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Review of *The Power of Kiowa Song: A Collaborative Ethnography* By Luke E. Lassiter

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The Power of Kiowa Song: A Collaborative Ethnography. By Luke E. Lassiter. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998. Illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, references, index. xv + 266 pp. \$40.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

In his informative and innovative exploration of Kiowa music, Luke Lassiter focuses on intersubjective, phenomenological, and experiential aspects of Kiowa song. Employing collaborative ethnography, a method that "fully embraces dialogue in both ethnographic practice and ethnographic writing," he discloses the ways in which his own social interactions with Kiowa consultants have informed his ethnography.

The book is divided into two parts. The first, "Experience, Dialogue, and Ethnography," recounts Lassiter's early impressions of Plains Indians and the gradual transformation of his understanding. The second, "Powwows, the Gourd Dance, and Kiowa Song," offers his interpretation of the social worlds in which Kiowa songs are performed and the systems of knowledge and symbolism that give these songs structure and meaning.

Lassiter reflects on the world of hobbyism in his opening chapters, suggesting that our awareness of Native Americans is shaped by "a long legacy of imagined encounters with Indians, images that we pass from generation to generation." As a Boy Scout, he participated in Indian-style induction rituals based on nineteenth-century practices, never realizing that Plains peoples had developed new dance styles during the intervening century. He candidly discusses his preconceptions and stereotypes, revealing his great surprise in learning that Indian singers actually enjoy singing. As he began studying anthropology, Lassiter found that early ethnographies emphasized historical research in a way that implied that authentic Indians were a thing of the past. Fieldwork in Native communities taught him to value the interpersonal relationships, narratives of experience, and dinner table conversation that became primary sources for his subsequent chapters on Kiowa

involvement in powwows and Gourd Dances. Lassiter does place current practices in historical context, but his primary concern is the role of living song in contemporary Kiowa culture.

The book's main strength is also its principal weakness. Lassiter's personal narrative is sometimes self-righteous, and a vignette describing an episode of drunken violence is gratuitous. The footnotes suggest the author's awareness of ethnopoeitics and gender studies, but he dismisses this work in the body of the text. His analysis of song texts, musical style, historical processes, and gender structures would have been strengthened by the use of models developed in the ethnomusicological literature on Native Americans during the past twenty years, but he ignores these sources. Nevertheless, the positive aspects of this work outweigh the negative, and it is a solid first book by a promising scholar.

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