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Author

Schneider, Joan S.

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The Heart is Fire: The World of the Cahuilla Indians of Southern California.

Deborah Dozier. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1998, 169 pp., \$16.00.

Reviewed by JOAN S. SCHNEIDER

University of California, Riverside
900 University Avenue - Riverside, CA, 92521

Deborah Dozier has documented a series of conversations among Cahuilla elders and organized these conversations under a number of subject headings: Identity, Family, the Land, Food and Medicine, Bird Songs, Rock Art, Basketry, Pottery, and We are Still Here. I found this book a delightful read, not only because I am acquainted with some of the participants in the series of conversations, but because I found, interwoven within the comments, stories, and views of the participants, a universal humanism somehow very familiar. The conversations that are the subjects of this little book should be read by archaeologists working in Southern California and elsewhere because they portray the real lives of real people — people who share characteristics with all peoples through time. The participants come through as having the insights, experiences, cares, and concerns of all of us: how we are perceived by others, how we are perceived by our families and friends, how we identify ourselves within the meaningfulness of life and death.

In the first group of conversations, *Identity*, the participants voice those commonalities of what we anthropologists term “culture.” They discuss what it means to feel and be Cahuilla and ponder whether certain insights, grasps of situations, and ways of dealing with things are genetic or learned. It is the very stuff of what culture means: learning something so well that we are not conscious of where those feelings and

ways of doing things originate, but still recognize them in ourselves and others. It comes not from the physical presence of certain genes, not from the knowledge of how to speak Cahuilla (although at least one elder feels this is an important part of Cahuilla identity), not from how one dresses, or from one’s job, but comes from the environment in which one is raised from early childhood, from watching one’s elders, from hearing and observing in a manner that can only be described as “human.”

The sections that Dozier has titled *Family* and *The Land* made me think that this is the way all humanity feels and reminisces — talking about the way things used to be, the better times, the wisdom of elders, the relationships that all humans once felt to the land with which they were tied, economically and spiritually, when the human animal lived in a close relationship with nature. It occurred to me, when reading this book, that it is a testament to what life was, but is no more, in many regions of our planet. We are now separated from the land, from our traditional relationships, from our extended and sometimes nuclear families, by a few or many degrees of separation. It is only by fortune that the Cahuilla have temporally lagged in this respect, in that oral histories of what once was do remain. How many of us can recall, even from the stories of our grandparents or great-grandparents, how our ancestors lived when they were responsible for taking care of the land on which they were directly dependent for survival? How many fewer of us would have any idea at all if it weren’t for our written records, as spotty as they are?

The remainder of the chapters are very much less philosophical and are aimed at recording what the participants knew of their material and non-material culture. *Food and Medicine* records the methods of harvesting and cooking some of the staples of the Cahuilla diet, as well as rather minimal information on medicinal plants. In *Bird Songs*, perhaps our most visual remainder of traditional Cahuilla music and dance today, the participants describe the modern-day revival of Bird Singing. I found intriguing Alvino Siva’s account of returning from

his years in the armed forces and finding all the "old ones" gone, when he had expected they would be there to continue his traditional education. It was also interesting to me to find out that the words of the songs are not fully understood and cannot be literally translated by the singers. It reminds me a lot of how both Catholic and Jewish American congregants repeat the familiar words and songs in Latin and Hebrew, respectively, but other than having a general understanding of what the words are meant to communicate and that the words are traditional, most of the congregation cannot literally translate them.

I found the *Rock Art* chapter to be sad because it expresses how little the Cahuilla know about the pictographs and petroglyphs that appear on rock outcrops in their traditional lands. Explanations vary from the mundane to the spiritual, even to extra-body experiences. The truth is that no one today knows how to interpret the ancient engravings and paintings on rock. What the Cahuilla do know and believe, however, is that the rock itself is alive and that the ancient ones made the drawings and this is enough to make rock art significant in a spiritual and symbolic sense.

In my view, the chapters on *Basketry* and *Pottery* are out of place in this book. The information is available elsewhere, and there is little added here except for the names of the several Cahuilla who have revived those traditional crafts. These two chapters are "out of synch" with the conversational tone of the rest of the book. [Talking about material things, rather than the intellectual and spiritual, somehow seems very out of place to this reviewer.]

We are Still Here is the final statement and focuses on the endurance and adaptability of the Cahuilla people. The list of the injustices that were perpetrated on the Cahuilla by Euroamericans in the past are once again stated (and may be somewhat overstated). It is true that there were grave injustices and sometimes downright cruelty. But times were changing, and so the Cahuilla changed too. In the process, like many other groups, some traditional ways have

been lost. But this too, is a human universal to change with the times; this is what makes humanity successful in an adaptational sense. The Cahuilla "...are still here;" an indigenous people has not been totally obliterated by the social, spiritual, and economic environments of the past and of today. For me, Cahuilla beliefs about protecting and preserving our Earth, on which we so much depend, are the most significant message of the book. The Cahuilla *know* this is the only way we will go on into the future with any success. We *Anglos* also know this, both intellectually and scientifically, but not in the spiritual context of the Cahuilla. I think that Delores Alvarez said it best: there are "different ways of knowing" (Dozier 1998:74-75). We had best heed the Cahuilla way.

The abundant photographs make *The Heart is Fire* particularly enjoyable; the side-bars highlighting quotes from the text are a delight. I recommend this book to my anthropological colleagues.

