

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Deliberate Acts: Changing Hopi Culture Through the Oraibi Split. By Peter Whitelev.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/86z332x3>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 12(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Clemmer, Richard O.

Publication Date

1988-09-01

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/>

The purpose of the last paragraph is to better inform the reader to cautiously choose your heroes. The apparent depth and the research which has gone into this book is both substantial and respectfully noted, but keep at the forefront of your mind the fact of these ancient cultures as living breathing organisms which shall change at will and for no apparent reason or direction and heeds no advice from latter-day social scientists. The ultimate "organization" of the world can only be found in Wah'kon-tah and Wah'kon-tah can be found in its true meaning in that "organization" at any time. (*Literature of the American Indian From Wah'kon-tah, the Great Mystery*, page 1.)

Authors such as Mr. Wyman, ultimately, need an "inside" to write a book, a Navajo Indian writer familiar with the ways of his/her people who can bridge the gap between anthropological "scientific objectivity" and the real day-to-day existence of the practitioners of this fascinating culture such as Doreen Jensen's *Robes of Power* did with the Northwest Coast People and Bill Holm's *Northwest Coast Indian Art*. For the Navajos to remain silent much longer on the subject of their own culture is to invite books like this, shall we say, into an Anthropologyway Ceremony?

Alfred Young Man
University of Lethbridge

Deliberate Acts: Changing Hopi Culture Through the Oraibi Split. By Peter Whiteley. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988. 291 pages, maps, table, photographs, notes, appendices. \$40.00 Cloth.

The book's central thesis is that Hopis deliberately planned the split. The outcome of several hundred people leaving the Third Mesa village between 1906 and 1909 was not only the founding of two new villages, but also the eventual demise of most higher-order ceremonies and ritual-political offices; a change to patrilineal land tenure; and a general restructuring of the social system. The split was not, avers Whiteley (pages 137, 143) deterministically caused by material conditions or by the impact of American society. Rather, a ruling elite holding ritual-political offices cooked up the split in order to dismantle the corruptness of Oraibi's ritual form and process.

Whiteley's task is to convince us that Oraibi was indeed hierarchically ruled; that Hopis perceived it as corrupt; that the split was actually deliberately planned by the rulers; that the impact of forces from outside Hopi society was negligible; and that Third Mesa is fundamentally different from First and Second, where the ritual order is still maintained and demographic change has not accommodated new polities. In constructing the argument, Whiteley performs a major reinterpretation of Hopi ethnography and also tackles the major explanations previously put forth to account for the split. Of these, he embraces much of the *diingavi* ("design in deliberation") explanation of Emory Sekaquaptewa; effectively demolishes the "ecological resource pressure" argument of R. M. Bradfield; but batters least effectively against the "pervasive factionalism" and "culture contact/aculturative pressure" theories put forth by a number of analysts.

Part of the argument's ineffectualness derives from the many anomalies embedded in the re-interpretation of Hopi ethnography which must be convincingly accomplished in order for the argument to work. Whiteley's reinterpretation persuades us to regard the household, rather than the lineage or clan, as one fundamental cornerstone of Oraibi's society, and specific ritual officers—rather than the religious social units that they headed—as the other. Thus we are also persuaded to disbelieve much of what has previously been written.

Where Fred Eggan, *Social Organization of the Western Pueblos* (page 119) wrote that "the Hopi have not achieved the same degree of centralized control that is to be found at Zuni," and where Mischa Titiev (*Old Oraibi*, page 59) referred to the "Hopi state" as "amorphous," Whiteley attributes to Oraibi an autocratic political structure without lineages but with political offices validated by ritual rank and expressed in control of land by individuals from specific households, rather than by clans. Where Eggan saw control of land, houses and ritual items and kivas producing strong extended matrifamilies that pushed males into ritual solidarity in religious social units, Whiteley sees the strength of nuclear families producing powerful leaders who simply use the religious groups and the existence of Americans to produce a political issue and consequent factionalism. Where Eggan saw a large and strong Bear Clan at Shungopavi on Second Mesa as enabling that village chief to avoid a split under similar conditions, Whiteley sees the lack of a split at Shungopavi

as confirming the specific cultural and historical characteristics at Oraibi that stimulated the split's implementation. This re-interpretation should reshuffle the sociological deck so that we can accord the players their ostensible trump card: manipulating their own people into thinking they were arguing about sending children to school and maintaining Hopis' political independence when they were really dismantling the ritual leaders' basis for power.

How successful is this re-interpretation? Recourse to ethnological methodology moves us toward an answer. Here is why: The events to be explained cannot be taken as primary evidence for identification of their ultimate cause. We must look for corroboration of that identification outside of the events themselves and outside of what is purported to be their cause, i.e., the desire and ability of powerful leaders to effect change.

We might look first to census data for corroboration of the "nuclear family" view of Oraibi society. If we find it, surely we can attribute less collectivity and more institutional charisma to specific men on whose competitive edge there would be little collective social check. Indeed, Whiteley shows (page 170) that in 41.4% (17) of the cases from Titiev's heretofore unpublished raw census notes on pre-split Oraibi, only one daughter remained in the natal household after marriage. Thus he infers that Oraibi's household structure was always nuclear-family based, not clan- or lineage-based, and it was individual families, not clans, that owned lands and houses.

How, then, do we account for the fact observed by Eggan (not addressed by Whiteley) that there is no Hopi word for "household" while there is one for "lineage"? Eggan notes (*Western Pueblos*, page 337) that only where census-takers assumed "household" to be coterminous with "house" do we find clan and lineage links obscured. In other words, we must look beyond statistics to cross-domicile behavior to discern different households of the same lineage. For example: while documenting well the important economic contributions of males to post-split Bacavi households, Whiteley gives us no new data on economic contributions of males to pre-split affinal households. It is certainly the case in post-split Third Mesa households with which I am familiar that a husband's economic contributions are likely to be shared with, say, the couple's five daughters, who may live in five separate households, as well as with the husband's fathers' sisters, who are obviously of a reciprocating lineage. Who

can say, then, that the husband's economic contributions to his affinal and in-law (*möwe*) households are not more a measure of the maintenance of cross-house, lineage-based social units than of the independence of house-based households? Clearly, if we look only for house-based households and stop there, we can find them. If we look for cross-household lineages as reflected in *behavior*, we find households *and* lineages. If we find individual men embedded in the collectivity of clan and lineage, it is difficult to substantiate Whiteley's picture of free-wheeling power brokers operating atomistically from independent households.

We might look to the rise of a powerful ideology, such as those found in revitalization movements, as the basis for reworking traditional leadership definitions and roles, to account for the development of powerful leaders and new social groups cross-cutting lineages. Indeed, Whiteley is on solid empirical ground in arguing that Bacavi was the major repository of those filling important ritual roles following the split. But Whiteley specifically eschews any importance for the usual components of social movements: ecological stress; psychological stress; acculturative pressures. It is especially denied that the split resulted from the strain of more than two decades of Hopis having to maneuver in and around draconian political repression imposed by an outside force—the U.S. Government—that made arrests, put men in prison, and tried to quash dissent.

What, then, did the leaders see as a replacement for that which had been Hopi at Oraibi? Whiteley documents the failure of Christianity to take hold. Bacavi did embrace the Hopi Tribal Council, but Whiteley denies this fact much import. Did the leaders envision gradual Americanization? No, says Whiteley: Bacavi is not a progressive village. Did, then, the leaders merely intend to turn Bacavi into the "egalitarian mishmash" (page 285) that Oraibi was not? Why, if the intent was to dismantle authority, did Kewanimptewa, according to Whiteley, lead Bacavi on the basis of his own personal and ritual power? Did the leaders intend to encourage the much less restrictive Kachina ceremonies to replace the more secret, high-order ones? We are not told. What is missing, then, is the *ideology* of this deliberate strategy. If this truly is "legitimately considered a 'revolution,'" (page 289), then ethnological compel the observation that there has never been either a revolution without ideology or one that addresses purely intra-society conflicts while failing to address extra-society pressures of foreign penetration with which it is

grappling. Either the designation "revolution" for the split must be abjured, or there is something more going on here that has had its surface scratched but remains undiscovered.

However, neither methodological rigor nor theoretical contextualization were meant to be the book's strengths. Its primary value lies in the detailed and meticulously searched archival documentation of the split and the events surrounding it before and after, and its dialogic perspective. Those familiar with the extensive literature on the split will find little new. But what is new is much valuable insight into Bacavi. The ethnography of Bacavi (chapters 5, 6, 7) is embedded in the overall argument and contains some very useful data drawn from government reports and the author's own interviews on succession to political office; economic data on households; population structure; residence patterns; and ritual performances.

The dialogic perspective follows Dennis Tedlock's call for a "dialogical anthropology." Whiteley implements the dialogue by acknowledging Hopis' resentment of the "intellectual apartheid" of anthropological "experts" who "rarely even pay lip service to Hopi analytical thought" (page 287) and expousing an analysis that is "largely Hopi in inspiration" (page xvii). It is this espousal that should be applauded as the book's most unique contribution. Whiteley may not be the first to have done this, but *Deliberate Acts* advocates anthropological analysis that is faithful to the picture of history, society, and the world that is derived empirically from consultants in the society under analysis. The book thus echoes much of what Clifford Geertz, in *Works and Lives* (1988) has summed as a "deconstructive attack on canonical works" deriving from a "nervousness about the whole business of claiming to explain enigmatical others." Some readers might even discern an answer to the reflexive question posed by a critical book of the 1970's: If anthropology were to be reinvented, free of its historical intellectual baggage, what would it look like?

An entertaining style enables easy penetration of the seine of names, dates, and events constituting the split and gives a rivetingly good read through count-and-counterpoint of Hopi, government, and army machinations. Even if readers find it hard to swallow that there once was a Hopi hierarchy that dismantled itself an important part of its own culture, *Deliberate Acts* makes it clear that Hopis do have a philosophy and belief system ex-

plaining continuity and change just as logically as the nearest social scientist.

Richard O. Clemmer
University of Denver

Ghost Dance Songs and Religion of a Wind River Shoshone Woman. By Judith Vander. Monograph Series in Ethnomusicology, Number 4. Los Angeles: Program in Ethnomusicology, Department of Music, University of California, 1986. 76 pages. \$9.95 Paper.

It is unusual to find such a wealth of subtlety and inspiration in a book so brief as this. Not one word is wasted here, and *Ghost Dance Songs* has a quality of directness and honesty that begins to be recognized as its author's trademark. Vander's style has a certain innocence about it—not to be confused with naiveté—and it is perhaps this which allows her to take such a bold approach in the book under review. To explain this remark, it may help to digress a bit concerning the current movement toward ethical reform in Native American studies and how this has effected recent work in ethnomusicology.

In modern literature on American Indian music, two inter-related trends seem to have emerged as especially significant: (1) first, a recognition of Indian artists or intellectuals as accomplished persons rather than merely as anonymous culture-bearers, and (2) secondly, a willingness to stand aside and let these individuals speak for themselves. Self-evident as these standards may seem, they have not always prevailed, and the literature on Native American cultures published between 1900 and 1970 is dominated by works in which ethnologists use information given by nameless "informants" as fuel for their own creative accomplishments.

Recently, however, "scientific" description and analyses of Indian music has finally begun to wane in prominence, and a new style is beginning to emerge. Basically, these books try to focus on things from an Indian point of view, and a few of them deserve special mention.

One of earliest and most important of these books is *Navajo Blessingway Singer: Frank Mitchell 1881-1967*, which appeared in