

BOOK REVIEW

Plants of the Gods: Their Sacred, Healing and Hallucinogenic Powers. Richard Evans Schultes and Albert Hofmann [reprint of 1979 edition]. Rochester, Vermont: Healing Arts Press, 1992. Pp. 192. U.S.\$19.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-89281-406-3.

We have here a facsimile reproduction of Richard Evans Schultes and Albert Hofmann's classic 1979 "coffee-table" book on entheogens, *Plants of the Gods* (Schultes and Hofmann 1979) with the only alteration being a new cover and front matter, along with a new subtitle, *Their Sacred, Healing and Hallucinogenic Powers* (the dedication to Heinrich Klüver has also been removed). The text and numerous color and black-and-white photographs and illustrations have been well printed in Italy on excellent paper, and bound with a durable, sew-and-glue binding. It is indeed fortunate that this facsimile has appeared, as the original edition, published nearly simultaneously with Hofmann's memoirs (Hofmann 1980) and R. Gordon Wasson's *The Wondrous Mushroom* (Wasson 1980), was remaindered together with these two books shortly after release,

owing to internal problems with the publisher, McGraw-Hill. This cut short the shelf-life of a truly excellent book, which now enjoys a new lease on life. The original edition was patterned after a lovely twin book, *Medicines from the Earth* (Thomson 1978).

Introductory sections on the botany, chemistry and geography of entheogenic plants are followed by a "Plant Lexicon" with single-column entries (some double-sized) for 91 species, each with a color illustration (mainly superb color drawings, but 15 with excellent color photographs), botanical name and family, geographic range, and a paragraph of text giving mainly botanical information, but with some phytochemical and ethnobotanical data as well. A 14-page table lists the same 91 species in alphabetical order by common names (in the lexicon, they are listed in alphabetical order based on Latin names), with sections giving scientific names, history and ethnography, context and purpose of use, manner of preparation, and phytochemistry and pharmacology for each species. Short chapters on "Fourteen Major Hallucinogenic Plants" make up the bulk of the book. These chapters are: 1) "Mainstay of the Heavens" (*Amanita muscaria* [L. ex Fr.] Persoon ex Gray); 2) "The Hexing Herbs" (*Atropa*, *Hyoscyamus*, *Mandragora* species); 3) "The Nectar of Delight" (*Cannabis* species); 4) "St. Anthony's Fire" (*Claviceps purpurea* [Fr.] Tulasne); 5) "Holy Flower of the North Star" (*Datura* species); 6) "Guide to the Ancestors" (*Tabernanthe iboga* Baillon); 7) "Beans of the Hekula Spirit" (*Anadenanthera* species); 8) "Vine of the Soul" (*Banisteriopsis* species); 9) "Trees of the Evil Eagle" (*Brugmansia* species); 10) "The Tracks of the Little Deer" (*Lophophora williamsii* [Lem.] Coulter); 11) "Little Flowers of the Gods" (*Psilocybe* and other species of psilocybian mushrooms); 12) "Cactus of the Four Winds" (*Trichocereus pachanoi* Brit. et Rose); 13) "Vines of the Serpent" (*Ipomoea violacea* L. and *Turbina corymbosa* [L.] Raf.); and 14) "Semen of the Sun" (*Viola* species). These chapters, superbly illustrated with black-and-white photographs and botanical illustrations of the respective plants, also feature maps showing distribution of traditional use, and superb photographs of use and preparation of these drugs, together with woodcuts and manuscript illustrations of entheogen-inspired art, pictures of shamans, deities, and drug paraphernalia,—a veritable artistic treasure-trove. The accompanying text of each chapter details the history and ethnobotany of each category of sacred inebriant, and each chapter has a brief sidebar on the chemistry and pharmacology of the active principles. A 4-page chapter on chemistry is also illustrative—it depicts colored ball-and-stick molecular models of 8 important hallucinogenic compounds and of 2 neurotransmitters for comparison purposes. Unfortunately, a glaring error in the original book (the transposition of the figure legends for *iso*-LSD and lysergic acid hydroxy-ethylamide on page 175) has not been corrected here. The last chapter on the "Uses of Hallucinogens in Medicine" presents a dozen colorful drawings made by psychiatric patients treated with LSD, and is followed by an epilogue, the author's salute to four pioneering predecessors in the study of shamanic inebriants—Ernst Freiherrn von Bibra, Mordecai Cubitt Cooke, Karl Hartwich and Louis Lewin. A 79-source "Further Reading" list is followed by credits to the numerous photographs and a detailed four-and-a-half-page index.

Withal, the quality is commensurate with that of the original \$34.95 cloth-bound edition, and Healing Arts Press is to be commended for somehow produc-

ing this superb facsimile of the original, lavishly-illustrated book, 13 inflationary years later, for the incredibly low price of \$19.95, the only palpable difference between the two editions being the hard and soft cover. In an era in which the average scientific book in natural sciences, many of which lack illustrations or decent design and typography, is priced at \$79.00 (Anon. 1994), this ranks as one of the best book bargains to be found. While *Plants of the Gods* is clearly directed toward the layperson, it contains many nuggets of ethnobotanical data of compelling interest to the specialist, which are not to be found in any other publication by either author. It isn't often that we get a second chance to purchase an important book, and this is a chance no ethnobiologist interested in shamanic inebriants can afford to pass up!

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