

BOOK REVIEW

Les Plantes des Dieux: Les Plantes Hallucinogènes, Botanique et Ethnologie.

Richard Evans Schultes and Albert Hofmann [anonymous translation of 1979 American original; *préface* by Jean-Pierre Galland]. Paris: Les Éditions du Léopard, 9 Passage Dagorno, 75020 Paris, France, 1993. Pp. 192. 195 French Francs (paperback). ISBN 2-9507264-2-9.

While the French marketplace has long been refractory to publications on the ethnopharmacognosy of shamanic inebriants, a new company, Les Éditions du Léopard, has recently tested the waters, apparently with commercial success. In its first year of operation, this company published a translation and an original title on marijuana or *Cannabis* (Éditions 1993; Herer 1993), and the firm brought out two large-format, elegantly colorful books on this subject. Jean-Pierre Galland's *Fumée Clandestine: Il Était une Fois le Cannabis* (Galland 1993) was followed closely by this French translation of Richard Evans Schultes and Albert Hofmann's 1979 popular book *Plants of the Gods: Origins of Hallucinogenic Use* (Schultes and Hofmann 1979—reviewed separately). There are only three alterations from the American original: a different subtitle, a one-page *préface* by Jean-Pierre Galland *in lieu* of the original unsigned preface; and the use of a larger typeface for the index and photographic credits, resulting in the regrettable excision of the single-page "Further Reading" bibliography. It would have been far better to have re-

tained this vital section, using the smaller typeface of the original index and photographic credits, to leave sufficient space.

Furthermore, for some reason (and in contrast to the typographically-elegant *Fumé Clandestine*) the publisher chose to use low-resolution (300 dot *per inch*) laser printer output for the French text (like the original, using a classic, serif face for the main body text, with the figure legends, table and "Plant Lexicon" set in a *sans serif* typeface). Besides compromising the elegant graphic design, this clunky, muddy type contrasts poorly with the excellent reproduction of color and black-and-white photographs and illustrations, the quality of which, like the paper on which they are printed, is commensurate with that of the original. Another typographic problem is the use of clumsily hand-drawn Greek characters (α , β , Δ) in the text; is the French marketplace lacking in garden-variety font packages? Also, there are far too many misprints. The Table of Contents, for example, has 5 misspellings, and a cursory examination of just the scientific names of 91 plants in the 14-page table immediately disclosed 21 misspellings, while the same quick look at plant names in the lexicon disclosed 9 mistakes in the 91 entries. Of course, Latin botanical names trip up even the most thorough proofreader, but these numbers indicate far too little attention was paid to the accuracy of the text. It might also be said that this translation suffers from a too-close correspondence with the original—a glaring error in the figure legends for the ball-and-stick chemical models on page 175 of the original is perpetuated in the translation (the transposition of the figure legends for *iso*-LSD and lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide).

On the bright side, however, this is a handsome and well-made book, lavishly and beautifully illustrated, at what I consider to be a bargain price (less than \$40 U.S. for a book printed on good paper with 127 color illustrations, and a durable, sewn binding). On the other hand, the contemporaneous, typographically-superior, American softcover facsimile edition sells for about half as much, but perhaps this was made from the original plates, and of course that edition entailed no expense for translation. Moreover, *Plants of the Gods*, as is well known, is an excellent introduction to the subject by two pioneering experts in the ethnobotany and chemistry of entheogenic plants (Hofmann 1964; Schultes and Hofmann 1980; Schultes and Raffauf 1990), well worthy of translation. The cover features a lovely reproduction of a Huichol yarn painting also appearing on page 63, and has an elegant design which does justice to the quality of the contents. The translation is faithful and accurate, though I am not qualified to comment on its literary quality. In conclusion, apart from the typographic problems aforementioned, we have here a lavish production of one of the best introductory, popular books on the subject of shamanic inebriants by two leading experts. Éditions du Léopard is to be commended for making this excellent book available to French readers in a style appropriate to the original and at a fair, indeed, a bargain price.

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