

Herman Grey. *Tales from the Mohaves*. Civilization of the American Indian Series, Vol. 107 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970) second printing, 1980, xiii, 93 pp. \$3.95.

The author, Shul-ya, a Mohave of the Beaver Clan, originally wrote the tales in this book for his children, later expanding them for the enjoyment of all ages. Born on the Arizona Fort Mohave Reservation, Shul-ya learned these tales from an uncle who had dreamed the character of Swift Lance, the mythological hero of the tales.

Mr. Grey explains in the preface and introduction that dreams are the very core of Mohave life; from them power, myths, songs, good fortune, guidance, knowledge, and the cultural unity of the Mohaves are derived. Thus, by preserving and sharing these dreamed tales, Shul-ya permits readers valuable insights into the Mohave identity.

As Alice Marriott points out in the foreword to this book, there are few books that have the *feeling* of Mohave life, though there are numerous factual ethnographies. These tales convey the feeling intangibles in a way that only a Mohave writer could. Although Mr. Grey regrets the loss of force and subtleties because the tales are told in English, his style is delightful. Concise and economical, yet vividly descriptive and figurative, the language engages the reader's attention and moves her/him vigorously through eight tales, some of which have an historical basis, such as the account of the Mohave alliance with the Apaches against the Pimas, and some mythological, such as the "frog people" narrative. By using the very appropriate structural device of having Swift Lance's elderly grandmother, White Flower, tell some of the tales or make responses in council meetings and so forth, Mr. Grey is able to pack a good deal of explanatory cultural detail into the tales without losing the energetic pace of narrative or having the details seem forced or unnatural.

Tales from the Mohaves is not a scholarly work, nor was it intended to be one. It has only a three-item bibliography, a sketchy map of the Ft. Mohave Reservation, and no footnotes or index. But what it attempts, it does well--which is to tell culturally revealing tales charmingly. A reader wishes only that the book were not so slight; one's adventures with the mighty warrior Swift Lance are over too soon.

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