

## Culture



**Jane NADEL-KLEIN and Dona Lee DAVIS (eds.), *To Work and To Weep: Women in Fishing Economies*, St. John's, Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988. 320 pages**

Charles R. Menzies

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that knowledge must be "seen as a process embedded in social life" (p.13), yet is he as reflective as he might be on the way in which the diversity of answers he receives is a product of his practice, his assumptions and lines of questioning? A valuable and impressive feature of this book is that Merrill provides the evidence to let the reader raise such an issue. Moreover, despite an excellent historical chapter, contemporary Rarámuri cosmology appears timeless. Too often he introduces ideas with phrases like "The Rarámuri think that..." or "The Rarámuri are very sensitive to any expression of sadness" (p.96). I cannot offer a better representational strategy, I merely note that this violates his own recognition of polyphony, his impetus to move away from a "rules-and-behavior" approach toward what Lawrence Rosen has called a "repertoire-and-performance" one.

The real measure of Merrill's achievement is that he is able to show how much knowledge underlies the typical and unpromising responses of informants who deny knowing anything special. By providing strategies to get out of this impasse Merrill's account should be useful for anyone working with the apparently inarticulate, whether with the "subordinate discourse" of women or other implicit forms of knowledge. It is for the courage to tackle tacit knowledge and informal practices and the energy to consistently link back marked events like rituals to everyday processes of reproduction that Merrill's work gains its major significance.

Finally, whether traditionally presented or not, we do learn a great deal of interest about the Rarámuri world: the mirror-image conception of relations between the Rarámuri and non-Indians, conceived to be the children of God and of the Devil, respectively; the movement of souls in sleep and illness which resonates with the literature on *susto*. Rarámuri thinking about knowledge is also of interest. Merrill points out that the fact that "the Rarámuri display a unanimity of opinion in public that obscures the diversity of ideas they hold privately... derives not from social pressure for ideological conformity but from the conviction that people should be allowed to think what they want and therefore should not be openly challenged in their thinking by others" (p.9). This view, I suspect, is characteristic of many North American native groups. But in the end, then, does not the local theory of knowledge and practice itself embed the knowledge and practice of theory, and do we not discover that hermeneutic approaches and social practice ones depend for their strengths on each other?

In emphasizing the diversity of knowledge Merrill tends to treat it as a set of facts, logically

interrelated to be sure, but nonetheless essentially referential statements (rather than, for example, metaphors) about souls, dreams, etc. Yet it is questionable whether the Rarámuri view knowledge in the same way, as objectified information. My suspicion is that Merrill has inadvertently shown us what our conception of knowledge is. In a society in which literacy does not appear to be a significant means for knowledge transmission, a more personal, subjectified conception (briefly visible, for example, in the discussion of sorcery or of doctors' dreaming) may be appropriate. Thus knowledge cannot be a simple form of currency, and individual differences are of less concern for the Rarámuri than for the anthropologist's models of reproduction.

In the end I am left with the puzzle: how significant is the diversity of Rarámuri knowledge? Is it the product of solitary reflection in a society that has lost the means for collective thought; is it an expression of personal freedom in a society which sets little store by intellectual conformity; or is it simply the inevitable but relatively insignificant by-product of the general and very significant processes through which reproduction and practice are articulated? Read this engaging and important book and enhance your own knowledge of the subject.

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Jane NADEL-KLEIN and Dona Lee DAVIS (eds.), *To Work and To Weep: Women in Fishing Economies*, St. John's, Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988. 320 pages.

by Charles R. Menzies  
York University

It is refreshing to read a collection of papers that concentrates on women in fishing economies. Too often, in the literature on fishing folk, women are relegated to a shadowy role behind their men. The hunt for fish is glorified as a male domain, while women are presented sitting quietly at home, anxiously waiting for their men to return. Nadel-Klein and Davis have done much to dispel this image with their ground-breaking collection on women and fishing.

This collection stems from a symposium organized by Jane Nadel-Klein in conjunction with the 1983 American Anthropological Association meetings in Chicago. It focuses on "the nature and significance of women's roles in communities in which fishing is a primary mode of subsistence" (xi). The

papers cover a wide range of geographical and cultural areas, but they are united in their concern with women in fishing economies.

The collection contains an introduction and literature review by the editors and twelve papers. The introduction sets the stage for the rather diverse selection of papers. In it the editors set out the "four key (...) themes (which) underlie all the following chapters." The primary theme is the focus on women as creative and important actors in fishing economies. The themes of women's roles, their status, and the applied aspects of these issues, build on and elaborate the editors' primary concern with women as actors in fishing economies. The literature review is a comprehensive, yet sparse, discussion of the relevant sources. It provides just enough information to whet the appetite, but leaves many questions unasked. This is partly a result of the dearth of material which discusses women in the context of fishing 'communities'. Yet, one feels the editors have spent too much time cataloguing material and not enough on a substantive discussion of past literature. The introductory papers and Estelle Smith's concluding piece attempt to unify a disparate and theoretically chaotic work.

The twelve papers in this collection go a long way in correcting the problems of past studies of fisher folk which have assumed an unquestioned division of labour between men and women. Each paper is concerned with the sexual division of labour within fishing economies and the role women play in the fishing 'communities'. Allison's paper, *Women fishermen in the Pacific Northwest*, looks at atypical women in the Alaskan, Oregon, and Washington state fisheries where women work on fish boats. Davis' paper, *Shore skippers and Grass Widows*, concerns the role of women on shore. Clark's paper, *Managing Uncertainty: Family, Religion and Collective Action among Fishermen's Wives in Gloucester, Massachusetts*, is a discussion of the important role women play in political lobbying and "as onshore agents in the family fishing business" (p.278). These three papers are especially important in provoking a "radical rethinking of long-accepted anthropological truths, an (in) open(ing) up new areas of investigation" (p.1). In the concluding paper, *The Right to Choice: Power and Decision-Making*, Estelle Smith brings the collection together by focusing on "the multidimensional issue of power" (p.279). This is an effective way to close the book. The issue of power clarifies and demonstrates the thematic unity of the papers.

Despite its thematic unity, this collection lacks an overall theoretical cohesion. However, the impor-

tance of these papers is not in their theoretical sophistication; neither is it found in the definitiveness of their analysis. As in all ground-breaking texts there are weaknesses and unsatisfactory segments. Small inaccuracies, such as Allison's American presumption that the "pacific northwest" does not include British Columbia, are distracting. But the importance of this collection unequivocally stems from the questions and ambiguities it raises. This collection puts a new and important set of questions on the agenda for studies of fishing economies. Earlier volumes on fishing folk have focused on class relations, interaction between skippers and crews, relationships between fishing communities and metropolitan powers, or on technological adaptations. By focusing on the relationships and activities in which women play a significant role, Nadel-Klein and Davis have moved beyond the androcentric biases of previous work.

In all, this collection is a worthwhile contribution to the fields of gender studies and maritime anthropology. The ethnographic data provided in these paper challenges us to fully consider the role of women in fishing economies. The book reads well and its concern with the role of women and the issue of power in fishing economies makes it ideal for courses in gender studies, and maritime anthropology. With this inaugural book on women in fishing economies, the editors have embarked on an exciting trip into uncharted waters. It is up to us to join them in their voyage.

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John NUNLEY and Judith BETTELHEIM, *Caribbean Festival Arts*, Seattle, University of Washington Press (in association with the St. Louis Art Museum), 1988. 218 pages, U.S. \$39.95.

by Frank E. Manning  
University of Western Ontario

This book can be approached in terms of its genre, which I will here define as Coffee-Table Anthropology. Oversized, glossy, bound in cloth, and handsomely dustjacketed, it is a book in which the illustrations - 161 of them, mostly in full color - have the dominant impact. The book is a collector's item which is meant to be displayed and viewed, much like the exhibit of Caribbean festival artifacts that provided the occasion for its publication. The exhibit opened in December 1988 at the St. Louis Art Museum and is scheduled later to tour other US and Canadian museums. Principal authors John Nunley