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Review of *The Night Has a Naked Soul: Witchcraft and Sorcery among the Western Cherokee*. By Alan Kilpatrick

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Press, 1997. Maps, illustration, bibliography, index. xviii + 160 pp. \$28.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

This fascinating, slim volume provides a rare glimpse of the supernatural world of the Cherokee Indians, a topic shielded by linguistic, cultural, and mental barriers. The Cherokees possess an extraordinary corpus of magical texts, recorded over one hundred and fifty years by their folk healers in small ledger notebooks. These texts, written in the Sequoyah syllabary and known as *idi:gawé:sdi*, contain a large body of knowledge of such occult subjects as love magic, rainmaking, and protective charms. In *The Night Has a Naked Soul*, Alan Kilpatrick, an associate professor of American Indian studies at San Diego State University and himself a Cherokee, translates thirty-nine new Western Cherokee texts left out of the classic collections his parents, Jack and Anna Kilpatrick, produced in the 1960s. In making these orphaned texts available, Kilpatrick, one of the few scholars able to grasp the nuances, hidden meanings, and archaisms of the Cherokee shamanistic incantations, has rendered an invaluable service to Native American religion, linguistics, and literature.

But Kilpatrick's volume is more than an attempt to finish his parents' work. By placing these Cherokee shamanistic writings in the context of anthropological theory, as well as performing thorough textual analysis of each document, Kilpatrick offers new interpretations of the function and meaning of Western Cherokee sorcery and witchcraft. For example, he challenges the traditional metaphysical approaches with a sociopsychological explanation that sorcery and witchcraft can be seen as a form of hysteria caused by such traumatic experiences as diseases or economic difficulties. Perhaps the most significant feature of the book is Kilpatrick's notion of the central role of transformational language (specialized vocabulary used in codifying the sacred formulae) in Cherokee shamanism. A detailed analysis of the various aspects of transformational language—time-conflation, color sym-

The Night Has a Naked Soul: Witchcraft and Sorcery among the Western Cherokee. By Alan Kilpatrick. Syracuse: Syracuse University

bolism, wordplay, euphemisms, abbreviation of words, and self-aggrandizement—highlights its function as a means to confuse uninitiated readers and heighten the emotional surge and mental focus of the conjuror.

Kilpatrick's is a scholarly book, thick with interpretation and theory, replete with facts, and frugal with description. Yet his lucid writing and sensitive analysis make the linguistic, cultural, and psychological aspects of Western Cherokee witchcraft easily accessible. Moreover, through Kilpatrick's meticulous translations of the shamanistic texts, even a general reader can achieve a glimpse of the principles and logic of a belief system embedded in a different natural order. In short, *The Night Has a Naked Soul* manages to accomplish what few books do: to be readable, exciting, and highly academic at the same time.

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