

Cocaine – Part 1



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Citation: Šejvl, J. (2010). Kokain (část 1). *Adiktologie*, (10)4, 246–251.

SUMMARY: *The paper seeks to provide comprehensive information about cocaine, a very specific substance with a long and significant history linked to human culture. Nevertheless, it also became a source of people's decay and suffering. Given its extent, the article is divided into two parts which build upon one another and constitute a compact whole. The first part of the text describes the natural source of cocaine – a widespread, well-known plant of cultural significance, the coca shrub (*Erythroxylon coca*), grown in South America since the pre-Columbian era. Cocaine, or coca, was originally used by the local population as a plant which became a common element of the community at that time and an ideal nutritional supplement that made a difficult life in a harsh environment easier. The general introduction is followed by sections exploring both the ancient and modern history of coca, coca leaves, and cocaine. The text continues by describing the modern history of the substance and its use in and undisputed influence on the development of medicine, including the aspects of the emerging issue of cocaineism. Finally, a brief summary is provided of the arrival of cocaine in Czechoslovakia's First Republic, including a short case study (Vondráček, 1935, pp. 79–83), followed by an account of cocaine abuse and its influence on the human body.*

The continuing second part discusses the spread of cocaine over our territory and the patterns of its use. Different forms of (ab)use – leaves, paste, and hydrochloride, including freebasing – are also considered. This section is followed by information on the health aspects, providing an outline of the health risks according to their level of severity.

KEY WORDS: ERYTHROXYLUM – COCA – COCAINE

Submitted: 1 / OCTOBER / 2009

Accepted: 18 / NOVEMBER / 2010

Grant support: OPPA CZ.2.17/3.1.00/31430

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