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Review of *Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions* by Charlotte Heth

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Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions. Charlotte Heth. Washington: National Museum of the American Indian with Starwood Publishing, Inc., 1993. Photos. 208 pp. \$45.00.

Dancing is the loftiest, the most moving, the most beautiful of the arts, because it is no mere translation or abstraction from life; it is life itself. (Havelock Ellis 1923)

Native American Dance attempts to capture in picture and words life itself across the span of time and the people of the Americas. This is an ambitious project that seeks to identify many of the worlds and peoples of the Americas through their dance and its drama.

The photographs and plates of this books are rich, striking, and full of detail. So much so that one could be lulled into expecting that the oversize volume would serve best as a browsing volume that creates coffee table impressions. Indeed, the scope of this work precludes a detailed text from being developed for any one area of scholarly interest. However the value in

this work to Native American scholars will not be found in any individual essay; rather it is embedded in the totality of the work.

For the Native American scholar who has not focused on Native American dance, this book can provide a refreshing new context and point of perspective for experiencing these cultures. If, as Ellis says, dancing is life itself, then this book presents a compelling window to its subjects' lives. It documents, through the direct expression and the symbolism of dance, unique points of contrasts and comparisons for the varied cultures of the peoples of the Americas.

In the structuring of this text, the editor makes a strong statement about the continuing evolution and modern-day application of ancient traditions. Dance is presented as a form of communication both between and within generations. At times, it is a communication of communion much like the Dervish; elsewhere, it is the social experience of a Hoe-down. In each chapter, the context for this communication is made clear as much through the people as through their geography, resources, and history.

This is a book that can be enjoyed by both the casual reader and the scholar. For the former, it has beautiful and detailed photographs accompanied by approachable narratives. For the latter, this is a refreshing overview that can give broader context to more focused and detailed work such as *Cherokee Dance and Drama* (Speck and Broom, 1983) and *Indian Dances of North America* (Laubin and Laubin, 1978). Perhaps most importantly, it offers us a new vantage point and a valuable model for expressing and experiencing cultures. Eric J. Jolly, *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.