

BOOK REVIEWS

New and Noteworthy

Four new or reprinted books on Native North and South American cultures, past and present, have recently been issued. Each of these books provides fascinating studies of religious change, intercultural relations, and linguistic anthropological issues.

In keeping with the fine tradition of previous volumes in the *Handbook of American Indian* series, Wilcomb E. Washburn has admirably edited the most recent issue, devoted to Indian-White relations (*History of Indian-White Relations*. Vol. 4. Handbook of American Indians. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988. Pp. xiii + 838, maps, illustrations, photographs, non-Indian biographies, contributors, list of illustrations, bibliography, index. \$47.00 cloth). This magnificently produced and illustrated tome is clearly organized, with separate sections on national policies, military situations, and political, economic, religious, and conceptual relations. Aside from providing excellent authoritative background material, folklorists will benefit particularly from Berkhofer's article on White conceptions of Indians, Hertzberg's discussion of the Indian rights movement and Pan-Indian trends, and Rayna Green's overview of the Indian in popular American culture.

The Pacific Northwest is the scene for a new examination (Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau: Smohalla and Skolaskin*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1989. Pp. xiv + 257, photographs, map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.95 cloth) of two nineteenth-century dreamer-prophets, leaders of revitalization movements on the Columbia Plateau previously investigated by Cora DuBois, Verne Ray, and Leslie Spier in the 1930s, and by Christopher Miller in the 1980s. Ruby and Brown's portrait of Smohalla and Skolaskin, and the beliefs, rituals, and practices of these Ghost Dance-related movements, is popular ethnohistory and not deeply rooted in recent anthropological theory on acculturation and religious syncretism. It does, however, bring together a great deal of material from interviews and from published and archival sources, and provides especially intriguing information about the contemporary scene.

The University of Texas Press has just issued a paperback version of a recent classic (Joel Sherzer, *Kuna Ways of Speaking: An Ethnographic Perspective*. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1990 [1983]. Pp. x + 262, photographs, guide to pronunciation, notes, bibliography, index. \$14.95 paper). Sherzer's well-received work on the Kuna—a mere one hour away from Panama City—is an ethnography of speaking that explores the intersection of language and speech with religion, curing and magic, politics, ritual, material culture (especially those beautiful appliqué molas), and the full range of everyday activities. And the University of Arizona Press has just issued a collection of Keith H. Basso's writings (*Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1990. Pp. xx + 195, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.95 cloth) which brings together work published over the last 25 years in scattered journals and edited volumes. As Basso states in an introduction written for this book, his work reflects (and has helped define) the central concerns of linguistic anthropology in attempting to see what the study of spoken language can reveal about the shapes and contours of cultural worlds, and how this information can improve the craft of ethnographic description. Basso's extensive research on the dynamic and vital traditions of the Western Apache at Cibecue (particularly on narrative, the uses of silence and metaphor, and place-naming) has much to offer folklorists in general, and specifically anyone interested in the cultural construction of landscapes.

Over the past few years, UMI Research Press has initiated a "Masters of Material Culture" series: valuable, if steeply priced, collections of what are, for the most part, previously published articles. Their choice of "Masters" is unquestionable. The late Austin Fife (*Exploring Western American* [ed. by Alta Fife] Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988. Pp. xviii + 279, photographs, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$44.95 cloth) is truly an under-recognized scholar of American folklore, whose legacy includes not only fine scholarship devoted to Western lore but also a wealth of archival materials and an annual conference as well. His book nicely summarizes his work on Mormon belief, narrative, and music, cowboy songs, and the material culture of the Rocky Mountain frontier. Michael Owen Jones (*Exploring Folk Art: Twenty Years of Thought on Craft, Work, and Aesthetics*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987. Pp. vi + 219, photographs, bibliography, index. \$44.95 cloth) currently directs one of the nation's major folklore programs at UCLA, and the articles in his book focus on an experiential-behavioristic approach to chairmaking, architectural remodeling, and the ethnography and folklife of organizational culture (e.g., corporate culture). Warren E. Roberts (*Viewpoints on Folklife: Looking at the Overlooked*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988. Pp. xv + 315, photographs, illustrations, index. \$44.95 cloth) was the first to receive a Ph.D. in Folklore from Indiana University and was an early leader of the American folklife movement. His book reflects his distinctive perspective on the old traditional way of life and addresses issues of function and community aesthetics in the folk arts, crafts, tools, customs, and architecture of Southern Indiana. Thomas J. Schlereth (*Cultural History and Material Culture: Everyday Life, Landscapes, Museums*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990. Pp. xxii + 440,

photographs, illustrations, index. \$44.95 cloth) is the widely published and cited author of many articles linking material culture with the American Studies movement. Schlereth's volume reflects the breadth of his interests in folk-popular-mass material culture, with articles on mail order catalogs, public landscapes (e.g., the city as artifact), and the roles of American history museums. Don Yoder (*Discovering American Folklife: Studies in Ethnic, Religious, and Regional Culture*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990. Pp. xi + 314, photographs, bibliography, list of dissertations directed, index. \$44.95 cloth) has long been a pillar of the Pennsylvania folklife scene, a scholar whose intensity of regional research in things Pennsylvania-German is matched today perhaps only by Roberts' love for things Hoosier. Yoder's volume contains his important articles on the foundations of American folklife studies, and a rich selection of his work on American folk costume and foodways and, of course, the oral, customary, and material traditions of Pennsylvania's Germans. All of these books are fine tributes to excellent scholars.

Two edited volumes have recently been published which provide perspectives on material culture near and far. Jean-Paul Bourdier and Nezar AlSayyad (*Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989. Pp. 540, photographs, illustrations, appendices, notes on contributors. \$62.75 cloth, \$35.00 paper) have edited an interdisciplinary look at traditionally built environments, with contributions by such figures as Yi-Fu Tuan and Amos Rapoport, and by twenty-one other scholars from around the world. Aside from its general cross-cultural perspective, folklorists will be particularly interested in the book's valuable section on emergent housing forms which are influenced by colonialism, immigration, and modernization. Closer to home is a nicely illustrated collection of six essays on the diversity of folk arts in Minnesota (Willard B. Moore, et al *Circles of Tradition: Folk Arts in Minnesota*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989. Pp. xii + 162, photographs, illustrations, selected bibliography, index. \$18.95 paper). Although limited in geographic scope by artificial boundaries, this book is not simply a catalog of one state's cultural heritage; its essays range widely, bibliographically and theoretically. Included are articles on Norwegian-American traditions, the decor of Ojibway drums, Mexican-American corridos, a Latvian mitten knitter, and various "unexpected" artistic traditions (e.g., lawn art, and the aesthetics of public fish displays in a physical environment rich with lakes and rivers). My only complaint with this fine volume is its inability to decide how to handle architectural forms—there is but one relevant photograph, that of a hewn log Swedish-American barn.

Also of interest to scholars of material culture and cultural geography, and especially to those in the American West, is a new book by Thomas R. Vale and Geraldine R. Vale (*Western Images, Western Landscapes: Travels Along U.S. 89*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1989. Pp. xi + 189, maps, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, index. \$29.95). The authors use a trip—from Nogales, Arizona, to St. Mary, Montana—on this well-known highway to compare common perceptions of the American West with the reality of landscapes actually encountered along the road; specific mental images of the West emerge: the West as frontier, as garden, as protected wild nature, as

Turnerian progress, as desert, and as Big Rock Candy Mountain. This book should be thought-provoking to anyone interested in the relationship between landscape and environmental perception and folk culture.

Finally, I urge all folklorists to read a new book by Sally Price (*Primitive Art in Civilized Places*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989. Pp. xi + 145, photographs, notes, bibliography, illustration credits. \$19.95 cloth), a provocative look at the ideological foundations of our public attention to "primitive art." Drawing upon numerous examples from her own fieldwork in the Amazon and from modern, everyday Western public culture, Price portrays the relationship between "civilized" viewers and "primitive" art objects, and explores questions of appropriation, anonymity and "authorship," and the "universality" of aesthetic response. This brief and eminently readable treatment of art and the conceptualization of the Exotic Other would be a good complement to another recent and related work, Henry Glassie's magisterial *The Spirit of Folk Art*. Both have the potential to change forever the ways in which we look at art.

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Michael Jackson. *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989. Pp. xi + 239, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00, cloth; \$12.95, paper.

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In recent years, questions about the nature and quality of ethnography have pervaded the journals, libraries, and syllabi of folklorists and anthropologists alike. Michael Jackson has added his voice to this often-heated discussion: *Paths Toward a Clearing* speaks clearly and profoundly to the issues at hand.

The book outlines a program of "epistemological openness" based on experience and an absence of abstraction (184). Anthropological concepts can never contain the fullness and complexity of reality as it is lived by real people. Jackson skillfully employs various philosophical traditions to create the foundation for a rejuvenated anthropology of experience. William James' radical empiricism acknowledges both structure and agency but refuses to give primacy to either; stuck between the granite of social norms and hard independent action, existential experiences of *thrownness*, *finitude*, and *ambiguity* come to the fore, and Jackson invokes Sartre and Heidegger to clarify them. He argues that it is from context, need, and desire that individuals create meaning; it is performed by people, and later perhaps discovered by analysts.

Jackson grounds his argument in examples from years of fieldwork among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone. For example, in Chapter Six, he compares the category of witch with the experience of those women who confess to witchcraft on their deathbeds. Witchcraft among the Kuranko implies a negation of