

BOOK REVIEW

The Tlingit Indians. George Emmons, edited with additions by Frederica de Laguna. Biography by Jean Low. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1992. Pp. 530. 65 line drawings, 127 photographs. \$60.00 (hardcover). ISBN 0-295-97008-1.

The Tlingit Indians is sumptuously produced, encyclopedic, and well illustrated. It represents a monumental effort of some 60 years' labor between Emmons and de Laguna. De Laguna has performed an invaluable service in making Emmons's extensive Tlingit data, and his interpretations of them, available for the first time. *The Tlingit Indians* is based on Emmons's decades of fieldwork in southeast Alaska and intimate knowledge of the Tlingit. As its publication is more than a century after the beginning of his fieldwork, the work has an archival quality and represents a valuable time depth in the understanding of the Tlingit. This quality is enhanced by the copious quotations from early sources regarding Tlingit life in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including Russian sources, and other observations of the Tlingit in the late nineteenth century. Numerous reproductions of early renderings of the Tlingit are used as illustrations, along with many sketches by Emmons himself, showing traditional dress, housing, transportation, and technology. Archival photos also illustrate such topics as shamanistic curing, ceremonial costume, and traditional houses, canoes, and totem poles. The volume is an excellent addition to available material on the Tlingit and Northwest Coast cultures.

The Tlingit Indians is a comprehensive ethnography. Chapters cover the land and people, social organization, villages, houses, forts, and other works, travel and transportation, fishing and hunting, food and its preparation, men's and women's arts and industries, dress and decoration, the life cycle, ceremonies, war and peace, illness and medicine, shamanism, witchcraft, games and gamb-

ing, and time, tides, and winds. The 37 tables cover many aspects of Tlingit life and land, including climatic and vegetation data, population, social structure, uses of animals and plants, ceremonies, and medical practice. A bibliography (updated to include important modern references) and an index are also included.

De Laguna's decision to intersperse Emmons's original material, in bold text, with selections, comments, and quotations written by her in lighter type and enclosed in brackets, leads to some distraction in reading. The material she has amassed adds immensely to the value of the work, however. The segregation of the tables at the back of the volume is a minor inconvenience.

Valuable for the ethnobiologist are tables of edible marine resources (invertebrates and algae), edible plants, colors, paints, dyes and stains, basketry materials, and medicines. De Laguna has enlisted the services of the ethnobotanist Alix Wennekens to supply scientific names for the plants discussed by Emmons, which is very helpful. The addition of scientific names in the text for plant foods and medicines, as well as in the tables, would enhance the ease of use of the book for ethnobiologists. The discussions of harvesting and processing food plants and basketry materials are extremely useful. Good treatments of traditional hunting and fishing techniques are also included. A minor error in the food plant section is the identification of the edible fern root as lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*). Turner et al. (1992) have demonstrated that the fern rootstock collected by the Tlingit is *Dryopteris expansa*.

The Tlingit Indians is a good value for anyone interested in the cultures of the Northwest Coast of North America, or in hunter-gatherer subsistence and technology. The book is also valuable for those with an interest in traditional medicines, as it has extensive sections on diagnosis and treatment of illness, shamanism, and witchcraft.

LITERATURE CITED

- TURNER, NANCY J., LESLIE M. JOHNSON GOTTESFELD, HARRIET V. KUHNLEIN, and ADOLF CESKA. 1992. Edible wood fern rootstocks of western North America: Solving an ethnobotanical puzzle. *Journal of Ethnobiology* 12:1-34.

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