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A Necessary Balance: Gender and Power among the Indians of the Columbia Plateau. By Lillian A. Ackerman. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. 282 pages, \$42.95 cloth.

A Necessary Balance is an outstanding ethnography and detailed analysis of fieldwork done by the author, Lillian A. Ackerman, over the course of the past twenty years. Ackerman reviews previous ethnographic and anthropological fieldwork and publications done by early explorers, missionaries, and ethnographers, contextualizing their conclusions in light of her own work. Ackerman also reports on her interviews with Colville tribal consultants, framing the central issues temporally from traditional cultural practices to contact and then into the present. This is a detailed, theoretically informed, and intellectually exciting ethnographic journey into the knot of gender and power. Ackerman works to connect what she sees as past analytical errors in the anthropological record to undo the stereotyping, myth making, and imperialism of these records. The interweaving of time, location, and competing voices that informs this ethnographic field study makes this monograph a definitive model for understanding gender and power on the Columbia Plateau and beyond.

In chapter two, Ackerman notes that defining and investigating gender equality has been complicated in the past by conflicting notions of what counts as equality, and by differing feminist and anthropological theoretical positions. While Ackerman initially claims that this is not a theoretical work, in fact her outstanding discussion of definitions and methods in analyzing gender equality breaks new theoretical ground. Her application of Schlegel's model that defines gender equality as the equal or balanced access of men and women to power, authority, and autonomy in four social spheres—economic, domestic, political, religious—leads Ackerman to conclude that, in fact, gender equality existed among the Plateau Indians before and throughout contact, and continues to exist in spite of forced acculturation. This is not the generally accepted conclusion: There has been a tendency either to romanticize the “natural” position of tribal women as honored and powerful, or to diminish the roles that tribal women played during and after contact as replicating the subordinate locations of European women, even though neither case holds true. Ackerman denies the Euro-American position that hierarchy creates only oppression. In chapter four, “Gender Status in Traditional Colville Reservation Culture,” she takes the position that hunter-gatherer societies are egalitarian; that women have different access to power, authority, and autonomy in the four social spheres that Schlegel identifies, but that their participation is equally important to men's roles. Many cultural narratives have undervalued the importance of women's roles in producing economic stability. Ackerman corrects this notion, demonstrating the critical role of women's informal, but decisive participation in providing food and participating in trade. Women gathered material for weir lashings that were critical to the salmon fishing that was a mainstay of traditional Colville culture (90). Although Ackerman's account of polygyny as practiced in the Plateau is

perhaps less convincing, nonetheless, she argues that women exerted a great deal of autonomy even in this apparently patriarchal structure.

In the final chapter, Ackerman provides a groundbreaking discussion of complementary rights in the context of access to the four social spheres. Comparisons between legal rights and customary practices highlight her argument that, although Euro-American and European women might stand as normative in discourse, Plateau women—and in fact, most Indian women—have had, and continue to, enjoy far more gender equality than has previously been understood, through informal rather than legal structures of marriage, production, reproduction, and decision-making. For example, during the transition from traditional tribal autonomy to the reservation and forced acculturation of the late nineteenth century, while some traditional offices in the political realm disappeared, both genders retained the right to speak in assembly, even though women began to speak less often. This is in contrast to Euro-American women's legal status, with no right to attend or speak in political assemblies. Both customarily and legally, American women were non-entities. Ackerman concludes that customary practices among Plateau Indians provide women with effective access to decision-making power, even though there might be no "legal" assertion of authority.

Ackerman engages in serious, considered ethnography, using rigorous and relatively traditional methods of presentation to demonstrate the gendered social arrangements of the Colville tribal group. There are only a handful of critical analyses that explore the lives of Indian women in relation to gender and power. In the early 1980s, Sands and Bataille's *American Indian Women* began to unpack the myths, stereotypes, and possibilities in this kind of study, following in the tracks of early feminist ethnographers such as Elsie Clews Parsons. Paula Gunn Allen's work on American Indian women differs from Ackerman's work in its focus on narratives and storytelling. *A Necessary Balance* extends and deepens the work begun by Ackerman and Laura Klein in 1995 in their important *Women and Power in Native North America*, providing a geographically specific case study rather than an inclusive review of multiple tribal practices. It is important to note that gender references in *A Necessary Balance* do not refer exclusively to women, but include an analysis of men's social locations and customary practices that might militate against their own access to decision-making power.

Ackerman argues that one might read this ethnography as a persuasive argument against the assertion that the only form that gender relations take globally is universal male domination. This text provides clear and thoughtful evidence for the possibilities that gender equality is possible, based on women's economic independence. Colville reservation politics and gender relations provide evidence of the existence of gender equality and a model and prima facie case for future efforts towards a balance of power. "Though other societies with gender equality have been described in convincing detail . . . many anthropologists continue to deny the existence of gender equality and declare that societies everywhere are male dominated. . . . I hope that this study will contribute to the demise of the notion of universal male dominance" (239). Through careful reporting of consultant interviews, thoughtful

critique of previously published ethnographic descriptions, and extensive participant-observation fieldwork, Ackerman provides the model and the evidence to refute the myth of male dominance. The redefinition of what constitutes power might apply to other tribal geographies using this methodology, and by extension, to many cultural groups in which women operate at informal levels with more independence and autonomy than has previously been understood. These are powerful possibilities.

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Singing the Songs of My Ancestors: The Life and Music of Helma Swan, Makah Elder. By Linda J. Goodman and Helma Swan. Forward by Bill Holm. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. 339 pages. \$44.95 cloth.

As the daughter of a Northwest Coast chief, Helma Swan (1918–2002) enjoyed privileged access to an understanding of the significance of the music of her Makah people. This book describes songs, dances, and potlatch ceremonies in Swan's own words, along with a discussion of song ownership and other Makah musical concepts. Linda Goodman first met Swan in 1974 at the Makah village of Neah Bay, Washington, where Goodman was working on her doctoral dissertation. This book is the result of more than twenty years of research and oral history interviews, during which time the two women developed a close friendship.

Swan's goal in this work was to tell her story in her own words, to validate her family's rights to particular ceremonial property, and to leave a written record about Makah music. Goodman, an anthropologist/ethnomusicologist by profession, was interested in placing Swan's story in an appropriate cultural, historical, and musical context so that the non-Makah reader could envision the world from which Swan's life and traditions emerged. After reading Goodman's introduction, which discusses participant-observer methods of fieldwork, theories of women in society, and concepts of culture change, it appeared that anthropological issues might overshadow the book. However, as David McAllester notes on the jacket of the book, this work is clearly written and free of scholarly jargon. In large part this is due to the liberal use of quotes from the hundreds of pages of transcripts from interviews that Goodman recorded over the years. This method of collaborative research is similar to that used by Tara Browner in *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-Wow* (2002), Luke E. Lassiter in *The Power of Kiowa Song* (1998), and John G. Neihardt in *Black Elk Speaks* (1995). From a researcher's perspective, this extensive use of quotes from the primary sources of information is what makes these works particularly valuable.

Singing the Songs of My Ancestors is divided into three parts: the first discusses various elements of Makah culture, history, and music; the middle of the book is a story of Swan's life in her own words; and the concluding chapters focus on the music itself. Although the parts are quite different in tone,