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The Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region. By Melvin R. Gilmore.

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to have proven his case beyond a reasonable doubt; he admits that there is plenty of "coincidence and inexactitude" (p. 321), even in light of the compelling circumstantial evidence of the Inuit stories. Moreover, his research points to the need for further exploration in the area of Kirkwall Island, the site of stone cairns and possibly the final resting place of one of Franklin's two ships. In his focus on Kirkwall Island, Woodman undermines the relatively recent and imaginative books by Nowel Wright, which claim that the ships were borne off by an iceberg.

Intriguing though the Inuit testimony is, it does not tell us in indisputable terms what happened to the expedition. Some of the testimony may refer to other expeditions, and the portions of testimony that cannot be separated from the Franklin expedition can be read in a number of ways. Woodman uses the evidence of the testimony to construct a highly probable picture of what happened, much as an archaeologist mines the strata of a canyon for clues on which to construct a narrative of the canyon's history. The minerals beneath the archaeologist's hammer are genuine enough, but it is up to the archaeologist to examine those minerals in the light of the right questions if he is to draw useful answers.

The questions Woodman asks make for a compelling narrative. His book is richly documented, and the appendices of Inuit place names and witnesses are of considerable help. One complaint: The maps—with which the book is amply supplied—would be easier to use if the land masses were shaded so as to help the reader distinguish them from the dizzying myriad of straits, coves, inlets, and other water bodies. Overall, the book is as carefully organized and produced as it is well written. It belongs in the hands of everyone interested in the Franklin expedition—or in the significance of Inuit oral traditions.

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The Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region.
By Melvin R. Gilmore. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. 125 pages. \$9.95 paper.

First published in 1919 by the Bureau of American Ethnology and today considered a classic by many ethnobotanists, *The Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region* by Melvin R.

Gilmore is now available in an enlarged paperback edition. This thorough ethnobotanical treatment written and assembled more than seventy years ago reflects the vast knowledge held by five northern Great Plains tribes regarding the plant world.

The cultures of the Plains tribes typically have been associated with large game animals; their knowledge and uses of plants have been downplayed. Many early authors and anthropologists concluded that the Plains Indians depended primarily on hunting, with the buffalo as the cornerstone of their subsistence economies. Gilmore's monograph challenges this stereotype by demonstrating the great importance of plants in the lives of these tribes of the prairies—elevating plant gathering as a significant activity.

Gilmore reported that over 150 plant species were used for medicines, foods, weapons, games, construction materials, ceremonies, and other purposes. This number is impressive, despite the fact that it represents a fraction of the total number of species utilized by native peoples prior to European contact. Gilmore interviewed many elders in the Pawnee, Ponca, Omaha, Winnebago, and Dakota tribes. Ethnobotanical information was substantiated and supplemented by cross-checking the data between informants and by providing actual specimens of each plant for observation and identification by the participants.

From his writings, it appears that Gilmore established a friendship and rapport with native people and that they were eager and enthusiastic to share plant knowledge with him. Gilmore never passes negative judgment on the efficacy of a medicine or on the level of cultural advancement achieved by the tribes studied. On the contrary, his respect for native knowledge is mirrored in his emphasis on the importance of this knowledge to modern society. Gilmore astutely reminds us that some of our plant industries had their origins in native discoveries and practices.

The book can be divided into three sections. Part 1 is a basic introduction to the work—a narration exploring and defining the range of plant-human relationships within the field of ethnobotany. Such topics as the economic value of native plants to contemporary society, the origins of cultivated plants, and the human impact on native flora are addressed—blending the interests and concerns of the botanist, the anthropologist, the ecologist, and the conservation biologist.

The major thrust of the book lies in part 2, a taxonomic list of plants and their indigenous uses. This section is based entirely on primary materials—the result of numerous interviews with In-

dian elders. A wide variety of plant forms, including grasses, herbs, sedges, vines, shrubs, and trees, appear in this section, demonstrating native people's reliance on the diversity of the prairie's flora and their ingenuity in meeting their cultural needs. Whenever possible, Gilmore enriches plant use information with other cultural notations, such as details about songs, ceremonies, and legends that feature the plant of interest.

This part is arranged by plant family, and the sequence is based on the modified system of Engler and Prantl used in the seventh edition of Gray's *Manual of Botany* (1908). The genera and species are placed under the family headings, but not alphabetically. The scientific names utilized can be found in Rydberg's *Flora of the Prairies and Plains of Central North America*, revised edition (1932). In this enlarged edition of Gilmore's book, Hugh Cutler (Missouri Botanical Garden) has appended a list of those scientific names used by Gilmore that have changed, showing their recent equivalents; and he has added a most useful index of scientific and common names presented in the book. Part 2 is followed by a series of drawings by Bellamy Parks Jansen, prepared especially for this enlarged edition, that beautifully and accurately illustrate some of the plants described by Gilmore.

Throughout the book, Gilmore employs the rules of a scrupulous botanist. In the majority of cases, the exact species used is recorded rather than the generic grass or sedge without a scientific name attached. He was also careful to obtain samples of species investigated and to have them identified with certainty and preserved as herbarium specimens. Each specimen was identified by several Indian informants and later by the systematic botanist, W. E. Safford.

Careful record was made of the etymological analysis of the names of plants and of botanical terminology in the language of the tribe studied. Besides herbarium specimens for identification of the species, Gilmore also collected specimens showing Indian utilization of the plant. For this purpose, samples of raw materials were assembled, showing the stages of preparation through which they pass, and also specimens of the finished product. Both the herbarium specimens and the bundles of plant products are represented in photographs illustrating the text.

In many cases, the ethnobotanical information is not removed from its cultural context and therefore raises interesting questions for further anthropological investigations. For example, Gilmore has connected plant use information to such broad topics as the

effects of humans on the distribution and range of certain plant species. At the time of Gilmore's writings, it was generally accepted that Indians did not materially alter the native vegetation of the Plains and prairies. Gilmore was of the belief that there were many examples of plants whose natural occurrence had been altered by Indian activity and that Indians had a significant effect on the composition of the prairie.

Most subsequent ethnobotanies of the region, such as *The Economic Botany of the Kiowa Indians as It Relates to the History of the Tribe* by Paul A. Vestal and Richard E. Schultes (1939), rely to some extent on Gilmore's earlier work, demonstrating its enduring value and importance as a primary source of information. Kelly Kindscher in his recent book entitled *Edible Wild Plants of the Prairie* (1987) stated that Melvin Gilmore's work in the 1910s made "the most important contribution to the ethnobotany of the region" and that Gilmore "understood the spirit of the prairie."

Gilmore was one of the first professionals to point out that the discipline of ethnobotany encompassed more than J. W. Harshberger's (1895) early definition of "the uses of plants by aborigines." Gilmore argues in his book that plant-human relationships are the underpinnings of an ethnic group's material and spiritual culture, and, therefore, ethnobotanical study is fundamental to understanding other related fields such as linguistics, folklore, and ceremonial life. His insights formed the basis for a new definition of ethnobotany—concerned not only with uses of plants but with the entire range of relations between native people and plants. His book is fundamental reading not only for those interested in understanding the indigenous cultures of the northern Great Plains but also for those interested in the evolution of the field of ethnobotany.

Kat Anderson

Voices of the Wind: Native American Legends. By Margot Edmunds and Ella E. Clark. New York: Facts on File, 1989. 368 pages. \$27.95 cloth.

When the earth was created, the plants and animals interacted intimately with each other. The various elements of life spoke with each other and learned from one another. The mountains, lakes, rivers, fog, clouds, and other elements of nature were filled with