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Laird: *The Chemehuevis*

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of any tribe in the state.

Latta, despite the fact that he never received formal training in ethnographic recording, is truly (as Kroeber wrote of him in 1948) "one of those rare beings—a natural-born ethnographer." C. Hart Merriam was another natural-born ethnographer, but he failed to publish any significant quantity of the voluminous data he gathered from about 1910 to 1935. Stephen Powers was also a natural-born ethnographer, but one whose research did get published in 1877 in his famous *Tribes of California*. What Latta learned and has now published for the largest of all California tribal groups may be equalled only in time by the works of Kroeber and the posthumous publication of J.P. Harrington's records on the Chumash.

The index is excellently done; there is no bibliography for the reason that the author is reporting data secured by himself and presenting them as straight ethnography. We are all in Latta's debt for this outstanding contribution to California ethnography and ethnohistory.



*The Chemehuevis*. Carobeth Laird. Banning: Malki Museum Press, 1976. xxviii + 349 pages, 2 maps, \$15.00 (hardback), \$8.95 (paper).

Reviewed by CATHERINE S. FOWLER  
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*The Chemehuevis* is an example of a phenomenon all too rare in North American Indian ethnography: a solid, rich, descriptive work coupled with sensitive, humanistic analysis and interpretation. Too frequently in our quest for "science" we may achieve the former alone. Occasionally we also see the latter but yearn for the strength in descriptive evidence that alone will sooth our academic consciences. In this volume, there is room for both, and

given the expressive talents of the author, both are so carefully interwoven that neither detracts from the other. Rather, both blend to such a degree that the monograph is as much engaging as it is informative.

As Harry Lawton notes in his foreword, Carobeth Laird's academic and analytical training comes largely from her early association (and it is perhaps best called that) with John Peabody Harrington, the obsessive and obsessed genius of American Indian linguistic field recording. She was married to Harrington from 1916 to 1923 and for most of those years travelled with him from camp to camp in the western United States recording what he passionately perceived to be dying languages and cultures. Mrs. Laird's humanism, we suspect, comes from her own nature as well as from her deep, personal relationship with George Laird, a Chemehuevi whom she met on the Colorado River Reservation in 1919 and the man who would become her true life partner. Those who have read with pleasure Mrs. Laird's vivid account of her "Harrington years" in her *Encounter with an Angry God* will know more of the relationship of these three people and of the author's capabilities and qualities. It is George Laird who was the principal consultant for the present work.

*The Chemehuevis* is a semantically based study, derived from Mrs. Laird's admittedly incomplete field notes (some were lost over the years) obtained from George Laird between 1919 and 1940, the year of his death. Mr. Laird had grown up on and near the Colorado River Reservation, the son of a jack-of-all-trades from Tennessee and a daughter of Black Turtle, leader of a local Chemehuevi band. Since his mother died when he was a small child, Mr. Laird's Chemehuevi education came principally through participating with others of his age in the remnants of old lifeways now being reshaped by reservation conditions. In addition, he spent a year caring for a dying man who painstakingly taught him to speak a

southern Chemehuevi dialect and who spent much of his time relating traditional tales to his youthful nurse. Mr. Laird's White education was less systematic.

The lifeways related by George Laird and interpreted by Carobeth Laird are summarized under several key chapter headings. The first, "Identity, Distribution and Organization," places the Chemehuevi in time and space, noting as best as Mr. Laird could remember the locations of the various Chemehuevi subgroups and their neighbors. Most interestingly, he also suggests the existence of several hereditary "song" groups, seemingly bilaterally based, whose "songs" at once described and charted the inheritor's hunting territory and rights. Although Mr. Laird remembered only fragments of those song cycles—Mountain Sheep, Deer, Salt, Quail, etc.—what he did recall may be of considerable significance. They fit the basic pattern of Mohave song cycles described by Kroeber (1946). Chemehuevi versions seem to have different orientation and significance, however. Mrs. Laird also suggests in this chapter a view of Chemehuevi chieftainship as more structured than previously supposed.

Laird's second chapter is concerned with shamanism and the supernatural. In it she describes the nature of shamanism as well as the process of power acquisition. She also provides a general classification of supernatural phenomena. The treatment is largely semantic, taking key lexical items as the focal points for discussion, and expanding upon these to explain the nature and relationships of the various spiritual classes.

The third chapter, on kinship and personal relationships, provides a wealth of detail on social structure. Laird sets up various diadic kin categories (e.g., parent/child, grandparent/grandchild, cousin, etc.) and presents a list of associated lexical items with explanations. In all she notes the heavy use of reciprocals and the behavioral bonds implied by them. This is

probably the most complete semantic analysis of a Numic kinship system offered to date. The remainder of the chapter is a catalog of Chemehuevi personal names. It should prove delightful for those interested in naming principals as well as for historians of lower Colorado River peoples.

The next chapter, titled "The Natural World," follows the semantic format of the previous two. Because of the author's conviction that the Chemehuevi view the natural and supernatural as inextricably interwoven, she also presents discussions of such essences as earth, sky, water, and the seasons, in addition to plants, animals, birds, insects, etc. Since the latter may serve the shaman as well as more ordinary men, lines can not be so firmly drawn. Laird does not claim that the treatment of any one category is exhaustive, nor have all the semantic implications been carried to their ultimate conclusions. Yet there is much here for the specialist, including the ethnoscientist, to appreciate and explore.

The fifth chapter, "Places, Trails, and Tribes," is a thorough discussion of toponymy and related concepts. The first section, on place names, rivals that by Powell (Fowler and Fowler 1971) for Southern Paiute, to which it might fruitfully be compared. Although George and Carobeth Laird had once painstakingly located all of these places, trails, and tribes on a series of maps, these were lost over the years. Herta B. Caylor restudied the names and was able to provide modern designations and associations for many of them (see Appendix A). Without her work, these listings would have been of less value.

Laird's last two chapters are devoted to mythology. She sees mythology as the "master key" to unlocking the wealth that is Chemehuevi social structure, psychology, and history. In Chapter VI she presents translated versions of some 14 tales, several short and incomplete and several of epic quality. These are but part of a promised larger collection.

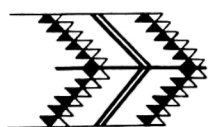
Chapter VII is a thought-provoking analysis of these tales. Although some of Laird's hypotheses about Chemehuevi world view might be difficult to validate with certainty, they are indeed stimulating and should form the basis for much additional interpretive work. The final chapter also summarizes and restates the nature and quality of Chemehuevi life that has been defined in previous chapters.

The volume also contains a brief grammatical sketch of Mr. Laird's Southern Chemehuevi dialect as well as an 850+ word glossary—a boon to comparative Uto-Aztecanists. There are also numerous footnotes to the various chapters that provide valuable sidelights to points being raised. The one difficulty is that the footnote section is placed before the appendices and glossary, making continual reference somewhat of a problem. The notes might have been more accessible at the end of each chapter.

In all, *The Chemehuevis* is rich, fresh, and well written. The non-specialist might find the semantic emphasis a little heavy, but let him be assured that the specialist will find it a feast for years to come.

### REFERENCES

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1971 Anthropology of the Numa: John Wesley Powell's Manuscripts on the Numic People of the Western North America, 1868-1880. Washington: Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology Vol. 14.



*Cocopa Ethnography*. William H. Kelly. *Anthropological Papers of the University of Arizona* No. 29, 1977, 150 pp., 34 figs. including 8 maps and 26 black/white illustrations, 11 tables. \$7.95 (paper).

Reviewed by JAMES P. BARKER  
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*Cocopa Ethnography* is based on a total of ten months of field work on the part of the author and his wife, Dorothea S. Kelly, conducted between 1940 and 1952. Most of the data come from two extended visits in 1940. The work is based on information elicited from nine principal consultants (7 men) through formal interviews using an interpreter. Over half of the field time was spent with a single consultant, a Cocopa man born about 1874.

Because of the times in which the work was done, *Cocopa Ethnography* is an attempt to describe a "sample" of Cocopa culture "in a style reminiscent of those written by Alfred Kroeber, E. W. Gifford, Grenville Goodwin, and Leslie Spier" which stands as a record of the pre-European Cocopa culture and can be used by other researchers as a basis for more detailed studies. In keeping with this, Kelly's ethnography is divided into 11 chapters covering standard ethnographic topics including: History; Habitat; Subsistence; Material Culture; Family Life; Band Organization and Leadership; Ceremonies and Meetings; Division of Labor; Mythology; Warfare; and Cultural Themes. Throughout, Kelly is careful to clearly state the period (pre- or post-European) which he is discussing and to be clear on the reliability of his generalizations and descriptions.

While Kelly has been successful in capturing the "style" of 1930's and 1940's ethnographies he is less successful at providing a *useful* record of pre-European Cocopa culture. The major problem is the 25 years that have passed since his last Cocopa fieldwork and the publication of *Cocopa Ethnography*. If this