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Navajo Medicine Bundles or Jish: Acquisition, Transmission, and Disposition of the Past and Present. By Charlotte J. Frisbie. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.

The declared focus of this book is Navajo medicine bundles, or jish, which are here examined in greater depth than has been done before. But there is much more. The rich Navajo ceremonialism in which jush play a central part is necessarily dealt with, as are the outside influences affecting Navajo culture, the role of the medicine men who are custodians of the jish, and the struggle of traditional Navajo to maintain their religious practices and protect their sacred paraphernalia and holy places. All this is done by the author, an anthropologist, with extraordinary attention to detail and a clear empathy for the effort to preserve native religious rights and practices against forces which would erode them.

Medicine bundles, or jish, are not unique to the Navajo, but nowhere, apparently, do they occupy such an important place in religious practice as among the Diné, the People. There is an incredible variety of jish, for the contents vary according to the particular ceremony for which each is designed. There is a great variety of rituals, frequently dealing with the prevention or cure of illness or the banishment of misfortune, some of which can last for as many as nine nights, and involve large numbers of people, friends and relatives of the person for whom the "sing" is performed. Frisbie believes that "kin and community solidarity are reaffirmed through such participation" (page 7). To traditional Navajo, medical and religious beliefs are bound together. Central to the whole is the owner of the jish, a "medicine man," often called a "singer," who knows the songs and complex rituals which are performed. So many are the rituals that no one is trained to perform all of them, for the necessary knowledge is obtainable only through a long apprenticeship. The "cornerstone of the whole traditional system" is Blessingway, a major preventative ceremony (page 8). About thirty distinct ceremonies are listed by Frisbie, including those with such intriguing names as Beautyway, Coyoteway, Enemyway, Mountainway, and Windway.

Perhaps out of respect for the sensibilities of the People, Ms. Frisbie does not detail the procedures of these ceremonies, which sometimes include the spectacular art of sandpainting. She does

list the contents of some jish, however, which is not difficult to do, since many have found their way into museums and private collections. Contrary to some expectations, medicinal herbs play a minor role, and are sometimes not included at all. Bags of earth from the San Francisco Peaks or other sacred places are common ingredients. Noisemakers such as bullroarers, whistles and gourd rattles may be included, as well as masks, prayer sticks, feather bundles, turquoise, colored stones and sand, sheephorn, bits of buffalo hide and other animal parts, lightning struck wood, corn pollen and other pollen, shells, arrow points, red ochre, tobacco, and much more.

Navajo traditional observances, though still strong, have suffered a decline in the face of the growing importance of a monetary economy, wage work, livestock reduction, the death of elderly singers who fail to pass on their knowledge, and the indifference of some of the young. While medicine men are paid for their services, in cash, goods, or livestock, Frisbie maintains that many live at a bare minimum or poverty level.

Added to all this is the growing activity of Christian churches, some of which, particularly the evangelical denominations, persuade their converts to shun traditional ways, citing a biblical injunction not to have fellowship with those who "worship demons." The Native American Church, the peyote religion, is often regarded also as a rival to traditional Navajo religion, although NAC members hold that the two are compatible.

Upon the death of a singer who leaves no trained replacement, his heirs might dispose of his jish. Sometimes it is burned or buried, or hidden in the rocks, but frequently it is sold for cash to collectors, dealers, or their agents, who often purchase them for trifling sums and resell them for prices which escalate, after several changes in ownership, into thousands of dollars. Any of these ways of jish disposal, of course, is considered sacrilegious, to use a term from our culture, and their existence signifies a measure of decay of the old ways. A booming market in Indian artifacts has driven prices up. In Europe it is not unusual, we are told, for a sacred object which was originally sold for \$10 to be valued at \$10,000. The Navajo Tribal Museum and the Navajo Community College museum are unable to purchase these jish, and their sale is difficult for the tribe to prohibit because of the view of the courts that they are private, not community property. Jish are lost through pawning, theft, and bad loans. Borrowed

jish are often returned with items missing. Motivated by economic needs, Navajo increasingly manufacture artifacts specifically for sale. As one writer states: ". . . the dollar, dangling at the end of a string pulled ever shorter and shorter, has the same effect upon the Navajo as upon ourselves. It supersedes all other values, be they social, moral or spiritual" (page 363).

In some ways, Navajo religion is holding its own. The Indian Health Service hospitals employ traditional medicine men as adjuncts to conventional physicians, and particularly values them as mental health consultants. Navajo medicine is taught in Navajo Community College, and studies of Navajo ethnobotany are under way. A Navajo Medicinemen's Association has been formed to license practitioners, establish standards, and prevent alienation of jish. However, it has not been accepted by all Navajo medicine men, some of whom view it as a creation of the peyote cult, and it has not won the sanction of the tribal council. An Indian Health Service hospital at Chinle adopted a bicultural stance by constructing a hogan shaped room decorated in Navajo art motifs, for the practice of native healing procedures.

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978) was designed to halt the exploitation of native religious objects, and the North American Indian Museum Association was organized to aid in its enforcement. However, court decisions weakened the application of the act to a near nullity, in Frisbie's view. Professional looting, we are told, is big business and a big problem in the Southwest. The Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management are charged with laxity in preventing the desecration of grave sites. Indians have complained of non-Indian drinking and carousing at San Francisco Peaks, the use of non-indigenous plants to re-seed strip mined areas, driving out native medicinal plants, and lack of Indian access to sacred sites. Frisbie agrees with Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle that the American Indian Religious Freedom Act has only "made Indian religious practice the target of further harassment and has failed to provide a shield against intrusion" (page 379).

In her last chapter Dr. Frisbie waxes eloquent in defense of Indian religious rights. She charges the Supreme Court with giving "priority to the wide-open spaces on federal land by an ever growing non-Indian 'American' population, ignoring the right of American Indians to have their sacred places protected" (page 385). She holds that "The rape of Mother Earth goes on

unabated" (page 386). So far as the Religious Freedom Act is concerned, her judgment is that "the few federal court interpretations of the Act to date suggest that the spirit of the law is already dead" (page 397).

In asserting their rights, she holds that Indians have "the support of a number of other Americans who are concerned with environment, nuclear war, energy, civil liberties, religious freedom, ethnic and minority issues, and cultural genocide" (page 399).

This book represents an enormous amount of labor, and is a monumental achievement. It took ten years to complete, and involved 323 people in the research. In places, perhaps, it is too assiduous in presenting detail, as in tracing the history of dozens of jish through numerous changes in ownership. Typographical errors are few, but one could cause confusion. In the last sentence of the third paragraph on page 375, the word "list" should probably be "loss."

The last third of the book is filled with useful appendices, including the text of important documents, along with notes, ample references, and the index. The book is illustrated with a number of photographs, drawings, and tables. A map of Navajoland would have been a useful addition.

This book combines scholarly excellence with a concern for the subjects of her investigation. Not one to take refuge in sterile neutrality where human rights are concerned, Dr. Frisbie proves that admirable performance as a scholar is not incompatible with personal commitment.

Virgil J. Vogel

City Colleges of Chicago, emeritus.

Beyond the Vision. By William K. Powers. University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. 210 pp. 24 illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.95 Cloth.

This is a collection of essays written by William K. Powers and presented at various scholarly meetings from 1975 through 1984. "The Vocablé" was presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Montreal, 1979; "Regulating a War Dance", the first Conference on Culture and Communications, Temple University, March, 1975; "Counting Your Blessings: