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*The Ute Indians of Colorado in the Twentieth Century*. Richard K. Young. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997, xiii + 290 pp., maps, photographs, index, bibliography, \$29.95.

Reviewed by:

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The purpose of this volume is to "trace the divergent paths followed by the Southern Utes and the Ute Mountain Utes during the twentieth century, with particular emphasis placed on the experiences of the two tribes since the early 1930s" (p. 9). The organization is chronological until the 1960s, and then breaks into separate topical treatments of economy, politics, and society and cul-

ture. The greatest strength lies in the presentation of data on recent events since the last major study of these groups. Young repeats and confirms observations of earlier, classical studies of Ute people, and documents many continuing phenomena.

Selection of his contrast pair keeps Young within the political boundaries of Colorado. He explains this choice, first, because these tribes constitute a microcosm of twentieth century Indian history, that what happened to them also occurred to other, larger tribes; and, second, because there is little scholarly work about them available (pp. 10-11). This latter contention would probably surprise all the authors listed in Omer Stewart's *Ethnohistorical Bibliography of the Ute Indians of Colorado* (1971) or in the extensive Ute bibliography in the Great Basin volume of the *Handbook of North American Indians* (d'Azevedo 1986). Young's first explanation employs a rhetorical device that recurs throughout the book, wherein he asserts a strong evaluation without any supportive evidence or rationale. Young proclaims broadly, for instance, that many Ute Indian agents were "corrupt or incompetent" without giving a single example of corruption or incompetence (pp. 47, 70). He maintains that despite change, "beneath the surface" Utes remained "basically Ute," without explaining which characteristics define superficial, in contrast to fundamental, cultural identity (p. 56). While the reader may well agree with Young's conclusions, it would be reassuring if he shared his thoughts on why these things are so.

In an inconsistent nod to impressionistic literary ethnography, the volume opens with two descriptive scenes, one from each tribe, that the author declares are microcosms of the "fundamental differences in approach" of the two tribes (pp. 3-8). As he does later, Young presents individual cases as indicators of general trends, without supporting data that these are, in fact, representative (e.g., pp. 33, 144). Examples, no matter how data-rich, are not substitutes for analysis.

Young's political narrative also focuses on individual leaders. His stress on individual events and

leaders, coupled with topical separation of politics from economic and cultural factors that inform the political process, produces almost a "Great Man" theory of history (pp. 227-228). Those outside the current leadership, on the other hand, appear as faceless others who inhibit progress through their suspicious factionalism (pp. 123, 226-229, 286).

Young treats culture as a primordial entity, fixed in its content. It is not dynamic, nor is it a process. This content he declares was uniform for all Utes before the 1850s, described in only the briefest cultural overview. As specific ethnographic facts are needed, Young introduces them fortuitously one by one (e.g., pp. 76, 260). Thus, they appear dissociated from context, without necessity or logic, as an assortment of timeless, "continuing" traits. In addition, Young has noticeable weaknesses in his basic ethnography, particularly in the area of social organization. It may come as a surprise to most Great Basinists, for instance, that Utes were matrilineal (p. 25, fn. 35) and that the local structure and identity of the residential band was of only minor importance before Euroamericans provided horses (p. 21).

Since it is only content, culture cannot change without pieces being lost. To the extent that Utes took on "white" culture traits, the author sees them as correspondingly losing their own. Utes, "like all Indian peoples in the United States," he says, face the challenge to "survive in a world dominated by an alien socioeconomic system and yet retain their unique cultural traditions and identity" (p. 12). Young describes Ute history as reaction to Euroamerican actions, and therefore logically as caused by non-Indians (e.g., p. 259).

In this analysis, the author recites the now-familiar litany of accusations against the federal government, its Indian policies, and agents, identified as the source of Euroamerican influences (pp. 78, 284-285). Local Colorado miners, ranchers, and settlers are exonerated of any historic blame by their virtual absence from the narrative.

As his theoretical framework, Young uses the acculturation paradigm popular in anthropology in

the 1940s. He speaks frequently of "continuity and change," of selective Ute adoption of culture traits and equally selective preservation of other traditional traits (e.g., pp. 77, 79, 91, 284, 288). He proposes an "acculturation gap" between the Southern Utes and the Ute Mountain Utes (e.g., pp. 258, 288). Because he has no larger analytical framework, this selectivity appears as historical happenstance. He also uses the more popular "resistance/accommodation" phraseology without explaining why Utes resisted some American policies and accommodated others (e.g., pp. 288-289). Culture history becomes serendipity.

The only rationale appears when one tribal "choice" foreclosed certain subsequent options. Beginning culturally the same, Young says Southern Utes and Ute Mountain Utes "chose different paths" at various key junctures in their history, particularly at allotment (p. 287). Suggested motivations proffered for the more conservative and resistant choices of Ute Mountain Utes include: (1) their greater isolation from white ranchers and agencies (in other words, differences in Ute culture came about because of Euroamerican presence and activities, or absence thereof); (2) differences in individual leaders; (3) scantier resources at Ute Mountain, a bare geographical determinism unmediated by discussion of the value of those resources to particular cultural systems; (4) "bitterness" created by historical experiences, a psychological assertion; and (5) "the extremely high proportion of full-blood tribal members" at Ute Mountain (pp. 35, 58, 91, 170, 258, 287).

While praising Ute adherence to spiritual beliefs, Young suggests that other aspects of native culture were antithetical to development and well-being. Ute Mountain Utes' slow demographic recovery in the early twentieth century, for instance, was in part due to their "seminomadic life style," as was resistance to modern medicine, housing, and schools (pp. 66, 67, 79, 81, 87, 89). In discussing recent history, Young overtly declares that Utes

were in desperate need of the economic development that could alleviate this bleak state of affairs.

And yet to the extent that the two tribes succeeded in developing their reservations, they increased the likelihood that their distinctive way of life--already drastically altered--would be pushed further toward the brink of extinction [pp. 279-280; see also p. 286].

Young's message is clear. Utes, and other Indians, cannot "develop," be economically successful and socially healthy, and culturally remain Indians. Native culture is not an adaptive, changing style of life practiced by a society, but a rigid list of "traditional" traits. It cannot become modern, because it cannot change; it can only be retained or lost.

Young says his book debates a purportedly prevalent tendency to label tribes as either conservative or progressive, and he does provide ample evidence that tribal politics are far more complex than such a simple duality would suggest (pp. 13, 98, 289). But I sincerely doubt that this distinction has been seriously entertained in the anthropological literature since the 1950s. I suspect that the author has been swept up in the categories and evaluations of his predominantly Bureau of Indian Affairs archival sources. He rather uncritically equates farming with industriousness, worthless land with nonarable, valuable with cash-producing, and American organizational methods with efficiency (pp. 49, 50, 57, 123, 131). Reservation wage work patterns he blames on "poor work habits" that he says are due to "cultural differences" (p. 261). He equates Utes' degree of acculturation to Euroamerican lifestyle with accomplishment, development, advancement, progress, and modernization (pp. 81, 179, *passim*).

While Young says that diffusion of culture traits from Euroamerican sources led inevitably to the loss of Ute cultural heritage, diffusion of traits from other Indian cultures is treated as generically "Indian" and hence "traditional" (pp. 72, 95-96, 169, 277, 288). The Native American Church, borrowed from southern Plains tribes more recently than many of the traits from "alien" Euroamerican sources, as well as the Sun Dance, also from the Plains, are presented as natural. They are native and need no explanation, despite his description of

syncretic Christian elements (pp. 274-278). They are declared "conservative" forces that "supported traditional values and identity" (p. 70).

The most frustrating feature of this volume is its chronic underanalysis. When reporting one man's death in 1946, Young says, the "healing ceremonies of the medicine men began to disappear, and with no new Sun Dance chief taking Cloud's place, this annual dance of great spiritual importance faded from the scene" (p. 168; see also pp. 226, 268). But why had no successor sought training? He tells how Ute Mountain Utes rejected forming a tribal constitution under the Wheeler-Howard Act and then, without discussion of what changed, they show up with a draft in the next paragraph (p. 116). Again, after a long and fascinating description of a Southern Ute recall drive in 1990, replete with accusations of witchcraft and a curiously small voter turnout, the author simply notes anticlimactically that the tribal council had survived (pp. 249-250). There is no explanation.

On the whole, this is a disappointing volume. The author has recruited enormous quantities of data, but he seriously underanalyzes them. Despite obvious familiarity with current leaders and occasional flashes of insight, the piecemeal recitation of facts lacks an interpretive paradigm that would help the reader make sense of Utes' actions in the larger context of the historical past and the continuing present.

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*In My Own Words: Stories, Songs, and Memories of Grace McKibbin, Wintu.* Alice Shepherd. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1997, 240 pp., pronunciation guide, references, phonology, photograph, \$14.00 (paper).

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*In My Own Words* is a small but powerful, engaging, and rewarding book in which Shepherd skillfully presents 19 Wintu texts in the original Wintu, along with both interlineal translation (Wintu/English) and English translation. It is one of several results of Shepherd's many years of research in the 1970s and 1980s with Grace McKibbin, a much-respected Wintu elder who lived in Hayfork, Trinity County.

Before starting to read this book, it is essential to take a long, careful look at the photograph of "Gracie," as she is fondly referred to by relatives and friends, for the full strength of her character as a capable, confident, kindly woman of wisdom and good humor is readily apparent. One can easily imagine listening to her as she recounts the stories that follow. It is equally important to read the forward by Frank LaPena, also of Wintu heritage, in order to understand the significance of language for native groups and the ways in which stories in the original language provide a sense of history of the people, a history that has been passed verbally through the generations.

Shepherd acquaints the readers with both Gracie and Wintu culture with a brief, friendly, and intimate introduction, thus establishing the context for the texts, which are the focus of the book. She also provides an informative and useful sketch of the Wintu language that contributes greatly to the appreciation of the texts, particularly in regard to Wintu notions of time and how Wintu speakers indicate the basis of their knowledge about persons or events, an aspect that Shepherd call "evidentials"; moreover, it is a good lesson in linguistics. Finally,

