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phasizing Indian education. A list of suggested supplementary references arranged topically is made to aid further reading.

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Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden: Agriculture of the Hidatsa Indians. By Gilbert L. Wilson. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987. 129 pp. $7.95 Paper.

In 1906 Gilbert L. Wilson, a Presbyterian minister then serving a congregation at Mandan, North Dakota, made the first of many visits to the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in that state. Interested in Indian life since childhood, he had been advised by his physician to get more outdoor exercise, and he chose to obey that injunction by doing field work on the reservation rather than by hunting, as the doctor intended that he do. At Fort Berthold he became acquainted with Edward Goodbird, an acculturated Hidatsa farmer, who was later ordained as a Congregational minister. From then until 1918 Goodbird served as Wilson's interpreter during a succession of twelve summers spent on the reservation. During most of this time Wilson was employed by the American Museum of Natural History to collect artifacts and conduct ethnological research.

Like most anthropologists, Wilson was more interested in the aboriginal culture of his subjects than in the process of cultural change that they had been experiencing since intensive white contact began. Goodbird, born in 1869, was too young to know much as first hand about pre-contact Hidatsa culture, but his mother, Buffalo Bird Woman, about thirty years older, proved an extremely valuable source of information, as to some extent did her younger brother, Henry Wolf Chief. When Wilson was adopted into the Prairie Chicken clan, he became the beneficiary of the system of reciprocal obligations that clan members owed one another. No doubt his special status as a family member accounts in part for the depth of his comprehension of Hidatsa culture.

Wilson received a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Minnesota in 1916. His dissertation, published the following

year as *Agriculture of the Hidatsa Indians: An Indian Interpretation*, took the form of a first-person narrative by Buffalo Bird Woman; it has now been reprinted, with a useful introduction by Jeffrey R. Hanson, by the Minnesota Historical Society Press under the title *Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden*. Besides several scholarly monographs, Wilson wrote four books for children, two of which have recently been reissued: *Waheenee: An Indian Girl's Story*, in 1981 by both the State Historical Society of North Dakota and the University of Nebraska Press, and *Goodbird the Indian: His Story*, in 1985 by the Minnesota Historical Society Press. Although intended for a juvenile audience, they are solidly based in the author's knowledge of native culture.

In June 1987 the Minnesota Historical Society, repository of a large proportion of Wilson's photographs, artifacts, and personal papers, opened an exhibit of these materials, as well as others on loan from the American Museum of Natural History and other museums. Titled "The Way to Independence," it focuses on the transformation undergone by the Hidatsa people during the century covered by the combined lifetimes of Buffalo Bird Woman and Edward Goodbird. (Independence was the name given to the rural area where many tribal members settled after being obliged to leave Like-a-Fishhook village, their last earthlodge settlement, but the word is also intended to suggest something of the struggle for economic independence that these highly communal people had to make in their new homes.)

Gilbert Wilson was one of the earliest anthropologists to approach the study of a culture by way of autobiography, a method later used by Paul Radin and others. Instead of the impersonality that, by intent, characterizes much ethnological writing, there is about *Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden*, as about the two children's books by Wilson, an immediacy and intimacy that only a first-person narrative can provide. No sense of editorial intrusion mars the flow of what seems, on the surface, to be a continuous monologue. The presence of an interrogator is implied by occasional parenthetical interpolations such as: "Did the young men work in the fields? (laughing heartily.) Certainly not!" (p. 115). But these occur only when Wilson has asked a question that Buffalo Bird Woman deems absurd—the sort of question she might expect a white man to ask.

As Mary Jane Schneider points out in her introduction to *Good-*

bird, the final versions of Wilson's "as-told-to" books for children vary markedly from his field notes and reveal the hand of a conscious stylist. Not only does he blend excerpts from interviews made at different times, but he incorporates facts and opinions obtained from informants other than the putative speaker and on occasion even inserts remarks not made by the principal informant at all but considered necessary to clarify a point for readers not familiar with Hidatsa culture. In *Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden* such supplementary information provided by Wolf Chief, Goodbird, or even Buffalo Bird Woman herself at another time are largely relegated to footnotes. Yet Wilson undoubtedly shapes and rearranges his material so that the result is art as well as ethnography. The substantive contributions he makes assuredly do not bulk so large as those of John G. Neihardt in *Black Elk Speaks*—indeed, he says that "her account was taken down almost literally as translated by Goodbird" (p. 3)—but the principal interview, made in August 1912, was supplemented by further interviews in the three following summers.

Although Buffalo Bird Woman refers now and then to iron pots, hoes, and rakes, as well as other artifacts of white origin, the agricultural practices she describes are mainly those of precontact days, essentially unmodified by the addition of such implements to the Hidatsa cultural inventory. Even when nonnative tools were adopted, they were not necessarily used in the ways that whites used them. They were fitted into the context of Hidatsa custom, their functions were those of the bone or stone tools that preceded them. The rhythm of the agricultural year, with its traditional times for getting the ground ready, planting, harvesting, and storing, remained the same.

Buffalo Bird Woman gives an awesome amount of detail on Hidatsa agriculture. She describes how a woman would take a squash in her left hand and slice it with a bone knife held in her right hand; how a corn drying stage was built out of cottonwood poles and planks, held together with rawhide thongs; how a cache pit was dug and filled so as to minimize spoilage and concealed so as to protect it from potential raiders; how the various kinds of vegetables were prepared, singly or together, for eating. White observers, basing their judgments on only a superficial acquaintance with the Hidatsa village, sometimes thought native agricultural techniques haphazard and careless. Buffalo Bird

Woman leaves no doubt that everything was done with a purpose and that the methods followed were the result of long trial-and-error experiementation. The Missouri valley horticultural tribes knew the limitations of their natural environment and had devised practices that enabled them to get the most out of that environment.

Despite the subtitle, however, the book is not just a treatise on Hidatsa agriculture. In his foreword, Wilson says he decided at the beginning of his work that the materials of his thesis should not be presented as a study "merely in primitive agriculture," but rather "as a phase of material culture interpreting something of the inner life, of the soul, of an Indian" (p. 3). With this in mind and by letting Buffalo Bird Woman speak for herself, he has enabled her to emerge as an individual as well as a member of a tribe. As Hanson describes her in his introduction, she was a "staunch traditionalist" (p. xx), a defender of the old ways—and by virtue of that fact an ideal informant for an ethnologist seeking to record aspects of a culture that he believed to be vanishing.

Inevitably, her pride in her people and their customs lead her to make a few mildly derogatory remarks about whites. "White men do not seem to know very much about raising beans," she notes, telling of a school teacher who harvested his beans without treading and threshing the vines. "I think it would take him a very long time to harvest his beans in that manner," she concludes (p. 85). Even so, her regard for Wilson probably led her to moderate some of her comments on white civilization as she perceived it.

Hanson is assuredly right when he says that this book "remains one of the most detailed, in-depth accounts of aboriginal Native American agriculture ever published" (p. xxi). Yet it is more than that. By focusing on the consciousness of a single person, Wilson has presented some insights into Hidatsa lifeways that a more orthodox approach would not have achieved.

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The Life I've Been Living. By Moses Cruikshank. Recorded and compiled by William Schneider. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1986. 132 pp. $14.95 Paper.