

of completely different problems for which the approach advocated in this book was not planned to address.

However, in terms of the impact on farmer knowledge and livelihoods there are some striking parallels between the impact of scientific plant breeding in a Green Revolution context and the emerging problems of genetically modified crops. Modern plant breeding, as Ceccarelli and Grando note (p. 297), has historically benefited better-off farmers in more optimal conditions, and this is undoubtedly also the case for genetically modified crops. Scientific crop-breeding in the late twentieth century often showed insufficient understanding of the need to increase yield and yield stability in marginal environments and conserve genetic diversity. We now know, for example, that the combination of El Niño effects and economic instability in parts of Indonesia led to significant harvest shortfalls amongst rural populations. Such populations had moved to small numbers of high-yield rice varieties compared with upland groups that had managed to resist genetic erosion of their landraces. It seems very likely that genetically modified organisms are also set to further marginalize smaller, poorer, and remoter groups of farmers. We should have learned the lessons of insensitive application of Green Revolution technology. It is still possible to do so, despite the vociferousness of GM evangelization.

*Farmers, Scientists and Plant Breeding* is a very welcome and substantial work which will hopefully become basic reading for all those concerned in plant breeding research and policy implementation. It would be a pity, however, if its apparent specialist focus was to deter others interested in the way scientific and traditional local knowledge interacts, because it has much to say to them also.

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**Spruce Root Basketry of the Haida and Tlingit.** Sharon Busby. 2003. Marquand Books/University of Washington Press, Seattle. Pp. 160 + maps, photos, illustrations. \$55.00 (hardcover). ISBN 0-295983-175

Made entirely from the thin, split roots of Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis* Bongard), Haida and Tlingit basketry constituted both a major category of utilitarian household equipment as well as an important aesthetic medium. Much of what is known about these crafts was collected by pioneer ethnographer and naval officer George T. Emmons while he was stationed in Alaska in the 1880s–1890s. Frances Paul gathered additional information on materials preparation, techniques, and decoration in the 1940s.

The author is an enthusiastic collector of these baskets. Her interest has even motivated her to learn the techniques from basket makers who are reviving the craft. The book is intended for the beginning collector or student of Haida/Tlingit basketry. While the present volume adds no original information, this is made up

for to a considerable extent by Ron Reeder's outstanding photographs of examples from both museum and private collections. Indeed, the volume sets a new standard for basketry illustration.

Chapter 1 locates the Haida and Tlingit in their traditional homelands of southeast Alaska and adjacent coastal Canada. Chapter 2 is concerned with the origins of spruce root basketry among the two peoples. This question is addressed from both the indigenous perspective, through myths, and the scholarly perspective. Busby notes the 1994 discovery of a nearly 6,000-year old spruce root basket from Prince of Wales Island, Alaska as evidence of the great antiquity of the craft in the region. However, the connection (if any) of this example to historical peoples of the area cannot be determined.

Chapter 3 discusses the materials preparation and techniques of basket weaving among the Haida and Tlingit. It is well illustrated with photos of weavers gathering and preparing materials and with excellent line drawings depicting the intricacies of construction. Twining, both plain and twill, is the main technique employed by weavers. Alternation of different colored elements constitutes one decorative technique. So-called false embroidery, utilizing dyed maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum* VK) stems, is another.

Chapter 4 chronicles the wide range of baskets made for traditional uses. Berries were an important food source for the Haida and Tlingit; accordingly, berry-picking baskets for carrying them came in a range of shapes and sizes. Other baskets, tightly woven and watertight, were used for cooking through "stone boiling"—placing fire-heated stones in the basket along with the contents to be cooked. Bowls and mats were used for serving, while cylindrical baskets served a variety of storage purposes. Even baby carriers were fashioned from baskets. Finally, hats were important among these peoples. They not only kept off the frequent rains of the region but, when painted with an owner's totemic designs, served as markers of status in the intricately ranked societies of the two tribes.

Chapter 5 documents the innovations that occurred as Haida and Tlingit weavers responded to the demands of Euro-American customers, particularly during the "Indian basket craze" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among the Haida and Tlingit, baskets became smaller and slightly less strong, while the amount of decoration increased. The result for non-Indian consumers was, as the author notes, "... an attractive basket that required less time and material; the loss of strength was acceptable" (p. 94).

Chapter 6 examines the decline and revival of basket making in the 20th century. The basket craze was largely over by the First World War. The Great Depression ended it entirely. With the disappearance of a market, weavers lost incentive to continue their craft and only a few women kept the knowledge alive until a renewal of interest by collectors and a new generation of weavers emerged in the 1970s. Unfortunately, all of the information on this topic is taken exclusively from the literature. No insights from the author's experiences or from her teachers are presented. Reflecting its intended audience of novice collectors, a brief Chapter 7 introduces the subjects of care and appreciation of baskets.

In many ways, this volume is a throwback to the literature of the first basket craze of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As then, Busby's en-

thusiasm for her subject is evident. While no new ground is covered, the book was not intended as a scholarly tome. Rather, it is an introduction to the subject for a popular audience. The superb photos constitute the real message.

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**Plants and People of Nepal.** Narayan P. Manandhar. 2002. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. Pp. 599. \$49.00 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-88192-527-6

The country of Nepal is particularly rich in human and plant diversity. The terrain ranges from a tropical 70 meters above sea level to an alpine environment over 8,000 m. This encyclopedic book, aided by 36 pages of color photos and over 600 pen and ink drawings of useful plants, represents the ethnobotany of every eco-zone and a similar sample of the different ethnic groups. Clearly it is destined to be the definitive work on Nepal for its quality, because many of the plants described are near extinction and botanical knowledge is declining rapidly with modernization.

While all readers will marvel at the encyclopedic scholarship and artistic merit of this book, those of us who have spent even one Nepalese monsoon in the field pursuing ethnographic or botanical research will probably be as impressed with the hardship which went into the 30 years of research as with the final product itself. For the reader to truly appreciate this effort, it is necessary to recall that in addition to the complexity of peoples (around 60 different ethnic groups) and plants (7,000 species are native with 1,500 deemed useful by the locals), there are also the problems of terrain and economic underdevelopment. Almost all local travel is done by walking, and Nepal is subject to four months of heavy monsoon rain at the height of the collecting season. This rain brings a luxuriant growth of vegetation and also heralds slippery and dangerous footpaths, leeches and snakes, washed out bridges, and landslides that erase whole villages. This makes it all the more impressive that Manandhar has collected plants and ethnobotanical information from all 75 of Nepal's administrative districts.

Ever modest, Manandhar briefly mentions only some of these difficulties in the preface to his book. Chapter one, entitled "The Land of Nepal," includes the best, most concise introduction to the history, demography, geology, geography, climate, and vegetation zones of Nepal that I have ever read. Also included are a short discussion of deforestation, its causes and consequences, and the history of plant collecting in the Nepalese Himalaya.

The second chapter, "The People of Nepal," proffers ethnographic profiles of 14 of the 20 ethnic groups whose ethnobotany was surveyed. Chapter three, "The Ethnobotany of Nepal," is a discussion of the most common uses for both wild and domestic plants in that country, ranging from plants used in animal husbandry, to agriculture, foods and beverages, medicine, dyes, and other special uses.