

BOOK REVIEW

Chumash Healing: Changing Health and Medical Practices in an American Indian Society. Phillip L. Walker and Travis Hudson. Foreword by Jan Timbrook. Banning, California: Malki Museum Press, 1993. Pp. xvi; 161. \$12.95 (softcover). ISBN 0-939046-33-4 (hardcover), 0-939046-34-x (softcover).

The book at hand is of interest to ethnobiologists largely because of the medicinal uses of plants and animals, described in Chapter VII, "Treatment of Specific Disorders" (pp. 81-102). However, the whole book is well worth attention. It presents a comprehensive view of what we currently know of Chumash medicine.

The book is rather unusual, among works of its kind, for its commendable attention to changes in postcontact times. The Chumash were among the most severely impacted by introduced diseases; they almost died out. A crumb of consolation lay in the Spanish/Mexican folk remedies they acquired during the mission days. Later, they have become sharers—alas, marginal sharers only—in the benefits of modern medicine.

Phillip Walker's work on epidemics, demography, and physical changes among the Chumash is well known. In this book he has combined it with the ethnographic researches of Travis Hudson and John Peabody Harrington. Harrington's vast unpublished treasure trove of ethnographic findings has shed much light on the Chumash in recent years. Until his tragic and untimely death, Hudson worked assiduously with these notes. It was left to Walker to bring the results to light, combined with his own dynamic picture.

The amount of material that we have is surprising, but no doubt represents only a small fraction of Chumash medical lore. At least five named classes of medical practitioners are described; this is very possibly not an exhaustive list. The ethnobotany is extensive, but surely there was much more.

The strength of the book lies in its archaeological, demographic, and historical materials. Contemporary Chumash ways are not well covered. The authors have drawn on published sources and some surviving oral tradition. Some comparative material is provided, but not very much. There is a need for a systematic investigation of, for example, Mexican and Southwestern parallels in herbal lore and curing practice. Judging from the evidence, modern Chumash practice is very heavily influenced by Mexican and Hispanic-American medical lore. This does not make it less worthy of attention; no detailed research on *any* group's folk medicine has come to us from the Santa Barbara-Ventura area. We need basic documentation comparable to what Bea Roeder has given us in *Chicano Folk Medicine from Los Angeles, California* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988). But that is a task for another book.

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