

## BOOK REVIEW

**Funghetti.** Silvio Pagani [pseudonym]. Nautilus, Casella Postale 1311, 10100 Torino, Italy, 1993. Pp. 36. Lire 4,000 (stapled academic wrap with separate 2-color dust jacket). No ISBN or copyright.

The pseudonymous work of a leading Italian ethnopharmacognosist and founding member of the Italian Society for the Study of the States of Consciousness (see *Altrove 1* review), this inexpensive little booklet on psilocybine-containing mushrooms is the first Italian contribution to a *genre* of drug literature which commenced with L. Enos' *A Key to the American Psilocybin Mushroom* (Enos 1970). From this crude beginning in the U.S., the "field guide" to psilocybian mushrooms was perfected through various iterations (Ghouled 1972; Haard and Haard 1975; Norland 1976; Menser 1977; Ott 1976), leading to quite elegant books on the subject (Ott and Bigwood 1978; Stamets 1978). Outside of the U.S., there has been comparatively little such publishing activity, an exception being an English field guide from 1977 (Cooper 1977), and recently there have been German contributions to the *genre*, notably the multi-disciplinary *ZauberPilze* (Rippchen 1993) and the scientific *Narrenschwämme* (Gartz 1993), both recently reviewed in this journal.

*Funghetti* briefly surveys the pre-Columbian history of *teonanácatl*, as the Aztecs called the sacred mushrooms, which R. Gordon Wasson rediscovered in 1955, leading to Albert Hofmann's isolation of psilocybine and psilocine in 1958. The treatise then focuses on *Psilocybe semilanceata* (Fr. ex Secr.) Kumm., the most common psilocybian mushroom in Italy and the world. Somewhat detailed information regarding dosage and effects of this diminutive mushroom is presented. The author then comments on the legal situation in Europe, where some mushroom pickers have run afoul of the law, since psilocybine is an illicit drug. Field identification of psilocybian fungi is discussed, and there are three good color photographs of the common species *P. semilanceata*, suitable for identification (a low-resolution line drawing of this species is more decorative than of use in aid of identification; the booklet also features a frontispiece drawing of a "mushroom head" from the Mixtec *Lienzo de Zacatepec*). The danger of mushroom poisoning from faulty identification is mentioned, as is the possibility of negative reactions

to psilocybine. The author discusses appropriate use of the fungal pharmactheon, to minimize this possibility. The booklet concludes with a discussion of the potential value of entheogenic mushrooms to contemporary society, with a commentary on the Holy Inquisition of the Dark Ages, and the contemporary "Pharmacatic Inquisition" of drug prohibition, which has resulted in wild mushrooms being considered to be dangerous narcotics.

Despite its brevity and diminutive size, *Funghetti* is an informative and inexpensive treatise for the layperson on *Psilocybe semilanceata*, Europe's most common psilocybian mushroom. The Italian mycophile will find therein information on identification and use of this mushroom, its effects and dangers, all placed in ancient historical and modern sociological context. This is a worthy modern contribution to the *genre* of psilocybian mushroom field guides, and a valuable addition to the Italian drug literature.

## LITERATURE CITED

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