1629, from Hernando Ruíz de Alarcón, it is stated that indians rendered cult to seeds, plants and mushrooms, they were in fact considered sacred.

The wide distribution of these representations permit us to suppose, that a profound cultural concept, deeply related with beliefs and rituals, was of primary importance in Mesoamerica;

Hallucinogenous plants have different effects on the mind, they all modify it profoundly: producing states of extasis, deliriums, exaggerated euphoria, visual and auditive fantasies, and some times depression and death. The scenes of the slabs from Tula, confirm the frequency of these depictions and their effects. In Tula there is a group of buildings, recently explored, that distinguishes from the monumental constructions and the enormous open spaces that characterize the central part of the city this group is about 6 kilometers distant from the monumental area, and differs from it because of the small constructions that might indicate that was destined to ritual intimate activities. One of these buildings has a square small courtyard with walls in its three sides, and in the fourth one, a brief stairway. Cubes above slopes limit the stairway. Each one of the two slopes was covered in its front by a stone slab with carved reliefs. I had the opportunity of seeing and photographing them in January 1982 and in May 1984; I did not find them by November 1985, and so far I do not know where they are localized. Each slab is 43 cms in the base and 50 cms. high; the stone is the usual volcanic toba from the region. An irregular frame limits the relief scene which is basically the same in both: from the stomach of the reclining man rises a tree with fruits. The feet of the men were placed near the stairway, the heads distant from it. Men and trees are clearly seen. The head is raised, the face turns up, and the body rests horizontally. Only the left leg is visible, and it is placed in such a way that the foot is above the ground. Also the only arm visible is the left one, that descends by the body and rests in the ground. The two men are dressed with a máxtlatl or

loincloth, a belt, headdress, leg wraps and sandals. They use earplugs, noseplugs, pectorals and bracelet. The ornaments are different in both, they indicate, possibly, that they are different individuals. Figures of men are rendered in profile, but feet and parts of dressing and ornaments, are depicted frontally. Above the stomach of each figure grows a tree that bifurcates in two branches, these curves, descend and divide, in their lower part fruits are hanging. I will transcribe part of the botanic identification given to me by Dr. José Luis Díaz, from the Institute of Biological Research at our National University. I quote "Both reliefs depict the same plant, they have identical elements, the best equivalent among the magic and ritual plants from México is Datura ceratocaula, a tree from the solanace family with power to induce delirium in humans. The reasons that make me identify them are 1. The most conspicuous elements in the reliefs are ovoid fruits, plain and hanging from the branches. 2. In all of them appears a Caliciform pedunculus 3. From the plants of the genre Datura only the ceratocaula has this characteristics. 4. The bifurcation is characteristic of this genre, the trunk bifurcates in 4 and the branches divide successively in the same way. 5. The elements without pedunculus are leaves. Besides these morphological arguments, that do not permit a wrong identification, there are some others of historical character. There is no doubt that Datura ceratocaula is native from America and that was used with the names of Tlápatl and nexéhuac by ancient mesoamericans. Codex Florentine and Badiano, include these plant among the psicotrópicos of magic use. The discovery is important because, as far as I know, this will be the first precolombian representation of such a plant". Until

here the botanical diagnostic.

Now well, it is convenient to precise what is Datura and what are its effects on mind when ingested. According to botanist R. Evans Schultes and to chemistry a Hoffmann, I quote "There is in Mexico a rare species of Datura, so different that has been assigned a separate seccion from the gendre, this is Datura Ceratocaula a plant that grows in lakes and swamps. It is known as "torna loco" (that is to go crazy) a powerful narcotic. In Ancient Mexico it was venerated and considered "the sister of ololuihqui (that is morning glory or the seed of the virgin) the effects of both are similar. PHYSIOLOGICAL Fisiological activity begins with a state of relaxation, then a stage of hallucinations, followed by a profound sleep and lost of conscience. In some cases might reach death.

From it has been said before we might approach the meaning of the Tula slabs. It seems that the men are in an extatic attitude, and that datura, with which it is unified creating a plastic entity man-tree, has given them supernatural power; perhaps in its hallucinations look at the plant as part of himself, and in its "cosmic conscience" transfigures in the sacred tree.

One must remember that the buildings where the slabs were found, are so different from the others at Tula, that suggest a liturgic character. With Datura the toltecs at Tula might have had an specific ritual, but in other times and places of Mesoamerica, different rituals were held with diverse hallucinogenous plants. In this way, the scenes of the slabs from Tula, unique in the specific matter that represent, but integrated to the general theme of other representations of hallucinogenous, reinforce the expression of a general concept in Ancient Mexico that is the use of ritual plants

considered sacred.

I want to finalize saying that this paper is part of a major research. I have found a great variety of hallucinogenous depicted either in sculpture or in painting; some of them are exquisite depictions, not as rude as the Tula slabs. This botanical imagery from the first millenium Before Christ to the XVI century will be confronted with ethnohistorical information, the very rich prose and poetry written in nahuatl frequently refers metaphorically to the "enhiabrating flowers". The actual use of hallucinogenous for divinatory and curatory purposes can also help to understand their antique meaning. But the main purpose of this research is to prove that a just recognition of an arthistic theme might lead to a better approximation to some aspect of the thoughts and beliefs of precolumbian men.