

The Meskwaki and Anthropologists: Action Anthropology Reconsidered, by Judith M. Daubenmier. Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. xiii, 416 pp. Appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 cloth.

Reviewer Douglas Foley is professor of anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of "The Fox Project: A Reappraisal," in *Current Anthropology* 40 (1999), 171–91; and *The Heartland Chronicles* (1995), an account of the relations between the Meskwaki and white residents of Tama.

Judith Daubenmier has written an exhaustive history of Sol Tax's action anthropology project on the Meskwaki settlement. It is a very useful contribution to contemporary anthropological discussions of collaborative, activist anthropology, vividly conveying the perils and promise of such an approach. In addition, her study is also an insightful account of post-World War II Meskwaki politics. She shows how tribal factionalism affected the tribe's relationships with federal, state, and local politicians as well as with the action anthropologists. Her analysis is based on a meticulous reading of Tax's personal papers and the project's papers. The archival work is further enriched by oral history interviews of Meskwaki. In addition, she begins to provide a broader appraisal of action anthropology through a discussion of Tax's involvement in the American Indian civil rights movement.

Daubenmier argues that previous appraisals of action anthropology have underestimated Tax's influence on the rise of American Indian activism, the field of anthropology, and the Meskwaki settlement. She wants to show that Sol Tax's action anthropology was more than "a tiny blip in the long history of Meskwakis" and in the brief history of anthropology.

Her story begins with a biographical account of Tax's early academic studies and work as an applied anthropologist in Central America. Apparently, those experiences convinced Tax that a new, more value-oriented, useful kind of anthropology was needed. As a young professor at the University of Chicago, he was charged with creating a field school on the Meskwaki settlement to train graduate students.

From 1948 to 1959 Tax and 36 students tried to implement "action anthropology" on a settlement rife with underhanded Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) policies and Meskwaki political factionalism. Overall, Daubenmier emphasizes Tax's willingness to learn from his students and from the Meskwaki. Her detailed accounts of events surrounding the BIA's attempts to terminate the tribal school and of action anthropologists' attempts to create mass media programs on racism highlight Meskwaki agency; Tax and his students started with a different agenda than the tribal leaders and ended up acceding to the tribe's wishes.

She also stresses that some Meskwaki benefited from the scholarship program and their close relationships with action anthropologists.

Daubenmier's detailed portrait of the complex interactions among action anthropologists, the BIA, the Meskwaki, and local whites will be sobering for future activist anthropologists. This is not the easy way to do anthropology. These early action anthropologists became embroiled in tribal politics in productive and unproductive ways. With mixed results, they tried to be cultural brokers for the tribe with the BIA, state agencies, and the media. At times, they collaborated well with the Meskwaki; at other times they initiated projects with little consultation. In other cases — such as the scholarship program and the Tama Craft program — they collaborated mainly with one Meskwaki. None of these programs lasted beyond 1959. Daubenmier demonstrates that as action anthropologists battled the racist, assimilationist, paternalistic views of their era they tried to help the Meskwaki and to make anthropology more socially relevant.

Daubenmier extends her appraisal of action anthropology beyond the Meskwaki settlement to demonstrate its impact on anthropology. That is an excellent idea, but her evidence for such claims — mini-biographies of Tax's former students, a few testimonies by colleagues, and action anthropologists' number of citations — will not persuade most post-1960s American anthropologists. Let us hope that Daubenmier is working on an extended biography of Tax and his involvement in the American Indian civil rights movement. That is probably the surest way to document Tax's contribution to anthropology.

As someone who has also done a more limited appraisal of action anthropology (see my article in *Current Anthropology* [April 1999]), I believe that Daubenmier's main blind spot is the way she downplays action anthropology's sparse academic production. That is surely the main reason that the field undervalues Tax's bold experiment. He had the right idea — that collaborative activist anthropologists can produce better ethnographies — but two key factors worked against accomplishing that on the Meskwaki settlement: (1) Tax saddled his experiment with the task of being a field school for novice anthropologists; and (2) he never gave the project his sustained attention or intellectual leadership. Consequently, the students concentrated more on implementing the projects than on writing about them. What they ended up being was more independent, politically active, applied anthropologists. Daubenmier's study documents this tendency with career data on Tax's best students. Several became applied anthropologists who pushed their peers toward activism, and who often worked outside of academia.

A recent Wenner Gren Foundation conference on contemporary activist anthropology helps put earlier action anthropology in perspective (see Les W. Field and Richard G. Fox, eds., *Anthropology Put to Work* [2007]). Participants asked and answered a question that Tax's students surely confronted: "How do activist anthropologists survive in academia?" The answer: publish well-theorized ethnographies that advance knowledge. As current activist anthropologists have shown (see, in addition to *Anthropology Put to Work*, Luke Lassiter, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* [2005]), a collaborative, politically activist approach can produce better ethnographies. Tax was right in theory, if not in practice. But conference participants also warned that failing such production, activist anthropologists will find themselves working for the government or private NGOs, or as pens for hire for activist groups. Had Tax and his students lived to be twenty-first-century anthropologists, they probably would have felt right at home.

The Iowa Master Farmer Award History Book: A History of the Prestigious Award, Its Winners, and a Century of Iowa Agriculture. Des Moines: Iowa Master Farmer Foundation, 2007. 397 pp. Illustrations, appendixes.

Reviewer John J. Fry is associate professor of history at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois. He is the author of *The Farm Press, Reform, and Rural Change, 1895–1920* (2005).

Each year, *Wallaces' Farmer*, a monthly farm journal aimed at farmers, presents the Iowa Master Farmer Award to a select group of Iowa farmers. Awards are given on the basis of the individuals' success in farming and service to their community. Occasionally, the publication also presents the Iowa Master Farmer Exceptional Service Award to nonfarmers who have dedicated their lives to the service of farming, such as extension agents and university professors. Awards have been presented each year since 1926, with brief interruptions during the Depression and World War II. By 2007, 410 Iowans had been honored.

This book reproduces the articles from *Wallaces' Farmer* that announced the award winners. The articles give brief biographies of recipients and descriptions of their farm operations, family, and community activities. The book organizes the articles in chapters roughly by decades. Each chapter begins with an introduction that traces the major developments in agriculture, technology, the economy, and other national and international events during the period. Each chapter also presents a table of "Iowa Farm Facts" for the first year represented in the chapter, including the number of Iowa farms, acreage, and production and price information for livestock and crops. The