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## **Review of *Creek Indian Medicine Ways: The Enduring Power of Mvskoke Religion* By David Lewis, Jr. and Ann T. Jordan**

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**Creek Indian Medicine Ways: The Enduring Power of Mvskoke Religion.** By David Lewis, Jr. and Ann T. Jordan. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002. xxi + 194 pp. Photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

This collaborative work by Mvskoke (Creek) medicine man David Lewis Jr. and Euro-American anthropologist Ann T. Jordan focuses on the *heles-hayv* tradition of medicine that Lewis's family has kept for generations through the forced relocation from the Southeast to the eastern margins of the southern Great Plains. Lewis's first-person narrative occupies the heart of the book: chapters titled "Kinds of Medicine People," "Selection of Medicine People," and "Memories of Childhood in a Medicine Family"; a chapter on the sacred story encoding much of the tradition's essential knowledge; chapters on vegetal pharmacopoeia, medical practices, and ceremonies; and a chapter titled "The Unseen Powers of Traditional Medicine." Preceding the narrative are a prologue by Lewis and a meaty preface, a tribal history, and a Lewis Family history, all coauthored. Following Lewis's narrative are three appendixes by Jordan: one tracing the ethnography and historiography of Mvskoke medicine, one comparing Lewis's narrative to written sources, and a diagram of Lewis's genealogy.

The book's organization reflects the "collaborative method" of ethnography, which has supplanted the older method of "fieldwork" with native "informants," who provide information about their culture to the investigator, who determines the truth about it, a truth that eludes the natives. The belief that scholars' knowledge is superior to natives' is in eclipse, and best practice now presents indigenous knowledge as complete and worthy in itself. Accordingly, this book delivers Lewis's narrative "as he spoke and wrote it," uninterrupted by "academic commentary," and Jordan's contributions are marginalized into introductory and appended matter.

Apart from its considerable value as a record of an indigenous medical tradition (minus sacred matter unsuitable for publication), this book also illuminates differences and respective utilities of the obsolete and current ethnographic methods. Such comparison is clear in this volume because David Lewis's great-grandfather Jackson Lewis served as an informant for the old-school ethnographer John R. Swanton, who addressed Mvskoke medicine in several reports published early in the twentieth century. David Lewis affirms, amends, refutes, and embellishes Swanton's points, and Jordan compares Lewis's and Swanton's statements in an appendix. The comparisons suggest that four generations of Lewises kept the tradition intact. Given this constant medical knowledge, the reader can see that the informant method produced a vast amount of information—flawed, however, because of the anthropologist's outsider status and the alienation of the knowledge from the "informant" (see, for example, pages 42-43). The collaborative method has the advantage of primary over secondary sources. A coauthor is also the highly reliable source of the information reported.

Of half a dozen Mvskokes polled, all were pleased with this book.  
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