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**Science and Civilisation in China. Volume 6: Biology and Biological Technology. Part I: Botany.** Joseph Needham (with collaboration of Lu Gwei-Djen and Huang Hsing-Tsung). Cambridge University Press, 510 North Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801. 1986. 718 pp. \$95.00.

The first part of the 6th volume of this amazing undertaking traces the history of plant science in China through 2 millennia. The vast botanical literature, wholly uninfluenced by the botany of other peoples, and based on a collection of plants unknown to Greek, Persian, and Indian botanists, constitutes what Needham calls "a veritable epic." The achievements of plant classification of these pre-Linnean Chinese botanists demonstrate in an extraordinary way what esthetic and taxonomic motivation could do for biological science.

Of special interest to economic botanists is the section on plants and insects in man's service treated as natural plant pesticides (earliest pesticides, gifts of medieval pharmacologists) and biological pest control (insect pests and natural enemies, citrus ant story).

This remarkable work is essential background for all researchers of Oriental plants; indeed all those who enjoy plants will gain pleasure in reading how men in a distant land and culture from ancient times onwards treated the world of plants known only to them.

WALTER H. LEWIS, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, ST. LOUIS, MO 63130

**Medicinal Plants of North America.** 2 volumes. Daniel E. Moerman. Research Reports in Ethnobotany, Contribution 2. University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology Technical Reports, No. 19, Ann Arbor, MI 48109. 1986. 910 pp. \$30.00 (paper).

All those familiar with Moerman's *American Medical Ethnobotany* (Garland Publ., New York, 1977) will welcome this greatly expanded overview of medicinal plants used by Native Americans. The fully computerized database includes 17,634 entries for 2,147 species.

Volume 1 consists solely of genera and species listed alphabetically, and the bibliography. Each binomial includes family, vernacular name, and usually several to many records fully referenced of medicinal use by native group with details of utility. This remarkable compilation is followed in volume 2 by several alternate presentations of essentially the same information, the first is "Indications" listing all items in terms of their primary usage, the second is "Families" (180, the three most used in order are Asteraceae, Rosaceae, Pinaceae), the third is "Culture," and the last is "Common Names."

This extraordinary publication is an essential reference for all those interested in medicinal uses of North American plants. This is *the* scholarly compendium to have available.

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**Plants in Indigenous Medicine and Diet: Biobehavioral Approaches.** Nina L. Etkin (ed.). Redgrave Publishing Co., 380 Adams St., Bedford Hills, NY 10507. 1986. 336 pp. \$24.95.

Ethnobotanists, ethnopharmacologists, nutritionists, botanists, anthropologists, and others will welcome this unusual collection of contributions, many of them treating topics for which literature is not readily available to most investigators.

There are 16 chapters divided into four broad parts: 1) The importance of multidisciplinary approaches to plant use; 2) Criteria used in the selection of medicinal plants; 3) Plants in medicinal and dietary contexts; and 4) Medical panaceas and misunderstood plants. The editing of such an extensive and diverse collection of papers by 18 specialists was masterfully handled by Etkin, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of

Minnesota. Each chapter is provided with an extensive list of references. The index is extremely detailed as to plants (common and scientific names), peoples, regions, illnesses, and chemical compounds.

The novelty of approach, the broad spectrum of topics discussed, and the wise choice of expert contributors combine to make this volume, in my opinion, one of the truly outstanding ethnobotanical publications of the year.

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