

**Robert G. Lake, Jr. *Chilula: People from the Ancient Redwoods.* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1982) xvi, 186 pp., \$26.25 cloth, \$12.00 paper.**

Since information concerning the northern California Chilula has rarely appeared in print and some observers have maintained that they no longer exist as a tribe, Robert G. Lake, Jr., attempts to provide a comprehensive account of the people. He not only demonstrates that they do, indeed, exist but also that much of their traditional culture remains intact. Using relevant archaeological and ethnographic literature, as well as on-site field study of village and ceremonial locations and the collection of a number of personal interviews from elderly Chilulas, the author draws a relatively detailed picture of hunting practices, fishing techniques, gathering, food sources, medicinal herbs, animal cosmology, religion, and life cycle. The reader learns about the Chilula's lack of susceptibility to poison ivy, about how animals convey good and evil power, and about healing rituals. Lake's detail with respect to religion, which he asserts was "functionally integrated into every fiber" of the Chilula cultural system, is especially noteworthy.

Lake, himself a Baltimore-born mixed blood (Cherokee/Seneca/White) who currently teaches at Humboldt State University, is well aware that Anglo anthropologists have often ignored the full dimensions of American Indian religious experience and concentrates his effort upon redressing this oversight. A shaman, he does an excellent job of synthesizing the religious and moral objectives inherent within Chilula folktales and myths—that oral literature which imparts appropriate values to children.

Notwithstanding these successes, however, *Chilula* does have considerable problems. It is rather disjointed—in part because some of the chapters have appeared previously as articles. For all the valuable material it contains about spiritual and material culture, the book contains little about the contemporary quality of life for the Chilula and next-to-nothing on the nature of interpersonal relations. The Chilula as people are strangely missing from this work. Lake supplies thirty photographs, but none of these show Chilula dealing with one another in play or work. Only six of the photographs contain actual people; the remainder are of buildings (4), artifacts (5), and natural formations (15), including sacred places.

The photographs set the tone for the book. We learn almost nothing about what the Chilula thought (and think) about neighboring tribes, how they raised their children, or how social tensions were resolved. We learn that the Chilula sought sorcerers to relieve a sense of jealousy and sometimes considered jealous tribesmen to live in neighboring villages, but we are not really told why the people from the ancient redwoods were

jealous. There is one clue: a male doctor is said to be envious of a female doctor's capacity to earn money. But how common was this and did envy of material possessions or abilities profoundly influence the way Chilulas perceived one another?

Internal evidence from Lake's work suggests that he wishes to avoid describing social attitudes or dislocations, those aspects which might disturb his harmonious rendering of a people. He does a poor job on women, in particular. He states that "women had a significant and contributing role within Chilula culture," but fails to indicate whether men acknowledged that important role. The fact that a few women became shamans does not prove that women were much respected. After all, only female doctors could touch the sacred eagle feathers, while men who had not achieved shaman status could do so. The woman could not control her own child-bearing, for abortion and infanticide were "sacrilege." She might have to endure—as a wife or daughter—being given to a male doctor for sex or labor in payment for his services. Sharp segregation of tools, weapons, gambling devices, and religious items existed, as neither sex was allowed to touch the possessions of the other. Women's vaginas were considered so unclean that they could affect the performance of men (even when such women were not menstruating). What women thought about such attitudes, prohibitions, and inequalities is unknown, for Lake neglected to ask either men or women how they felt about gender identity and social interaction.

Lake's effort to praise the "woman warrior" while covering up violence directed at women reflects his tendency to cast a good light on a bad action. After one Chilula woman describes how her grandfather shot a woman in the back and smashed her two year old's head against a log during one raid, Lake attributes this shocking incident to the fact that "'woman warriors' in various tribes were considered more dangerous than average men because they had 'special powers.'" Yet, Lake provides no proof that the woman's slayer thought she was a medicine woman. (Indeed, among most tribes where women become shamans, it is usually only women past their child-bearing years who are eligible.) Nor does the author justify his conclusion that she could not have even been a "woman warrior," for he states in another place that only the Chilula and the Yurok—not the Yuki (the tribe to which the slain woman belonged)—possessed female warriors. Moreover, he does not even demonstrate the existence of "woman warriors" among the Chilula! His one cited instance is not actually a warrior at all, but a Chilula woman who made war medicine (and did not fight).

*Chilula's* utility is further limited by the fact that Lake ignores any treatment of problems produced by Anglo cultural intrusions. He does not even bother to interview the younger generation, those whom the elders claim are not learning the "sacred songs" or participating in the

“sacred dances.” To what extent Chilula culture is changing is only minimally dwelt upon. Thus, despite its credible analysis of religion and myth, *Chilula* is a work which does not really much illuminate the position of the contemporary people of the ancient redwoods.

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**Arnoldo De León. *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982) xix, 277 pp., \$19.95.**

De León's pioneering effort is a most welcome volume to Chicano Studies. The historian's findings in the history of the Mexicans in Texas during most of the last century present a major addition to our knowledge of how agrarian Tejanos lived from the Texas Revolution to the turn of the century.

The author attempts “to define *Tejano culture*” and to seek answers to “a fundamental question: what did Mexican Americans in Texas do for themselves, and how did they do it . . .?” He stresses the emancipatory development of a flexible bicultural existence as a means of survival and a major achievement for an oppressed people. Sixteen rare photos and a host of tables are included in the text. In nine chapters any reader interested in historical, sociological, religious, socio-political matters or in issues pertaining to folklore will profit from the book. De León has drawn from an impressive amount of source material. The problems raised by his work derive from the geographical vastness of Texas, the highly varied social strata of Tejano society, and the inclusiveness of his approach and time span. Each one of his chapters could ask for a full-fledged book, e.g. “Politics and Tejanos,” “The Urban Scene,” “Religion and Life Experience,” “Culture and Community.” Frequently the reader has to be content with lists of names of individuals or publications involved in an activity relevant to the community, but then is left with an appetite for more information and, above all, more of an analytical approach. The delicate balance between descriptive detail and statistics, analysis and information, which characterizes the great masters, is often lacking.

Arnoldo De León does very well in giving Texan geography and Tejano cultural zones their due. Most of all, ample proof is furnished that Tejanos were bicultural at an early date after the Anglo take-over, a fact