

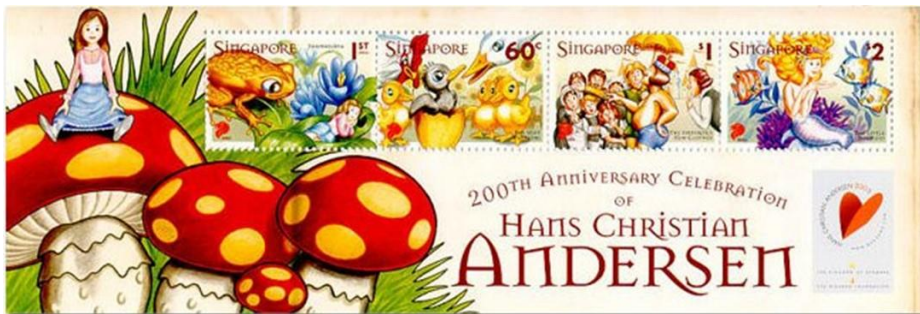
## AN ASSOCIATION OF TOADS AND TOADSTOOLS ON STAMPS

Dr. Vic Eichler, BU1850

There has been a long association of toads with mushrooms in medieval as well as contemporary art, literature, and folklore. The term “toadstool” is literally a mushroom upon which a toad can sit. In fairy tales, toadstools were often associated with little gnomes of the forest, as well as frogs and toads.

The mushrooms most often pictured with toads are a poisonous species with the classic umbrella cap and long stem, such as the Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*). These have a bright red cap with white spots, and emit an odor that actively attracts flies. Hence, toads are attracted to the mushroom to eat the flies.

A souvenir sheet from Singapore (with detail) honoring the story of Thumbelina by Hans Christian Andersen depicts the typical appearance of the “toadstools” with red with white spots with one stamp showing a toad.



Thumbelina fairy tale by H.C. Andersen souvenir sheet  
Singapore, 2005, Sc#1136



Toad with Thumbelina  
Singapore, 2005, Sc#1136a

A set of three New Zealand se tenant (side-by-side) stamps includes the presence of a frog or toad in the center stamp along with the typical “toadstools” form of mushrooms.

The association of toads and mushrooms—especially those called toadstools—have an interesting history.

Between the years 1400 and 1600 AD, the terms *tadstoles*, *frogstooles*, *frogge stoles*, *tadstooles*, *tode stoles*, *toodys hatte*, *paddockstool*, *puddockstool*, *paddocstol*, *toadstoole*, and *paddockstooles* were used synonymously with the words *mushrom*, *mushrum*, *muscheron*, *mousheroms*, *mussheron*, or *musserouns*.<sup>1</sup>

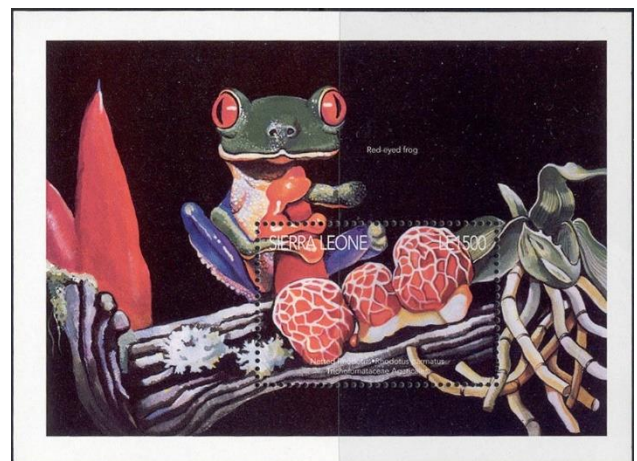
Analogies in other languages include the Chinese *hama chun* (toad-mushroom), Dutch *paddenstoel* (toadstool/chair), French *crapaulin* (of the toad), and German *Krötenschwamm* (toad-fungus). The German word *Todesstuhl* literally means “death’s chair,” which might refer again to the deadly Fly Agaric mushroom, which is often fatal if eaten by sensitive individuals.

The Red-eyed Tree Frog (*Agalychnis callidryas*) in the margin of this Sierra Leone souvenir sheet visits a group of red and white Netted Rhodotus mushrooms (*Rhodotus palmatus*).

*Agalychnis callidryas*  
Sierra Leone, 1996, Sc#1902

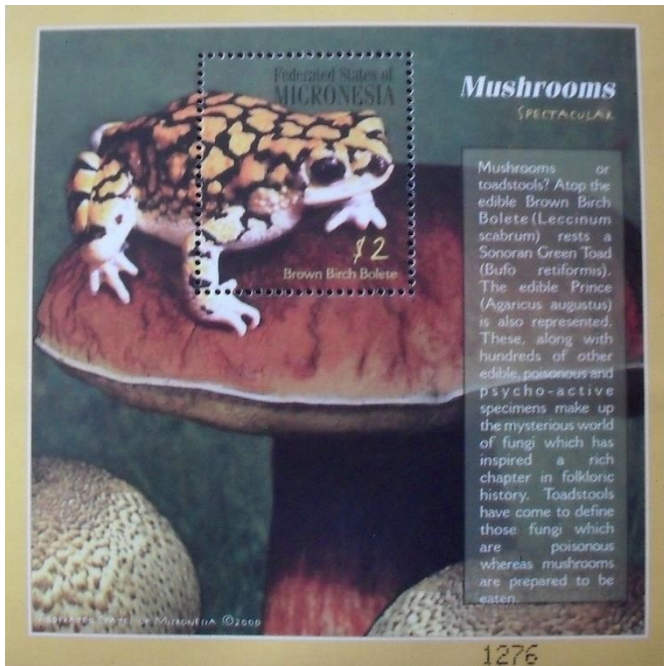


Stylized Toad  
New Zealand, 1977, Sc#B100a

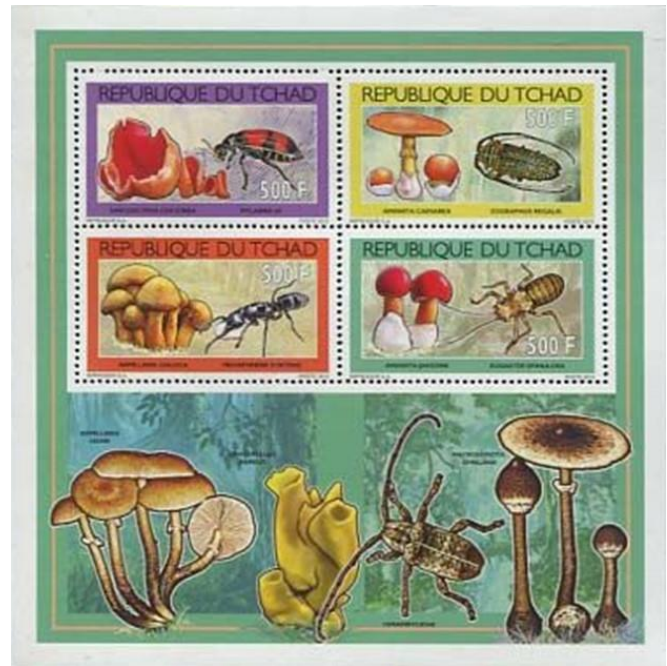


<sup>1</sup> Ramsbottom J. (1954). *Mushrooms & Toadstools: a Study of the Activities of Fungi*. Collins, London

Generally toadstools are most often considered to be fungi that are not edible, but that is not always the case. In this souvenir sheet from Micronesia (below), a Sonoran Green Toad (*Bufo retiformis*) sits on a Brown Birch Bolete mushroom (*Leccinum scabrum*) with two Prince mushrooms (*Agaricus augustus*) partially shown at bottom. Each mushroom depicted here is edible.



*Bufo retiformis*  
Micronesia, 2000, Sc#384



Insects & Mushrooms  
Chad, 2012, n/a

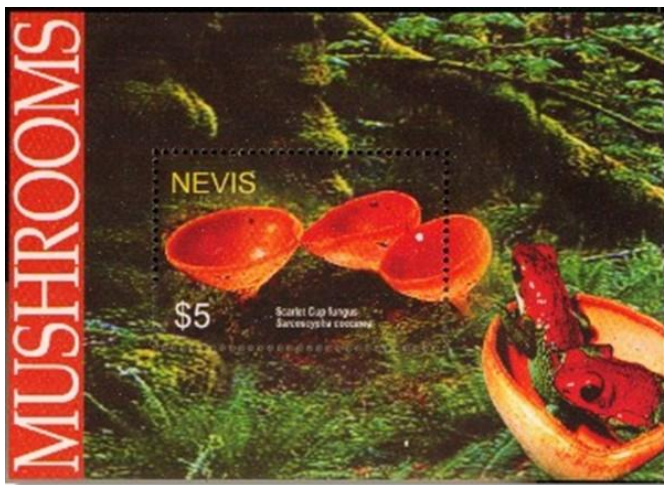
It has been suggested that the reason toads (and perhaps frogs) gather around some mushrooms is due to an odor that attracts insects. This is true for the common toadstool *Amanita muscaria*. Of course, frogs and toads would be attracted to flying insects wherever they are found. The miniature sheet of stamps from Chad (above) shows a variety of insects attracted to many different mushroom species.

The country of Angola celebrated a variety of native mushrooms with a familiar amphibian taking notice from the margin of this miniature sheet.



Mushrooms with amphibian  
Angola, 1999, Sc#1102

The Caribbean island of Nevis associates these two small Strawberry Poison-dart Frogs (*Dendrobates pumilio*) with some equally small Scarlet Elf Cup fungi (*Sarcoscypha coccinea*) in the selvage of this miniature sheet. A similar arrangement is seen on a souvenir sheet from the Grenadines of St. Vincent.



*Dendrobates pumilio* (margin)  
Nevis, 2005, Sc#1421



*Dendrobates pumilio* (margin)  
St. Vincent Grenadines, 1992, Sc#879

A Biodiversity stamp series from Nepal shows a postal set with a frog and mushroom stamp adjacent on the sheet.



*Amolops formosus*  
Nepal, 2006, Sc#774C

*Russula kathmanduensis*  
Nepal, 2006, Sc#774D

And in a fanciful stamp from Poland a frog, a gnome, and some mushrooms are seen.

There are many illustrations of frogs associated with mushrooms, although not the typical toadstool form, on the margins of sheets of stamps.



Fairy tale scene  
Poland, 1962, Sc#1107

Two labels form part of the selvage of a Czech Republic sheet that emphasizes diversity of the biosphere (left) and a Belarus sheet of mushroom stamps that pairs a frog with mushrooms (right).

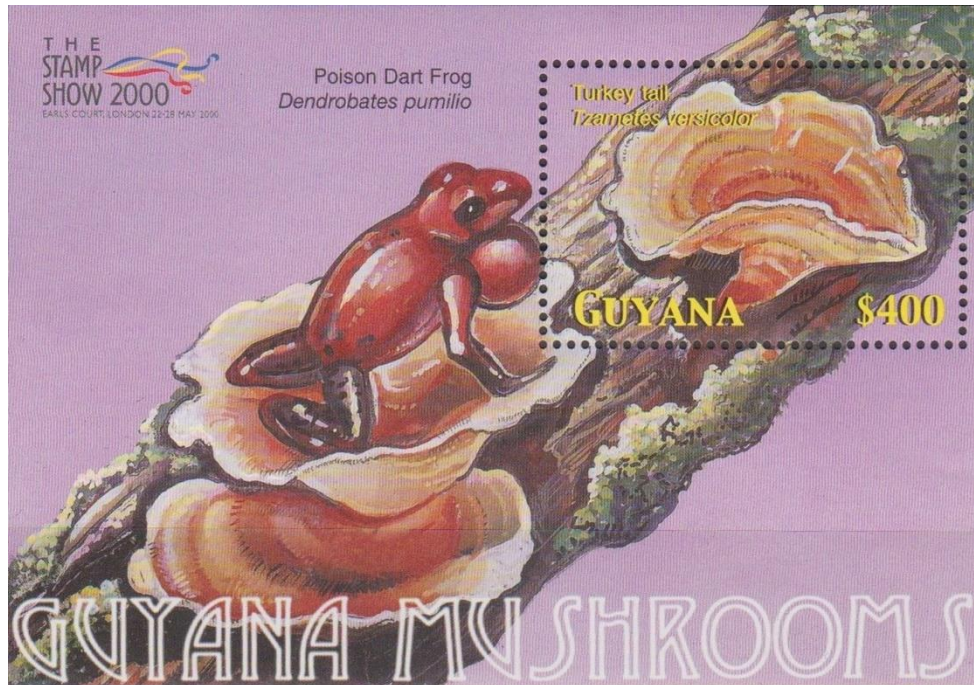


*Rana dalmatina*  
Czech Rep, 2009, Sc#3426



*Rana temporaria*  
Belarus, 2013, Sc#877a

Frogs are paired with mushrooms in the margins of two souvenir sheets from Guyana and Guinea Bissau.



*Dendrobates pumilio* (margin)  
Guyana, 2000, Sc#3522



*Bufo calamita* (margin)  
Guinea-Bissau, 2015, Mi#8048