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Grass Games and Moon Races, California Indian Games and Toys. Jeannine Gendar. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1995, 125 pp., 65 black and white photographs and illustrations, \$12.95 (paper).

Reviewed by:

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Grass Games and Moon Races by Jeannine Gendar is a delightful book about the games and toys that California Indian peoples played in the past, many of which continue to be enjoyed today. It is a book that gracefully achieves the author's main goal "to promote fun" (p. 15). Three general categories of games (field, skill, and gambling) are described and discussed with chapters devoted to each. Different versions played by several tribes are explained for each game type so that both varieties and similarities across the state are clear. Many of the explanations are presented in the first person native voice, thus conveying authenticity, charm, and the lively spirit of the games. The volume is liberally illustrated with photographs of both historical and contemporary scenes which strongly support the continuing importance of these events in the expression and celebration of California Indian culture. These photographs also clearly reveal the concentration and intensity with which the games are pursued. A number of well-designed figures and graphics are helpful to the understanding of various details, particularly for the dice and hand games.

Following a brief introduction, the first games discussed are field games, such as variations of Indian football and stick or shinny games, all of which are played on large fields and require great endurance from the participants. Both men and women play these games. Gendar establishes the cosmological basis of these matches by providing an example of a *Yowlumni* (Yokuts) story in which *Limik* (Prairie

Falcon) has a shinny contest with a powerful gambler, *Coo'-choon*. Both players use special powers to gain a competitive advantage, but eventually *Limik* wins (pp. 27-30). The use of oral tradition in this case, and throughout the book, reveals the essential connection between games, daily life, and cosmology, thus embedding the games within the whole of Native American culture.

Next, Gendar discusses games of skill, which involve many variations on throwing spears or shooting arrows through a hoop or at a target. These are obviously instrumental in honing skills essential to male hunting activities, and consequently are games predominantly for boys and men, though in some tribes girls/women may have played some forms (p. 32). These games, like the field games, are intuitively familiar to us as participants in contemporary society, where, as children and adults, many of us play ball games that require throwing accuracy and that increase hand-eye coordination.

The descriptions of the gambling games—hand game/peon and various dice and stick games—are of particular interest as the hand game, especially, continues to be an important part of many California Indian "Big Times" or Festivals. This discussion also provides valuable insight into the role of gambling in traditional society. Bets were and are an essential aspect of the hand and dice games, and wagers were also made on shinny, races, etc.: "Certainly they bet; they wouldn't run on a hot day for nothing" (Tubatulabal man, p. 82). A successful gambler is well-respected and must have both skill and luck, the latter often supported with spiritual help, as suggested in oral tradition. Gendar explains the rules of the games clearly and deftly outlines some of the subtleties; additionally, she includes a brief mention of current gambling and gaming issues pertaining to casinos. She also provides descriptions of how to construct and decorate the material components of games. Finally, Gendar brings games into contemporary

times in a discussion of games today, with both current expressions of traditional games and participation in the repertoire of Euroamerican games played on regional and national levels.

Gendar's book is well researched and handsomely produced. The front cover presents a marvelous painting by L. Frank entitled "This is Yo Luck," depicting Bear with various game equipment scattered about her feet. This book is a welcome reminder to anthropologists that California Indian people were not always involved in making "optimal choices" but, indeed, enjoyed themselves immensely on many occasions. Scholars will find this volume delightful, but it will be the interested laymen and teachers who will find it most valuable; it is an ideal complement to anthropological/historical materials for classes addressing California Indian culture—I suspect that many children, and even adults, will try to play and consequently enjoy some of these games that they read about here.



Across the West: Human Population Movement and the Expansion of the Numa. David B. Madsen and David Rhode, eds. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994, xi + 255 pp., 37 figs., 15 tables, 18 maps, \$51.95 (paper).

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How do people come to occupy their current and past "homelands"? This is the fundamental question asked during a few days in May 1992,

at Lake Tahoe, California, at a meeting called the Numic Roundtable. *Across the West* grew out of that roundtable, and the editors and authors are to be commended for the fine volume they have produced.

The work explores what has come to be known as the "Numic Problem," which in essence concerns when and how the ancestors of various speakers of Numic languages came to occupy most of the Intermountain West. Numic is a language family that includes Ute, Paiute, Shoshone, and other Uto-Aztecan groups. Peoples speaking these languages were encountered by early Euroamericans throughout the southern Colorado River drainage, Great Basin, northern Colorado Plateau, and Snake River Plain. The idea that Numic groups were relatively new to the region can be traced to some of the first chroniclers of the Euroamerican expansion in the middle nineteenth century. Naturally the questions arose, "Where did they come from?" and "When did they get here?" Answers were only generally addressed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A picture of Numic peoples spreading across their historic range in a vast fan-shaped wave from an ancestral homeland somewhere in southwestern North America became dominant after linguist Sydney Lamb proposed it in 1958. Since then, the idea of the "Numic Expansion" has gained nearly the status of an old saw.

However, as Madsen and Rhode observe in their introduction, the apparent consensus around this issue among archaeologists and linguists is now broken. Why? They note four important reasons. The first is that local culture histories have not been well developed in the Intermountain West. This means that models of Numic prehistory cannot be rigorously tested using local cultural sequences. Secondly, the mechanics or processes that account for past migrations in the region have only recently begun to be formulated. Thirdly, the problems associated with explaining Numic prehistory are part and parcel of