

Book Reviews

GILBERT LEWIS, *Knowledge of illness in a Sepik society. A study of the Gnau, New Guinea*, London, Athlone Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. x, 379, illus., £12.50.

The author, being medically qualified and Lecturer in Social Anthropology in the University of Cambridge, is uniquely equipped to produce this study of the occurrence, recognition and explanation of illness in a primitive community. By examining these aspects of the inhabitants of the forest village of Raut, a useful insight is afforded into their views of their world. But to be successful it is necessary to be aware of other cultural themes and their relationships to illness, so that the author gives here a partial ethnographic account of the people he is studying.

Using his dual training, Dr. Lewis was able to investigate the occurrence of disease and then to relate its nature to the current explanation for it and the measures taken to combat it. Most previous research of this nature has been selective, and limited to the explanation and management of illness, which has been used to illuminate other themes of the society under investigation. Clearly an examination of the phenomenon in its entirety is alone likely to give an accurate picture of primitive medicine. The author could do this, for he states, “. . . The external standpoint of modern medicine thus enabled me to define a field of misfortune and then to see the differential social pressures and concerns which acted to select certain of these events for more marked attention . . .” (p. 2). His aim is thus to contribute to the anthropological study of disease, by focusing on diagnosis and explanation.

Dr. Lewis deals in turn with the social structure of his chosen community, its environment and disease, the incidence and prevalence, and recognition of illness, the classes of causes, causality, and the explanation of actual illness. It would have been useful to have related his findings to those of other primitive societies and to have cited more of the general literature on his topic; references in the bibliography to W. H. R. Rivers', *Medicine, magic, and religion* (1924), M. J. Field's, *Religion and medicine of the Gā people* (1937), and F. E. Clements', *Primitive concepts of disease* (1932), are notable omissions, and the work of Professor E. H. Ackerknecht, who is perhaps one of the few living scholars with comparable qualifications, should have received more attention. However, Dr. Lewis has provided the deepest analysis so far available of primitive concepts of disease, illustrated with excellent photographs. It will be of vital importance to historians of medicine who, although recognizing the possible hazards of the technique, equate present-day primitive medicine with the palaeo-medicine of prehistoric man.

LLOYD DE MAUSE (editor), *The history of childhood. The evolution of parent-child relationships as a factor in history*, London, Souvenir Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. [iv], 450, £5.00 (£3.00 paperback).

It is true that the history of childhood is a relatively neglected field in the history of medicine, but whether to exploit it we should join forces with the psychoanalyst, who has proprietary rights on childhood, is another matter. The psychohistorians include those that do, and they present here ten essays, which review systematically the attitudes and practices of western parents towards their children as exhibited from the late Roman period to the nineteenth century. Each is a scholarly contribution with excellent documentation and together they form an excellent source of historical