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NEW CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF VEDIC SÓMA AS THE MUSHROOM FLY-AGARIC

Stephan Hillyer Levitt

This paper examines several Sanskrit, and also Dravidian terms for ‘mushroom’ that suggest that the Vedic *sóma* was indeed a mushroom, specifically the mushroom fly-agaric (*Amanita muscaria*).

1. My main purposes in this article are to consider the form *śilīndhra* for ‘mushroom’ in classical Sanskrit sources as this relates to an identification of the *sóma* plant, and to reconsider the late Stella Kramrisch’s argument that the *sóma*-substitute *pūtika*, more properly *pūtīka* as Kuiper (1984) pointed out, though *pūtika* does occur in later texts, was a mushroom. In addition, a few other points gathered by myself in Levitt (1989) when considering the semantic spreads of words for ‘mushroom’ in Dravidian will be brought to bear on the argument that *sóma* was the mushroom fly-agaric (*Amanita muscaria*).

2. First, though, some background information is in order.

The orthodox Brahmanic interpretation of the Sanskrit sacred name “Indra” is that it comes from Skt. *indh-* ‘to kindle (the sacred fire)’. This was shown by Apte (1950). In Levitt (2008), I argued that this is supported by comparative Indo-European data from the vantage of laryngeal theory. Cognate Indo-European (hence, IE) forms for Skt. *idh-/indh-* show an initial IE diphthong the first member of which was **e-*. This initial IE **e-* was perceived, according to laryngeal theory, as reflecting an undifferentiated vowel which was shaded by contact with a laryngeal. Further, this initial was seen to have consonantal value. As J. Kuryłowicz has suggested for reconstructed Proto-IE roots containing an initial vowel, the initial must have been a laryngeal (Wyatt 1970: 7; Lindeman 1997: 41–58). In Indo-Iranian the initial was lost in the simplification of IE diphthongs the first member of which was normal grade that occurred systematically in Sanskrit and only partially in Iranian.

The argument regarding the etymology of Skt. *indra* in Levitt (2008) is a twist on Grassmann’s Law, the second part of which states that “given two consonant-groups in a word, separated by a vowel and themselves aspirated, and provided

they are in the same root, then one (and *normally* the first) is deprived of its breath feature” (Collinge 1985: 47; italics mine). While in general in the application of Grassmann’s Law deaspiration is regressive, as listed by Wackernagel (1896–1964 I: 126) there are occasional examples in which aspiration is preserved in the initial and lost in the root final. Not all these examples have held up through time, but in perhaps two instances Wackernagel’s observation remains valid.

With regard to the connection between laryngeals and aspiration, surd aspirates in Indo-Iranian have been attributed to the combination of a laryngeal (H) with a preceding unaspirated surd. Burrow (1955: 71) comments that a corresponding aspiration of sonants by H is perhaps possible, but not many examples have been found. Burrow gives one possible example. See also Kuiper (1946–1948, 1957) regarding the etymology of Skt. *sadhásthā* < *sad-*, analyzing it as *sad-H-as-thā*.

By the analysis of Skt. *indra* in Levitt (2008), the form would be in origin **Hzeindhra* (= **aindhra*) > **Hzeindra* (= **aindra*) > **indrá* > *indra*, the initial IE **e-* being lost in the simplification in Sanskrit of IE diphthongs the first member of which was normal grade. As such, the form would carry the meaning ‘the enkindling one, the kindling spark’.

It is the argument of Levitt (p. 27) that there was a perception on the part of some Vedic writers, at least, of the initial IE **e-*. Among the points brought to bear on this by Levitt is that the *Pāṇinīyaśikṣā* appears to preserve in Sanskrit the tradition of a diphthongal pronunciation for *e* and *o* distinct from that of *ai* and *au* (see Allen 1953: 63).

The original adjectival formation would have had its accent on *-rá*, but the accent would have been thrown back from the suffix onto the root in the formation of a substantive, as elsewhere in a comparatively small number of forms (see Burrow 1955: 146–147 (1973 edn: 147–148)).

From the vantage of phonotactics, I should note, it would seem that for **Hzeindh-* we should obtain **Hzeyṇdh-*, or **Hzeiṇdh-*, as explained by Schindler (1977: 56). Schindler noted in that place, though, that there are exceptions to the overall rule. He mentions that when the *n* is a verbal infix from the nasal present, as here, the *n* stands instead of becoming *ṇ*.

Grassmann’s Law is a rule in Indic, operative in Vedic and classical Sanskrit. A similar rule applies to Greek as well, which fact has posed problems for IE dialectology. It is argued by Levitt (2008) that such a resolution with regard to Skt. *indra* was very ancient, and can be seen already in the Balto-Slavonic river names reported by Petersson (1921: 248), from the period when Indo-Iranian and Balto-Slavonic were in contact (see Burrow 1955: 18–23 (1973 edn: 18–23)).

It is also suggested by Levitt (2008) that the first member of the initial IE diphthong is preserved in the Avestan form *andra* standing beside Av. *indra*. Such a

resolution of the IE diphthong in Iranian would be unusual. Geldner (1886–1896 III: 82 and 82n. (*Vendīdād* 10.9)), followed by Bailey (1960: 80), have argued that the origin of this reflex of Skt. *indra* is orthographic. The argument of Levitt throws this into question. The Avestan form may well represent an early variant, possibly attested as well in a Balto-Slavonic village name recorded by Petersson.

Supporting the proposed connection of Skt. *indra* with Skt. *idh-/indh-* from the vantage of Sanskrit lexicography is Sāyaṇa's interpretation of the Sanskrit form listed alternately as *aidhā*, *aidh*, and *aidhā* as 'ardor, power' in its relationship to *édha* and *édhas*, which carry the meanings 'fuel' and 'kindling', and *idh-/indh-* 'to kindle (the sacrificial fire)'. Just so, Skt. *indriyá* 'power, force, virile power, sense ...' stands in relation to Skt. *indra* as 'the enkindling one, the kindling spark'. The two forms can be seen as reflecting parallel and related semantic development.

Other cognate forms to Skt. *indra*, aside from those derived directly from *indra* and *idh-/indh-*, would be *indu*, *indambara*, *indīvāra*, *indirā*, and *indindirā*.

Skt. *indu* would appear to preserve its base meaning in the *Taittirīyāranyaka* as 'bright drop, spark'. Both 'drop (of sóma)' and 'moon' would be extended definitions. Of interest here is that it is the *Taittirīyāranyaka* that provides the unusual form *inttām* < *indh-tām* that Levitt sees as supporting his argument (see Levitt 2008: 230–232 for a full consideration of this important form, including E. Phelps' opinion that the form is due to dialectical variation, and J. Schindler's opinion that the form is a nonce form, that is, idiosyncratic).

Skt. *indambara* and *indīvāra* are both compounds the second member of which, *ambara* and *vāra*, in each case indicates 'circumference, surrounding'. These terms are applied variously to *Nymphaea caerulea* and to *Nymphaea stellata* and *cyanea*, all lotuses that possess a blue flower. The usages would appear to be metaphorical, referring to the atmosphere, which is during the daytime blue. Skt. *ind°* and *indī°* in these instances would refer to the atmospheric form of fire with which Levitt (2008) associates Sk. *indra*.

Skt. *indirā* appears to be more obscure in its base meaning. Suggested by its occurrence in the compound *indirālaya*, also *Nymphaea stellata* and *cyanea*, is that *indirā* has the same force as *ind°* and *indī°*. The association of the form with the goddess Lakṣmī, and derivation of the form's force from this as was suggested by Monier-Williams (1899: 165c) ought to be avoided as it occurs first in a list of goddesses in Amarasīṅha's *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* 1.1.1.23 (Böhtlingk & Roth 1855–1875 I: 800). Amarasīṅha's meanings are not always as clear and straightforward as they appeared to the Hindu writers who followed him. A simple equation between *Indirā* and Lakṣmī, while this was certainly a usage after Amarasīṅha, cannot provide us with the form's original meaning (see Levitt 2007 regarding definitions in Amarasīṅha's text in general). Perhaps Skt. *indirā*

is to be interpreted as a feminine form of Skt. *indra*. Debrunner in Wackernagel (1896–1964 I (Suppl.): 15) noted that according to H. Jacobi, Skt. *indirā* is to be compared with the tri-syllabic Ṛgvedic metrical pronunciation of Skt. *indra* (see Levitt 2008: 236–237 regarding the tri-syllabic pronunciation of Skt. *indra*). Such a form is what would be expected according to Siever’s Law. It can be noted that if the metrical pronunciation **indara* for *indra* represents a situation in which aspiration has yielded *ə*, as suggested by Levitt and reflecting the theory that *ə* is a vocalic version of the laryngeals, then *ə* > *i* would represent the same development as in the generally accepted minimal pairs such as Skt. *pitr*, Gk. πατήρ, Lat. *pater*. Skt. *indī^o* in *indīvāra* and the alternation between *ind^o* and *indī^o* in *indambara* and *indīvāra* probably would represent a similar development.

Skt. *indindirā* ‘bee’ is interesting in that it is reduplicated as if it were a Dravidian onomatopoeic form indicating a specific sound. Such forms are present in Sanskrit, and have been discussed by Emeneau (1969). Of comparative interest here, and suggesting a relationship between Skt. *indindirā* ‘bee’ and *idh-/indh-* ‘to kindle (the sacrificial fire)’ is a parallel semantic situation between Dravidian forms meaning ‘bee’ as given in Burrow and Emeneau (1984; hence *DEDR*), entry no. 4518, and Dravidian forms meaning ‘to light a fire, kindle’ as given in *DEDR* 4517. These Dravidian forms appear to share a common root.

The reader is encouraged to look at Levitt’s full discussion, which cannot be done justice in summary as many of its technical points require explication.

3. Given the above background, though, we are now in a position to consider the Sanskrit forms *śilindhra* ‘mushroom’, *śilindraka* ‘mushroom (esp. one growing out of cowdung)’, and *ucchilindhra* ‘covered with sprouting mushrooms’. Skt. *śilindhra* in its signification as the plantain tree, *Musa sapientum*, or as the blossom of this tree (in *Śiśupālavadha* 6.32.72), in its signification as mushroom (in *Harivaṃśa* 3358, 3606 and in Kālidāsa’s *Meghadūta* 11, for instance), and in its identification as a kind of fish, *Mystus chitala* (in lexicographic citation and in late medical literature only) are perhaps to be considered on the basis of cognate forms in modern Indo-Iranian for ‘mushroom’ (in Dardic and in other speech of the Indo-Iranian frontier areas) and in modern Indo-Aryan languages for ‘the fish *Silundia gangeticus*’ as the merger of discrete forms, the Sanskrit significations possibly the merger of non-Indo-Aryan forms of unknown origin (Mayrhofer 1956–1980 III: 343). Mayrhofer (1992–2001 III: 491–492), while it still separates the words for a fish from the other meanings, has now backed away from the earlier opinion regarding the other forms. The latter notes the etymologies to be simply “not clear” in both instances.

Wasson (1968; 1971; 1979) has argued that *sóma* was the mushroom fly-agaric (*Amanita muscaria*). He also pointed out that mushrooms around the world are associated with lightning, as in *Meghadūta* 11 in which the form *ucchilīndhra* occurs. In consideration both of this and of the etymology for Skt. *indra* < *idb-/indb-*, one wonders whether we rather have here a *tatpuruṣa* compound making direct reference to *sóma* as *indhra* (= *indra*) from *śilā* ‘rock’ – of which a combining form is *śilī*^o. This would show a reflex in Sanskrit of the form Skt. *indra* with an aspirate. (The interpretation that Wasson cites of *śilīndhra* from Skt. *śilī*, the name of a kind of worm, is a possibility suggested by Monier-Williams (1899: 1073c) for all words of the shape *śilīndhra*. It is highly unlikely.) This interpretation, of course, rests on the interpretation of Skt. *indra* as meaning ‘the enkindling one, the kindling spark’.

That such a form would be associated with a mushroom, one type of which it has been argued is to be identified with *sóma*, lends support both to the association of *sóma* with the mushroom fly-agaric and to the argument of Levitt with regard to the etymology of Skt. *indra*.

I note further that if an explanation can be found for this word for ‘mushroom’ from within Sanskrit, it certainly makes unlikely any explanation of this word from a non-Indo-Aryan source.

Sóma, of course, is first brought down from a rock high in heaven on which Varuṇa placed it (Keith 1925 I: 169, 171). Its descent to earth has been interpreted as being associated with lightning, the *aśáni* defined by Grassmann as ‘the thunderbolt, understood as a slinging stone’ (Bloomfield 1892–1894; Grassmann 1873: 137). Twice, in *RV* 9.82.3 and *RV* 9.113.3 Parjanya, god of thunderstorms and rain, is said to be the father of *sóma*. On earth, in Vedic ritual, it is stone which is used to press the *sóma*. Also, *sóma* is connected closely with Agni, god of fire. In *RV* 9.66.19–21 and *RV* 9.67.23–24, for example, *sóma* is called Agni, and in *RV* 8.48.6 *sóma* is told to make the poet burn like fire which has been started by the friction of sticks (*mathitá*). The pouring of pressed *sóma* is frequently likened to thunder and lightning, and *sóma* is said to dispel darkness and is identified on account of its brightness with the sun (Keith 1925 I: 168; Oberlies 1998–1999 I: 443–444, 495, including n. 182; II: 151 n. 107, 244 n. 119; see also Wasson 1968: 39–42).

While this must certainly be worked out with great care at another time, could it not be that the *dvandva-devatā* to whom *RV* 1.93.6 is addressed, Agni and Soma, represent kindling or combustion from wood – or atmospheric combustion (= Indra) manifest on earth in Agni, and kindling or combustion from rock (i.e. *śilīndhra*) – or heavenly combustion (if atmospheric combustion as well, also = Indra) manifest on earth in Soma (= Indu).

In *RV* 1.93.6 (*Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 2.3.14.2) the descent of fire and the descent of *sóma* are placed together as parallel mysteries. In the translation of M. Bloomfield

(1892–1894: 11–12), “One (the fire) Mātariśvan did bring from heaven, the other (the Soma) the eagle (the lightning) snatched from the cloud [*ádreh*].” Vedic Mātariśvan, the nature of whom is not entirely clear from the *R̥gveda*, is of course clarified by its Persian cognate *bādrisab* ‘twirling stick’ (Keith 1925 I: 138–139; Burrow 1962: 25). Mātariśvan is also referred to as bringing fire to man in *RV* 1.128.2. Bloomfield (1892–1894: 11n.) commented, “It is of interest to note that this [*RV* 1.93] is the only hymn in the *RV* which is addressed to Agni and Soma as a *dvandva-devatā*”. Regarding the pair Agni-Soma, see as well Oberlies (1998–1999 I: 287 n. 660, 312 n. 794).

Note also that in *RV* 2.12.3, Indra is attributed with having generated fire from between two stones archetypically. Regarding this verse, Griffith (1896–1897 I: 348n. (reprint: 176a n.)) commented that it referred, in part, to “Indra’s coming, which is caused by the kindling of the sacrificial fire”. Oberlies (1998–1999 I: 250 n. 491) opined that this verse indicates that the deed of bringing fire is attributed to Indra.

That the specific mushrooms referred to by *śilīndhra* in our classical Sanskrit literature need not be fly-agaric is without saying should we consider that in a mycophobic culture such as Sanskritic India became, all mushrooms are pretty much the same.

Alternately, I should note, we might interpret the *śilā*, or ‘rock’, as the *aśāni*, the thunderbolt that Indra wields, the stone from heaven, the compound *śilīndhra* being interpreted here as an appositional *bahuvrīhi* (i.e. ‘that having rock – the thunderbolt, as its kindling’). This would be in accord with the beliefs held around the world, referred to above, that lightning is associated with the genesis of mushrooms.

I add I am aware of the criticism of Wasson’s opinion regarding *sóma* put forward by Brough (1971 and 1973), and the gentler criticism made by Kuiper (1969–1970). And I am aware of the arguments that *sóma* is to be identified with Ephedra, including Falk (1989) and Sarianidi (1998, 1999, and 2003). “There are about ten varieties of Ephedra known, of which *Ephedra pachycladae*, *maior*, *intermedia*, and *gerardiana* are native in the mountainous regions of northern India, Iran and the mountains in between” (Falk 1989: 83). See also Flattery & Schwartz (1989: 70–71) for Ephedra species in the East Iranian-North India area and modern IA names for these. I am also aware of the argument of Flattery & Schwartz (1989) that *sóma* is to be identified with Harmel, *Peganum harmala*. For a general overview of the topic, see Houben (2003). For recent criticism of both the Ephedra and Harmel theories and for support for Wasson’s proposal in light of his critics, albeit without commitment, see Staal (2001). See especially Staal (2001: 775 n. 4) regarding strong recent support for Wasson’s argument from

Smith (2000), which also see. See as well Bakels (2003), which throws question on Sarianidi's claims. And see Thompson (2003), which points out contradictions between Falk's view and Sarianidi's view, and which argues for a restoration of the interpretation of *RV* 10.119 as presenting evidence of ecstatic experience in the *R̥gveda* and thereby contradicts Falk's arguments to the contrary.

With regard to the signification 'a kind of fish' for Skt. *śīlīndhra*, note that in Dravidian the usual word for 'fish', recorded in *DEDR* 4885, shares the same root with words for 'flash, glitter, lightning ... to cause to flash or shine ... star ... spark' in *DEDR* 4876. Also compare *DEDR* 5379 which terms are used for various kinds of fish, and sharing the same root, *DEDR* 5377 'luster, splendor, brightness ... ?spark ... shine'. And consider as well with regard to the semantic spread of Skt. *śīlīndhra*, *DEDR* 4498 'a sort of fish', which shares its root with *DEDR* 4499 'edible fungus ... a kind of mushroom ... mushroom'. This material both provides support for our interpretation here of Skt. *śīlīndhra*, and suggests that the semantic spread of this Sanskrit form is Dravidian.

With regard to the signification 'the blossom of the *Musa sapientum*', the latter being the Latin term for the banana, or plantain, note that Roxburgh (1795–1819 III: 73–74, pl. 275; 1832 I: 663–664 (reprint: 222–223)) noted that its spathes are "crimson on the inside; outside darker coloured". See the plate, which shows the crimson flower. Also, do a search for "banana flower" at <images.google.com> to see the variations in the coloring of banana flowers. They are all in the red to pink family. Given the connection of *śīlīndhra* with mushrooms one type of which, the fly-agaric, has been suggested is the identification of the Vedic *sóma*, one must wonder whether the signification 'the blossom of the *Musa sapientum*' for Skt. *śīlīndhra* came about on account of a comparison of the color of its blossoms with the red cap of the fly-agaric. Also interesting from this regard, Roxburgh noted that the *Musa sapientum* blossoms generally during the rains. Compare this with the worldwide association of mushrooms with lightning and thunderstorms.

4. In 1975, Stella Kramrisch published an article in which she argued that the Sanskrit name of a plant substituted for *sóma* in the Pravargya sacrifice, *pūtika*, survived to this day in the name *putka* of a mushroom sacred to the Santal, an aboriginal tribe in eastern India. As Kramrisch (1975: 230b) wrote, "The identification of Pūtika, the Soma surrogate, supplies strong evidence that Soma indeed was a mushroom" (see also Wasson 1979: 101b–103a).

Kuiper (1984) offered several objections to Kramrisch's identification. The first is based on the identification for the plant by commentators. But commentators are not always correct. See, for instance, the discussion of the titling of Sanskrit plays in Levitt (2005), or the discussion of Amarasinha's *Nāmalīṅgānuśāsana*

(*Amarakośa*) in Levitt (2007). The second objection is that the name, properly *pūṭīka*, does not mean ‘stinking’, which meaning he attributes to the Petersburg lexicon. But as Kramrisch (1975: 226b) clearly indicates, this is the way the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* refers to the plant. That the word may be a loanword in Sanskrit (Kuiper 1984: 222–223) is well taken. But, then, such a form may have dropped out of Sanskrit while it continued in Santali, so the objection is moot. That Kramrisch’s argument is circular, I do not agree with. That the Santali word is *puṭkə*, with a retroflex *ṭ* is also moot when the confusion between dental *t* and retroflex *ṭ* is considered on account of their both often having alveolar articulation (see Levitt 2010: 23–25 and 76, for instance). With regard to the Munda forms with which Kuiper relates Santali *puṭkə* and the related Santali *puṭi* ‘to swell, bloat, puff up’, compare as well *DEDR* 4499 “Pa. *boḍḍa* edible fungus. Go. (Mu.) *nira baḍḍa* kind of mushroom (*Voc.* 2480). ?Kol. (Kin.) *burma* mushroom (Kamaleswaran)”, *DEDR* 4563 “Ta. *poḷḷu* (*poḷḷi-*) to blister, swell ... Ma. *poḷḷu* bubble”, *DEDR* 4492 “Ta. *poṭṭu* drop, spot, round mark worn on the forehead”, and so forth, as listed in Levitt (1989). For the full semantic spread of these forms, and parallel semantic spreads for other words for ‘mushroom’ in Dravidian, see the 2-sided foldout chart and, for instance, 10¹–11¹, 29, 32. With regard to a connection with words for ‘stench,’ see pp. 24, 26, the 2-sided foldout chart, and elsewhere in that article. For a proposed Uralic connection here, see Levitt (1989: 38–39). While Kuiper’s (1984: 225–226) objection that grammatical facts have no explanation outside the linguistic system has force, the explanation given by Wasson’s informant on being pressed as to why the form is animate, that after left a day or two in leftover curry the leftover *puṭkə* would “stink with the stench of a cadaver” (see Kramrisch 1975: 229b; also Wasson 1979: 102a), would seem to represent an accurate association with the mushroom. Other Dravidian connections also are reflected in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* passage cited by Kramrisch (1975: 226b) referred to above, such as vital sap (see Levitt 1989: 23), and connections of Dravidian words for ‘mushroom’ with words for ‘mortar’, ‘pestle’, and ‘pulverize’, with the earthen Mahāvīra vessel itself.

In short, I do not think that Kuiper’s objections to Kramrisch’s proposal are the last word on the matter.

5. Earlier, on the basis of H.W. Bailey’s observation that the native Sanskrit etymology for *sóma* from the root *su-* ‘to press out, extract’, i.e. ‘pressed thing’ (Bailey’s definition), was “a poor kind of way to designate a sacrificial plant of great potency” (see Wasson 1979: 103b), I suggested that Skt. *sóma* was cognate with North Dravidian etyma in *DEDR* 1035 “Kur. *ōsā* mushroom. Malt. *ósu* id.”, through metathesis. Metathesis is a feature of the Telugu-Kui-Kuwi-Konḍa

subgroup of Central Dravidian, as figured by Bh. Krishnamurti's earlier and widely known sub-grouping of Dravidian languages. Levitt (1980: 44–45, 55–56 n. 27) has proposed such a process for North Dravidian as well, and has suggested that it is evidenced not only within Dravidian itself, but also in early loans from Dravidian in Sanskrit. Other possible instances of such in Meluḥḥan words from North Dravidian are given in Levitt (2009: 157–159 (nos 5, 7 and 8, 10, 11)). “Meluḥḥa,” of course, is what modern-day archaeologists interpret as being the Ancient Mesopotamian place name for Indus Valley civilization.

Cognate etyma for these North Dravidian forms for ‘mushroom’ display an association with the color red, as also is the case for the other North Dravidian set of etyma for ‘mushroom’ (see Levitt 1989: 7²–8², 7¹, 37, 2-sided foldout). The head of the fly-agaric mushroom argued by Wasson (1968; 1971) to be the Vedic *sóma*, of course, is red. Wasson (1979: 103b) has noted that the plant must have had a name before the Vedic liturgy was devised.

This etymology, of course, presupposes acceptance of Wasson's argument that *sóma* was the mushroom fly-agaric (*Amanita muscaria*).

In this context, note that over 140 Sanskrit forms listed in *DEDR* as having probable Dravidian etymologies are the names of plants, and over 55 are the names of fauna. These are cross-referenced with 95 and 45 Dravidian etymological sets, respectively. This is a considerable number.

Such a North Dravidian etymology for Sanskrit *sóma* fits with Mahadevan's 1985 and 1994 argument that the *sóma* cult was of Dravidian Indus Valley civilization origin, though unlike Mahadevan, I would see the composition of the *Ṛgveda* to be in the main contemporaneous with a primarily Dravidian Indus Valley civilization in which there was, however, an Indo-Aryan component (see Levitt 2003: 355a–356a; 2009: 160–162, 166; in press). Mahadevan argues that the cult object before what he refers to as a “unicorn” on Indus Valley seals is a *sóma* filter, and that this is the original of the *Indra-dhvaja* ‘Indra's standard’ for which he finds evidence in the *Ṛgveda* though the locution, as such, does not occur till later times. Fairservis (1986: 47) identifies what Mahadevan refers to as a “unicorn” to be one of the species of domesticated cattle commonly portrayed on Indus Valley seals.

Also to be considered in this regard is the argument of Levitt (1980) that the Sanskrit root *mad-/mand-* ‘to rejoice, be glad or delighted, be drunk or intoxicated’, so important from the vantage of *sóma*, contains semantic content from Dravidian roots that merged with an IE root.

6. As the late Daniel H.H. Ingalls (1971: 190b) wrote in his comments on Wasson's *sóma* argument, in different words, the importance of something new is what it

leads to. So it is with the etymology of the Sanskrit sacred name “Indra” proposed by me in 2008. It solves several etymological problems, explains, for instance, the alternation of Indha and Indra as deities of the right eye (see *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 14.6.11.2 [= *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4.2.2], *Maitryupaniṣad* 7.11, stanzas 1–3, and the allusion in *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 6), and helps us identify *sóma* as earlier identified by Wasson and argued as well by Kramrisch, whose insight into things Indian was truly remarkable.

Aside from Wasson’s arguments, we now seem to have three additional pieces of evidence that indicate *sóma* was a psychedelic mushroom. What more do we need?

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