

The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns. By Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay. University of Nebraska Press, 2002. 160 pages. \$24.95.

“My dad teaches these songs because he doesn’t want them dying out,” says Donna Kotay, daughter of the respected Kiowa singer at the heart of this book. Early Christian converts sang Kiowa hymns that “came from God. Because all of a sudden, their eyes were opened and they saw God. There’s a Spirit, and it just moves through them. It’s just something that happens to them, and it’s got to come out. And it comes out in song” (111–112). *The Jesus Road* reflects Ralph Kotay’s effort to spread the word beyond the Kiowa communities of southwestern Oklahoma, and it is an important contribution to scholarship on native religious life.

Luke Eric Lassiter is an anthropologist and the author of *The Power of Kiowa Song: A Collaborative Ethnography* (University of Arizona Press, 1998). Clyde Ellis is a historian and the author of *To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893–1920* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1996). Working in concert with Ralph Kotay and other Kiowas, they have produced a collaborative, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural study of Kiowa hymns. This distinctive musical tradition is a product of the missionary era of the reservation experience and an important part of Kiowa church life today; Lassiter, Ellis, and Kotay focus on the hymns as a lens through which to examine the dynamics of the Kiowa Christian community. In Part 1 Ellis outlines a history of the Kiowa encounter with Christianity. Lassiter opens Part 2 by sketching an ethnography of Indian Christian music in southwestern Oklahoma. The text then culminates in Kotay’s commentary on specific songs; the book is accompanied by a compact disc containing field recordings of twenty-six Kiowa hymns performed by Kotay and others.

Ellis frames his history of Kiowa Christianity with the 1997 funeral of Harry Tofpi Sr., a respected elder whose passing illustrates the complexity of Kiowa religious life. Christian missionaries first arrived at the Kiowa–Comanche–Apache Reservation shortly after it was established in 1867, and their presence increased dramatically once reservation lands were broken up twenty years later. The Catholics, Methodists, and Baptists were especially active among the Kiowas, each denomination peddling their particular map of “the Jesus Road.” The Sun Dance, the Ghost Dance, and peyotism were other religious options during this period. “Why did so many Kiowas accept Christianity?” Ellis asks (53). The answer “is not necessarily the story of how one set of beliefs replaced another one wholesale, or of the incompatibility of Kiowa practices with Christian ones. Rather, it is a more complex encounter in which both sides made concessions” (19). He concludes that, in general, “accepting Christianity did not mean agreeing to the end of Kiowa identity and culture” (53). Tofpi, for example, was a devout Baptist but “also a lifelong member of the Native American Church and often said that he felt closest to Jesus in the peyote tipi” (19). He was mourned at the Saddle Mountain Kiowa Indian Baptist Church cemetery, during a peyote

meeting the night before, and in tribal ceremonies conducted by Sac and Fox relatives on his wife's side of the family.

Social change since World War II has threatened the survival of rural Indian churches. Elders chuckle about the story of a Kiowa preacher "who looked up to see a full house on Easter," then "told them that he was mighty glad to see them and that he would look forward to seeing them again, at Christmas" (66). This is the cultural context for Lassiter's ethnography of contemporary Kiowa hymnsinging, which he organizes around Ralph Kotay's effort to preserve the tradition. Kiowa Christians also sing the English-language hymns found in American Protestant hymnals, but Kiowa hymns are original compositions using the tribal language set to traditional-style tunes and sung without accompaniment. Kiowa hymns "belong to larger tribal song repertoires as much as they belong to Christian song repertoires," pointing to "a deep level of experiential encounter that reaches beyond discrete musicological categories such as musical sound, structure, performance, and use." The "language of hymns" encompasses "what the language *in* song explicitly relates and communicates as well as the language *surrounding* song—that is, the voiced stories and sentiments that hymns evoke" (78–79). Kiowa church songs are oral tradition, grounded in personal experiences and social relationships, and "a song's meaning is not entirely defined by the words in a song; the words are the symbolic foundation on which broader narrative meanings are built" (80). The Kiowa words for "God" and "song," Lassiter points out, share a root that translates to the English word "power" (82).

Language, of course, is the linchpin of this tradition. Kotay was reminded of the power of Kiowa hymns during a serious illness in the early 1990s, and afterward he pledged to do what he could to preserve the hymnsinging tradition. He began teaching classes for tribal members, most of whom are not fluent in Kiowa. Can tribal traditions survive the obsolescence of tribal languages? Kotay's signal contribution to *The Jesus Road* is a recorded compilation of twenty-six selections—many performed with his students—along with the written commentary that accompanies each song. The lyrics are simple, straightforward meditations on the spiritual life; some are explicitly Christian, others are not. "If you are following the Jesus Road, be happy," begins the first selection. "Let us all pray to God," intones the last song, "And you will be forever happy" (87, 109). "Many people have learned Kiowa hymns from my recordings. And I'm glad of that," Kotay says in the end. "We're trying to get our younger people to understand these things; we don't want this to die out" (109–110). The compact disc provides a good overview of Kiowa hymnsinging, though some selections have been abridged, preventing a full appreciation for the repetition that is an important aspect of the tradition. The text includes English translations of the songs, though the absence of Kiowa transcriptions makes it difficult to follow the recordings or to evaluate Kotay's interpretations. These shortcomings undoubtedly reflect commercial limitations, but then it has always been hard to fit tribal realities into the strictures of capitalist culture.

A brief afterword details the implications of this study: "Some of the most profound changes experienced in Native North America over the last several centuries have been religious" (115), yet most scholarship in this field has relied

on “assimilation, acculturation, and ethnicity models” (116) that typically “emphasize broad, sweeping changes and ignore the deeper experiential complexities that have emerged from this multidimensional encounter” (115). Cultural conflict has been a central aspect of this encounter, “but there is too much evidence of Christianity’s importance and deep meaning in the Indian community to disregard the degree to which tribes made room for this new faith in order to gain or maintain some degree of control. Thus, listening to Native peoples speak of this history is crucial to our understanding of how and why they accepted religious practices that were new and, frankly, sometimes at odds with their traditional ways. Importantly, it also makes them the central players in that history, actors with agency who understood what they were doing” (116–117). “There’s a feeling you get from a Kiowa hymn,” says Frances Doyebi, one of the Kiowas who read an early draft of the manuscript. “There are some that hit you just right. The words in that song are what you are feeling, you know. They have a really special meaning. Sometimes you feel like crying or sometimes it’s just a glad feeling” (114). *The Jesus Road* is an admirable exercise in collaborative scholarship. As a short book accompanied by a compact disc, it is especially suitable for classroom use in courses on Native American religion or American Christianity.

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Encountering Kali: In the Margins, at the Center, in the West. Edited by Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal. University of California Press, 2003. 321 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

Kali is that fierce dark goddess famed in Bengal, but also long recognized with a mix of fascination, dread, and love throughout India and the West, and unfortunately known by many primarily from films such as *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. If goddesses appreciate intelligent and careful attention, then surely Kali will be pleased with this book, a grand testimony to the vitality and complexity of Kali’s continuing life, her role in Indian culture and piety, and her enduring ability to captivate modern scholars. The complex value of *Encountering Kali* can be spelled out on four levels.

First, and as previewed in Jeffrey Kripal’s and Rachel McDermott’s introduction, the book maps Kali’s place in the Indian traditions (part I), in Bengal but also in places such as Banaras, Kerala, and Sri Lanka, among western scholars (part II) from John Woodroffe to those writing today. By the volume’s end, however, all this accumulates into a scholarly conversation that is both Indian and western, contemporary and global. The basic narrative covers classic texts (David Kinsley on a range of texts including the various puranic texts and the poet Ramprasad, Patricia Dold on the *Mahabhagavata Purana*), and accounts and reactions from the Raj (Cynthia Humes on indigenous and British constructions,