

Schultes, Richard Evans & Hofmann, Albert. *Plants of the Gods: Origins of Hallucinogen Use*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979). 192 pp., \$34.95.

Reviewed by Weston La Barre, Ph.D.*

Although their second edition of *The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens* is now the standard scientific source on its subjects, the presently reviewed volume is surely the most authoritative modern work that includes ethnographic and historical data on psychotropic drugs for the general reader — authored by none other than the ranking expert on the botany of hallucinogens together with the discoverer and first synthesizer of LSD.

Seven general chapters introduce succinct yet comprehensive chapters on the 14 major hallucinogens: Soma, Vedic “mainstay of the heavens” (*Amanita muscaria*); the classical and medieval “hexing herbs,” henbane, nightshade and mandrake; marihuana and hashish (*Cannabis*); “St. Anthony’s Fire” or *Claviceps* ergot, probable cult hallucinogen of the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries; the highly toxic Old and New World *Daturas*; the African “guide to ancestors,” *Tabernanthe iboga*; *Anadenanthera* yopo snuff of the Caribbean and tropical South America; “vine of the spirits” ayahuasca

(*Banisteriopsis*); “trees of the evil eagle” (*Brugmansia* spp.); “footprints of the deer” (*Lophophora* peyote); the “lost” Aztec narcotic mushroom, teonanacatl (various mushroom species); Peruvian “San Pedro” or “cactus of the four winds” (*Trichocereus*); “vines of the serpent” (morning glory, ololiuqui and badoh negro); and “semen of the sun” (*Viola* “epena” narcotic snuff).

Chapters on the chemical structure of hallucinogens and on the uses of hallucinogens in medicine complete the volume. All that is missing is Emboden’s long awaited work on the lotus, which was a very ancient cult drug in both Egypt and Buddhist India and highly suspect of being psychotropic. One wonders too why *Unghadia speciosa*, the Texas buckeye, has been omitted, when its archaeological context so plainly signals psychotropic use. And, although they are not of botanical origin, someday one would like a full treatment of the narcotic bamboo grub of Amazonian South America, the hallucinogenic “dream fish,” *Kyphosus fuseus*, of Melanesian Norfolk Island, the black and red *Oconenotl* bird in Tlaxcala, whose flesh is hallucinogenic, and the varieties of toad with bufotenin in their skins.

The book is illustrated with a striking variety of drawings, maps and photographs, many of them in color and refreshingly unhackneyed — the work of a masterful compiler, Joan Halifax. Despite the stiff price, if the aficionado wanted the one book on hallucinogens, this would be it.

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