

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Medicine Women, Curanderas, and Women Doctors. By Babette Perrone, H. Henrietta Stockel, and Victoria Krueger.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/49r3v8sn>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 14(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Blicksilver, Edith

Publication Date

1990-03-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Medicine Women, Curanderas, and Women Doctors. By Babette Perrone, H. Henrietta Stockel, and Victoria Krueger. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989. 252 pages.

The widespread adoption of Western scientific medical theories and methods has resulted in a major shift about traditional faith healing. Although, in many cases, the dominant culture has imposed itself upon Native Americans and Southwest Hispanics, both historic and contemporary aspects of healing are combined in treating the total person, with patient recovery achieved ideally through the benefits of both approaches. In fact, the advantages of contemporary medicine, with its sophisticated technology, lead ailing individuals; when they are given the options of treatment through a traditional or modern way, typically to select the latter. However, according to prize-winning photographer Babette Perrone, award-winning poet H. Henrietta Stockel, and clinical psychologist Victoria Krueger, there are many important aspects of cultural faith healing that should be given respect and recognition.

It is for this reason that these Santa Fe, New Mexico research scholars compiled the stories of ten women healers in *Medicine Women, Curanderas, and Women Doctors*. Using oral interviews and a historical approach, the authors take the reader into the fascinating world of Native American medicine women, Southwest Hispanic *curanderas*, and women physicians, describing their healing techniques, telling colorful human interest stories, and detailing the obstacles these women had to overcome from the primarily male, conservative medical profession.

Included in this insightful, thoroughly researched collection, with notes and bibliography, are illustrations of bright-eyed, spunky, frequently well-educated women, such as Apache Tu Moonwaler and Cherokee Dhyani Ywahoo; both utilized advanced degrees in Anglo universities as well as their own ethnic traditions to help patients discuss the causes of their psychological stress and body pain. Ywahoo, although only in her thirties, is "Keeper of the Priestcraft of the Cherokee Indian Nation." Her ancestors have been keepers of the sacred fire for twenty-seven generations. She has gone beyond her reservation to organize a society in Vermont, offering programs in meditation, music, dance, and the healing arts.

Both *las curanderas* and the women physicians use their learning and courage to break out of traditional roles frequently reserved for females in contemporary society. The dark side of healing is detailed in a chapter describing the tragic results of witchcraft hysteria, which has resulted in the torture or death of untold numbers of innocent women healers.

In conclusion, faith cures do not depend so much on the truth of what the healer tells the patient, as on the sick person's belief, affection, and respect for the healer. A strong belief in the effectiveness of a religious ceremony, in prayer, in touching a relic, sometimes combined with modern medical technology, can remove nervous blocks to mental and physical good health.

Thus, this book is valuable for those interested in the relationship between illness and healing—medical practitioners, historians, anthropologists, folklorists, and feminists, in addition to psychologists, psychiatrists, theologians, and sociologists. In particular, the side effects of psychotherapy and the psychosomatic links to illness are discussed, indicating that additional investigative scholarship is needed into the many unknown factors in faith healing.

Edith Blicksilver

Georgia Institute of Technology

Images from the Inside Passage: An Alaskan Portrait by Winter and Pond. By Victoria Wyatt. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, in association with the Alaska State Library, Juneau, 1989. 144 pages. \$19.95 Paper.

Victoria Wyatt's *Images from the Inside Passage* is the catalog for a traveling exhibition of over one hundred photographs taken, for the most part, in the years 1893–1910 by the Juneau, Alaska partnership of Lloyd Winter and Percy Pond. Although the title does not convey the fact, the exhibition is principally drawn from Winter and Pond's pictures of Tlingit and Haida life, that is, from about four hundred of the forty-seven hundred Winter and Pond plates in the Alaska state library. Like the many nineteenth-century portrait painters and photographers who made a living moving from town to town, Winter and Pond augmented their