

BOOK REVIEW

Dugan F.M. 2008. Fungi in the Ancient World: How Mushrooms, Mildews, Molds, and Yeast Shaped the Early Civilizations of Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Near East. APS Press – The American Phytopathological Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A. 140 pp. ISBN 978-0-89054-361-0

As indicated in the "Preface" (p. 1) this book reviews the diverse role of fungi in ancient societies, from the beginnings of the Neolithic until the Middle Ages. The roles of fungi in agriculture, their impact on myth, folklore, healing rituals and politics have been broadly discussed. Since the author is associated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and with the Washington State University no wonder that history and plant protection topics are broadly discussed in respect to agriculture, horticulture and forestry.

The book contains following chapters: Chap. 1 – "Introduction" (p. 1–4); Chap. 2 – "Fungi in baking and brewing" (p. 5–17); Chap. 3 – "Edible fungi" (p. 19–23); Chap. 4 – "Fungi as "entheogens" (p. 25–32). Chap. 5. – "Poisonous fungi and mycotoxins" (p. 33–47); Chap. 6 – "Fungi used for medicinal purposes and other technologies" (p. 49–54); Chap. 7 – "Plant-pathogenic fungi" (p. 55–67); Chap. 8 – "Fungi as agents rot on wood and fabric" (p. 69–70); Chap. 9 – "Human and animal pathogens" (p. 71–74); Chap. 10 – "Environmental and ecological roles of Fungi" (p. 75–76); Chap. 11 – "Ancient fungi preserved in glacial ice or permafrost" (p. 77–79); Chap. 12 – "Ancient images of fungi" (p. 81–87); Chap. 13 – "Fungi in ancient European folklore" (p. 89–95); Chap. 14 – "Ideas of the ancients on fungal biology" (p. 97–99); Chap. 15 – "Some additional hypotheses regarding impact of fungi in ancient times" (p. 101–106); Chap. 16 – "Conclusions" (p. 107–110). The contents of all chapters are based on impressively numerous bibliographies as the part "Literature Cited" has 428 references (p. 111–136). A good Index (p. 137–140) allows the readers to find specific topics.

Summarizing, this book clearly demonstrates that edible, toxic and halucinogenic fungi had a big effect on ancient civilization including customs, politics, religion, human, animal and plant health, art, folklore and the beginnings of science. As such this book will be an excellent source of valuable information for academic teachers and a wide range of specialists such as historians, politicians, agronomists, botanists, mycologists, plant pathologists and plant breeders. For that reason I recommend this book to agronomic, medical, historical and general libraries.

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