

erence to Pacal II in a few of the labels (he is confusingly called "Shield II" in the catalog), one would never know that the texts of Palenque can now be read almost in their entirety, in Chol Maya, nor would one be aware of the exciting work done on Palenque dynastic history, iconography, and architectural history by Schele, Robertson, Peter Mathews, Floyd Lounsbury, and others.

The same inability to come to grips with the decipherment is also evident in the Chichén Itzá room, for on the label describing a circular monument from that site we read "The hieroglyphic text around the outside . . . has not yet been deciphered." But were any of the epigraphers who have been making new breakthroughs in the Chichén inscriptions—David Kelley, Ruth Krochock, and Michel Davoust, among others—asked about this?

The mammoth (712 pages) catalog (Metropolitan Museum of Art/Bulfinch Press, 1990) accompanying the exhibit is a great deal better than the exhibit itself, although it shares some of its inherent defects. Edited by John P. O'Neill, it is beautifully illustrated and printed; for Mesoamericanists the first 234 pages will be a valuable reference work. The most interesting thing about the volume is the long, introductory essay by Octavio Paz, Mexico's Nobel Laureate in literature, who has tried with some success to integrate Mexican culture history before and after the Conquest into a single narrative. Paz says "I have written these pages on Mexican art under the auspices of three emblems: the eagle, the jaguar, and the Virgin" (p. 37)—the eagle and jaguar, the Above and the Below, because they stand for the duality of ancient Mexican thought, and the Virgin because she is the mediator between Christianity and the ancient religions, between the Here and the Beyond.

Perhaps the organizers of *Thirty Centuries* could have taken the themes proposed by Paz and made something more coherent out of all these "splendors." A strong narrative thread of this sort would have resulted in an exhibition that might have done real justice to the past and present glories of Mexico.

Mesoamerica's Ancient Cities: Aerial Views of Precolumbian Ruins in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras. William M. Ferguson and Arthur H. Rohn (photographs by John Q. Royce and William M. Ferguson). Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1990. 266 pp. \$45.00 (cloth).

SUSAN D. GILLESPIE
Illinois State University

The pre-Columbian civilizations of Mesoamerica flourished, as the authors of this book like to point out, while Europe was experiencing its "Dark Age." Today, however, the once-great cities of Mexico and Central America are mostly jumbles of fallen stones and shapeless mounds covered by vegetation. How, then, can the modern observer glimpse the former grandeur of these ceremonial centers, which epitomize the accomplishments of those early civilizations?

Ferguson, Rohn, and Royce have one answer: aerial and panoramic photographs that can reveal the complex patterning of edifices and plazas even as they lie half-ruined and obscured by jungle overgrowth. These photographs, which convey a sense of the original greatness and sophistication of the ancient cities, are the *raison d'être* for this book. Together with pictures of some of the individual buildings and monuments, they provide an armchair travelogue through Mesoamerican prehistory, engendering impressions from perspectives impossible to obtain by simply visiting the sites. The panoramic views of the ceremonial centers (created by overlapping photographs) are frequently supplemented with schematic drawings identifying the different buildings in the photographs. While this book will be of interest to persons planning to see some of these sites, it may also be useful to specialists investigating questions of site planning and cultural rules governing the architectural arrangement of the ceremonial centers.

In contrast to their previous publications (*Maya Ruins of Mexico in Color* [University of Oklahoma Press, 1979] and *Maya Ruins in Central America in Color* [University of New Mexico Press, 1984], both by Ferguson and Royce), the authors have now endeavored to cover "Mesoamerica's" cities. However, only two of the nine sections of the book deal with the non-Maya area—central Mexico and the Valley of Oaxaca—leaving the bulk of the work once again to the Maya sites, which they have grouped into seven regions. The overemphasis on the Maya area is due in part to the greater number of surviving Maya centers, located in the remote jungles of southern Mexico and Central America; in this respect, the book is not unlike Joyce Kelly's more comprehensive *The Complete Visitor's Guide to Mesoamerican Ruins* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1982). Since many of the Maya ruins are difficult to reach and less likely to be visited, these photographs are all the more appreciated. On the other hand, the authors' bias in favor of the Maya over other Mesoamerican peoples was also expressed several times.

The brief texts that accompany the photos for each of the nine regional sections are most useful when they deal with site descriptions. They have been written explicitly for the general public, especially as a guide for potential visitors. As R. E. W. Adams notes in his foreword, both Ferguson and Royce are "amateurs" in the oldest and best sense of the word. Nevertheless, their enthusiasm and empathy for the people they have chosen for their avocation—revealed in their perseverance in obtaining these photos under difficult conditions—cannot overcome some of the obsolete notions of Mesoamerican culture history found in the commentary. The short bibliography (there are very few in-text citations) indicates the authors' overreliance on out-of-date syntheses rather than current publications; but then, the text is only supplementary to the photographs, placing them in a geographical and chronological context. In sum, this book contributes to our view of ancient Mesoamerica by visually highlighting the architectural patterns of some of its great cities.

Out of the North: The Subarctic Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology. *Barbara A. Hail and Kate C. Duncan.* Brown University Studies in Anthropology and Material Culture, Vol. 5. Bristol, RI: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University (also distr. by University of Washington Press), 1989. 302 pp. n.p. (paper).

WILLIAM E. SIMEONE

Stephen R. Braund and Associates, Anchorage

Brightly colored floral embroidery in beads or silk thread has become a mark of cultural identity for subarctic Athabaskan and Algonquian peoples. In this catalog, which accompanies an exhibit of the Haffenreffer Museum's subarctic collection, Barbara Hail and Kate Duncan have chosen to view such work from a "stylistic viewpoint in addition to that of its social and utilitarian functions" (p. 12).

Two articles by Hail, which provide a historical context for the collection, open the catalog. The first is a brief introductory essay on subarctic culture and contact history that concludes with a discussion of the various avenues by which floral embroidery was introduced into the region, mainly through Christian missionaries. In her second article Hail provides a biographical sketch of the principal collector, Emma Shaw Colcleugh, who made several trips into the North, including one to Alaska in 1884 and another to the mouth of the Mackenzie River in 1889. A sense of place and

people is nicely captured through Hail's extensive use of quotes from Colcleugh's travel articles, published in 1932, and a wonderful set of historical photographs. Hail also indicates how the collected objects were integrated into a changing Native culture. Snowshoes, mittens, and moccasins, for instance, continued to serve functional purposes, while other objects served as cultural markers, distinguishing Native and White, and still others, such as beaded wall hangings, were new items made to sell to the increasing flow of tourists. In addition, Hail points to the factors that influenced the shape of 19th-century museum collections: the personal interest and taste of the collector; Native expectations about what White women or men would like to buy; and the collector's access to Native craftpersons.

In a second series of articles that pull this diverse collection of artifacts together, Duncan presents us, first, with an overview of the various regional styles of thread embroidery and beadwork produced in the central subarctic. She then demonstrates, in a following article, using visual perception theory, why these styles are similar even though they were produced some distance from one another. Finally, in a third article, she discusses the stylistic evolution of two Algonquian bag forms as they were spread across the subarctic by Native and Métis hunters working in the fur trade. I found these articles intriguing because they give an indication of how what is thought to be "traditional" Native material culture is a product of cross-cultural exchange and historical process.

Two articles, by Hail and William Tracy, concern contemporary material culture and, in my view, add immeasurably to the catalog. Based on fieldwork by Hail, Duncan, and Tracy, these articles draw the collection into the 20th century and illustrate how contemporary Native culture has articulated with and responded to Western culture. Tracy, for example, shows how contemporary craft production in the village of Brochet, Manitoba, is subject to a variety of influences ranging from cyclical fluctuations in the local and regional economy to the demands imposed by consumers. In a broader context, Hail points out that modern craft production is a response, in part, to the need for maintaining a distinct cultural identity in the face of political and economic domination. Both of these articles lead to an appreciation of the place of craft production in contemporary Native culture. A concluding epilogue by June Helm offers insight into how women's work, the production of furs and skins into clothing, has since become appreciated as women's art.