




DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY

## MEMORANDUM

To: Carl Cohen, M.D.  
Arnold Wendroff, Ph.D.

Date: November 6, 1995

From: Paige Adams 

Re: Mercury Study

Mercury, a.k.a. azogue or quick silver is widely sold out of caribbean religious shops and botanicas as a form of spiritual protection. It is commonly sold in small plastic capsules almost twice the size of an ordinary cold capsule. It may also be sold in glass vials with prices ranging from one dollar to five dollars. After visiting twelve of these Brooklyn establishments I easily obtained information as to the use and effects of this product and was able to purchase samples.

Although the main purpose for which this product is sold is protection, it is known to have all-purpose power. Upon asking several proprietors how I should use the mercury, the most common response was, "What do you want to use it for?" Whether my reply was to rid evil spirits or human danger I was told the mercury could help me. One proprietor further explained that whatever I focused my mind on, the mercury would help to eliminate those unwanted events or thoughts.

Among the Latin caribbean culture mercury is also used as a love potion. One Latin proprietor explained that by bathing with it or sprinkling it throughout your home, you can accomplish the goal of "keeping your man." Another, explained that I should write the man's name and my desires to be with him on a piece of parchment paper. Then I should place this paper in a glass and sprinkle some of the mercury on top of it. This procedure is guaranteed to draw the man to me.

Most people carry the vial or capsule on their person to ward off any evil spirits or negative events. Others go so far as to mix the mercury with their cologne or what is known as "florida water" (a yellowish looking liquid) and spread it over their bodies. Still, others bathe with the mercury. It is agreed that in order for the mercury to bring about your desired results faster, one must burn the mercury on a candle.

When asked whether the mercury presented any dangers, the responses varied. Most denied or were unaware that there were any dangers in using the mercury. One Haitian proprietor denied that the mercury was toxic, however, he warned that when applying the mercury to one's body you must take off your gold jewelry because the mercury will change the color of the jewelry. Another proprietor shared that she heard the mercury was toxic, however, she went on to recommend my using it and stated that she uses it herself. Only one establishment out of the

to recommend my using it and stated that she uses it herself. Only one establishment out of the twelve sold the mercury in a plastic zip-lock bag with a warning label. Despite this warning the sales lady suggested the burning method for faster results. One proprietor openly prepared a capsule for me by simply pouring the mercury from a small bottled container into a plastic capsule. Any spillage was cleaned up with a paper towel.

Several of the religious shops and botanicas doubled as grocery stores, beauty supply stores and record shops thereby exposing many more people to the dangerous invisible vapors of this metal. There seemed to be a lot of competition for these establishments as I noticed there would always be at least two shops located within 100 yards of each other.

Overall, there seemed to be no fear or apprehension towards my questioning. Everyone seemed receptive and willing to explain the use and effects of the mercury. Most important every proprietor stood firm in their beliefs of the mercury's power.

#### References

1. Botanica Delcarmen  
3450 Fulton Street
2. Botanica Santa Philomena  
3215 Church Ave
3. San Miguel & Anaisa Inc.  
341 5th Ave
4. Botanica San Lozaro  
406 New Lots Ave
5. Casa Rosana Records & Botanica  
430 Rockaway Ave
6. St. Patricio Botanica & Records  
1708 Pitkin Ave.
7. Religious Shop  
Schemerhorn St.
8. Religious Store  
210 Utica Ave
9. Fulton Religious Supply  
1304 Fulton Ave
10. George  
1314 Fulton Ave
11. Saintuairy Mount Carmel Religious Stores  
and Beauty Supplies  
210 Utica Ave
12. Botanica Yamaya  
485 New Lots Ave