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Review of Art of the Red Earth People: The Mesquakie of Iowa.

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Art of the Red Earth People: The Mesquakie of Iowa. By Gaylord Torrence and Robert Hobbs. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989. Photographs, illustrations, exhibition checklist, selected bibliography. x + 132 pp. \$50.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

One aftermath of European colonization of the eastern United States was the westward migration of many eastern Indian tribes. Among the hundreds of tribes that uprooted themselves and sought new lands were the Mesquakie, more

commonly referred to as the Fox or Sauk and Fox, who migrated from the area around Green Bay, Wisconsin, into eastern Iowa in the late 1700s and adapted so well to their new home that they took unique steps to become permanent residents. In 1846, under pressure of Iowa statehood, their tribe sold their land in Iowa and moved to Kansas, but in 1856 the Mesquakie, disliking Kansas and fearing another removal, returned to Iowa, purchased eighty acres of land, and established a permanent home for themselves and their descendants. *Art of the Red Earth People* describes Mesquakie art from the time of their first arrival in Iowa to the present day.

Two essays—"Art of the Mesquakie" by Gaylord Torrence and "Constancy, Change, and Cultural Interaction in Mesquakie Art" by Robert Hobbs—relate the art to historic and cultural changes in Mesquakie life. The first essay is a clear, straightforward introduction to Mesquakie art, including a description of the basic art forms, rush mats, woven bags, yarn sashes, quillwork, costumes, beadwork, ribbon applique, silver work, feather work, sculpture, and painting and drawing that could serve as a general introduction to Central Algonquian art. Hobbs's essay is more visionary and involved, tracing changes in Mesquakie art and indicating the influences for some of the changes. His suggestion that some of the designs that became popular among the Mesquakie actually originated from contact with Scandinavian settlers is sure to cause much discussion, especially among the Mesquakie. Another perceptive point made by Hobbs is that the presence of anthropologists and other reporters encouraged the Mesquakie to maintain and develop their artistic skills.

More than half of this slim volume is taken up with large, nicely detailed photographs, some colored, some black and white, of Mesquakie art. Although there were 188 objects in the exhibition that inspired the book, only 86 are illustrated. Scholars would prefer to have photographs of all the items in a resource book enabling comparative studies, but maintaining a reasonable cost was obviously a factor. My

major complaint is that the descriptive information that the checklist gives for each item is separate from the photographs. The captions for the photographs are very brief and the reader constantly has to turn to the checklist for additional data.

Art of the Red Earth People is exactly what the title indicates, an analysis of Mesquakie art. It is not a history or ethnographic study, although it contains elements of both. It is a highly focused, thoughtful presentation of the art of one of the nation's smaller, but no less important, tribes.

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