

REVIEWS

The Lands Never Trodden: The Franciscans and the California Missions

John J. O'Hagan
Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press. 2013.
308 pp., \$18.95 (paper)

Reviewed by Robert L. Hoover
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The study of California's 21 coastal Franciscan missions has experienced a renaissance following the 1992 Columbian Quincentenary. However, some popular works still portray the missions as the romantic paradises of Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel, *Ramona*. Others continue the 1960s polemic of the missions as agents of slavery and genocide. Fortunately, the last 20 years have resulted in an abundance of scholarly studies devoted to more realistic and useful models of mission life. These institutions are portrayed not as perfect, but far more benign agents than those of the Anglo, French, Dutch, and Portuguese colonial worlds. They were more humane than other agents in time and place even within the Spanish empire. O'Hagan presents these new ideas in a format convenient for popular consumption.

Lands Never Trodden is a compact, well-organized approach to the California missions. Two excellent introductory chapters define and describe the development of the mission as an institution. Certainly, the Spanish made use of the military post (*presidio*) and town (*pueblo*) to extend their influence northward, but the mission proved to be the most cost-effective and successful Spanish institution in California. It was also the institution that rested most lightly on the native population and presented them with more opportunities. The mission program was designed to create self-sufficient Christian communities of Spanish-speaking citizens who would be economically productive, pay taxes, and defend the realm against foreign intruders. It flourished from 1769–1834 in the coastal areas of southern and central California.

The author presents concise chapters on each of the 21 missions in order of founding. It is clear that a

number of missions had their problems. Those of the far south were never able to support all of their neophytes at the mission headquarters, as agricultural production was limited. Native people continued to live in dispersed settlements which were visited regularly by a circuit-riding priest. This resulted in the retention of many more aboriginal cultural traits and a thinner veneer of acculturation.

Bay Area missions, on the other hand, concentrated neophytes from many different tribes at the same site. The friars were perplexed that Christian converts who all seemed outwardly similar could not live in peace at these missions, although they had been traditional enemies for generations. The central missions of the Chumash and Salinan areas proved remarkably stable and successful. Scholars have speculated on the reasons for this contrast.

O'Hagan demonstrates that mission success depended on many complex factors—the local availability of year-round resources for support, the nature and degree of cultural homogeneity of the local native society, the initial response of native leaders to the mission, the degree and nature of incorporation of the neophytes into the mission hierarchy, and even the individual personality of the friars themselves. Frs. Payeras of La Purisima, Ripoll of Santa Barbara, and Martinez of San Luis Obispo were all truly talented administrators who maintained close personal relationships with their neophytes. Fr. Juan Sancho of San Antonio was a musical genius of the quality of Hayden. His neophyte orchestra and choir mesmerized visitors and inspired his flock on the frontiers of the civilized world. Impressive churches, oriented to take advantage of astronomical events during religious celebrations, music, statuary, paintings and murals, and staging of rituals all served to reinforce neophyte belief. The crafts learned at the missions enabled the neophytes to survive economically and blend with the general Hispanic population, avoiding the worst of the atrocities of the American period.

O'Hagan's book points out continually that California missions were much more complex organizations than previously believed. While they were Spanish institutions, they always remained Indian communities.

It is disappointing that this useful work was marred by careless editing and assembly. For example, there are no endnotes in the text on San Antonio, while the list of

these is found at the end of the chapter on San Carlos. These are minor deficiencies when compared to the real content of this book.



After the First Full Moon in April: A Sourcebook of Herbal Medicine from a California Indian Elder

Josephine Peters and Beverly Ortiz
Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2010
220 pages, 152 figures/photographs \$30.00 (paperback)

Reviewed by Frank K. Lake

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Josephine “Jo” Grant Peters was an Native American herbalist of mixed tribal ancestry (Karuk/Shasta/Abenaki) who was raised and lived in Northwestern California along the Salmon, Klamath, and Trinity rivers. She was a woman with an exceptional knowledge of native and non-native plants, and of the many cultural traditions for management, harvesting, preparation, and uses associated with them. In addition to her plant knowledge, Jo was an artist, educator, and compassionate matriarch to her family and tribal community. Her life (1923–2011) experiences and work with plants spanned a time of modernization and change for tribal communities along the Klamath and Trinity rivers. Because of these changes, her knowledge, use, and preparations of plants reflected both historical and modern practices and applications. Beverly R. Ortiz, an ethnographic consultant, came to know about and work with Josephine on *After the First Full Moon* at the request of family, tribal, and community members and in partnership with the California Indian Basketweavers Association and U.S. Forest Service, Six Rivers National Forest. The book’s content reflects the partnership and work of Bev Ortiz as the ethnographer, Jo as the consultant, and

the contributions of many tribal and other community members. The thoroughly recorded, documented, photographed, and integrated work carried out by Bev Ortiz captures the essence of Josephine’s and other contributors’ use of and relationship with plants. This book embodies more than just the ethnobotanical and medicinal uses of plants—it also covers the life story and relationships of the people who worked with or were treated and healed by Josephine.

The book’s content and organization are primarily centered around Josephine’s life and relationship with plants. It provides a wealth of information regarding tribal gathering practices, preparation methods, and a multitude of applications for various ailments or sicknesses. Photographs of people, places, and plants provide reference and context for the book’s content. Additionally, the book includes traditional stories, tribal beliefs, ethics for harvesting, and descriptions of Karuk cultural uses of plants for medicinal, subsistence, and ceremonial purposes. The book’s sections and chapters are organized so that the reader can learn about and appreciate Josephine’s history and life, the plants she used, and the many ways that plants play an important role in tribal life.

The beginning of the book includes a preface and introductory chapter that give the reader a good overview of the book’s content, intent, and utility by detailing Josephine’s life, family history, and tribal cultural issues, as well as Beverly’s role in helping with the book. A chapter on gathering ethics provides a valuable context for the tribal community’s and Josephine’s individual philosophy about the harvesting and use of plants. This topic sets the foundation for the reader’s understanding of how, why, and where plants are gathered for medicinal, subsistence, and ceremonial