H-Net Reviews in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Virginia Kerns. *Journeys West: Jane and Julian Steward and Their Guides*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. xxviii + 414 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8032-2508-4.

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Personalizing the Basin-Plateau: Introducing Relationships into Julian Steward's Theories on Cultural Ecology

In 1935, anthropologist Julian Steward and his new wife, Jane, set out on a research trip through the arid landscape of the United States' Great Basin and Plateau. Steward wanted to document the relationship between the environment and the societal structures of indigenous people prior to Anglo settlement. He believed that his research would reveal the presence of patrilineal bands-a culture type defined by male-centered politics and land ownership. Steward never found his evidence of patrilineal bands. However, the research did result in the 1938 publication of his scientific report Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups. People-Steward, his wife, and his informants-are starkly absent from the well-regarded study. In her newly published book, Journeys West, anthropologist Virginia Kerns sets out to expose the personal elements of Steward's research that made Basin-Plateau possible.

In some regards, Journeys West is a "making of" Basin-Plateau, presenting readers with a behind-the scenes-look at the Stewards' ventures through California, Nevada, Utah, and Idaho. It follows in the footsteps of other scholars, such as Richard Clemmer (1999) and Robert Manners (2007), who seek to honor, synthesize, critique, and apply Steward's theories. Kerns's own previous publication, Scenes from the High Desert (2009), also chronicles Steward's life and theoretical reflections. However, Journeys West is narrower in focus than these other works. It reads as a two-year biography of Julian's and Jane's lives, as well as the lives of their indigenous informants, as they set out to uncover the relationship between society and ecology. Organized into three main parts, Kerns reconstructs the Stewards' sevenmonth road trip over the course of two years. Moving chronologically and geographically across space and time, these parts create a thorough and critical travellogue of the trip. Part 1 details the Stewards' 1935 travels in eastern California as they sought out Paiute elders as informants; part 2 documents their interactions with the Western Shoshone of Nevada in 1935; and part 3 introduces readers to the couple's experiences among the Northern Shoshone and Ute of Utah and southern Idaho in 1936. To retrace the couple's spatial and educational journey, Kerns relies on a wide variety of sources, including old road maps; the Stewards' field journal; letters and correspondence between the couple, their families, and coworkers; oral interviews,;and census data to expand readers' knowledge of their informants.

The goal of Journeys West is twofold. The sources articulate spatial and temporal developments in the Stewards' lives, but they also emphasize the changing field of anthropology. Kerns uses the Stewards' travels to reflect on the past, present, and future of anthropologyfocusing on the complex roles of objectivity, memory, and research. She helps document the emergence of a new generation of anthropologists by highlighting Julian Steward's new research methods. While Alfred Kroeber, Steward's mentor, relied on trait lists composed of one-word responses, Steward's interviews emphasized the value of open-ended questions to elicit lengthier responses. Kerns also stresses Steward's role as one of the founders of cultural ecology-"a framework for understanding links between environment, the quest for food, and the structure of human groups" (p. xxii). People, the land, and its natural resources are deeply intertwined, but recognition of people's impact on the environment and vice versa was just beginning in the 1930s.

Kerns argues that the relationship between humans and their natural environment is so integral to the field that anthropologists often take it for granted today. Following the present trend and methods of many scholars, Kerns uses *Journeys West* to reflect on the practice of anthropology in the twenty-first century, reconsidering her own role as a teacher and practitioner. She uses the Stewards' trip to argue that anthropologists *were* not, *are* not,

and will never be pure, objective, scientific observers of passive, "vanishing" cultures. Rather, they are subjective participants in dialogue with active, culturally adaptive people and places; anthropology is about relationships. Despite focusing on anthropology, Journeys West is an accessible read for an interdisciplinary audience. Kerns prompts anthropologists and environmental historians to question their own subjectivity. Who and what affects our own scholarship and how?

One of Kerns's main strengths is her critical analysis of Steward's original work, specifically because it silenced the personal relationships that made the study possible. Much of his research would not have been possible without the help and companionship of his wife. Additionally, Steward was so intent on documenting the indigenous-environment relationship prior to Anglo settlement that he did not attempt to understand his informants on a personal level. He did not acknowledge that their post-contact experiences influenced their pre-Anglo memories. Kerns counteracts this flaw by introducing her readers to his informants who remained faceless and impersonal sources in the 1938 publication. Journeys West introduces people like Western Shoshone Bill Gibson from Elko, Nevada; Shoshone Rachel Perdash from Utah; and the deceased "ghost informant" Paiute Panatubiji. The standards of Anglo society deeply affected Steward's study, leading him to place his own societal understandings of gender, labor, property, and "progress" onto the native cultures he studied.

In addition to contextualizing the circumstances that had an impact on Steward and his informants, Kerns does a commendable job of describing the western United States' changing landscapes. Most important, her detailed imagery documents the ecological crisis caused by Anglo settlement. For example, over the course of a single generation, Paiutes in California's Owens Valley watched as their ancestors' land was altered first by settler farming and ranching and then by Los Angelinos' appropriation of the valley's river water. Unfortunately, a map does not accompany Kerns's visual descriptions-an essential addition for those readers unfamiliar with the western United States. Nonetheless, students and professionals alike will benefit from reading Kerns's Journeys West. It offers an opportunity to learn about the trials and tribulations of early scholars "in the field" while simultaneously reflecting on our own roles as anthropologists and historians. Journeys West argues that as scholars we must consider how space, time, and relationships shape our own scholarship.

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