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Altogether, this collection of studies provides noteworthy examples of how to integrate archival research with archaeological investigations to provide a more nuanced understanding of how people in the past negotiated their daily lives and created communities. The methods employed here are not new; however, they have been used in novel ways that provide a pathway that other researchers can follow when working with historically

under-represented people or with older materials. The thought-provoking discussions of the various concepts and definitions of community and of the basic human interactions that create the archaeological record are important for all archaeologists to consider, but the book is presented in a way that advanced students should be able to read and comprehend as well.



Old Magic: Lives of the Desert Shamans

Nicholas Clapp
El Cajon: Sunbelt Publications, 2015,
232 pp., illustrations, references,
ISBN: 9781941384053, \$22.95 (paper).

Reviewed by David Wayne Robinson
University of Central Lancashire

This book looks at the spiritual practices of the Native Americans of the southwestern California desert, particularly the Cahuilla, but also those of desert tribes further afield. The book is written in a personable manner—the voice of the author comes through as one familiar with both the local haunts and the homespun tales of yore. This is both the strength and the weakness of this engaging, but at times limited, take on shamanism in the southern reaches of the state. The book opens with the author's statement that he will not reveal rock art locations and that it is best to be cautious when using anthropological interpretations. I'm glad to say that he sticks to the former, but sadly ditches the latter. The narrative then moves to a prologue, a first-person account that transports the reader into the desert world and into a shared 'discovery' of the strangeness of rock art, which opens the subject up before a brief discussion (and map) of the region of concern. The bulk of the book is divided into two sections: Part One is entitled *The Way of the Shaman*, while Part Two is called *Dream Quest*.

Part One gives the reader a sense of the feeling and breadth of the region's geography and areas including the Mohave, Anza-Borrego, the Colorado River, and

the wider Sonoran Desert. There are lovely accompanying photographs here and throughout the book. This is interwoven with mythic stories drawn from select ethnographies and secondary sources. The book works through a series of short chapters, really vignettes, that lay out the story of how one might become a shaman—from personal dreams, through initiation, to the ingestion of datura and the acquisition of songs. This is followed by a rather speculative interpretation of a rock feature that the author discovered in the desert, which he compares to a wide range of sand paintings. Rock art once again comes into focus, with more vignettes on historical rock art and on sites like Corn Springs. Everything is placed within a shamanic paradigm, with different published accounts again interwoven against the backdrop of shamanic practices. Rather interesting discussions of paraphernalia, regalia, doctoring, and sorcery finish off the first part.

Part Two: *Dream Quest* sketches the story of a shaman's quest for power via trance. Drawing upon the classic entoptic model of Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson (mistakenly written as 'Dodson' and not included in the bibliography), as well as the work of California rock art specialist David Whitley, the narrative blends country prose with ethnography and rock art to present the now familiar refrain of rock art as the outcome of shamanic trancing. This section covers groups from a wide territory, including the Quechan, Mohave, Chemehuevi, Paiute, Shoshone, Coso, and others, while incorporating well-chosen and entertaining anecdotes. The book ends with the 'twilight' of desert shamans, with interesting vignettes on historical rock art, the Ghost Dance, and the last of the shamans. A notes section and a much-appreciated

in memoriam on native artist Armand Frederick Vallee finishes off this nicely illustrated book.

The book has many merits. Written for the public, its narrative voice is thoroughly engaging. It paints a compelling, empathetic picture of lone shamans trancing in the shade of rock shelters while ranging across the distant reaches of the Desert West, with the rock paintings created for the private interiority of the shamanic mind in the cave. It is a familiar tale to anyone versed in the wider literature on the subjects covered. But those versed in that same literature know that the soothing voice of the narrator in large part glosses over any critical or analytical perspective that such a subject deservedly requires. For example, the opening image in the book of a rock shelter with black anthropomorphic figures is captioned “a shaman’s cave.” A number of bedrock mortars are shown in the same photograph but are not mentioned. Is there a midden present? It is entirely typical of almost any book

on shamans and rock art you may come across to ignore the archaeology that is often evident at rock art sites. A wide body of literature can be found that calls into question the idea that rock art was created exclusively for shaman’s eyes, based upon the rich archaeological deposits often found in association with it—clearly there was a whole lot more than trancing going on at the feet of those anthropomorphs. That failure to delve into the sites themselves is symptomatic of the failure to unpack the term shamanism, its use in the history of anthropology and in early twentieth century California, and the failure in works like this book to delve a bit deeper into ontological critiques of shamanism itself (as Thomas Dowson himself did 12 years ago). However, as I indicated previously, this book clearly was not written for an academic audience but for the general public, and the author can perhaps be forgiven for leaving academia behind and instead turning to the old magic of a good tale told well.



Foragers on America’s Western Edge: The Archaeology of California’s Pecho Coast

Terry L. Jones and Brian F. Codding
Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019,
Xii + 291 pp., includes 60 figures, 71 tables, 6 appendices,
references, index, ISBN 9781607816430, \$50.00 (hardcover).

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Foragers on America’s Western Edge is a compelling monograph that details the unique history of human adaptation throughout 10,000 years on the Pecho Coast of central California. Jones and Codding marshal a substantive dataset derived from thirteen years of ongoing research on the Pecho Coast and synthesize over fifty years of archaeological research in the region. The study is focused on the foragers who lived near the rocky intertidal coastline between Morro Bay and

San Luis Obispo Bay; however, their findings are of import to archaeologists with interests ranging from human environmental interactions to post-contact indigenous resilience.

The first few chapters provide the necessary background to situate their study in a regional context. The authors begin by giving credit to the seminal work of Roberta Greenwood (1972), who was among the first to draw attention to ancient human occupation in this area of littoral California. Her published findings of a 10,000-year cultural sequence at the Diablo Canyon site (CA-SLO-2) were unprecedented at the time and befittingly brought attention to the Pecho Coast of San Luis Obispo County. Chapters 2 and 3 offer a thorough review of previous investigations in the area and provide a necessary overview of the environmental considerations that the authors link to settlement and subsistence throughout the book. Chapters 4 and 5 outline the field, lab, and analytical methods that were employed throughout the project.