

BOOK REVIEWS

Turners and Burners: The Folk Potters of North Carolina. By Charles G. Zug III. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press [The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies], 1986. Pp. xxii + 450. Photographs, color plates, map, genealogies, tables. architectural drawings and floor-plans, notes, bibliography, index of North Carolina potters, general index. No price given, cloth.

Reviewed by John B. Welford.

A product of over ten years of research, Zug's **Turners and Burners** represents another quality contribution to the bookshelf of American ceramic literature. To the folklorist, this work transcends most other scholarly works in the field because of the author's dedicated adherence to folkloristic methodology while conducting research and his singleminded fidelity to understanding the folklife surrounding the traditional North Carolina potter. In this sense, Zug follows the example of John Burrison and his publication of **Brothers in Clay** (1983), the excellent study of another Southern pottery tradition, that of Georgia potters. Together, these books form a classic exploration into state-bounded folk pottery traditions in the Southeastern United States and should be viewed as an essential foundation upon which any other interdisciplinary study of Southern folk pottery may build.

Zug's work, like Burrison's, upholds the demanding standards of the best folkloristic research and publication. Zug personally interviewed over fifty individuals with first-hand experience or contact with the folk potter's world, compiling over eighty separate inter-

views. He also conducted extensive library research, although he soon discovered that the secondary literature contained biases that unacceptably distorted the data. Two specific biases prominent within the literature that Zug felt compelled to challenge were first, a pro-Northern, anti-Southern bias concerning the desirability or aesthetic competence of the indigenous pottery, and second, an object-oriented, contextually-negligent approach that reveled in the pottery pieces themselves but seriously denigrated the cultural and other contexts in which the pottery was produced simply by ignoring those contexts. As a folklorist, Zug recognizes the primary significance of the folk environment and the tendency toward regional chauvinism within academic literature, so he went to the field and discovered the riches inherent within people's memories.

Zug organizes *Turners and Burners* into three main parts: History, Technology, and Culture. His focus throughout the three sections is North Carolina folk pottery culture (although he does introduce subjects beyond the state boundary where they impinge on the North Carolina traditions), so that each of these sections explicitly applies to North Carolina folk pottery. He thus takes a somewhat different organizational approach than Burrison (who organizes mainly according to pottery centers within Georgia), although both books incorporate much of the same viewpoint, methodology, and emphases. Zug's organization, however, allows the reader a greater understanding of, for example, the actual processes of folk pottery than does Burrison's book, because Zug himself provides focused attention to specific steps within the various processes of the production of the pottery within the "Technology" section. In Burrison, the reader understands the processes generally by reference to them throughout the book, as applied to the various centers; in Zug, the

processes are readily accessible in chapters devoted specifically to them. To the less initiated in the fundamentals of folk pottery, therefore, **Turners and Burners** would be an excellent work to begin to come to terms with this topic.

I do not mean to imply, however, that Zug's work is simply for the beginning reader in folk pottery. Rather, his work is so thorough, his methodology so meticulous, his organization and style so clear, and his data so complete, that his book should be required reading for anyone interested in the folk pottery of any region or state. Although his work, like Burrison's, uses the artificial boundaries of a state as the boundaries of the study, the data reveal such an extensive interstate folk pottery cultural matrix that the implications for the larger regional study - massive as it appears - of Southern folk pottery traditions must be acknowledged. Also acknowledged must be the tremendous groundwork that Burrison and now Zug have achieved through their publications: without such excellent studies of specific areas within regions as foundations, the larger regional works could not be constructed.

Zug's work, of course, stands on its own as a superbly written, beautifully illustrated, well-documented material culture and folklife study. Not only should scholars interested in folk pottery pay attention to this book, but also those involved in folk culture, foodways, Southern culture, and American culture, for Zug is dedicated in his approach to demonstrating the integral cultural connection between the North Carolina folk potter and his sociocultural environment. By taking the "broad, interdisciplinary approach, employing all the tools of the folklorist" (xv), Zug has provided the scholarly world with a solid work valuable for both its own presentation and for its capacity to engender even broader studies.