

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Winter 2002

Review of *The Kiowas and the Legend of Kicking Bird* By Stan Hoig, with three Kiowa tales by Col. W. S. Nye

Charles M. Robinson III
South Texas Community College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Robinson, Charles M. III, "Review of *The Kiowas and the Legend of Kicking Bird* By Stan Hoig, with three Kiowa tales by Col. W. S. Nye" (2002). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2348.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2348>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

The Kiowas and the Legend of Kicking Bird. By Stan Hoig, with three Kiowa tales by Col. W. S. Nye. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 2000. Illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. xxv + 341 pp. \$29.95.

Stan Hoig is known for outstanding books on Southern Plains Indians. *The Kiowas and the Legend of Kicking Bird* joins that corpus. With his usual thoroughness, Hoig has gone back to the original sources, breaking new ground, cross-checking, and, where possible, resolving contradictions in the old accounts. When contradictions cannot be settled, Hoig considers the various possibilities and allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. He also reflects on political infighting among the Kiowas, particularly between the Kicking Bird and Satanta factions, which exists to some degree even today.

The result goes far beyond what the title might indicate at first glance. Although Kicking Bird does hold center stage, Hoig's study is

about the Kiowas at the most critical point in their history. It looks at the demographic and technological upheavals affecting them and other Southern Plains people torn between two irreconcilable alternatives. They could learn to accommodate the alien races that, by sheer numbers, were overwhelming the Plains, and by doing so ensure their own survival. Or they could yield to the historic and cultural forces that dictated resistance and thus guarantee their own destruction.

Hoig shows that each chief had to decide for himself which road he would take. Kicking Bird and Stumbling Bear, both accomplished warriors, abandoned war. Lone Wolf tried to accommodate, but, when his son was killed in a raid, yielded to the warrior's impulse for vengeance. Satanta remained a warrior to the end. The outcome of each choice is carefully examined.

An appendix contains three Kiowa stories collected by Wilbur Nye, and one by Alvin Rucker, all published in *The Daily Oklahoman* in the 1920s and 1930s. Nye, an army officer posted to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, during that period, interviewed aging Kiowa warriors and leaders; anyone interested in the Kiowas owes him a tremendous debt. Although many regard Nye as almost sacrosanct, Hoig's research makes a credible case that he erred in some of his conclusions. Yet Hoig has dissected, analyzed, and pointed out the errors without in any way detracting from the value of Nye's pioneering effort, thereby showing himself to be not only a fine researcher and writer, but a true gentleman.

CHARLES M. ROBINSON III
Department of Humanities
South Texas Community College