

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Rethinking Hopi Ethnography. By Peter M. Whiteley.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4x60290g>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 24(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Olson, Carla

Publication Date

2000

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

junction with the color reproductions. Long quotes from contemporary Native American artists like David Bradley, Bently Sprang, Kay Walkingstick, Dan Lomahaftewa, Lloyd Oxendine, Oscar Howe, Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith, Truman Lowe, and Rick Hall are refreshing after viewing pages and pages of stereotyped statements and visual images. Allan Houser's 1980 bronze sculpture, *Sounds of the Night*, Grey Cohoe's etching, *Yei Bi Chei Dancers*, Dan Lomahaftewa's 1994 collagraph, *Spring Arrival*, Wayne Eagleboy's 1971 mixed media, *American Flag*, Oscar Howe's 1973 painting, *Sundance*, and Jean La Marr's 1990 serigraph, *Some Kind of Buckaroo*, really evoke the books' title.

A major strength of the book as a whole is the abundance of color reproductions covering a wide time span, including images created by Natives and non-Natives. Its weaknesses include geographic ethnocentrism and sexist language. For example, statements about gaining a better understanding of American and Canadian societies fail to consider that Canada is also in America and thus American. A more accurate statement would refer to United States and Canadian societies. On page 80 and other pages, Indian is referred to in the masculine pronoun as *him* or *he*.

After seeing the exhibit at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian Art, I highly recommend that readers try to attend the show as it travels to museums in their region. Five-hundred years after the arrival of Columbus to the Americas, the cultural influences acting on Native American art and culture remain varied and complex. Many aesthetic and cultural changes have taken place in the twentieth century as Native peoples have participated more fully in the dominant culture and have incorporated artistic traditions from many cultures into their own traditions. Native American artists are developing new definitions of Indian art. Although contemporary Native American culture has lost some of its early symbolism and rituals because of cultural change and assimilation, its essence remains. Native American thinking has not ever separated art from life, what is beautiful from what is functional. Art, beauty, and spirituality are intertwined in the routine of living. The Native American aesthetic has survived colonialism, servitude, genocide, racial discrimination, and rapid technological change. As author Emma I. Hansen so eloquently states in *Powerful Images*, "For native people today, the object speaks to the spirit and endurance of tribal cultures and provides a key to understanding the past, the present, the people who went before them, and their own generation" (p. 24).

Phoebe Farris (Powhatan)
Purdue University

Rethinking Hopi Ethnography. By Peter M. Whiteley. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1998. 285 pages. \$39.95 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

In the wake of intense ethnographic studies done on the Hopi, Peter Whiteley's book, *Rethinking Hopi Ethnography*, explores ways in which Hopi politics, history, and perspectives could be joined with existing and future anthropological knowledge.

The introduction is superbly laid out as Whiteley explores the complications of studying and exploring Hopi culture. According to Whiteley, the academic commodification of Hopi knowledge has forced the Hopi to guard their intellectual property as rigorously against misrepresentation as they guard their material property.

One way in which the Hopi have worked to eliminate misrepresentation of Hopi beliefs and values is seen in the 1980s creation of the Hopi Tribes Cultural Preservation Office (HCPO), an offshoot of the tribal government. It is the responsibility of the HCPO to screen, approve, or deny all research projects conducted on the Hopi Reservation today. Plenty of well-intending novice and seasoned ethnographers have taken privileged information out of Hopi and distorted it into something other for the sake of academic imagination and writing. Whiteley considers this to be the “model of the explorer-academic parachuting in to a local community, only to return to the ivory tower after serving the requisite term of exotic interaction” (p. 25). With this model in mind Whiteley states that the Hopi Tribes Cultural Office of Preservation is seen as a considerably frustrating obstacle for the “free-for-all individualism of Western openness—in ideological terms, anyway—regarding knowledge circulation” (p. 4).

Whiteley proclaims that his work in this book and in the field is “more revisionary than originary...[in that] it attempts to engage Hopi analytical perspectives with an aim that is both restorative and corrective” (p. 13). His approach is restorative in the sense that he argues throughout the book that Native communities should have a say in the type of resources that will be taken out of their communities and for what good they will be used. He proposes that ethnographic work on Hopi or any other Native community should not come to an end, but should incorporate new and more community-inclusive methods of training the ethnographer to conduct field work. In *Rethinking Hopi Ethnography*, Whiteley suggests that future work on Hopi be corrected to include the Native voice as primary and the authored voice of the anthropologist, or ethnographers, as secondary.

In this text Whiteley proclaims that anthropological theories and methods have not always been the bridge they proclaim to be but have been a one-way street back to academia, leaving the Native voice muted by the overwhelming voice and theories of the researcher. Too many narrative ethnographers, according to Whiteley, have romanticized and crafted their subjects into mere puppets that dance for the investigator.

This book is the accumulation of Whiteley’s fieldwork that started in 1978 and continues today. He details for the reader his own authored voice within this book and within his own research as observer-participant. Whiteley’s voice is not distantly removed from himself as a researcher, but reflects and contextualizes his personal locality and his point of entry into the field of anthropology. He documents his own interests of study in American Indian culture, thanking the late Alfonso Ortiz for his patience and insight.

Whiteley documents his fieldwork on Hopi in this book and he freely critiques academia—“the academic castle, with its own elaborate rules of access and mystification”—while still remaining an excited and a vital member of its

faculty (p. 4). It is with this expertise and sensitivity to culture that Whiteley gives his recommendation for further research done by anthropologists in "other" communities and argues that academia promotes its own interests if anthropology continues in the same vein.

In 1988 Whiteley wrote two other notable books or volumes on Hopi history and culture: *Deliberate Acts: Changing Hopi Culture Through the Oraibi Split* and *Bacavi: Journey to Reed Springs*. Both of these books have received impressive reviews from those who are experts in the fields of anthropology and history.

Rethinking Hopi Ethnography is highly recommended for community college, undergraduate, and graduate courses in American Indian studies, anthropology, sociology, and history. Whiteley challenges academia to look for further research projects that are not only inclusive of the Native voice, but are also inclusive of the local community as a viable decision-making population. It is a stellar addition to the current literature by a scholar with a life-long commitment to the Hopi and the integrated study of culture.

Carla Olson

University of California, Los Angeles

Ritual and Myth in Odawa Revitalization: Reclaiming a Sovereign Place. By Melissa Pflüg. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. \$28.95 cloth.

In keeping with the central theme of ethical reciprocity that this book identifies within Odawa myth and ritual, Melissa Pflüg's work itself promises offerings both for the academic communities it seeks to enlighten and for the small community of traditionalists whose integrity and efficacy she seeks to represent. Pflüg proposes to articulate how these Odawa, an Alongkian people of the Great Lakes region, respond to contemporary threats to their culture and identity with practices that are informed by the narratives and performances of Odawa myth and ritual. She argues for the academic conceptualization of tradition not as some archaic body of abstract values and beliefs slowly slipping from the fingers of this contemporary group, but as a powerful interpretive frame that is both worked through and elaborated upon by these social actors in their revitalization efforts. By foregrounding such a model of myth and ritual as action, the full agency of Odawa traditionalists can be brought into view.

The book is divided into three sections, each generating a narrative that moves from a consideration of the context in which Odawa traditionalists engage in revitalization efforts, to the models of myth and ritual that Pflüg argues continue to inform Odawa revitalization, to a discussion of Odawa ritual and politics that constitute the contemporary practices informed by those models. The book's first section addresses the need for contemporary as well as historical and mythical considerations as they contribute to modern-day tribal activism. Thus she provides an account of the contemporary organization of Odawa bands, including groups with and without federal recognition,