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Review of *Kiowa Military Societies: Ethnohistory and Ritual*. By William C. Meadows

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Kiowa Military Societies: Ethnohistory and Ritual.

By William C. Meadows. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. xx + 455 pp. Photographs, figures, tables, appendix, bibliography, index. \$75.00 cloth.

No other region of Native North America has been the focus of more scholarly attention to the roles that warfare and conflict have played in Indigenous societies than among those living in the Great Plains. Historians and anthropologists have produced a voluminous literature about the warrior culture as an integral facet of Plains Indian life. While previous studies have examined either general aspects of Plains Indian warfare or provided ethnographic descriptions of Great Plains military societies, no diachronic, comprehensive account of military societies has been undertaken focusing on a single society.

Drawing on over a decade of research, in combination with archival and published anthropological and historical literature, William C. Meadows provides a detailed ethnographic account of Kiowa military societies and their historical development. Employing a perspective spanning from the prereservation era to the present, Meadows describes each military society's origins, structures, rituals, ceremonies, functions, and associated music, dances, songs, and material culture within the context of the Kiowa military society system. Beginning with Rabbits Society in the first chapter, he graphically portrays the Mountain Sheep Society, Horse Headress Society, the Black Legs Society, Unafraid of Death or Skunkberry Society, Scout Dogs Society, the Bone Strikers, as well as the Omaha Society and Kiowa Women's Societies, devoting a chapter to each.

Throughout his study, Meadows not only successfully integrates the wide array of data into a comprehensive examination of each major Kiowa military society, but also elucidates through his extensive fieldwork with Kiowa elders and consultants how the Kiowas feel about their societies and their continuing importance in honoring military service and Kiowa cultural traditions. The final chapter provides a summary of the current role military and dance societies play in Kiowa culture. Over the course of time, as Meadows meticulously details, Kiowa military societies have undergone numerous changes in form, function, and meaning. These changes have paralleled the larger developments and changes that have

periodically altered Kiowa society. Despite changes owing to the forces of history, Kiowa military societies at their core have evolved today into a social mechanism for the perpetuation of Kiowa identity and culture.

Lavishly illustrated with photographs and accompanied by an appendix of society membership since the late 1800s, *Kiowa Military Societies* stands as the most in-depth piece of scholarship concerning the evolution of military societies in a particular Great Plains tribe. The book is a valuable addition, not because it contributes any new, revealing insights or provides a theoretical analysis of the topic, but because it draws together a mass of literature that is meticulously and skillfully integrated. It is its comprehensive, synthetic nature that makes it a significant work. **Gregory R. Campbell**, *Department of Anthropology, University of Montana*.