

VIRTUOUS HERBS: PLANTS IN CHUMASH MEDICINE

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ABSTRACT.—The Chumash, like most other California Indians, believed that illness was largely a matter of power imbalance, or lack of harmony between the individual and the spiritual world. Most disease was thought to be caused by malevolent supernatural beings, by sorcery, or by violation of sensory or dietary taboos.

Plants played a role in most medical treatments. In traditional Chumash society, several kinds of shamans specialized in particular kinds of treatment for illness—smoke doctors, sucking doctors, ant doctors, herb doctors and others. All these highly trained practitioners were paid for their services and generally kept their methods secret. During the mission era, most of these specialties went into rapid decline and soon died out. The use of herbs then shifted, to become the basis of a widespread folk medicine whose application did not require formal status or training as a doctor.

This paper describes herbal medicine among the Chumash and discusses the effects of Spanish, Mexican and Anglo-American contact on these traditional practices.

INTRODUCTION

"We are constantly walking on herbs, the virtues of which no one knows."

—Chumash tradition (Hudson 1979:56)

At the time of initial European settlement in the late 18th century, the Chumash Indians of southern California were a group of about 15,000 people. Their ancestors had occupied the Santa Barbara Channel coast and offshore islands for 8,000 years or more. By the late prehistoric era they had become a classic example of "affluent foragers," with a complex, stratified society at the chiefdom level supported on a hunting-gathering-fishing economic base.

Among the elite members of Chumash society were a variety of occupational specialists who belonged to trade unions or guilds, the membership of which was based partly on wealth and partly on supernatural sanction. Makers of stone bowls, plank canoes, sinew-backed bows and certain other artifact classes each belonged to the appropriate guild and received pay for their products (Hudson, Timbrook and Rempe 1978:153-154).

Religious specialists also had their own organization, an esoteric ritual cult called the '*antap*'. As in much of native America, the Chumash made little distinction between religious and political spheres, or between sacred and secular aspects of life. Members of the '*antap*' group served as leaders of ceremonies, dancers, musicians, community chiefs and their assistants, and shamans (Hudson and Underhay 1978).

There were many kinds of shamans—bear shamans, weather shamans, astrologers, rattlesnake shamans and others—whose power was based partly on training but also on a close relationship with one or more supernatural spirit guides, or "dream helpers," acquired through visions (Applegate 1978). The same was true of shamans who were medical specialists, who used various pharmaceutical and therapeutic techniques to cure illness. There were smoke or pipe doctors, sucking doctors, ant doctors, herb doctors and others (Walker and Hudson n.d.).

These specialists were understandably quite secretive about the exact nature of the remedies they used. Their medical knowledge was the basis of their livelihood and may sometimes have been passed down in families from father to son (Geiger and Meighan 1976:73, 75).

Shaman doctors were probably not the only individuals who practiced medicine among the Chumash. Although there is little evidence to confirm it, a sort of folk medicine based on commonly known remedies, largely herbal, may have existed from the earliest times. The lack of information is not surprising, since explorers, missionaries and others who observed Chumash life in the early stages of European contact focused on what to them was strange and exotic behavior. The less spectacular, everyday practices were virtually ignored until John P. Harrington's work in the present century.

Most medical treatments, among both specialists and folk practitioners, made use of plants, the so-called "virtuous herbs." In this paper, I will describe a few of the most important plants the Chumash used in curing, and discuss changes that occurred in historic times. Sources consulted include explorers' journals, mission documents, late 19th century authors, John P. Harrington's extensive unpublished field notes and botanical collections, and more recent interviews.

PLANTS WITH LASTING IMPORTANCE

Yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*).—In the late 19th century, several authors in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties compiled information on medicinal herbs used by local Indian people and Spanish Californians. These early writers noted that a high value was placed on tea of yerba mansa root as a healing wash for cuts and ulcerated sores (Bard 1894:7; Bingham 1890:37; Birabent n.d.). Yerba mansa tea was also drunk for colds and as a blood purifier (Birabent n.d.; Benefield 1951:21).

Ethnographer-linguist John P. Harrington conducted interviews with Chumash people during the first half of this century, most actively from 1912 through the 1920s. Harrington's Chumash consultants called yerba mansa a "good medicine" (Maria Solares, Simplicio Pico, in Harrington n.d.). The root tea was drunk for cough (Luisa Ygnacio, Simplicio Pico), applied to cuts and sores (Luisa Ygnacio), or used as a hot bath for rheumatism (Maria Solares, in Harrington n.d.). Yerba mansa root was also chewed, drunk as tea, or inhaled to purify and strengthen a person who was to carry dangerous substances (Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.).

Yerba mansa is quite often mentioned by early writers and Harrington's consultants as an effective remedy for venereal disease (Bard 1894:7; Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.). After Spanish contact and colonization both syphilis and gonorrhea affected the Chumash, and these diseases devastated the mission populations. Yerba mansa, long used as a wash for sores, was logically applied to similar conditions. It was also taken internally in cases of venereal disease, probably being intended to aid by purifying the blood.

The Chumash believed that many diseases were really just one, blood trouble (Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.). "Freshening" or purifying the blood, thereby restoring balance and harmony in the patient's body, was the goal of a number of treatments. Many of these were herbal, such as yerba mansa; other treatments, such as seawater drinking, were considered effective as well.

Today, Chumash people still consider the yerba mansa plant to be good for "cualquier dolor." They take yerba mansa tea as a blood purifier, use it to soak or wash infected cuts, and drink it for relief from colds, asthma and kidney problems (Gardner 1965:197; Weyrauch 1982:22).

Because of yerba mansa's reputed medicinal value, the plant has been intentionally spread by humans, and large patches have become established in new localities such

as the California islands (Smith 1976:107). Yerba mansa is reportedly used all over Hispanic America as a liniment for skin problems and as a tea for blood disorders (Jepson 1914:376; Ford 1975:341-343). Its popularity seems not to be a post-contact phenomenon, however, since yerba mansa is valued medicinally by Native American people in whose territory it occurs, and names for it exist in several Indian languages. I think its use among the Chumash dates from prehistoric times, although it may have expanded somewhat under the influence of Mexican-American folk medicine.

Chuchupate (Lomatium californicum).—Mission-era writers noted the importance of chuchupate to the Chumash, both for its medicinal value and as a sort of talisman. The Chumash habitually carried or wore a piece of the root, and soldiers with the Longinos expedition in 1792 purchased bits of it "at a good price" from the Indians (Longinos 1792, in Simpson 1961:46). What benefit the chuchupate was expected to confer to either Indians or soldiers was, unfortunately, not specified.

The Chumash practice of carrying chuchupate root on the person was observed in the following century as well. According to an author of the late 1800s, this was done in order to repel rattlesnakes (Bard 1894:9).

In the early 20th century, Harrington's consultants were familiar with the use of chuchupate to control rattlesnakes. The root was thought to be capable of stupefying the snake or attracting it if one wanted to capture it (Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.); and a snake would rattle, but not bite, a person who carried a piece of chuchupate root in the clothing (Maria Solares 1918, in Harrington n.d.).

Medicinal uses of chuchupate were recorded in early mission times. The aromatic root was chewed for headache, chewed and rubbed on the body for any sort of pain, and the scent inhaled for headache (Longinos 1792, in Simpson 1961:45; Mission San Fernando 1814, in Geiger and Meighan 1976:73).

A late 19th century physician said that chuchupate root was chewed as a tonic, and "was useful in flatulence, headache, and neuralgia" (Bard 1894:6). For stomach trouble, it was taken as a decoction or soaked in a bottle of brandy and drunk (Birabent n.d., Benefield 1951:24).

In the early 20th century, Harrington's consultants mentioned most of these same uses for chuchupate. For pain relief, the root was chewed and rubbed on; it was applied the same way or drunk as a tea for rheumatism (Fernando Librado, Juan Justo, Luisa Ygnacio, Maria Solares, in Harrington n.d.). It was also applied as a poultice to sores and used in a number of other ways; it was said to be very strong (Maria Solares, in Harrington n.d.).

Among modern Chumash chuchupate is still important but restricted to medicinal applications. These medicinal uses seem to have expanded somewhat, possibly influenced by outsiders. The fresh or dried root is chewed or made into tea which is considered "good for everything from diarrhea to toothache," coughs, sore throat, nausea, upset stomach and constipation (Gardner 1965:298; Weyrauch 1978:25). One person is said to carry pieces of chuchupate root around in his pocket "for whenever he feels bad," but none of the people recently interviewed mentioned any connection with rattlesnakes.

In the Great Basin, Southwest and Mexico, *Ligusticum porteri* is known as chuchupate or oshá (Ford 1975:182, 253-254; Bye and Linares 1986:290). That species is not found in the Chumash region, but its uses are strikingly similar to those reported for *Lomatium californicum* among the Chumash. The evidence indicates that medical and magical uses of the plant (*L. californicum*) have a long tradition in this area and probably were not introduced by Mexican Indian or Hispanic people in historic times.

PLANTS FORMERLY IMPORTANT, BUT NO LONGER USED

Datura (*Datura wrightii*)—In the sense that Native American medicine is integrally involved with religious beliefs and practice, *datura* [usually called ***toloache***] probably was the single most important medicinal plant of the Chumash. This was recognized by the early missionaries, one of whom stated in 1814: "With this they intoxicate themselves. They take it in order to become strong, in order not to fear anyone, to prevent snakes from biting them and that darts and arrows may not pierce their bodies, etc." (Geiger and Meighan 1976:48).

Datura is, of course, a hallucinogenic plant and was used by the Chumash for three principal purposes (Applegate 1975): first, establishing contact with a supernatural guardian to provide protection, special skill and a personal talisman; second, contacting the dead, finding lost objects, seeing the future, seeing the true nature of people; and third, curing the effects of injury, evil omens or breaches of taboo, and providing immunity from danger. For example, a person whose form was assumed by a coyote was in grave danger and should immediately take *datura* to prevent soul loss and death.

Datura's visionary applications did sometimes play a role in medicine but are too elaborate for discussion here. It was administered by a specialist when one was seeking visions, especially the first time, and there were always concomitant restrictions on diet and sexual behavior.

As a medicine, *datura* was prepared by a relative, usually the mother or grandmother of the patient. The leaves or roots were taken internally as a tea and/or applied as a poultice for broken bones and wounds. This was used as the treatment of last resort when other methods failed, and was also thought to cure the ill effects of a narrow escape from death. *Datura* and seawater were considered the best tonics for freshening the blood (Applegate 1975).

Harrington's consultants provided some additional data. The four most important Chumash remedies were said to be *datura*, seawater drinking, cauterizing, and big red ants (Fernando Librado c. 1914, Maria Solares 1918, in Harrington n.d.). *Datura* was considered to be an effective remedy for tapeworm (Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.). For broken bones, *datura* was taken internally (Fernando Librado, Simplicio Pico, Maria Solares, in Harrington n.d.). It is unclear whether this was intended as an anesthetic for setting bones or as a way of restoring spiritual balance after injury.

It was believed that *datura* played a role in death from snakebite. According to Maria Solares, when a rattlesnake plans to bite a certain person, it sinks its fangs into a ***toloache*** root and sucks up the poison; the person it bites will die quickly (Applegate 1975:11).

Today, the traditional use of *datura* to induce visions is barely remembered, and medicinal uses seem to be completely forgotten. "The present-day Chumash know that in the past people used ***toloache*** . . . It is said that it made one 'crazy'" (Gardner 1965:294). Older people in the late 1950s were aware that their ancestors practiced sweating and vaguely associate *datura* drinking with the sweathouse. This is thought to have made the men feel well (Gardner 1965:297). Actually, it was not *datura* but tobacco that was used in this way.

Datura was avoided by nearly all of the Santa Barbara area Indian and Hispanic people interviewed in the late 1970s. One unidentified informant spoke of inhaling the smoke from burning dried *datura* leaves as a treatment for asthma, although he had never used it for this himself. Most of the other people interviewed had no knowledge of *datura* use or said it was a dangerous drug; one said it was a form of liquor, a "bad medicine" (Weyrauch 1978:33).

These statements from older Chumash people indicate to me that traditional knowledge of *datura* use has not been passed down to the present generation from their elders. The use of *datura* as a hallucinogen may be undergoing a revival among some

younger Chumash descendants who are seeking to recapture their ethnic identity and follow ancestral traditions. It appears that current knowledge of datura use is based on personal experimentation and on information obtained from anthropological publications.

Tobacco (Nicotiana attenuata et al.).—Wild tobacco was formerly eaten not only as a recreational drug but also to promote good health. This practice made quite an impression on the Spanish explorers and missionaries; it is mentioned in several accounts and frequently likened to the alcoholic drinks with which Europeans were more familiar (e.g. Longinos 1792, in Simpson 1961:55). Priests at missions in Chumash territory stated that the Chumash used a mixture of wild tobacco and lime as an intoxicant, either chewed or drunk in water (Geiger and Meighan 1976:89).

According to Harrington's consultants, the wild tobacco was dried, ground and used plain or mixed with lime ash from burned shells. This mixture was called *pespibata*. Eating tobacco in the evenings after dinner, especially by gatherings of men, was a popular social recreation, "like people serve coffee or chocolate now." The resulting euphoria was generally accompanied by vomiting, which was considered a healthful practice (Fernando Librado, Simplicio Pico, Candelaria Valenzuela, Luisa Ygnacio, Maria Solares, Rosario Cooper, various dates in Harrington n.d.).

One consultant told Harrington that when people were still living at the missions, "the priests objected to Indians eating *pespibata*. At Santa Ynez the *alcaldes* [Mission Indian constables] used to go around looking for *pespibata* indulgers and would bring them in and whip them" (Hudson 1979:147-148).

Tobacco smoking was also practiced by the Chumash, but not in a recreational way. For example, in 1777 the explorer Fages witnessed tobacco smoke being blown over a corpse before burial (Priestley 1937:33-34). This is consistent with later information provided by Harrington's consultants. Only rarely, they said, were cane tubes filled with pure tobacco and smoked for pleasure. Smoking of tobacco in stone pipes was done only by specialists and intended as a blessing, for purification or for curing (Fernando Librado c. 1914, Maria Solares 1918 in Harrington n.d.).

The pipe doctor, an old man, was accompanied by two other old men, one a sort of messenger whose duty was to ascertain if anyone was sick and the other a singer. The pipe doctor blew tobacco smoke as an incense to treat the sick person. "A sick man would sometimes actually recover as a result of that treatment." There were special ways of handling the pipe, and the owner took an oath never to carry it around for fun or use it in play. He was paid for his services in chia, acorns, bead money, or whatever they had (Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.).

Tobacco had a number of other medicinal uses. In 1814, a mission priest noted that one of the best known curative methods was a fermented mixture of wild tobacco, lime and urine, drunk to relieve stomach pain and to heal wounds (Geiger and Meighan 1976:73).¹ The same remedy was mentioned by Harrington's consultants: tobacco mixed with water was drunk to relieve pains in the stomach (Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.) Walker and Hudson (n.d.) speculate that Chumash medicine may have emphasized purgatives and emetics for relief from internal parasites acquired from eating undercooked fish and sea mammals.

Tobacco was used externally as well as internally. The dried leaves were chewed or moistened with water and then rubbed on the body for topical pain relief, as for muscle soreness or when one's ears were being pierced (Fernando Librado c. 1914, Maria Solares 1918, in Harrington n.d.).

Neither medicinal nor ceremonial use of tobacco is mentioned in recent sources based on actual interviews (Gardner 1965, Weyrauch 1982). The medicinal uses of this plant which were formerly so important have been completely eclipsed by its use as a recreational drug. Many Chumash descendants do smoke tobacco nowadays. Some of

them smoke wild tobacco, often mixed with other substances, and for these individuals it may be symbolic of Indian identity.

Poison Oak (Toxicodendron diversilobum).—Poison oak was formerly an important Chumash medicinal plant. Mission records from the early 19th century state that plasters of powdered poison oak were very effective in healing wounds and lacerations (Geiger and Meighan 1976:75).² A hundred years later, poison oak juice was still being applied to staunch the flow of blood from a cut (Luisa Ygnacio c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.).

According to Harrington's consultants in the early 20th century, the juice from stems and leaves freshly cut in early spring was considered to be the most effective remedy for warts, skin cancers and other persistent sores. It was dripped onto the area and after contact with the skin turned black on exposure to air. When the black surface healed and fell off, the cancer was cured. This method was also used for calluses and corns on the feet (Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.).

Poison oak was also taken internally as a remedy for dysentery or diarrhea. The root was boiled—taking care not to let the vapor get into the eyes lest blindness result—and the decoction drunk cold (Fernando Librado c. 1914, in Harrington n.d.).

Apparently Indian peoples generally did not experience the severe contact dermatitis which affects many contemporary Anglo Americans following contact with poison oak leaves and stems. In northern California, for example, the Pomo used the stems in basketry, the juice or ashes from burned leaves in tattooing, the leaves to wrap acorn bread for cooking (Chesnut 1902:364; Goodrich *et al.* 1980:82).

Harrington's Chumash consultants commented on differences in poison oak susceptibility even among Indians; the Yokuts, a neighboring inland group, were said to be severely affected by it when they visited the coast, but the local Chumash were affected only a little or not at all (Juan Justo, Fernando Cardenas, in Harrington n.d.). One woman said her mother used to work out in the field cutting poison oak and would "get it just a little on her arms" (Mary Yee c. 1955, in Harrington n.d.).

Immunity seems to have diminished along with the proportion of Chumash ancestry in modern descendants. Remedies for poison oak rash have been known for some time, but have become much more important in recent decades. Harrington's consultants treated the rash by rubbing on dry ashes from burned tule [*Scirpus acutus*] or rush [*Juncus textilis*] (Maria Solares c. 1918, in Harrington n.d.). Other remedies mentioned were bathing the area in lime water (used by the mission priests), mugwort tea [*Artemisia douglasiana*], or nightshade leaves [*Solanum douglasii*] mixed with salt; or spitting on and rubbing the affected part (Fernando Cardenas, in Harrington n.d.).

By the late 1950s, Chumash descendants no longer used poison oak medicinally but eagerly sought remedies for its effects. The rash is bathed in a tea made from mugwort leaves, coyote brush [*Baccharis pilularis*] or coffeeberry [*Rhamnus californica*] (Gardner 1965:297-298). Currently, some believe that immunity can be obtained by spitting on the plant or by drinking a tea of boiled poison oak root (Weyrauch 1982:14).

PLANTS WHOSE USES HAVE CHANGED HISTORICALLY

Mugwort (Artemisia douglasiana).—Chumash doctors cauterized wounds of their patients with small cones made from dried mugwort leaves, which were placed on the skin and ignited. The cones slowly burned down, becoming hot and painful (Walker and Hudson n.d.:78). This method, similar to the moxa of Asian medicine, was also used to treat skin cancers and rheumatism. Older people often had many scars from the treatment, especially on their legs. '*Apin*, as it was called, was considered by Harrington's consultants to be one of the most important Chumash remedies, along with seawater, datura, blood-letting and red ants (Fernando Librado c. 1914, Maria Solares 1918, in Harrington n.d.).

The Chumash also practiced a variation on this technique, described by an early physician in Ventura [Bard 1894:9]. A stone tube or pipe, heated by burning dried leaves, was held over the diseased spot to induce a blister. Stone tubes and pipes were restricted paraphernalia used by the sucking doctor and smoke doctor, respectively. If cupping or cauterizing with mugwort was originally employed by these specialists, it may be fairly ancient in Chumash medicine.

Harrington's consultants mentioned other medicinal uses of mugwort, including plasters applied for a sore neck and lying on a bed of the leaves over hot coals for paralysis [pasmó] (Luisa Ygnacio, Maria Solares, in Harrington n.d.). They also said it could be used as a remedy for headache and poison oak rash (various consultants, in Harrington n.d.).

Today, the best known use of mugwort is as a remedy for rashes, particularly as a wash for poison oak and measles (Gardner 1965:298; Weyrauch 1982:8-9). A tea of the leaves is drunk for headache and asthma (Gardner 1965:298), and also taken for severe fright (Juanita Centeno, pers. comm. 1978). The leaves are applied topically for headache (Gardner 1965:298) and toothache (Weyrauch 1982:9).

Among Chumash people interviewed in recent years, the cupping technique described by Bard (1894:9) was barely remembered by one Santa Ynez Chumash woman (Jennie Guillen): "They blew smoke or air into the cup and applied it to the person's back to take away pain, I believe." She saw this done in the presence of her grandmother, who had been one of Harrington's consultants in the early 1900s (Weyrauch 1982:2).

NATIVE PLANTS USED IN INTRODUCED DISEASES OR DISEASE THEORIES

In some cases, new uses were introduced or developed for plants which had already been part of Chumash medicine. This has already been mentioned in the case of foreign diseases or conditions which were brought to the Chumash after contact with Europeans. *Yerba mansa*, it was noted, became a specific for venereal diseases, and mugwort has become a preferred treatment for poison oak. Many traditional cold remedies were probably applied when influenza and pneumonia struck mission Indian populations.

New theories about the causes of illness were also introduced. Most important of these was the idea of hot-cold balance which is so prevalent in Hispanic medicine throughout Latin America and the Southwest. This belief seems not to have been indigenous to the Chumash, and although they adopted some of its methods they apparently did not internalize the theory behind it.

For example, one syphilis remedy described by a Harrington consultant entailed drinking a concentrated mixture of sea water and chile peppers; this "hot" remedy for a "hot" disease would never be used by a Latin American folk healer (Walker and Hudson n.d.:113). On the other hand, cutting a newborn infant's umbilical cord with a carrizo cane knife was consistent with this theory; in some areas metal or stone knives are considered "cold" and therefore injurious (Walker and Hudson n.d.:99). However, cane knives are sharp and the Chumash traditionally used them when skinning game animals and slicing deer meat (Maria Solares 1918, in Harrington n.d.).

PLANTS INTRODUCED ALONG WITH THEIR USES

In mission times and afterward, many new plants were brought into the Chumash area, both deliberately as garden cultivars and accidentally as weeds. Some medicinal plants were very obviously introduced, often along with recipes for using them, by people from Mexico.

Rue (Ruta chalapensis).—Rue was brought in as a garden and medicinal plant. In the late 19th century it was drunk as a tea for nerves and heart palpitations, and also used for ear problems (Birabent n.d.).

Harrington consultants did not mention this plant at all, but it has become well known among Chumash descendants today. Its most important use is for earache, the leaves being inserted into the ear either alone or with warmed oil (Gardner 1965:298; Weyrauch 1982:17). This is now one of the most common herbal remedies in the area.

Ruta is used medicinally for earache and deafness throughout the Hispanic Southwest and northern Mexico; sometimes it is also taken for abdominal pain and nerves (Ford 1975:293-294). These uses have been adopted by other California Indians (Bocek 1984:252; Hinton 1975:217).

Horehound (Marrubium vulgare).—Franciscan friars are said to have introduced this plant as a medicinal herb in the late 18th century (Jepson 1943:397-398). By the late 19th century it was abundant on roadsides and waste places, and much used for coughs and lung diseases (Bingham 1890:37). Harrington consultants said they sometimes made tea of horehound leaves, but did not consider it to be medicinal (Juan Justo c. 1925, in Harrington n.d.).

About 1960, horehound tea was vaguely remembered by some Chumash people as an old-time way of inducing abortion, and no other uses were recorded at that time (Gardner 1965:296-297). Currently it is most used as a cough medicine and for sore throats, colds and lung ailments, often mixed with honey (Weyrauch 1982:10).

Horehound has a wide variety of medicinal uses throughout Mexico and the Southwest (Ford 1975:237-238), but only the respiratory and throat remedies seem to have been adopted by Chumash descendants.

NEW PLANTS AS SUBSTITUTES FOR TRADITIONAL ONES

Introduced species which had their own distinctive uses are fairly easy to identify. It is more difficult to talk about new plants which may have replaced indigenous ones as remedies for particular ailments. Much depends on availability. The disruption of trade networks and restriction of access to private property have affected choices of medicinal materials. Mountain tea [*Ephedra viridis*], valued for the blood and kidneys, grew in remote inland areas; horsetail [*Equisetum* spp.], which also has green, cylindrical, jointed stems, was much more common along the coast. Notes with plant specimens collected by Harrington's consultants indicate that horsetail may have been used medicinally when *Ephedra*, the preferred form, was not available.

Investigators in the 1920s and 30s suggested that one particularly desirable remedy, *Adenostoma sparsifolium*, called ribbonwood or yerba del pasmo, was formerly found in the Santa Ynez range and offshore islands, but overzealous collecting by early-day Mexican Californians exterminated it from these localities (Barber correspondence on file at Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History). In the 1920s, Harrington's consultant Lucrecia Garcia labeled a specimen of a different plant, *Haplopappus arborescens*, as yerba del pasmo. *Haplopappus* and other genera of Asteraceae are known as yerba del pasmo in Mexico and the Southwest, but locally I think this is not a matter of mistaken identity. It may be that when "real" yerba del pasmo (*Adenostoma sparsifolium*) became unavailable, people began gathering a similar-appearing plant which they had always considered "another kind" of yerba del pasmo (*Haplopappus arborescens*) and adjusted the folk category accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Medical practices are dynamic by nature, and culture change did not begin with European contact in the 1500s. Many remedies were probably learned from other Indian peoples in prehistoric times. The Chumash have always been quite willing to experiment with new remedies, both on the basis of information received from others and by trying whatever is at hand (Gardner 1965:297; Weyrauch 1982:1).

Today it is difficult to separate elements of traditional Chumash medicine from the folk medicine of the Mexican-American community since each group has learned from the other. The Harrington materials from the first part of this century include information on 95 Chumash medicinal plants, only 9 of which were introduced species (Timbrook 1984:144), and use of cultivated or store-bought remedies has increased since then. Nearly half of the 49 medicinal plants which a recent study listed as used by Indians of Santa Barbara County are non-native species (Weyrauch 1982).

Many Chumash have expressed a general distrust of the competence and motives of Western physicians. One of Harrington's consultants said, "The doctors nowadays are more for getting money than they are for curing people. They do not have the power of curing people like the old Indians had" (Harrington n.d.). This belief remains widespread today.

Since the traditional specialists—pipe, sucking, and other doctors—died out shortly after mission times without passing on their technical knowledge, folk medicine practiced by non-specialist individuals has played an increasingly important role. But the Chumash today still feel the need to consult expert practitioners of traditional medicine. In the absence of curing specialists on the Santa Ynez Reservation in the late 1950s, some individuals occasionally went to Mexican healers and Chinese herbalists (Gardner 1965:296).

"My grandfather told me that it was good to learn about medical herbs, but that people will die just the same. It is merely a pastime."

—[Fernando Librado, in Hudson 1979:56]

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NOTES

¹These authors suggest "urine" may be a mistranslation of Spanish, and perhaps "water" is meant (Geiger and Meighan 1976:158). But urine was commonly used in folk medicine, according to Margarita Kay (personal communication 1987).

²Original document (Feb. 20, 1814): Los remedios que toman son de Plantas, Cortezas, Raizes, y ojas de Arvoles de los que no conozco ninguno sino es la Yedra con la que e visto hacer primores pues a un hombre hecho pedazos por un oso en brazos, piernas, costillas e spalda, con solo espolvonear la yerda [sic] sanó.

Although Geiger and Meighan (1976:75) translated yedra as "ivy," to Harrington's consultanta yedra meant poison oak. Bright also suggests this interpretation for the Luiseño term *hial*, called yedra in Spanish, translated by these authors as "ivy." The Luiseño drank the powdered root mixed with water as a purgative (Geiger and Meighan 1976:157).