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Halo Of The Sun: Stories Told And Retold



Synopsis

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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book offers an especially sensitive and sympathetic introduction to rug weaving, a major element of Navajo culture, and is typical of the quality books published by Northland Press. Noel Bennett accomplished something which few outsiders even try on the Navajo Nation. Based on her background and experience, she set out to understand and learn one of the traditional crafts -- weaving a rug from raw wool to finished product. It looks easy. After all, lots of Anglos weave. Some even spin yarn. The whole process, from raw wool to a finished rug that is work of art, sounds simple in the telling; but, reality is different. Let me give you an example. Fry bread is a traditional Navajo food, which almost every woman can make without thinking. It's as natural as walking. Maybe one of the simplest of traditional Navajo skills. I've tried to learn one element of it, taking a small ball of dough and patting and kneading it out to a circle about a foot in diameter that is then dropped into hot oil to be cooked to a golden brown. It was a lot of fun. The Navajos got a lot of amusement out of watching me try and mostly fail, day after day. I had fun trying. My "teacher" was kind, helpful, patient and amused; she'd show me again and again, but I inevitably ended up with a lumpy disc of dough that she'd patiently pat into a proper circle before laying it in the frying pan. In other words, it ain't as easy as it looks. Bennett undertook a similar but far more complicated learning experience in the 1960s. Unlike me, she stayed with it and became skilled. One result is this book, a sensitive semi-insider's look at a traditional craft that exemplifies one of the few genuine

American art forms.

BOOK REVIEW HALO OF THE SUN REVIEW BY SUSAN G. STERN Written for Oriental Rug Review, Vol 8 #6. Bennett's book, Halo of the Sun, is really a volume about love-- cultural love. Yet the reader feels Bennett's awkwardness and fearfulness as she encounters the ancient Navajo customs foreign to her experience. Although this is Bennett's fourth book about the Navajo, a culture she embraced more than 20 years ago, it is the first volume of stories to take us inside the Indian culture. Through the author's Anglo eyes we intimately view Navajo life, seeing it as humanely as she did, and feeling profound respect and love. Photographs by John Running picture the Navajo people in their homes, surrounded by the material and spiritual landscape of their lives. Made possible by two grants, one from the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation and the other from the Weatherhead Foundation, this work is born out of many years of love between Bennett and the Navajo People. Bennett, a well known New Mexican author, weaver, and artist, successfully presents insights gained from her devotion to weaving, and through this technical relationship offers patterns of understanding between the traditional Navajo culture and the predominate and surrounding Anglo civilization. The enduring values of traditional Navajo life, so elusive to the Anglo mind, are made accessible through every day stories that illustrate simple but eloquent truths. Through her words we see the Navajo with a clearer focus and a deeper vision. Bennett is blessed with an unusually beautiful voice. It sings with rhythmic warmth; humor, and mellifluous but penetrating clarity.

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