THE TEONANACATL — IN PRE-CONQUEST ACCOUNTS AND TODAY

By Lothar Knauth.

Brother Toribio de Benavente, better known as Motolinia, describing the idolatry and bad habits of the Mexican Indians, gave this unusual report about one of their lesser known vices:

They had another drunkenness which made them more cruel: which was of some small mushrooms, which are found here as in Castilla; however the ones here are of such nature that eaten raw and being sour, one drinks afterwards or eats them with a bit of honey; and after a little while they were seeing a thousand visions, especially of snakes, and as they went completely out of their minds, it seemed to them that their legs and body were full of worms which were eating them alive, and thus, half raving, they went out of the house, wishing that somebody would kill them, and with that bestial drunkenness and the trouble they felt, it would happen sometimes that they would hang themselves. And they were also against the others much more cruel. They called these mushrooms teonanacatl, which means flesh of the God (the demon they adored) and in that manner, with that bitter food, their cruel god held communion with them.

Other pre-Conquest accounts, describing hallucinatory mushrooms and their effects, all written in the 16th Century, are available in Spanish (by Spanish monks and Mestizo historians like Duran and Tezozomoc) and in Nahuatl (Sahagún, Ms. de la Biblioteca Nacional de México). Collected after the Conquest, they base themselves, directly or indirectly, on Indian informants.

Not until recently, a renewed interest has been taken in these “intoxicating mushrooms”. In 1936 Robert J. Weitlaner disco-

1 Motolinia, Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España, Editorial Chávez Hayhoe (México, 1941), trat. I, cap. II, p. 25.
vered them still being used in ceremonies of the native curanderos among the Mazatec Indians in Huautla de Jiménez, State of Oaxaca, México. This discovery was followed by descriptions of non-Indians of Native mushroom ceremonies (Basset Johnson, Carrasco). However, only after the mycologists (the Wason, Roger Heim) became interested, widespread scientific attention was aroused. Public interest awakened after Life magazine published an advance story from the Wason’s Mushrooms, Russia and History, with a picture spread of a mushroom ceremony in Oaxaca. Today, hallucinatory mushrooms are grown in greenhouses in Paris and their active substance is synthesized in Switzerland and the United States. Full-scale medical and psychological research programs are under way, among others, at the Institute of Personality Research at Harvard and the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México.

By correlating Indian and quasi-Indian pre-Conquest references to hallucinatory mushrooms with personal experiences encountered today under controlled group conditions, we hope to reach new insights into one little known facet of pre-Conquest culture.

Types of Hallucinatory Mushrooms

To ward off the impending invasion of Cortés and his Spaniards, the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II sent out some of the best magicians of his vast domain. One group of them came from a series of towns famed for their wizardry, which are found on an imaginary line that stretches itself from east to west south of the Valley of Mexico: Acapixtla (Yecapixtla today), Huaxtepec (Oaxtepec), Yauhtepec, Cuauhnauac (Cuenavaca), Ocullian, Malinalco and Tenancingo. 

Strangely enough, this line extended to the northeast leads to San Pedro Nuxapa, on the slopes of the volcano Popocatepetl, and, drawn out to the west, to San Pedro Tlanixco, on the slopes of the Sierra de Toluca (Tzintzuntzancatl). Stranger even, in both San Pedros hallucinatory mushrooms are gathered and used to this day. The third prominent “Mushroom village”, already mentioned, is Huautla de Jiménez, which, located near Teotitlan del Camino and Tehuacan, lies in another territory famous

in pre-Conquest times for its magicians.

In each one of the three locales, different in appearance: The one called teonanacatl, the one in San Pedro Nuxapa, and the one in San Pedro Tlanixco.

The last mentioned variety was used in the already mer­

Etermed by the natives mujercitas. The Nahuatl equivalent, Cihuatzitzin, identifies the mushrooms in the market, a few bites of the mushroom otherwise the mujercitas will die.

Also used in native ceremonies, no hallucinatory value, are horchtaclacatzitzintli) identified by the

capitate (little children, in Nahuatl: poci, known as Neurophyllum floccosum.

Mushrooms in pre-Conquest times

I have drunk mushroom

I am desolate on this earth

Thus a Nahuatl poet expressed Friendship”. A feeling of desolation most pre-Conquest descriptions of mushrooms, Orozco y Berra, wrote himself mainly on Motolinia, Garibay K., Angel María, Poesía (Mexico, 1952), p. 103.

The teonanacatl, divine flesh, desirable, was eaten to practice certain festivities three only with a little honey. Their frightening hallucinations.

That these mushrooms were the

fact that Alonso de Molina, in his


garibay K., Angel María, Poesía (Mexico, 1952), p. 103.

Mushrooms in pre-Conquest times for its wise men, astrologers and magicians.

In each one of the three locations the mushrooms are slightly different in appearance: The one in Huautla is named *Psilocybe mexicana*, the one in San Pedro Nexapa, *Psilocybe aztecorum Heim*, and the one in San Pedro Tlanixco, *Psilocybe wassonii*.

The last mentioned variety is known to me personally and was used in the already mentioned group experiments. They are called by the natives *mujericas* (little women) or by their Huautla equivalent, *Cihuatitzintli*. They women selling me the mushrooms in the market told me that they had to take a few bites of the mushrooms while picking them, “because otherwise the *mujericas* will get mad and we will fall sick”.

Also used in native ceremonies, but according to Heim of no hallucinatory value, are *hombrecitos* (little men, in Huautla: *tlaetzintli*) identified by the French mycologist as *Cordyceps capitate* and easily recognized by their phallic shape and *niños* (little children, in Huautla: *piltzitzintli*), a yellow mushroom known as *Nevrophyllum floccosum*.

Mushrooms in pre-Conquest Accounts

I have drunk mushroom wine, my heart cries.
I am desolate on this earth, I am a wretch...

Thus a Nahuatl poet expresses his feeling of “Ephemerai Friendship”. A feeling of desolation seems to be common to most pre-Conquest descriptions of the effect of intoxicating mushrooms. Orozco y Berra, writing in the 1870’s but basing himself mainly on Motolinia, gives this account:

The *teonanacatl*, divine flesh, divine mushroom, bitter and disagreeable, was eaten to practice certain superstitious acts; they took two or three only with a little honey. They produced a state of intoxication with frightening hallucinations.

That these mushrooms were widely used is shown by the fact that Alonso de Molina, in his *Vocabulario en Lengua Castelana de la Conquista*, vol. IV, p. 118.

---


llana y Mexicana in 1571 published for the first time, gives five different translations for the term “mushroom which makes drunk”, namely: xochinanacatl, tepexina nanacatl, iztlaualcan nanacatl, mazauacan nanacatl and tequititi nanacatl.

Often when disconsolate, dissolute, disintegrating states of personality are described, we find a reference to mushrooms in the Nahua accounts recorded by the Franciscan monk Bernardino de Sahagún. The following quotations are taken from their German publication and translation by Leonard Schultze-Jena. Only the first is from another source.

Of yollopoliuhqui, the deranged one, “the one who has lost his heart”, it is sad: iuhqui nanacatl tiquatinemi, “you are like one who always eats mushrooms”.

The angry young man, in tlapellilote telpuchtli, has turned into a mushroom, nanacatl mochiuhitimeni. This is also said of the angry full-grown man, tlapellilote tetzon, who has turned into a mushroom, who eats them all the time, nanacatl mochiuhitimeni, quiquatinemi.

From the bad noblewoman without shame, in amo qualli tetlapallo amo pinavani, who is addicted to mushrooms, monananacatitinemi, it is only a short step to the prostitute, aviyanani, who, besides drinking mivintitinemi, and chicle-chewing, mohapa­litincmi, also has the vice of eating mushrooms, monananavitininemi.

The gallery of lesser members of society continues, downward, to the disintegrated young man, telpuchtitelitoc, who also chews mushrooms consistently, to the procurer, teltlanochiliani, who has a whole repertoire of effects for he acts like an hallucinatory seed, tepixeia, an enchanter, and an hallucinatory mushrooms.

After having found references to them in the reporting of attributes among the lower fringes of society, we suddenly encounter a mention of the coronation of Moctezuma II. The religious festivities on mushrooms, which contain the intoxicating drinks; while the believers heard voices; therefore notices, revelations of the future.

Orozco y Berra bases his descriptions by Durán and from the 16th century. Durán says:

...(they) were so intoxicated that they killed themselves by the mushrooms, they saw visions, and their demon spoke to the

Tezozomoc has this to add:

...the strangers gave them... so that they would get intoxicated others went inside to their room of the patio and every time they danced and to sing; and so they dressed themselves with false hair.

Mushrooms in the coronation nanacatl was not so bad after all. Following text from Sahagún, the ceremony I could find written threw a new light on the ancient pre-Conquest Nahua culture.

Though not describing the attributes of the important fiesta of the Aztec empire, gave the following caravans to the distant,
shaped for the first time, gives
a term "mushroom which makes
stepexina nanacatl, ixlauacan
d tequitini nanacatl.9
olute, disintegrating states of
and a reference to mushrooms
by the Franciscan monk Ber-
ving quotations are taken from
translation by Leonard Schultze-
other source.
gaged one, "the one who has lost
anacatl tiquatini, "you are
rooms".7 The angry young man,
into a mushroom, nanacatl
id of the angry full-grown man,
 into a mushroom, who eats
uihitnemi, quiquatinemi." From
shame, in amo qualli tetlapallo
lyo, mushrooms, monananacati-
the prostitute, aviyan, who,
i, and chicle-chewing, motlapa-
eating mushrooms, monananavi-
membes of society continues,
young man, telpuchtlaveiltoc,
consistently,12 to the procurer, te-
re repertoire of effects for he acts
pixvia, an enchanter, and an ha-
ences to them in the reporting of
fringes of society, we suddenly
encounter a mention of them in Orozco y Berra's account of
the coronation of Mocteucocma II:

The religious festivities ended, the lords gathered to eat woodland
mushrooms, which contain that which confust's the mind, as if they were
intoxicating drinks; while their minds were confused they saw visions,
believed to hear voices; therefore, they took these hallucinations as divine
notices, revelations of the future and augury of things to come.14

Orozco y Berra bases his accounts of the coronation on the
descriptions by Durán and Tezozomoc, chroniclers writing in the
16th century. Durán says of the same incident:

... (they) were so intoxicated and out of their mind that many of
them killed themselves by their own hands, and under the power of
those mushrooms, they saw visions and had revelations of the future,
and their demon spoke to them in their drunkenness.15

Tezozomoc has this to add:

... the strangers gave them mushrooms found in the mountain woods
so that they would get intoxicated, and with that they began to dance;
others went inside to their rooms to rest. Then they took the big lights
of the patio and everytime they started the song the strangers began
to dance and to sing; and so that they should not be known they dressed
themselves with false hair.16 *

Mushrooms in the coronation festivities? Perhaps the teo-
nanacatl was not so bad after all as a status symbol? The follow-
ing text from Sahagún, the only report of an entire mushroom
ceremony I could find written and preserved in Nahuatl, might
throw a new light on the actual place taken by mushrooms in
pre-Conquest Nahuatl culture.

Though not describing the coronation, it nonetheless is part
of the important fiesta which the pochteque, the great merchants
of the Aztec empire, gave the night before they sent their trad-
ning caravans to the distant, foreign commercial centers of the

15 DURÁN, Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y Islas de Tierra FIrme,
Editorial Nacional (México, 1951), cap. LIV, p. 431.
16 TEZOZOMOC, Crónica Mexicana, cap. LXXXVII, p. 419.* It is possible that
we have here another translation making as little sense as the same author's
description of the tlachtli, the ballgame.
Gulf and Pacific coasts. For the Nahuatl text we have depended on the paleography of Leonard Schultze-Jena; the translation into English, keeping close to the original without romantic enlargement and verbal ornamentation, is our own:


Auh in nanacatl neocyo in quiquaya; in ihuac ye inteuch quiza nanacatli, in ocan mihtotia, oncan chocha auh y cequintin inoc iyoloy quimati: calaqui, in ocan inyeyan moltalan caltech, acmo mihtotia, can oncan ualtotimotlaliza.

inaca commottomilia, ye mizquiz, oncan chocaticia, in aca commottomilia, yaomiqquiz, in aca commottomilia, tequanqualotiz, in aca commottomilia, yoac tlama in, in aca commottomilia, yehual itomocuitlato, in aca commottomilia, tecouaz, tla-caua yez. In aca commottomilia, tetlaximaz, tezohtonalotiz, tetepacholotiz, in aca commottomilia, ihichitequiz, ino tetepacholotiz. In aca commottomilia, tequetapacholotiz, quitzaocixtaiz. In aca commottomilia, atlan mizquiz, in aca commottomilia, yehual oncan iuian yococa nomemitiz, ypan mizquiz. In aca commottomilia, tlapanco valhuetzitz, mictuuetzic.

Yzzazo quesquich tepan mochihuaz, mocrh oncan conittaya, in ahnoza ylaquiloiz, auh i oquincuah nanacatl, ca tepan monoohnotnia, quimulhuia, in te commottomilliqa, ahu and ye- huantzin, in ahle quequahque nanacatl, no quichiuhtinemi, in te commottomilia, ylaquiloiz in te commottomilia, teaquiquilimi emeacuentin: in ahzo ihictelqui, in ahzo tetlahtlesxima, yzzazo izquital, manli omihto: in tlama in, tequiuahcatiz, in tepuchiyahcatiz, in yawimizquiz, in motlacamatiz, in tecouaz, cuicuicatz, in tequiuahcatiz, in tepuchiyahcatiz, in yaomizquiz, in motlacamatiz, in tecouaz, tlaqualli quiquaya, in ahnozo anauac miquitiuh.
The arrived those that were going to dance: the Tlacatecatl, the Tlacochealecatl, and those that were going to abandon themselves, the Otomi and the Titiccheua. Those of the merchant leaders who were not going to dance were the straight-laced, chaste ones, who bought themselves somebody. And the old merchants met them with flowers, with tobacco, with brilliant green paper collars and bunches of quetzal feathers, glistening in the moonlight.

Right at the beginning, as a refreshment, they ate mushrooms. Then they felt with it a burn, a red-hot blown fire inside, and not from hot food they were eating. Therefore they drank cocoa that was kept warm for the night. Thusly they ate the intoxicating mushrooms.

When they had finished eating them, they danced and they cried. Meanwhile some of them felt the effect: they went inside; they sat down, with their backs against the wall. They didn’t dance anymore. They sat by themselves, in the same place and let their heads hang.

In that stupor, some imagined they were going to die and they cried; some were to perish in the war; some were to be eaten by wild beasts; some were to take prisoners of war; some were to be somebody rich, very rich; some were to buy and he owners of slaves; some were to be adulterers, were to be stoned, were to be stoned to death; some were to be thieves and he stoned to death; some were to become disolute, were to end as drunkards; some were to drown; some were to be somebody peaceful, peacefully living to themselves and dying the same way; some were to fall from the roof and die suddenly.

There were many who were speaking to themselves as they saw how were they were to perish. And as the mushroom effect wore off, they met, huddled together to talk: the ones who had been in the stupor and those who had not eaten any mushrooms who hadn’t been in the stupor — and those were teasing the others all night long about what was going to happen: that they were perhaps thieves, that some of them were adulterers. There were so many things to pique them with: that one was to capture prisoners, the great works another was going to do; that one was to be a leader among the young men; that one was to die in the war;
that one was to be captured; that one was to be rich; that one
was to be successful with women; that one was to wash slaves
for sacrifice; that one was to be an adulterer; that one was to
hang himself; that one was to drown; that one was to become
dissolute. There were many of those that were teasing... And
to themselves they imagined that they might go to their deaths
in that far land...”

*Mushrooms Today*

The two mushroom experiments in which I took part were
undertaken at different times, in different locations and in
different group situations. Both times the *mujercitas* from the
slopes of the Sierra de Toluca were used. The first experiment
took place in the midst of the rainy season, in August; the se­
cond, towards its end, in October. Fresh mushrooms are availa­
ble only during the rainy season.

On Thursday, market day, the first lot of mushrooms was
bought from Doña Juana, who sampled them in front of us,
in the shade of a churchwall, away from the tumult of the mar­
ket. Upon the return to Mexico City, the mushrooms were was­
hed in cold water. Since it wouldn’t be till Saturday that all
subjects could meet for the group session, they were kept till
then on the center shelf of the refrigerator.

The experiment took place in a residence in Cuernavaca,
fifty miles south of Mexico. This city of “eternal spring” has
a subtropical climate and an average, even temperature in
the middle 80’s. Throughout the experiment the usual atmos­
phere of the house was maintained. After an afternoon of swim­
mimg, the participants wore either sports clothes or swimming
suits. Though surely a far cry from Aztec vestments, the attire
offered probably the same freedom of movement as the *max­
tlatl* and the *tilmatli* of the Aztec merchants and noblemen.
The idea was to experience the mushroom effect in the usual
informal occidental group situation, with the least possible
changes.

At 17.00 hrs., I began eating eight of the bluishly tinted
mushrooms measuring on the average 7 cm. in stemlength
and 4 cm. in head diameter. Their taste was bitter-sour and left an
acrid afterburn on the tongue and in the esophagus. I was seated
at a garden table on the terrace. The large parasol above me had
its underside covered with my line of vision, about 2 m.
then the length of the short lawn was followed by a line.
It was about one hour before

After almost an hour I felt a slight rise in color perception
saw some of the flowers. At the same time I felt a slight
increase in color perception, a tendency to laugh, and
visions of flowers. I changed my point of view, gazed closest
beyond the hedge... my... not that marvelous arcade, which changed
*I noticed that I could retreat in it at this side of the house*
with its glasses and the... beyond the hedge... my
of that marvelous arcade, which changed
images in the image on the screen, the confines of the car:
it, a tendency to laugh. I changed my point of view, gazed closest
beyond the hedge... my... not that marvelous arcade, which changed
images in the image on the screen, the confines of the car:
it, a tendency to laugh. I changed my point of view, gazed closest
beyond the hedge... my... not that marvelous arcade, which changed
images in the image on the screen, the confines of the car:
that one was to be rich; that one
en; that one was to wash slaves
e an adulterer; that one was to
drown; that one was to become
those that were teasing. . . And
at they might go to their deaths

ms Today

ments in which I took part were
in different locations and in
times the mujercitas from the
were used. The first experiment
rainy season, in August; the se-
er. Fresh mushrooms are availa-

the first lot of mushrooms was
sampled them in front of us,
away from the tumult of the mar-
City, the mushrooms were was-
baldn't be till Saturday that all
roup session, they were kept till
refrigerator.

in a residence in Cuernavaca,
This city of “eternal spring” has
average, even temperature in
the experiment the usual atmos-
ned. After an afternoon of swim-
other sports clothes or swimming
from Aztec vestments, the attire
edom of movement as the max-
Aztec merchants and noblemen.
ne mushroom effect in the usual
situation, with the least possible

eight of the bluishly tinted
average 7 cm. in stemlength and
taste was bitter-sour and left an
nd in the esophagus. I was seated
. The large parasol above me had

its underside covered with a tasteless flowerpattern. Following
my line of vision, about 2 m. beyond the table was a low hedge,
then the length of the swimming pool. Farther on, 10 m. of
lawn was followed by a line of trees forming the property line.
It was about one hour before sunset.

After almost an hour I felt a slight, short pain in the nape of
my neck. This was followed soon by a hardly noticeable in-
crease in color perception. At about 18.10 hrs. I thought I
saw some of the flowers in the pattern of the parasol move.
At the same time I felt an extreme lightness and, coupled with
it, a tendency to laugh. My eyes started watering and I had
to visit the bathroom inside the house.

After I returned to my seat, I fixed my eyes on the fork in
the tree at the end of my line of vision. Soon it took on the
shape of a mask, but not in the sense that it was obviously a
mask, but much more that one was reminded of one — about
the way one is reminded of something or other in the shape
of the inkplots of a Rohrschach test. This seems to be a very
important point to note: Reality does not change completely
while fixing the eye on a certain object. It is much more a
seeing of forms based on the concrete image, or integrated into
it. Soon afterwards the tree became the corner pillar of a kind
of arcade, which changed continually its appearance. Suddenly,
I noticed that I could return to the reality of my “table environ-
ment” at this side of the hedge. The table was still the table,
with its glasses and the parasol overhead. And when I looked
beyond the hedge... my tree became once more the corner
of that marvelous arcade. The images in it were rapidly chan-
ging, composite patterns, comparable with finely made mosaic
or an exquisite stained glass window. The entire situation appe-
ared closest to sitting in a drive-in theatre: One can lose oneself
in the image on the screen, but can also return to the reality of
the confines of the car: to the coke on the dashboard and the
box of popcorn.

At about that time an assistant put a portable radio in front
of me. (Who had any idea of time?) Possibly the music might
influence my visions. It didn’t work. The radio music sounded
tinny, grating, out of place. I wanted to be alone with my
patterns.

I changed my point of concentration to the parasol above
me and now its underside became my world of beautiful imagi-
nation. Within its circle, moving harmonically, changing consistently, appeared the most unusual designs of extremely brilliant, integrated colors. There literally thousands of them, one more perfect than the other. In their forms, not in their content, they reminded one of Mixtec codices. All was pure enjoyment. Later on I was told that I sat for an hour and a half staring at the parasol above me.

Another desire to urinate made me leave my position on the terrace. To enter the rest of the house, I had to pass through the kitchen. I noticed a pastel overcast in the interior. Otherwise, neither my visions nor my motions seemed impaired. The assistant who had brought the radio met me and said, “you should see how Ben is carrying on in the bar”. Indeed, there seemed to be a cooing, singing sound in the bar-recreation room. As I entered the bathroom I was startled by the extreme luminescent brightness of a maroon towel hung up to dry. Also, the tile room seemed to be alive with hidden fluorescent light.

Then I went to the bar and saw my friend Ben sitting alone in an easy chair. The guitar laid across his knees, he was holding a nonsense dialogue interspersed with nonsense rhymes — with his barret. He recognized me immediately (there was never any difficulty in returning to the reality of recognition) and said, “You know what I just found out? A guitar, like a human being, has a musical side...” Here he struck the cords. Then he flipped the instrument over and tapped the bottom, “...and a drum side”. Then he went into an explanation of the different opportunities of influencing human actions by using either the musical or the drum side of a guitar. At that instant I noticed that also to my repertoires of feelings a new perception of symbolic in human situations had been added.

Leaving Ben, I went to one of the bedrooms. Three other participants were lying on the beds, hallucinating. They appeared to be completely happy with themselves. Now and then a low chuckle might be heard. Lying down also, in the darkness of a night outside, I noticed that now I could turn to the hallucinations “inside me” at will, being able to change back with equal ease to the actual surroundings. Even while sinking away to see my “inside patterns”, I could feel the texture of the bedspread with my fingers. My visions now consisted mainly of ribbons of the republics and American.

Between spells of being a weird experience of synchronizing to me, a coed, college senior, stretched out full impact. Next to her a professor, her senior, stretched out fulfillment. I saw the situational phallic posture of the father of the child... I might actually have any aphrodisian qualities.

After some more time in the bar. He was still conversing, autonomous attitude. Then, objects had took on a mellow, they could be kept solid. Or color, could not be forced away.

Soon the effect began to five hours since it set in. The perception, especially of completely back, feeling of was remained a lingering, heightened. I felt no after effect or change pain on my eyeballs, as a. Eats and drinks were brought returned one after another experiences. In this respect, nothing.

Exchanging impressions and the assistants, the following established itself: 1) The effect of the eating. 2) It is felt first a general relaxation. This led and a loosening of the sphincter of the eyes. 3) The first hallucination in a more or less the hallucinations is complete on the psychological state of no feeling of hostility. Then a sufficiency, a desire not to situations arise, the tendency;
of ribbons of the republics’ flags: French, German, Mexican and American.

Between spells of being absorbed in my patterns, I had an interesting experience of symbolic perception. On the bed next to me, a coed, college senior, was lying in a bundled-up position. Next to her a professor from a prominent university, quite her senior, stretched out full length. Suddenly, with considerable impact, I saw the situation as a symbolic relationship: The phallic posture of the father figure next to the womb position of the child... I might add, that mushrooms don’t seem to have any aphrodisian qualities.

After some more time in the bedroom I returned to Ben in the bar. He was still conversing with his barret in a completely autonomous attitude. Then, for the first time, I noticed that objects had took on a melted look, but through conscious effort they could be kept solid. Only their halo, an aura of pastel color, could not be forced away.

Soon the effect began to wear away. It had been just about five hours since it set in. There were still waves of distorted perception, especially of colors. Then, abruptly, I was completely back, feeling purged somehow and hungry. There remained a lingering, heightened color awareness. Other wise, I felt no after effect or hangover. I thought only to feel a slight pain on my eyeballs, as after looking into bright sunlight. Eats and drinks were brought to the table. All participants returned one after another and began talking about their experiences. In this respect, nothing was changed from pre-Conquest times.

Exchanging impressions and adding information supplied by the assistants, the following pattern of mushroom effects established itself: 1) The effect sets in approximately an hour after the eating. 2) It is felt first by a change in color perception and a general relaxation. This leads to feeling happy to ridiculous and a loosening of the sphincters, mainly inducing a watering of the eyes. 3) The first hour or more is one of intense hallucination in a more or less catatonic state. 4) The quality of the hallucinations is completely subjective, seeming to depend on the psychological state of the person. 5) There seems to be no feeling of hostility. There might be manifestations of autosufficiency, a desire not to be bothered. If potential conflict situations arise, the tendency is to withdraw. 6) There occurred...
definitely no schizophrenic state. All subjects had absolute control over their actions, whenever necessary. (It should be investigated to what extent this holds true for the quasicatatonic state already mentioned). 7) There is absolutely no difficulty in communicating verbally, though the sense of auto-sufficiency is such there is no or little desire for verbal communication. 8) There are no side or after effects worth mentioning.

The second experiment took place in a residence in a Mexico City suburb, in October. This time the mushrooms were eaten the same day they were bought in the Valley of Toluca. The effect was basically the same. The quasi-catatonic state at the beginning was less pronounced and shorter. A certain harmony with sound effects was achieved by listening to Handel’s *Watermusic* played back on tape. The over-all experience was pronouncedly wavelike: periods of almost complete reality changing with waves of hyperreality and distorted color perception. There was an extremely heightened awareness of symbolic values in inter-human relations. Toward the end of the toxic state, I experienced for first time a morphic change of my hand: the skin seemed extremely pergamine, the hairs prominent and the fingers growing and shrinking. The effect occurred only after watching the hand for some time. It could be “cut off” at will without difficulty.

It should be noted that during the second experiment all participants spoke at least three languages with some fluency. (The first session was carried on in English). There was absolutely no difficulty sustaining verbal communication in whatever language seemed most convenient at the moment.¹⁸

**Conclusion**

A comparison between pre-Conquest accounts and present day experiences shows on the surface a considerable similarity of over-all effect. There is, however, a trend toward exaggeration in the Spanish and Mestizo chronicles. Closest to the effects encountered today comes the Nahua collected by Sahagún.

Attributive expressions, inv also preserved in Nahua, must have been known widely of five words for *intoxicating* bulary.

Since it was not meant for a account seems to have preserved relation. In the Spanish and M with writings for wide publica before, they are in accordance lic hierarchy that effect that is approved. This explains also th and excessive acts. In turn, the range of the effect.

Three points seem to arise bween pre-Conquest accounts a Nahua records are much less those written in Spanish; 2) of Nahua culture an undist prerequisite and 3) we should culture from within its context structure and should never ac or take for granted, the value observers hundreds of years.

¹⁸ Though being born and brought up in Germany, I now speak more English than German. When I was asked during the toxic state, I and difficulty recalling the German word for *pea* (*Erbse*) and could think sooner of the Spanish *chicharo*. A perfectly natural lapse of memory which might also have happened any other time.
countered today comes the Nahua text about the pochteca party, collected by Sahagún.

Attributive expressions, involving references to mushrooms, also preserved in Nahua, may not mean a condemnation in pre-Conquest society as such. They are most likely used to create a strong image and evoke the intensity of the effect which must have been known widely — as is shown by the presence of five words for intoxicating mushrooms in the Molina vocabulary.

Since it was not meant for general publication, the Pochteca account seems to have preserved a considerable objectivity of relation. In the Spanish and Mestizo descriptions we are dealing with writings for wide publication, if not for propaganda. Therefore, they are in accordance with the opinion of the Catholic hierarchy that effect that cannot be controlled should not be approved. This explains also the emphasis on “horrible visions” and excessive acts. In turn, the pochteca report gives the whole range of the effect.

Three points seem to arise clearly from the comparison between pre-Conquest accounts and present-day experiences: 1) Nahua records are much less discolored and exaggerated than those written in Spanish; 2) in order to view manifestations of Nahua culture an undistorted, “humanistic” outlook is prerequisite and 3) we should try to comprehend pre-Conquest culture from within its context, perceive the complexity of its structure and should never accept without severe questioning, or take for granted, the value judgments made by opinionated observers hundreds of years ago —or even just yesterday.