

TEONANÁCATL

Psychoptic Mushrooms of North América

EDITED BY JONATHAN OTT



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EXORDIUM
A Brief History of Psilocinic Mushrooms

Ecstasy! The mind harks back to the origin of that word. For the Greeks *ekstasis* meant the flight of the soul from the body... In common parlance, among the many who have not experienced ecstasy, ecstasy is fun, and I am frequently asked why I do not reach for mushrooms every night. But ecstasy is not fun, Your very soul is seized and shaken until it tingles. After all, who will choose to feel undiluted awe, or to float through that door yonder into the Divine Presence?

R. Gordon Wasson
The Hallucinogenic Fungi of Mexico [1961]

R. Gordon Wasson first experienced *ecstasy* late on the night of 29 June 1955, high in the mountains of Oaxaca, hard by the Mazatec village of Huautla de Jiménez, in the Sierra Madre Oriental of SouthEastern México. That night, Wasson and his photographer Allan Richardson, became initiated-into the «psychoptic» (visionary) mushrooms of México, by the Mazatec shaman, María Sabina. To the strains of the thaumaturge's chanting, singing and percussive clapping in the stillness of the night, Wasson and Richardson knew a soul-shattering experience under the influence of the sacred inebriant, *DI-SHI-THÓ-KI-SHÓ* (the «sacred landslide-mushroom», *Psilocybe caerulescens*) [*Vide: PART TWO*]. To the best of our knowledge, they became the first scientists to partake of Mexican psychoptic mushrooms [Wasson & Wasson 1957].

Wasson and his wife, Valentina Pavlovna [Guercken] Wasson, had rescued the dying vestiges of this cult, from its imminent extinction in the few remote parts of México where it had survived into the XX Century... while today, the renown of the mushrooms has spread far and wide. From the epicenter in Huautla, the shock-waves of the Wassons' discovery spread throughout the World—provoking widespread ludible use of numerous species of mushrooms chemically-related to the *TEONANÁCATL-fungi* [Guzmán 1983; Guzmán *et al.* 1976; Pollock 1975; Weil 1977]. This unique, this verily remarkable resurgence of interest in an archaic entheogen has shown no signs of abating, and I expect that our modern «magic mushroom»-cult (that is, «psychoptic mycophagy») will continue to grow in the coming years.

In this *Exordium*, I shall trace the history of these Mexican psychoptic mushrooms. Brief examination of the archæological record will establish the antiquity of this cult, while a chronicle of the modern studies of these mushrooms will detail their introduction to the modern World. I trust this information will enhance the reader's

understanding of the current legal, societal and medical status of the psychoptic mushrooms of México... currently on the verge of employment in psychotherapy.

THE ARCHÆOLOGICAL RECORD

Among the oldest archæological artifacts from Mesoamérica are a group of carved stone-icons, in the form of mushrooms—generally, with human or animal-figures emerging from the ‘stipes’ of the ‘mushrooms’. More than 200 of these icons have been discovered—in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and in Southern México [Borgehyi 1961, 1963; Guzmán 1968; Lowy 1971]. The oldest of the ‘mushroom-stones’ have been dated, at roughly 1,500 B.P., and Valentina and Gordon Wasson have suggested that these were emblematic of the ancient mushroom-cult—in the Mayan’s domains [Heim & Wasson 1958; Wasson 1961; Wasson & Wasson 1957].

Mushroom-motifs also abound, in the Tepantitla-frescoes, of that great Mesoamerican Metropolis, of Teotihuacan. These murals are believed to have been executed sometime in the middle of the first Millennium, P.Æ. The most striking of these murals depicts the ‘Toltec’ rain-‘god’, Tláloc, from whose upturned palms emanate droplets of water. Beneath these falling raindrops, we find a number of mushrooms. These are juxtaposed with the figures of priests attending the ‘deity’, suggesting that they represent our psychoptic mushrooms. Beneath Tláloc, we see a representation of ‘Tlalocan’—the aqueous Paradise, or ‘Elysian Fields’ of ‘Toltec’ Mythology—where men disport themselves, with gigantic butterflies. And again, we find the mushrooms growing beside a river, in which flow ‘disembodied eyes’ (this is a short-hand-glyph for visionary plants and/or potions) [Caso 1942; Heim & Wasson 1958; Ott & Wasson 1983; Wasson *et al.* 1986; Wasson & Wasson 1957].

The visionary mushrooms appear in several of the scanty few surviving pictographic books of *PRE*-Columbian Mesoamérica [Heim & Wasson 1958; Wasson & Wasson 1957]. These beautifully-painted scrolls, called *amoxitli* in Náhuatl (spoken by the Mexica or ‘Aztecs’), were accessible only to the priests—and depicted features of the history and the rituals of the Peoples who had painted them. The mushrooms figure most prominently, in what today is called the Mixtec *Codex Vindobonensis*, which was painted early in the XVI Century. One complete panel of this *Codex* is devoted to these mushrooms [Caso 1963; Heim *et al.* 1967]; and the adjacent panel devoted to *xochioctli*, or the visionary *Agave*-wine [Gonçalves de Lima 1956].

These and other precious artifacts place the mushroom-cult at least as far back, as 3,500 years ago. They show that this cult held-sway—from the Valle de México

(the site of today's modern Capital) through Central América—and they testify to the crucial shamanic importance (and the numinous status) of these mushrooms, in the spiritual lives of many Mesoamerican Peoples of the *PRE*-Columbian *ÆRAS*.

THE CONQUEST AND INQUISITION

The *conquistadores*, under Hernán[do] Cortés, conquered «México», or the Mexica («Aztec») Empire, in 1521 [Prescott 1843]. A goodly number of the XVI-Century chroniclers referred to the use of these mushrooms in various parts of Mesoamérica [Heim & Wasson 1958; Wasson & Wasson 1957]. One (educated) Indian, Tezozómoc, writing in Castilian in 1598, described the ingestion of inebriating mushrooms, in celebration of the coronation of Moctezuma II, in 1502. Diego Durán described the same, for the coronation of his predecessor, Ahuitzotl, in 1486 [Durán 1967]. Moctezuma II, the last genuine emperor of the Mexicas, ruled 'til he was imprisoned by Cortés in 1519 [Prescott 1843]. From the writings of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (a Franciscan friar), and Francisco Hernández (a physician and herbalist), we learn that visionary mushrooms were called *TEONANÁCATL*, «sacred mushrooms»; or, more precisely, «wondrous mushrooms» [Hernández 1959; Sahagún 1950–1969; Wasson 1980]. We discover that there were several species, that these were bitter or acrid, and that sometimes they were taken with honey and/or *CACÁHUATL* (the stimulating concoction, of *CACAO*-beans [*Theobroma cacao* L.], *CHILLI* [*Capsicum*-species] and other spices [or rather *DRUGS*]) [Heim & Wasson 1958; Ott 2026; Wasson & Wasson 1957].

Withal, by and large, these few accounts of the Spaniards were superficial and condescending, and the sacred mushrooms repeatedly were vilified as an «idolatri». «God's flesh» (as Motolinía had mistranslated *TEONANÁCATL*) became «Devil's flesh» in the minds of those XVI-Century clerics [Heim & Wasson 1958; Motolinía 1541; Wasson 1980; Wasson *et al.* 1974, 1986; Wasson & Wasson 1957]. This indigenous *Communion* with *TEONANÁCATL* (most disadvantageously) was contrasted, with the «holy» *Communion* of Roman Catholicism. As Fray Motolinía clearly expressed it:

They called the mushrooms *teunamacatl* in their language, which means «flesh of God»—or of the Devil that they worshipped—and in the manner, with this bitter viand, they received their cruel god in *Communion*.

On 16 June 1620, these mushrooms were proscribed as a «heresy» and an «idolatri», by the «Santo» *Oficio de la Inquisición*, and an horrendous *auto de fe* was celebrated

which lasted for Centuries [López-Austin 1967; Wasson 1980; Wasson *et al.* 1974].

There is no indication that any of the Spaniards ingested these mushrooms, nor attempted to study their utilization [Wasson 1963; Wasson & Wasson 1957]. Perhaps their reluctance was motivated by fear of the iron arm of the *Santo Oficio de la Inquisición*. Sometime before 1629, one Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón wrote in Náhuatl (the language of Chichimecas, such as the Mexicas), the terms the *shaman* used, by way of heirs invocation [Ruiz de Alarcón 1953]. His was no disinterested study—such information was extracted under duress, from the tortured Indians [López-Austin 1967; Wasson *et al.* 1974]. The Spaniards ruthlessly forced apostasy onto these vanquished Indians, and by the advent of the XX Century, largely had succeeded in eliminating the use of the ‘sacred’ mushrooms... except in some few isolated mountainous zones [Heim & Wasson 1958; Heim *et al.* 1967; Wasson & Wasson 1957]. With the passing Centuries, the cruelty of Ruiz de Alarcón, and the accounts of those XVI-Century friars, were forgotten. These vision-producing mushrooms became *terra incognita* to modern science: with the exception of *FOUR* scattered reports—in the mycological and medical literature—of a handful of (purely accidental) intoxications, with (what proved to be) chemically kindred mushrooms.

THE PHARMACOTHEON IS RESCUED FROM OBLIVION

In 1915, the Usan ethnobotanist, W.E. Safford, published his preposterous hypothesis: that these visionary mushrooms *never had existed*—that the Spaniards had mistaken *PÉYOTL* (that is, ‘peyote-buttons’—the dried tops, of *Lophophora williamsii* [LEMAIRE] COULTER) for mushrooms... or deliberately had been misled in this regard by the Indians [Safford 1915]. Because of his prestige, Safford’s theory won a wide acceptance—such that many people first learned about these mushrooms from his *Paper*—merely to be told, *that they never had existed* [Schultes 1939; Wasson 1963]! Safford’s grave error, combined with the overwhelming forces of ‘acculturation’, would have interred forever the memory of these mushrooms, had it not been for the indefatigable work of the Austrian physician Dr. Blas Pablo Reko—a pioneering ethnobotanist in México. Reko declared, that he would not accept Safford’s thesis, and he began to search for the remains of this archaic cult, in the mountains of Southern México—and, soon enough, he found them—around the (then remote) Mazatec village of Huautla de Jiménez [Reko 1919; Schultes 1939; Wasson 1963].

Reko’s work attracted Richard Evans Schultes: then, a young graduate-student at HARVARD UNIVERSITY. Schultes had studied ethnobotany of *PÉYOTL* in México,

and so was familiar with Safford's 'theory', regarding these mushrooms. In 1938, Reko and Schultes sojourned in Huautla de Jiménez, and there obtained the first *identifiable* herbarium-specimens of *TEONANÁCATL*. [Schultes chronicles his taxonomic investigation of this *TEONANÁCATL*, in **PART I-A**.] These were deposited in FARLOW HERBARIUM, HARVARD UNIVERSITY [Schultes 1939] and ultimately were shown to represent *THREE* different species [Singer 1958; Wasson 1963]. Two years prior to this, Robert J. Weitlaner had become the first scientist *to handle* the mushrooms, but his specimens (also sent to FARLOW HERBARIUM) arrived in an *unidentifiable* condition [Wasson 1963]. In 1938, Weitlaner's daughter Irmgard, and her (future) husband, the Swedish anthropologist, Jean Bassett Johnson, became the first RESEARCHERS to attend a *VELADA* (literally, 'nocturnal vigil', the Castilian word used today by the Mazatecs to describe these mushroom-ceremonies) [Johnson 1939; Pollock 1975]. The Johnsons' *VELADA* also took place, in Huautla de Jiménez. Although they had observed the *shamanic* use of these mushrooms, they did not partake of them. Reko sent dried mushroom-material to Swede, C.G. Santesson, for chemical study. He documented «*semi-narcosis*» in frogs and mice, following administration of extracts of the mushrooms... but this intriguing lead never was pursued [Santesson 1939].

Despite this encouraging start in the latter 1930s, the Second World War was to postpone the rediscovery of the mushrooms—Johnson was killed in combat, during the Allied landing in North Africa; whereas Schultes was diverted to South América to survey rubber-trees. Santesson died in 1939; and Reko applied himself to other studies, until his death, in 1953. The mushroom-cult again fell by the wayside, and began to lapse into oblivion. Such was the situation in 1952, when the (espoused) Usan ethnomycologists Valentina and Gordon Wasson serendipitously learned of the Mesoamerican mushroom-cult. The Wassons—by that time—had for more than 25 years been studying *outré* cultural *rôles* of mushrooms. Their studies—of that field they named 'ethnomycology'—had led them to surmise that our *preliterate* ancestors had worshipped mushrooms. They knew not *which* mushrooms... nor *why* these had been adored, but had been led to such a conclusion, by the peculiar connotations of mushroomic names in Europe... and the diametrically-opposed emotional attitudes towards *fungi*, that these names 'fossilized'. The Wassons had discovered, that all Eurasian Peoples were emotional regarding mushrooms—either *loving them*, or *hating them*—and they coined the words 'mycophilia' and 'mycophobia', to characterize those two contrasting responses [Heim & Wasson 1958; Wasson 1959A,B, 1961, 1980; Wasson *et al.* 1974, 1986; Wasson & Wasson 1957, 1958].

After a thorough review of all those XVI-Century-accounts of the mushroom-cult, and careful reviews of the field-work, of Reko, Weitlaner, Schultes and the

Johnsons, the Wassons—with the assistance of Robert Weitlaner and Irmgard Weitlaner-Johnson—made their first expedition to México... in the summer of 1953. That year, and that following summer, they were able to learn tantalizing snippets of information about ‘sacred mushrooms’, even to obtain a few precious samples (a number of which Gordon Wasson ingested on his own—but the dose proved inadequate). Persistence paid-off, and on 29 June 1955, Gordon was able to collect a sizable quantity of *Psilocybe caerulescens* (*DI-SHI-THÓ-KI-SHÓ*, in Mazatec: or, the ‘sacred landslide-mushroom’) and that same day was introduced to María Sabina—who offered to perform a *VELADA* for him on that night. Feeling that he was on the verge of some momentous discovery, Wasson hoped that María would offer a dose of these mushrooms to him. He was delighted when, that evening—at the home of Cayetano García—he was served *CHOCOLATE*; for he remembered that both Sahagún and Durán had written, that the mushrooms were taken with *CACÁHUATL* [Ott 2026]. María Sabina, solemn and dignified, reverently censed the mushrooms Wasson had collected earlier that day—then offered him, and his photographer, Allan Richardson, **SIX PAIRS EACH**—María, and her shaman-daughter Apolonia, ingested **THIRTEEN PAIRS EACH**. The visionary effects of these ‘sacred mushrooms’ were a revelation to Wasson—at once explaining those enigmatic phenomena, of *mycophilia* and *mycophobia* [Ott & Pollock 1976; Wasson & Wasson 1957]. Valentina Wasson, a paediatrician, likewise ingested the mushrooms some few days later, in an *hôtel*; and later reported her reactions in *This Week Magazine* [VP Wasson 1957].

The Wassons teamed-up, with the eminent French mycologist, Roger Heim, who accompanied them to México, in 1956. Heim returned to Paris with specimens and cultures of several species of the Mexican ‘sacred mushrooms’. Heim was able to identify **14 SPECIES** of divinatory mushrooms—**12** of which, were new to science. With his collaborator, Roger Cailleux, he was able to cultivate many of those species in their (Parisian) laboratory [Heim & Wasson 1958]. Heim sent **100 G** of *cultured* specimens of *Psilocybe mexicana*, to that World-famous discoverer of LSD, Albert Hofmann—of the Swiss pharmaceutical firm, SANDOZ. Self-experimentation—by Hofmann and his assistants—determined that the psychoptic effects were provoked by two unusual new indole-alkaloids, later designated **PSILOCYBIN**, and **PSILOCIN**—which, expeditiously, they also synthesized [Heim & Wasson 1958; Hofmann 1960; Hofmann *et al.* 1959; Schultes & Hofmann 1973]. [Hofmann recapitulates all this chemical work (for the first time, in English) in **PART I-B.**] Heim, R.G. Wasson and Hofmann summarized their research in *Les champignons hallucinogènes [sic] du Mexique* [Heim & Wasson 1958]—by far the most complete, most authoritative, interdisciplinary study, of **ANY NATURAL DRUG**, ever published. Later research has

enriched our knowledge of the distribution and use of these psychoptic mushrooms in Mesoamérica [Escalante & López 1971; Guzmán 1958, 1959A, B, 1960, 1968, 1970A, B, 1983, 2008; Guzmán *et al.* 1976; Hofmann 1968, 1979; Hoogshagen 1959; Lowy 1977; Munn 1973; Ott 1975, 1976, 1980, 2024; Ott & Guzmán 1976; Rubel & Gettelfinger-Krejci 1976; Singer 1958]. At the *Conference*, in 1977 (herein excerpted), Wasson and Hofmann formally connected the *Eleusinian Mysteries* to the Mexican ‘sacred mushroom’-cult they thus had RESCUED FROM OBLIVION [Wasson *et al.* 1978].

TEONANÁCATL IS RENDERED AVAILABLE TO THE WORLD

In the 13 May 1957 issue of *Life Magazine*, R. Gordon Wasson first revealed their rediscovery of the long-forgotten mushroom-cult of México. His *Article*, «**Seeking the Magic Mushroom**», depicted SEVEN species of these visionary mushrooms, and described the modern cult, and its history [RG Wasson 1957]. This TITLE, chosen by the editors of *Life*, caught the popular fancy, and these ‘PSILOCINIC’ mushrooms thenceforth became known, as *magic mushrooms*. Wasson timed the publication of his popular *Article*—and that by Valentina, one week later [VP Wasson 1957]—to coincide with their release, of *Mushrooms Russia and History*, by both Valentina and R. Gordon Wasson [Wasson & Wasson 1957]. This magnificent, (two-Volume) Limited Edition of 512 copies, detailed 30 years of research which the Wassons had named ‘ethnomycology’. Commencing with a comprehensive study of European mushroom-names, the Wassons’ Quixotic *Odyssey* had led them to their rediscovery of these SHAMANIC MUSHROOMS of México. In this remarkable treatise, they first presented their initial observations on the existing cult of TEONANÁCATL, and included a thorough review of its history (reproducing all original chronicles from the XVI Century). With perspicuity and perspicacity—and in moving prose-poëtry—R. Gordon Wasson reverently described the effects of ‘sacred’ mushrooms... and the significance of their rediscovery. As befits such a revolutionary *Book*, *Mushrooms Russia and History* became an instant Classic—which had sold for up to US\$3,000 during one of the authors’ lifetimes—at that time, this being the all-time record!

The Wassons had unveiled the last, dying remnants of this once-mighty cult. In only a few remote areas of México did the mushrooms continue to hold-sway over the Indians, and (except for *Amanita muscaria* [L. EX FR.] PERSON EX GRAY in Siberia/North América) shamanic use of mushrooms has been found nowhere else. In every case, where divinatory uses of the mushrooms had been encountered, the folklore surrounding the cult was mingled inextricably with ‘Christian’ symbolism.

The mushrooms were personified as «Jesus», and these rites were celebrated before crude wooden altars, bearing icons representing the baptism in Jordan, and/or the *Santo Niño de Atocha* (this is a Roman Catholic representation of «Jesus» as a young child—specifically, it is from Atocha, near Madrid) [Heim & Wasson 1958; Pike & Cowan 1959; Wasson 1958, 1980; Wasson *et al.* 1974, 1986; Wasson & Wasson 1957].

Soon after the publication of this *Life-Article*, outsiders, in search of their own mushroomic experiences, began to make their pilgrimages to Huautla de Jiménez. María Sabina all but became some «High Priestess», of a modern mushroom-cult: born, like the Phoenix, from the ashes of its predecessor [Estrada 1977; Ott 1977]. In Huautla and other villages, the mushrooms were profaned... reduced, merely, to «knick-knacks» of the tourist-trade. Postcards depicting mushrooms—even a few shamans, too!—clothing, *machine*-embroidered, with mushroomic motifs... even the mushrooms themselves, widely and conspicuously were sold [Ott 1975, 1976]. The metamorphosis of the mushrooms to articles of commerce virtually has destroyed the remains of the archaic cult. Self-styled-shamans staged (spurious) mushroom-*VELADAS* for the benefit of the eager tourists. María Sabina herself pronounced a fitting *Epitaph*, to the once-secret cult that she had divulged to the World [Estrada 1977]:

Before Wasson, I felt that the mushrooms exalted me. Now I no longer feel this... From the moment the strangers arrived... the mushrooms lost their purity. They lost their power; they decomposed. From that moment on, they no longer worked...

A young psychologist named Timothy Leary learned of the Wassons' discoveries, and journeyed to México, to seek-out these mushrooms (at a comfortable *villa*—poolside, between cocktails!). In 1960, he had his first «psychedelic» experience with María's mushrooms, in Cuernavaca [Leary 1968; Ott 2024]. Like Wasson, Leary found their psychoptic effects to be a revelation, and eagerly he commenced his own «investigations». Leary obtained a supply of (synthetic) **PSILOCYBINE** (*Indocybin*[™]) from SANDOZ, and began his now-infamous experiments at HARVARD—which led to his resignation from the faculty, amidst a storm of controversy. Leary then turned his enthusiasm to LSD (or *Delysid*[™])... and the rest of his turbulent story need not concern us here. In 1968, Leary published *High Priest*: a megalomaniacal account of his experiences with psychoptic drugs. One *Chapter* was devoted to his initiation in Cuernavaca, and accompanied by abundant *marginalia* excerpted from Gordon Wasson's astonishing *Paper*: «The hallucinogenic [*sic*] fungi of Mexico: an inquiry into the origins of the religious idea among primitive [*sic*] peoples» [Wasson 1961]. [Here reprinted, with few revisions, as **PART I-C.**] Leary's *Book* was instrumental in

introducing the mushrooms to the World's public—especially to the burgeoning legions of users of LSD, Mescaline, **PSILOCYBINE**, and kindred psychoptic drugs.

Public consciousness of **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms further was expanded by the 1968 publication of *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui [sic] Way of Knowledge*, by Carlos Castañeda [Castañeda 1968]. Castañeda described his purported 'apprenticeship', to an aging 'Yaqui shaman', Juan Matus: who allegedly *smoked* dried mushrooms of (what he had *guessed* to be, absent voucher-specimens) *Psilocybe mexicana*. Castañeda's hamfisted **FICTION** became a bestseller and surely contributed to the growth of the modern cult of 'psychodelic mycophagy'—despite the fact, that he presented no information on the identification of said mushrooms. R. Gordon Wasson eagerly entered-into correspondence with Castañeda—and even met him, twice. In spite of Wasson's prompting, Castañeda was *unwilling* (or, more probably: *unable*) to procure specimens of these mushrooms for their reliable taxonomic identification [Wasson 1975]. Moreover, a wealth of most disconcerting inconsistencies make Castañeda's accounts inverisimilitudinous, and it has been argued that Castañeda *invented* Don Juan—cribbing liberally, from *Mushrooms Russia and History*, for his generally *hackneyed*, and *cockamamie* notions [DeMille 1976; Ott & Bigwood 1977]. Wasson even reviewed the first *FOUR*, of Castañeda's *cheesy science-fiction-NOVELS* [Wasson 1969–1974, 1977], and he concluded, as did I, that these were *bad FICTION*—comparing them to Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes-romances.

While these *Books* by Leary and Castañeda served to inform the World's public (most of whom *STILL* have yet to hear of the Wassons—nor of their monumental *Books*), of the *existence* of these psychoptic mushrooms in México, they provided no practical information on obtaining, nor using the mushrooms. In the 1960s to 1970s, chemical studies indicated that many Usan species of *Psilocybe* and *Panaeolus* produced **PSILOCYBINE** and **PSILOCINE**; and potentially were psychoptic [Benedict *et al.* 1962A,B; Guzmán 1983; Guzmán & Ott 1976; Guzmán & Pérez-Patraca 1972; Ola'h 1970; Robbers *et al.* 1969; Singer & Smith 1958; Tyler 1961]. Diverse chemical, mycological and ethnological work elsewhere in the World showed that **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms were cosmopolitan [Benedict *et al.* 1967; Guzmán 1983, 2008; Heim *et al.* 1966, 1967; Imai 1932; Imazeki 1973; Ola'h 1970; Ola'h & Heim 1967; Ott & Guzmán 1976; Picker & Rickards 1970; Southcott 1974; Stamets 1996; Stamets *et al.* 1980; Wasson 1962, 1973; Yokoyama 1973]. As numerous 'veterans', of the mushroomic pilgrimage to Huautla, learned that kindred **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms already were growing in their homelands, this contemporary cult of psychoptic mycophagy spread rapidly—far, and wide. Australia became an early center of the cult, as did Thailand and the Indonesian Island Bali [Pollock 1975; Stamets 1996].

With the advent of the 1970s, 'field-guides' to the Usan **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms started to appear. The first of these, was Leonard Enos' *A Key to the American Psilocybin Mushroom*, which described *FIFTEEN* species, but was illustrated with useless watercolor-paintings [Enos 1970]. Although regarded by some to be a pioneering work, in reality, Enos' book was a slip-shoddy fraud. It is obvious that the author *never even saw* the bulk of those mushrooms in said 'field-guide': but merely had copied the illustrations, *from line-drawings*, in the mycological literature (some, from Heim's superb watercolors, for the *Life-Article* [RG Wasson 1957])—then colored them... according to *verbal descriptions* of their colors, in that same literature! Enos likewise presented some worthless chemical test for **PSILOCYBINE** in mushrooms, as well as a mystifying and incoherent *Appendix* devoted to a *pseudo*-religious cult called 'Subud'—which had nothing whatever to do with **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms, and evidently had been added to flesh-out this otherwise flimsy and meagre pamphlet.

Several mushroomic 'field-guides' that followed Enos' formula have been published over the years, and continued to appear, at a stupendous rate [Ghouled 1972; Haard & Haard 1975; Harris 1976; Menser 1977; Norland 1976]. Eventually, there appeared reliable, *genuine* 'field-guides'—especially those by Paul Stamets, which presented excellent photographs of numerous **PSILOCINIC** species; accompanied by coherent, comprehensive information [Ott & Bigwood 1978; Stamets 1978, 1996].

Because of the abundance and diversity of indigenous **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms, the Pacific Northwest has become one modern center of such psychoptic mycophagy in those United States [Guzmán & Ott 1976; Guzmán *et al.* 1976; Weil 1977]. A number of species are used in the Pacific Northwest, notably: *Psilocybe cyanescens*; *P. pelliculosa*; *P. semilanceata*; and *P. stuntzii* (a novel species, discovered in the course of my own research) [Guzmán & Ott 1976; Guzmán *et al.* 1976; Weil 1977]. [*Vide: PART II*, for descriptions and illustrations of the *TWELVE* more important psychoptic species of the U.S., México and Canada.] Ludible use of the **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms is well-established in the U.S. Gulf Coast-States. *Stropharia* (also *Psilocybe*) *cubensis*, one of the species collected (by Reko and Schultes), in Huautla, in 1938 [Heim & Wasson 1958; Schultes 1939; Singer 1958]—and subsequently found in shamanic use by the Wassons [Wasson & Wasson 1957]—is the **PSILOCINIC** species that most commonly is ingested in Texas, Florida, Alabama and Louisiana—where it grows most abundantly [Ott 1976; Pollock 1975; Stamets 1996]. There were, as of 1978, incipient signs of psychoptic mycophagy, likewise, in the NorthEastern United States.

In 1976, Jeremy Bigwood and two collaborators (Dennis and Terence McKenna) published *Psilocybin. Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide* [Oss & Eric 1976], which adapted (illustrated by stepwise-photographs, both in color and black-and-white)

San Antonio's [1971] simple technique for growing *Agaricus bisporus*, to *Stropharia cubensis*—one of the first species cultivated by Heim in Paris, and now known to be the **PSILOCINIC** species that most commonly is cultivated. Recently, a number of (far less-distinguished) 'cultivation-guides' have followed on the heels, of that pioneering Bigwood (and McKennas) *-Book* [Harris 1976; Pollock 1977]. At the present there exist excellent guides to cultivating these, and many other mushroomic species—particularly those also by Paul Stamets [Stamets 1993; Stamets & Chilton 1983]. Simple home-technologies for the cultivation of **PSILOCINIC** mushroom have enabled this modern practice of psychoptic mycophagy to spread-into areas of the World, where these **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms do not grow naturally or abundantly.

In the past two years [1976–1978], mushroomic 'truck-farms' have been established in various parts of the World, catering to novel black markets for **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms. Regrettably, numerous profiteers have begun to market viable (albeit unsterile) spores of *Stropharia cubensis*, to (would-be) growers—*via* international magazine-adverts. It indeed is greatly lamented, that unscrupulous 'grifters' have exacted exorbitant rates for spores, and miscellaneous paraphernalia—even composted fecal matter worth—at best—a few CENTS *per* kilogram, magically has been transmogrified into so-called 'mushroom-compost', and was being sold in 1978 by what aptly have been denominated 'dung-dealers', for up to US\$22.00 *per* kilogram!

LEGAL AND SOCIETAL STATUS OF PSYCHOPTIC MYCOPHAGY

Even before most citizens so much as had heard-tell of the **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms, they came within the compass of our over-zealous 'law-makers'—who proscribed **PSILOCYBINE** and **PSILOCINE**, as 'Controlled [*sic*] Substances'. *Public Law* 91–513 or, *The Comprehensive Drug Abuse [*sic*] Prevention and Control [*sic*] Act* of 1970, made any unauthorized possession, sale, or even 'intent to sell', of **PSILOCYBINE** or **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms a crime, punishable by stiff fines and/or a lengthy imprisonment. This ILL-CONCEIVED action IN NO WAY has served to deter the usage of these mushrooms as *ludible drugs*, and there is every indication that many more people quite eagerly would commence using them... if they only were given the chance.

I see no medical justification for proscribing either **PSILOCYBINE** or **PSILOCINE**. Animal-investigations have shown both these alkaloids to be remarkably *non-toxic* [Hofmann 1968], and I know of no case, where *an adult* has been made seriously ill from **PSILOCINIC MUSHROOMS**. *Children* might show an anomalous reaction, to **PSILOCINE** and/or **PSILOCYBINE**, even with life-threatening symptoms... one child

had died in Oregon, in 1960, following accidental ingestion of *Psilocybe baocystis* [McCawley *et al.* 1962]. It should go without saying, that children should not be given these mushrooms, nor any other psychoptic drug. Hundreds of thousands of intentional inebriations with **PSILOCINIC** mushrooms occur each year in the Pacific Northwest alone, yet no conspicuous medical problems have emerged. Even were these mushrooms demonstrably dangerous, it does not follow necessarily, that legal proscriptions should be warranted. Deadly-poisonous mushrooms, of the *genera* *Amanita* and *Galerina* (AMATOXINS)—which have killed numerous people, in the United States and elsewhere—are subject to absolutely no legal strictures whatever.

These ill-advised laws against **PSILOCINE** and **PSILOCYBINE** immeasurably have hindered clinical experimentation with compounds some psychiatrists believe to be the most effective aids to psychotherapy as yet discovered. Their ‘good intentions’ notwithstanding, these ‘law-makers’ would do well to research the writings of the Wassons; then they might appreciate the significance of their discoveries, possibly even learn something of the untapped potentialities of these mushrooms. The history of *TEONANÁCATL* affords us a glimpse into the veneration in which our ancestors held what to them were *sacred mushrooms*; and surely their modern use is a phenomenon worthy of careful, detailed and systematic research. As R.G. Wasson [1961] wrote:

As man emerged from his brutish past, thousands of years ago, there was a stage in the evolution of his awareness when the discovery of a mushroom... with miraculous properties was a revelation to him, a veritable detonator to his soul, arousing in him sentiments of awe and reverence, and gentleness and love, to the highest pitch of which [hu]mankind is capable, all those sentiments and virtues that [hu]mankind has ever since regarded as the highest attribute of his kind. It made him see what this perishing mortal eye cannot see. What today is resolved into a mere drug, a TRYPTAMINE or LYSERGIC ACID derivative, was for him a prodigious miracle, inspiring in him poetry and philosophy and religion. *Perhaps with all our modern knowledge we do not need the divine mushrooms any more. OR DO WE NEED THEM MORE THAN EVER? Some are shocked that they key even to RELIGION might be reduced to a mere DRUG. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE DRUG IS AS MYSTERIOUS AS IT EVER WAS.* [Wasson’s entire *Essay* here is reprinted, as **PART I-C**. The *italics* are by the Editor.]

María Sabina doubtless was correct, when she rued, that the influx of strangers to her remote Mazatec hills caused (once) *sacred mushrooms*, to lose their miraculous powers [Estrada 1977]. Although today there must be more ‘communicants’ with these ‘magic mushrooms’, than any time before, it is a profane and puerile, largely a hedonistic cult, which has supplanted its venerable ancestor. Gordon Wasson

rightly observed that the superficial use of these mushrooms, by «ignorant thrill-seekers», was a desecration [Ott & Pollock 1976]. Today's mushroom-eater might be wont to ingest a *sub*-threshold (or «*micro*»-) dose of the mushrooms, often in a social setting, in combinations with ALCOHOL, and other DRUGS. Truly, it can be said that s/he knows nothing of the significance and the potential of this miraculous *fungus* ENTHEOGEN which held our remotest ancestors in thrall. These mushrooms deserve better and we might hope for a resurgence in their use as ENTHEOGENS. After all, a wise and serious user of TEONANÁCATL may, to paraphrase William Blake, *hold infinity in the palm of a hand; hold eternity in an hour*. S/he may experience ECSTASY—in the original sense of that bastardized word—«stand outside heirmself»—like our predecessors, those archaic SHAMANS of Mesoamérica... even know, for a time, the awe, terror, fascination and Mystery, of Communion with the Ineffable.

JONATHAN OTT

Olympia, Washington

Christmas Day, 1977

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