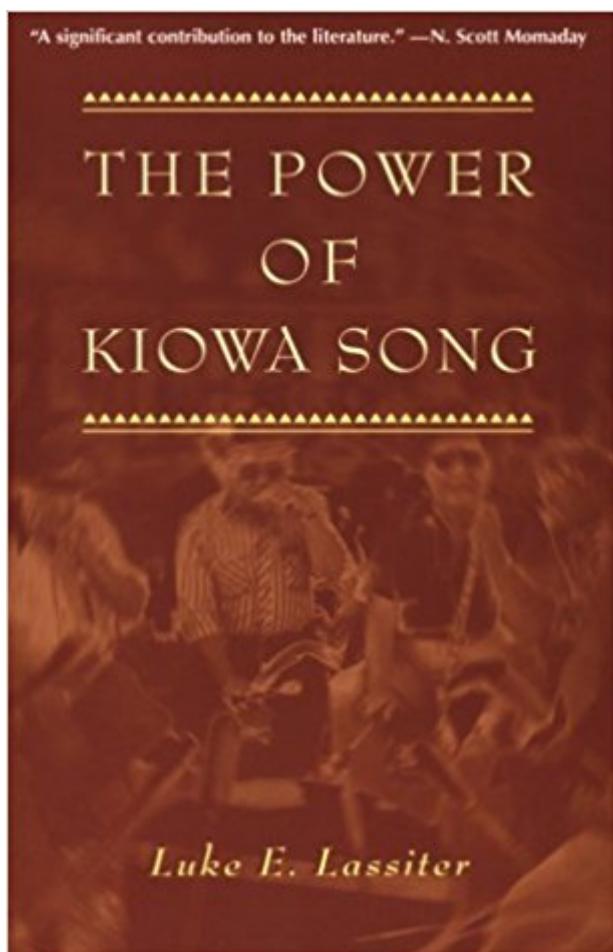


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The Power Of Kiowa Song: A Collaborative Ethnography (Religion In America)



Synopsis

Many Kiowas believe that song is a gift from God. Its power, argues Luke E. Lassiter, rests in the many ways that community members hear, understand, and feel it: "Song has power. As I begin to understand what this means for my mentors, I am just beginning to understand what this means in my life. They are not just singers. They are vehicles for something greater than all of us. Indeed, I now understand that I am not just a singer. But . . . I will sing until I die." As a boy, Lassiter had an early fascination with pow wows. This interest eventually went from a hobby to a passion. As Lassiter made Kiowa friends who taught him to sing and traveled the pow wow circuit, serving many times as a head singer, he began to investigate and write about the pow wow as an experiential encounter with song. The Power of Kiowa Song shows how song is interpreted, created, and used by individuals, how it is negotiated through the context of an event, and how it emerges as a powerfully unique and specific public expression. The Power of Kiowa Song presents a collaborative, community-wide dialogue about the experience of song. Using conversations with Kiowa friends as a frame, Lassiter seeks to describe the entire experience of song rather than to analyze it solely from a distance. Lassiter's Kiowa consultants were extremely active in the writing of the book, re-explaining concepts that seemed difficult to grasp and discussing the organization and content of the work. In a text that is engaging and easily read, Lassiter has combined experiential narrative with ethnological theory to create a new form of collaborative ethnography that makes anthropology accessible to everyone. This book is designed for anyone interested in Native American studies or anthropology, and it also serves as a resource written by and for the Kiowa themselves. Hear the Power of Kiowa Song

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lassiter (anthropology, Ball State Univ.) presents a revised version of his 1995 Ph.D. dissertation. He begins his narrative with an account of his experiences in the Order of the Arrow, an affiliate of the Boy Scouts of America, examining the influence of the Order's teachings on his conception of Indian culture. Then Lassiter details his evolution as he goes from powwows sponsored by hobbyists to contact with Kiowa Indians in Southwestern Oklahoma, where he travels the powwow circuit and sometimes performs as a head singer. In the book's second half, Lassiter focuses on the dance tradition known as the Gourd Dance and the Kiowa song associated with it. The power of the song, referred to in the title, comes from the way the members of the community hear and respond to it. The book works both as a personal and anthropological journey. The second half should be particularly valuable to scholars. This belongs in anthropology and folklore collections. John Burch, Hagan Memorial Lib., Williamsburg, KYCopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Some musicologists might say that although the book explains history, contexts, cultural dynamics, and the sociology of the Kiowa powwow event it does not include anything about the music. However, the book focuses on what really matters to the Kiowa about their music—the experience of powwow singing for individuals and the group. . . . This book is a valuable contribution to the understanding of music, and there is nothing quite like it." 2000 Yearbook for Traditional Music" He reveals singing as a powerful, orienting practice that pervades Kiowa life. . . . His collaborative methodology and narrative style ensure this book's value to the academy, while also making it accessible to a popular audience." Religious Studies Review" His overall portrayal of day-to-day Kowa life, and the place of music in it, make his friends real to the reader, and their lives jump from the page in vivid detail." Ethnomusicology

It is an amazing ethnography that gives almost a first person point of view on the powows of the kiowa and the songs that they sing. Lassiter does a fantastic job of taking you through his life experiences with the kiowa tribe.

The most important thing to keep in mind when picking up this book is that it is a "collaborative

ethnography." While reading you will get the feeling that this is not a solo project, but one undertaken by a whole community. A community made up of people who express themselves in different fashions, but are still working towards a common goal. It is obvious that this is a very personal work and Lassiter reveals much of himself to the reader which only reinforces the value and importance of song. "Power of Kiowa Song" is very readable and will interest those from various backgrounds. Academics as well as the casual reader will all learn something. Highly recommended.

From beginning to end, this wonderful blend of ethnographic information and personal experiences pulls the reader into the community, into the heart of the Kiowa people and definitely, into the song. For the academic and general reader, through the telling of personal experiences, this book offers an insight into the people and the thread of song and dance that holds them together as a community. Having had the privilege of singing many times with Dr. Lassiter, this book was just one more song well sung. Thank you, Eric, now, lead out another good one.

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