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Southeastern Pomo Ceremonials: The Kuksu Cult and Its Successors. By Abraham M. Halpern.

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Author

Keeling, Richard

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This is a well conceived and well executed text. It's topic is extensive, but the book must obviously be limited to an overview of critical issues and themes. Nonetheless, Limerick consistently demonstrates great insight toward the overall development of Western history, and *The Legacy of Conquest* is an important contribution to an accurate portrayal of the context of history and change in the West.

Dick G. Winchell

Eastern Washington University, Cheney.

Southeastern Pomo Ceremonials: The Kuksu Cult and Its Successors. By Abraham M. Halpern. University of California Publications: Anthropological Records, Volume 29. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988. 46 pages. \$20.00 Paper.

This slim volume is one of the more important works on California Indians to have appeared in recent decades. While its scope is almost certainly too narrow to attract a general audience, the book has great value for ethnological specialists and holds unusual interest for writers and others who follow scholarly and literary trends within the sphere of Native American Studies *per se*.

For those who focus on California Indians from an anthropological perspective, the subject of the book has intrinsic importance because variants of the Kuksu cult were widely distributed throughout northern and central California in aboriginal times and can arguably be viewed as the singlemost distinctive ceremonial complex of the region as a culture area. Wherever it was practiced, the Kuksu complex involved a cycle of rituals in which (usually male) members of special societies impersonated spiritual beings or ghosts before an audience of uninitiated on-lookers. Typically, these performances were elaborately costumed, involving elements of magic and comic entertainment along with the music and dancing. The various spirit impersonations were ranked in status, each requiring certain esoteric knowledge, and initiation of young males was a central focus of the Kuksu societies. Thus, besides their cosmological function as a recreation of sacred time or vehicle for world renewal, these

rituals also served to define and to reinforce a wide range of social relationships.

As described above, the Kuksu complex bears striking resemblance to secret societies which existed among Indians of the Pacific Northwest, and a glance at Boas's *Social Organization and Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians* (1897) or Drucker's *Kwakwiltl Dancing Societies* (1940) reveals some highly suggestive parallels. Far from indulging such far-flung speculations, however, the book under review takes a starkly empirical approach: Halpern only describes ceremonial activities of Pomo Indians living in the area around Clear Lake, and he focuses specifically on information collected from five elders during brief visits to Lower Lake and Sulphur Bank in 1936 and 1937.

Abraham Halpern died in 1985, and this posthumous volume presents results of research that was conducted more than fifty years ago. Basically, *Southeastern Pomo Ceremonials* is a slightly edited version of a manuscript which has remained in relative obscurity among collections at the University of California (Berkeley) for decades. In her Foreword to the book, Elizabeth Colson states that the manuscript has been "unknown and unused" all this time, even among specialists on the Pomo, but this is clearly an exaggeration. The manuscript is listed in Dale Valory's *Guide to Ethnological Documents in the University Archives* (1971), and this is a basic reference tool. Moreover, despite Colson's explicit statement to the contrary (page vii), the manuscript is cited and discussed in the California volume of the Smithsonian Institution's *Handbook of North American Indians* (1978:317).

A more informative Foreword might have touched on the broad distribution of Kuksu ceremonials and perhaps mentioned the chapter of Kroeber's *Handbook of the Indians of California* (1925) which attempts to provide a comparative sketch of the complex as practiced among the Yuki, Pomo, Patwin, Maidu, and Miwok (pages 364-390). Instead, Kroeber is not mentioned, nor does his name appear in either of the two bibliographies provided. Another name that should have been more prominent is that of Samuel Barrett, whose *Ceremonies of the Pomo Indians* (1917) is not mentioned, even though it covers some of the same ground as Halpern's manuscript. Barrett conducted field work around Clear Lake in 1902 and 1906, collecting several cylinder recordings of songs sung by Thomas Johnson, one of the five elders consulted by Halpern. Tape duplicates of these recordings are available at

Lowie Museum of Anthropology (Berkeley), and these are especially significant because Halpern provides hardly any information on music-sound *per se*.

Despite these omissions, the publication is particularly valuable to modern writers and scholars because Halpern's methodology was truly ahead of its time. Kroeber and Barrett belonged to a generation of scholars who presented the results of their research as though viewed through the eyes of an "omniscient observer," and a similar descriptive method is also adopted in Loeb's *The Western Kuksu Cult* (1932) and *The Eastern Kuksu Cult* (1933). In *Southeastern Pomo Ceremonials*, however, Halpern uses a very different technique: here, much of the information is presented as a collage of comments transcribed in the exact words of the elders consulted. This not only reflects a surprisingly modern ethical sensibility but also gives the book a grainy texture of reality that makes for interesting reading. Halpern seemed to realize that readers would find the words of his "informants" far more interesting than his own, and he exploits this expository method with a masterful hand.

A similar approach is used in Birbeck Wilson's *Ukiah Valley Pomo Religious Life* (1968), and it is an interesting coincidence that this was also a posthumous publication, based on research that Wilson (who died in 1946) conducted between 1939 and 1941. Presumably, these two knew each other and the approach taken was based on explicit understandings that they shared. In Halpern's hands, this method is applied in a highly systematic manner and with great success.

Halpern provides a good deal of biographical information on each of the five elders he interviewed. These life-histories are not only interesting in themselves but also serve to add dimension and verisimilitude to Halpern's analysis. It is too seldom recognized that our knowledge of Indian cultures in California is based upon the testimonies of relatively few individuals, but this is all quite explicit in the book under review.

Finally, and relatedly, the book provides an excellent history of religious developments in the Lower Lake and Sulphur Bank communities from 1850 through 1937. Modern developments (not only Bole-Maru but also Power Doctoring and even Pentecostal worship) are described on an equal footing with the indigenous Kuksu ceremonials, and Halpern manages to provide an excellent sense of continuity between these things. One leaves

this book with a satisfied feeling of having experienced something very palpable about an Indian community and its transitions.

Richard Keeling
University of California, Los Angeles

Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska. By William W. Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988. 360 pages. \$45.00 Cloth. \$24.95 Paper.

A slick, glossy, and colorful publication is not always made for coffee table display and that truism applies here. *Crossroads of Continents* was the catalog for a major exhibition which opened at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. in September, 1988. The event brought together, for the first time, early ethnographic collections from the North Pacific not available in any one nation. This exhibition and monograph are the result of a decade of cooperative endeavor by the Smithsonian Institution, the Soviet Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and several other museums. Primary focus of the exhibition was on the Native peoples of 18th and 19th century Alaska and Siberia.

The focus of the book is much broader and useful to laymen and scholars interested in Native peoples of the North Pacific region. In this sense, it was intended to be a vehicle for education and information resulting from recent scholarship and succeeds admirably. Readers are provided with a panorama of the history, culture and art of North Pacific traditional cultures from prehistoric times to the present.

Crossroads is organized around a logical progression of themes which outline its purpose and introduce the many native groups and cultures involved. These are followed by discussions of environment, prehistory, Euro-American historic contact, and current lifeways of Siberian peoples and Alaska Natives. The heart of the exhibition related material is composed of chapters about certain aspects of the cultures of North Pacific peoples. The final section is on the current lives of the native peoples.