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Fulkerson and Curtis: *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty: Basketmakers of the Great Basin*

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joint lesions can provide a useful measure of mobility. Comparing the frequency and severity of these lesions in different populations, they find that individuals from the Stillwater Marsh sample exhibit higher frequencies of joint remodeling than do East Coast hunter-gatherers or sedentary agriculturalists, findings they argue are more consistent with a physically demanding lifestyle than with the effects of parasitic mycotoxins, as has previously been argued by Brooks et al. (1990) for this sample. Sex differences in the severity of osteoarthritis in the hip and ankle joints are interpreted to be evidence of the greater mobility of males, a pattern consistent with the pursuit of game in upland regions. The evidence the authors present from the study of long bone morphology supports these interpretations. Because the distribution of osseous tissues in the long bones corresponds with the forces placed on bones during life, the cross-sectional properties of long bones can reveal habitual activities such as heavy lifting and long-distance walking. The results of this analysis are consistent with the data on osteoarthritis: both sexes appear to have been fairly mobile, with males more so than females. As the authors note, these sex differences in mobility call into question the simple dichotomy portrayed by the two models generally invoked to explain human adaptation to this region. The cross-sectional properties of these long bones also reveal evidence of excessive bone loss in both sexes that ties in nicely with the dental evidence of episodic undernutrition presented by Hutchinson and Larsen in Chapter 6.

The volume concludes with a short and concise summary by Larsen and Kelly (Chapter 9) synthesizing the data and interpretations presented in the various papers. Two short appendices provide additional descriptive data on various aspects of the collection. Overall, this is a nice, well-written volume that would serve well as a supplemental or case study text for classes in North American archaeology, Great Basin

prehistory, human osteology, and human ecology. The primary data presented throughout the text also make it a valuable reference source for regional archaeologists, bioarchaeologists, and others interested in human adaptation to this unique desert-wetland environment.

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Weavers of Tradition and Beauty: Basket-makers of the Great Basin. Text by Mary Lee Fulkerson, photographs by Kathleen Curtis. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1995, xxiii + 138 pp., 2 maps, 120+ photographs, glossary, bibliography, index, \$19.95 (paper).

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Some books we read for sheer pleasure, others for professional consumption, and still others we hold as long-standing references.

Weavers of Tradition and Beauty is a case for "all of the above." Written for a popular audience in an entertaining, thoroughly illustrated style, the book represents important firsthand documentation of contemporary native craft production, and serves to reference the repertoires of style and technique of individual basketmakers of the Paiute, Shoshone, and Washoe cultures, specifically within the confines of the state of Nevada.

The author and photographer (hereinafter referred to as "the authors") are both contemporary basketmakers, though not of native heritage. Their pleasure in locating and getting acquainted with Great Basin basketmakers is enthusiastically conveyed. The processes by which they learned about each craftsperson are earnestly depicted. This is not a lifelong scholastic study, but rather a journalistic foray, resulting in relatively brief but significant contacts between kindred spirits. The authors' observations are thoughtful, detailed, and relevant to anthropological studies of material culture. In a section about raw materials, witness the notes concerning the weavers' attitudes toward the effects of pesticides on plants sprayed by developers and farmers, the offering of thanks in the taking of plant materials, the methods of testing and sizing willow stalks, and the appropriate means to store raw materials.

An excellent foreword by Catherine S. Fowler discusses the archaeological precedence for the contemporary basketmaking tradition in the Great Basin region. She links and contrasts specific techniques, forms, and functions from prehistoric and modern times. A discussion of design selection and the placement of decorative elements further delineates the connections between today's weavers and their ancestors.

The text repeatedly emphasizes the contemporary, living, and vital nature of Great Basin basketmaking. Following a brief introduction to the environmental and cultural setting (with two useful maps), the plant materials and six different

basketry forms are described in Chapters 3 and 4. Cradle baskets, winnowing baskets, round baskets, burden or cone baskets, seed beaters, and water baskets all reflect aspects of earlier traditions and represent current continuities or revivals.

Even when describing the basketry types, the authors make people and processes, rather than "the things," the dominant subjects. Descriptions about basketry construction and weaves are perhaps the weakest point of the book, but the authors' focus on activities and beliefs certainly makes up for this shortcoming. Customs concerning the creation and use of particular baskets are described by the people who practice them.

There is an interesting, if tantalizingly brief, section on "Frame of Mind." As the women weave, they often think about times past, about the people who influenced them to weave. And, say both Florine Conway and Lilly Sanchez, "You have to be in the right kind of mood to make a basket" (p. 24). Norma Smokey elaborates: "I was real impatient and my willows just kept breaking. I knew I wasn't in the right frame of mind" (p. 24).

Chapter 5, which is almost half of the book, is devoted to "The Weavers," with biographical and artistic information about 19 premier basketry artists. The authors have recorded stories about how individuals learn to weave, how they raise their families, what weaving methods and materials they use, and their professional accomplishments and goals.

This is not a book that characterizes the cultures of the Northern Paiute (Numa), Western Shoshone (Newe) and Washoe (Wa She Shu), nor is it about tribal distinctions among these basketmaking groups of Nevada. In fact, the historical relationships and contemporary interactions among these peoples are simply not addressed. The authors go no further than stating that, "We found that while basket designs from the three different tribes sometimes overlap in a friendly sort of way, at other times a tribe—and

within that tribe, a family—will keep its own style separate and distinct from those of the others” (p. 5). Maybe the basketry production of each group cannot be easily characterized today, perhaps because of the prevalence of intermarriage or a strong sense of individuality; but, this inability may also be due to the authors’ own chosen focus on individuals rather than cultural groups. Because of the complexity of kin relationships, one could wish for several genealogical diagrams to visually link the variously related weavers. Also, I find it puzzling that the authors make no mention of Southern Paiute basketmakers of Utah and Arizona, inasmuch as they mourn the fact that they were not able to locate any Southern Paiute basketmakers (presumably they mean strictly from Nevada).

On the other hand, a focus on individuals and individual variability merits more attention in studies of contemporary native societies and has become a common trend in native art studies. Here, both younger and older weavers are profiled. The authors recognize that “each person has her or his own distinct ‘hand’ ” (p. 5). Several male weavers are included among the predominantly female assemblage. Verbal and visual portraits of each person give readers the sense of having been there, of having met that person and (almost) of having seen those exquisite baskets sitting on the marketplace table.

The concluding chapters of this book may at first glance appear sundry in both style and content, but all reinforce the main message of the book—that native basketweaving is alive and well today in Nevada. Chapter 6 takes a dramaturgical approach to present the interactions of two native apprentices with their instructor. This filmic presentation conveys that feeling of visiting back and forth that is so common to (and enjoyed by) both native peoples and anthropologists working in the field. Chapter 7 is a photographic essay of “The Making of a Water Jug by Evelyn Pete.” Step-by-step images show how pinon pitch is applied to a basket to make

it waterproof. Chapter 8 discusses dances, ceremonies, and legends in which baskets are predominantly featured. In addition to relating several origin stories (whose sources should really be better documented), the authors describe three contemporary professional dance groups and their efforts to preserve local customs. Chapter 9 addresses the question of “The Future,” with practical suggestions for how weavers may learn the craft and how buyers may purchase, document, and care for their baskets.

More than a hundred black-and-white and 19 color photographs illustrate various basketry types and portray basketmakers gathering raw materials, creating baskets, and displaying their work. Few of these are studio quality. Instead, the majority are frank field photographs of documentary quality (a few are even out of focus, as in the miniature Paiute cradle baskets in Plate 13). This homespun quality actually emphasizes the book’s concerns with people as they work every day around their present-day homes and at craft fairs, not in staged “traditional” or museum settings. I am also struck by how often hands are the centerpoint of the illustrations—gesturing, splitting, stitching, winnowing, embracing, and caressing the baskets. The processes of basketmaking once again come to the fore. A brief glossary with Paiute, Shoshone, and Washoe words for different baskets, a bibliography, and a useful index complete the volume.

Not surprisingly, *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty* raises a number of interesting questions regarding the challenges of outsiders representing native peoples today. Some of these are made explicit by the authors, others are more implicit. On the whole, the book is successful as a sensitive and straightforward account, double-thinking sufficiently but not excessively about the authors’ processes of knowing. Fulkerson and Curtis appear comfortable with their non-Indian, outsider identity and with their roles as basketmakers and artists in their own right.

Discussing this informally gives the book an unaffected, natural self-reflexivity, in contrast to certain recent anthropological explorations in which the author's presence (and thoughts and re-thoughts) pervades the text.

In exemplary fashion, these authors shared the text (and the photographs?) with each of the people involved. They honored their collaborators' wishes about materials that should not be published. Indeed, they claim that they "attempted to make this the People's book. Not our book, not the historians', scientists', or the spiritualists' book. Theirs" (p. xxi). In any case, they are well aware that many of the people involved and their successors will, we hope, read the book for some time to come.

Frequent use of statements by the weavers makes the text "come alive" and gives a strong sense of personal affinities. The authors apparently grappled with how to use direct quotations spoken to them, perhaps in Indian English at times: "All of the weavers are highly intelligent women and men speaking for their own culture; we have tried to preserve the integrity of the way in which they explain their work" (p. xx). The degree to which the numerous statements were edited to reflect integrity of thought rather than actual wording is not apparent, although almost all quotations are presently in grammatically standard English format.

They also agonized over the need to limit their coverage to just 19 artisans, leaving out many others "who are also carriers of their tradition" (p. xx). Unfortunately, it is not made

clear why the 19 were selected and why others were not included. For anthropologists today, this is a common problem, not only because of sampling and issues of representativeness, but also for maintaining continuing relationships in a community and avoiding hurt feelings.

A final issue concerns the artificial distinction between "traditional" and "nontraditional" basketweavers and baskets. In Chapter 5, following descriptions of 16 weavers listed as "traditional," are essays about three "Nontraditional Basketmakers . . . Native women who make nontraditional baskets differing in materials, techniques, style, or all three" (p. 91). Nevertheless, in each of the three cases, reference is made to the work being based in some manner on traditional practices. Inasmuch as my work with Navajo rugweavers has shown me that these Athabaskan weavers consider themselves traditional as long as they draw on any of the traditional *processes* (including the thinking), no matter what the resulting object looks like or what materials and techniques it contains, I wonder how the Nevada weavers respond to being classified outside of their traditional cultural domain.

In sum, *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty* presents some useful information in thoughtful and sensitive ways. Its focus on the individual human dimensions of craft production will make it a valuable addition to the bookshelves of many scholars, artists, and collectors, as well as to those of the native basketmakers and their families.

