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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Chasers of the Sun: Creek Indian Thoughts. By Louis Littlecoon Oliver.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6gs0k5xw>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 15(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

1991

DOI

10.17953

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Whiteman's religious beliefs are explored further in chapter 8. The author found that Whiteman carried on a continual communion with spiritual powers and lived his life according to the virtues prescribed by his religious convictions. Respect, generosity, cheerfulness, and the ability to endure hardships were some of the virtues Whiteman possessed as a spiritual person.

On 13 April 1981, cancer swept Whiteman from this earth. The significance of his life lies not in any scholarly analysis of what he told the author, but in his conscientious practice of a way of life—a Cheyenne way of life.

To be a Contrary was to be an ascetic of the highest order—a man of exemplary virtue and grace. As one examined Wesley's life, these things became self-evident. He was a man without prejudice and without guile, a truly noble individual, a rare human being—a "contrary" (p. 108).

The closing chapter contains three discrete supplementary narratives by Grover Wolf Voice, a cousin to Wesley Whiteman; Lee Old Mouse, an Arikara; and a Dakota, William Voice. While these narratives contain interesting ethnographic and historic information, their inclusion, in my opinion, detracts from the book's main subject, the recollections and life of Wesley Whiteman.

For students of Cheyenne culture and history, *The Last Contrary* is a welcome addition to a growing list of Cheyenne biographies. Similar to the previously published biographies, this book is rich in historical and ethnographic detail from a Cheyenne perspective. Most importantly, *The Last Contrary* stands as testimony to the resilience of the human spirit and a way of life.

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Chasers of the Sun: Creek Indian Thoughts. By Louis Littlecoon Oliver. Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1990. 105 pages. \$9.95 paper.

Elders have always constituted the primary repositories of knowledge and wisdom in traditional American Indian societies. Not simply accumulators and regurgitators of data, the old people have been relied upon to interpret bodies of information and

assign proper meanings to things. Typically, they have done this through distillation of various multifaceted subject matters into short and superficially simplistic vignettes, stories, and parables that are readily digestible by the relatively unschooled but are layered with nuances that transcend their literal plot lines. Ultimately, these stories tie together in a complex web defining the cosmology and worldview of the culture from which they arise, while simultaneously informing the conduct of day-to-day activities.

As matters of necessity and convention, such endeavors have always been generated orally, passed along from generation to generation in ways that have assured not only the continuity, but the immediacy, applicability, and ongoing vibrancy of indigenous insights. The success of the oral enterprise is, however, completely dependent upon the proximity of the people as a whole to one another, and the corresponding accessibility of the storytellers to those to whom their words must be uttered. Absent this proximity, the oral medium eventually becomes a cultural dead end.

This has become a real problem in an era when the twin impacts of conquest and colonization have scattered native North America to the winds, fostering a diaspora that places more than half of all American Indians in cities remote from the reservations where their oral heritages are now centered. In this setting, knowledge of things Indian—even among many Indians—has come increasingly to accrue from written formats, mostly filtered through the lense of “understanding” ground over the past century by an array of non-Indian academic “experts.” What is threatened by this circumstance is not so much the physical demise of native America (there currently are more than six times as many Indians in North America as there were in 1900) but a sort of final conceptual disjuncture in which the core characteristics of the indigenous reality are articulated exclusively by (or with the sanction of) Euro-America. This, of course, would be the consummation of the “red skins/white minds” phenomenon, an intellectually and psychologically assimilative proposition that stands to do more to destroy “Indianness” than all of history’s Sand Creeks and Wounded Knees put together.

A way out of this particular box might reside in utilization of the means but not the mode of communication employed by the dominant society to reach its own widely dispersed population. Any suggestion of this sort might at first seem rather paradoxi-

cal, oral and literate cultural structurations usually being presented as existing in virtually diametrical opposition. The unity of opposites is, however, hardly a new or especially novel premise. The possibility of indigenous oralists appropriating literary forms for their own purposes should, in this sense, be considered no more unconsonant with the perpetuation of native realities than was adoption of such items of European material culture as glass beads, trade cloth, steel blades, and the horse by the Indian people of earlier times. The Lakota, after all, did not stop being Lakota by virtue of incorporating rifles into their inventory of available weaponry.

Ideas of this sort have guided American Indian writers like Simon J. Ortiz (*Fight Back for the Sake of the Land, Fight Back for the Sake of the People*) and Jimmie Durham (*Columbus Day*), whose work blends prose and poetry in an effort to retain the flavor, idiom, and purpose of indigenous oralism within the literary venue. Such endeavors have largely served a "bridging" function, allowing Indians to speak from a position of relative cultural integrity to non-Indians via highly refined aesthetic channels. Because of the success of these younger wordsmiths in exploring the potentialities of the print medium over the past twenty years, the way has been opened for its effective use by elders in fulfilling their traditional responsibilities of Indian/Indian communication with a breadth of audience that otherwise would be impossible. Here, aesthetics take a decided second seat to literal content.

An excellent case in point is Louis Littlecoon Oliver's recently released *Chasers of the Sun: Creek Indian Thoughts*. Hardly a masterly prosaic/poetic work per se, *Chasers of the Sun* instead deploys these devices as a means to convey lessons from the author's eighty-six years' learning, and to do so in ways that are consistent with the Muskogee heritage he represents. Figuratively at least, it is as if the reader is seated at his feet, listening in the old way. The following is a personal favorite of mine, appearing on page 98:

A thought struck me as I wandered about,
And saw an Ant's highway—a caravan,
Through a dense forest of entanglements.
I squatted to study this industrial event.
Came to mind our own system of highways
The law of commercial distribution of goods.

Would that I could visit the Ant's kingdom
Way down, not high as our skyscrapers.
I'd find no mechanism, no computers,
No electrical musts, or giant cabinets,
Filled with drawers of business information.
But feel the intuition that guides them—
A spirit of nature since the beginning of time.
Could not the Indian live as the Ant?

On the next page he states,

I'm tired of technical innovators
The forked tongue of Anglo Saxon linguists
Articulating like rocks down a chute.
Is that fluent and poetic rhythm?
I don't write for the intelligentsia.

This is a book by an elder Indian, penned—and emphatically so—for younger Indians. It is emblematic of the cross-generational transfer of native worldview, the cement that has bound our peoples together through the millennia. In writing it, Oliver has more than met his obligations to the rest of us; he has pointed the way to our cultural survival. In turn, it is our task to glean the true meaning of his words and to see to it that others have similar opportunities to share the wealth of their vision with us. *Chasers of the Sun* is the kind of book we need to see many more of in the years ahead.

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The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians: Their Origin, Development, and Possible Antecedents. By Carol F. Jopling. Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Volume 79, Part 1, 1989. 164 pages. \$25.00 paper.

This book represents an admirable attempt to bring together disparate accounts of that Northwest Coast enigma—the Copper. (Throughout the book, as in this review, Copper with a capital C refers to the artifact, copper with a lower case *c* refers to the metal.) Coppers are shield-shaped objects consisting of two parts,