



Ancient Egyptian Hallucinogens Discovered in Historic Jug

Description

A ceramic drinking vessel dating back approximately 2,200 years has corroborated the long-held suspicions of archaeologists: some ancient Egyptians indulged in hallucinogenic substances. This exceptional discovery marks the first instance of organic residue from psychedelic plants identified within an ancient Egyptian artifact, which was believed to have contained a fruity, fermented sedative sweetened with honey, potentially flavored with licorice, and intentionally mixed with human fluids.

The concoction, likely ingested as part of rituals honoring the god Bes—whose visage adorns the vessel's exterior—was both alcoholic and hallucinogenic. "No previous research has documented findings as significant as ours," asserts archaeologist Davide Tanasi from the University of South Florida.

Bes, an [Egyptian deity](#) associated with music, joy, and childbirth, was sometimes referred to as the "giver of dreams/oracles". To date, over 380 Bes-themed vessels have been excavated from the ancient Egyptian civilization, yet the specific contents and their purposes remain enigmatic.

For many years, Egyptologists have postulated the intended use of these vessels—whether for sacred waters, milk, wine, or beer. According to Branko van Oppen, curator of Greek and Roman art at the Tampa Museum of Art, experts have debated whether these mugs served everyday functions, religious purposes, or were utilized in magical rituals.

The vessel, which harbors evidence of three plants known for their hallucinogenic properties, was donated to the Tampa Museum of Art in 1984 and recently analyzed by a collaborative team of US and Italian scientists. Among these plants is the blue water lily ([Nymphaea nouchali](#)), a psychoactive species frequently depicted in association with Bes.

The second is Syrian rue ([Peganum harmala](#)), whose seeds possess sedative effects and can induce dream-like visions akin to those described in ancient Bes myths. The narrative of Bes serving a narcotic beverage to pacify a vengeful goddess underscores the plant's historical significance.

The third identified plant belongs to the Cleome genus, which is also known to elicit hallucinations. The Bes vessel from the museum was discovered in a region south of modern Cairo, tentatively dating to the second century BCE. This era saw the existence of 'Bes chambers' in a nearby Egyptian city where enigmatic rituals were performed.

Human proteins found within the residue indicate a purposeful incorporation of human fluids, potentially breast milk, mucous fluids, or blood, into the ritual beverage. This inclusion may have aimed at personalizing the spiritual experience.

Van Oppen further elucidates that visitors to the Bes Chambers likely sought affirmation for successful pregnancies—a perilous endeavor in the ancient world. Therefore, the concoction of ingredients may have facilitated dream-inducing magical rituals to navigate the dangers of childbirth.

Researchers aspire to analyze additional Bes vessels in a similar manner to gain further insights into the frequency and significance of hallucinogenic concoctions in ancient Egypt. "This study provides scientific



validation for elements of Egyptian mythology and illuminates the obscure rituals likely performed in the Bes Chambers at Saqqara, proximate to the Great Pyramids of Giza," concludes Tanasi. The study was published in [Nature](#).

Vocabulary List:

1. **Concoction** /kən'kɒkʃən/ (noun): A mixture of various ingredients often for a specific purpose.
2. **Hallucinogenic** /hə,lʊ:sɪnə'dʒɛnɪk/ (adjective): Substances that induce hallucinations or changes in perception.
3. **Ritual** /'rɪtʃuəl/ (noun): A ceremonial act or a series of such acts.
4. **Extravagant** /ɪk'strævəgənt/ (adjective): Exceeding what is reasonable or appropriate; excessive.
5. **Enigmatic** /,ɛnɪg'mætɪk/ (adjective): Difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious.
6. **Flavored** /'fleɪvəd/ (verb): To enhance the taste or aroma of something.

Comprehension Questions

Multiple Choice

1. What does the ceramic drinking vessel dating back approximately 2,200 years reveal about ancient Egyptians?

- Option: They indulged in hallucinogenic substances
- Option: They only consumed water
- Option: They avoided alcohol completely
- Option: They preferred bitter drinks

2. What was the vessel believed to have contained?

- Option: Fermented water
- Option: Honey only
- Option: A fruity, fermented sedative sweetened with honey
- Option: Pure alcohol

3. Who is the god associated with the vessel and honored through the rituals involving the concoction?

- Option: Osiris
- Option: Horus
- Option: Anubis
- Option: Bes



4. Where was the Bes vessel discovered?

- Option: In modern-day Cairo
- Option: Inside the Great Pyramids of Giza
- Option: In Saqqara
- Option: In Luxor

5. How many plants with hallucinogenic properties were identified in the Bes vessel?

- Option: One
- Option: Two
- Option: Three
- Option: Four

6. What is the significance of the inclusion of human fluids in the ritual beverage?

- Option: It was accidental
- Option: It aimed at personalizing the spiritual experience
- Option: It was a mistake in the preparation
- Option: It was for preservation purposes

True-False

7. The Bes vessel is the first time ancient Egyptians have been linked to consumed hallucinogenic substances.

8. Bes was associated with warfare and destruction in ancient Egyptian beliefs.

9. The Bes Chambers were located next to the Pyramids of Giza.

10. Bes is also known as the "giver of dreams/oracles".

11. The Bes vessel was donated to the Tampa Museum of Art in 1984.

12. The Cleome genus is not associated with hallucinations.

Gap-Fill

14. Visitors to the Bes Chambers likely sought affirmation for successful _____.



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15. The Bes Chambers were said to be associated with enigmatic _____ .
16. The Bes vessel contained evidence of three plants known for their _____ properties.
17. The Tampa Museum of Art collaborated with scientists from the US and _____ to analyze the Bes vessel.
18. Bes was sometimes referred to as the "giver of _____/oracles".

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. They indulged in hallucinogenic substances 2. A fruity, fermented sedative sweetened with honey 3. Bes 4. In a region south of modern Cairo 5. Three 6. It aimed at personalizing the spiritual experience

True-False: 7. True 8. False 9. False 10. True 11. True 12. False

Gap-Fill: 14. pregnancies 15. rituals 16. hallucinogenic 17. Italian 18. dreams

Vocabulary quizzes

Multiple Choice (Select the Correct answer for each question.)

1. Which word means to make up form or establish?
- Option: Acknowledge
 - Option: Constitute
 - Option: Catalyze
 - Option: Ascertain
2. Which word refers to a sequence of actions performed in a customary way?
- Option: Extravagant
 - Option: Ritual
 - Option: Enigmatic
 - Option: Flavored
3. Which term is used to describe the magnetic field around a planet?



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- Option: Diffraction
Option: Temporal
Option: Magnetosphere
Option: Uncertainty
4. Which word means mysterious or puzzling?
Option: Innovative
Option: Probabilistic
Option: Facilitating
Option: Enigmatic
5. Which term refers to the microorganisms in a particular environment?
Option: Interference
Option: Microbiome
Option: Interpersonal
Option: Elucidated
6. Which word means to secretly enter or penetrate?
Option: Implication
Option: Acknowledge
Option: Infiltrate
Option: Catalyze
7. Which term describes substances that cause hallucinations?
Option: Ritual
Option: Extravagant
Option: Hallucinogenic
Option: Enigmatic
8. Which word refers to substances released into the air?
Option: Interference
Option: Magnetosphere
Option: Emissions
Option: Diffraction
9. Which term relates to the likelihood of an event occurring?
Option: Temporal
Option: Uncertainty
Option: Innovative
Option: Probabilistic
10. Which term refers to illnesses or diseases?
Option: Correlating



- Option: Phenomenon
- Option: Ailments
- Option: Elucidates

Gap-Fill (Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the vocabulary list.)

11. His absence from the meeting had serious _____ for the project.
12. It is important to _____ your mistakes and learn from them.
13. The investigation aimed to _____ the truth behind the mysterious disappearance.
14. The new innovation is expected to _____ growth in the industry.
15. The chef prepared a special _____ of exotic flavors for the event.
16. The professor's explanation fully _____ the complex theory.
17. The radio reception was disrupted by _____ from nearby electrical devices.
18. The data analysts are tasked with _____ the trends in customer behavior.
19. The training workshop focused on _____ effective communication skills.
20. The sudden increase in online shopping is a notable _____.

Matching Sentences (Match each definition to the correct word from the vocabulary list.)

21. The royal family lived a life of luxury often indulging in lavish and costly purchases.
22. The concept of time and its relation to events is explored in the study of dynamics.
23. The company introduced an approach to product design revolutionizing the market.
24. The chef created a new dish with a unique profile combining sweet and spicy tastes.
25. The outcome of the experiment was met with due to conflicting results.
26. Effective managerial skills involve understanding relationships within a team.
27. The artist's paintings were known for their themes leaving viewers questioning the meaning.



28. Light passing through a narrow slit demonstrates the principle of .

29. The concept of time and its relation to events is explored in the study of dynamics.

30. Weather forecasting involves analyzing models to predict future conditions.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. Constitute 2. Ritual 3. Magnetosphere 4. Enigmatic 5. Microbiome 6. Infiltrate
7. Hallucinogenic 8. Emissions 9. Probabilistic 10. Ailments

Gap-Fill: 11. Implication 12. Acknowledge 13. Ascertain 14. Catalyze 15. Concoction 16. Elucidates
17. Interference 18. Correlating 19. Facilitating 20. Phenomenon

Matching sentence: 1. Extravagant 2. Temporal 3. Innovative 4. Flavored 5. Uncertainty 6. Interpersonal
7. Enigmatic 8. Diffraction 9. Temporal 10. Probabilistic

CATEGORY

1. Sci/Tech - LEVEL5

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