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We Will Dance Our Truth: Yaqui History in Yoeme Performances. By David Delgado Shorter. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 390 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

We Will Dance Our Truth presents an ethnography of contemporary Yoeme identity through careful analysis of the dances, stories, ceremonies and preparations, and visits to places in Yoeme country read in counterpoint to the existing written historical and anthropological record. What results is an examination of how pervading definitions of literacy versus orality and historiography as written record serve to sublimate the historical meaning found in Yoeme dances, stories, and places. As he listens to *etehoim*, or stories; observes the *maaso bwikam*, or deer dances; and helps with multiple ceremonial preparations, David Shorter begins to understand Yaqui spiritual practices not as a religion but rather as embodied acts that produce Yoeme identity and solidarity within a socially constructed Yoeme epistemology.

In preparing this work, Shorter visited with Yoeme families in mostly Potam pueblo in Sonora, Mexico, for five years; took Yaqui language and culture courses in Phoenix, Arizona; and was provided with critical guidance by noted Yoeme educators Felipe Molina and Herminia Valenzuela, among others. He compares what he learns through visits with elders and community members in Hiak Vatwe, or Rio Yaqui, with what has been written by oft-cited non-Yaqui anthropologists Edward Spicer, Muriel Thayer Painter, and Evelyn Hu-DeHart about Yaqui spirituality, politics, and history (see most notably Edward Spicer, *Potam: A Yaqui Village in Sonora* [1954], *People of Pascua* [1988], and *Cycles of Conquest* [1962]; Muriel Thayer Painter, *With Good Heart: Yaqui Beliefs and Ceremonies in Pascua Village* [1986]; and Evelyn Hu-DeHart, *Yaqui Resistance and Survival* [1984]). The text of the work is comprised of anthropological analysis interspersed with selections of journal entries Shorter wrote while in the field as well as transcripts of illuminating conversations with elders. Conversations with elders revolve around topics such as the *aniam*, or the multiple worlds of being, the presence of individuals with ancestral gifts, contemporary struggles for the land and livelihood within the US-Mexico border economy, and the errors of the colonial Jesuit record. Because these concepts are not taken lightly within the Yoeme community, neither does Shorter treat them as such. He shares his reflections on these and other concepts through inclusion of his personal writings about his own misadventures and the moments of doubt, friendship, and confusion that accompany his attempt to understand Yoeme history and beliefs within a Yoeme epistemology and cosmology. Shorter's reflexivity as a scholar provides a welcome balance to the above-mentioned prior anthropological work, which often framed Yoeme spiritual practices and beliefs within a Christian binary of good versus evil, relied mostly on the Spanish colonial record for political analysis, or treated key dances as folk art or evidence of Catholic conversion. Thus, prior works fail to describe the complex, interrelated, and situated knowledge informing the spiritual practices and political activity of a Spanish-, English-, and Yoeme-speaking people living within the United States, Mexico, and *yoem bwia*, or natural homeland of the Yoeme people, as well as the multiple

overlapping worlds that shape what it means to be Yoeme. As Shorter writes about his experiences in these places, I am able to view through his eyes how his worldview shifts slightly in order to accommodate new and unexpected experiences (he may or may not have experienced an encounter with a spirit ancestor, though he reacted as if he had seen a ghost) and can understand when he uses phrases such as “singing and flowering worldview” to describe a Yoeme epistemology (229). Thus, I imagine that as he wrote in his journal—which is a performative act in itself—at the end of a hot and dusty day in the field, the journal entries become evidence describing how the presence within Yoeme landscapes inscribes ways of knowing on a person in a way that categorical definition and analysis of the practices of the “Other” cannot.

As both Yoeme and social scientist, however, I struggled at times with how turgid a social constructionist language is in describing Yoeme lifeways. Sentences that assert that dances contribute to a production of Yoeme identity sound awkward to me—as dancing, preparing for, and observing the dances serve a function greater than that for all Yoemem involved—and make me question how well the framework of identity and narrative can be used to understand indigenous lifeways and cosmologies. At one point in the text, Shorter includes a selection from a transcript in which an elder reminds him that the Jesuit historical record cannot be trusted for its descriptions of Yaqui beliefs because the Jesuits, not speaking the Yaqui language, wrote without even being able to understand anyone in the Yoeme community. In this way, the foreign language of performativity, identity production, and narrative also seem inadequate to me for describing what really goes on within the community during, for example, a *luto pahko*, or wake. Shorter acknowledges the limitations of language, and the written language in particular, as he argues for an expanded definition of what comprises historiography, literacy, and writing within an understanding of indigenous knowledge. In the introduction, Shorter writes that he would like for his work to be of use for his Native audience as well as social scientists. However, due to the analytic framework, I find this work to be directed mostly to social scientists. As a social scientist, I value his reflexive stance, consideration for the wishes of the participants, creativity, and rigor in producing this work. As a Yoeme, I find myself wondering why standpoint epistemologies are so often associated with the worldviews of the “Other” and why the word *identity* is used in place of the word *people* and the word *narrative* in place of the word *truth*. Although future work on the politics of Yoeme identity might include a deeper exploration of what it means to be Yaqui within the contemporary national narratives of the United States and Mexico, a more nuanced understanding of the ceremonies and *etehoim* may require abandoning the framing of narrative and identity, and instead find meaning within the language of the *aniam*, or Yoeme worldview. The evidence presented in this work appears to be sufficient for grounding initial explorations in either direction.

Overall, however, I most appreciate Shorter’s sensitivity in producing this ethnography of the contemporary Yoeme community. This work fills a gap in the anthropological body of knowledge about the Yaquis and should be included in preparing for any future ethnographic work about the Yaquis. It

is also useful for indigenous social scientists currently grappling with notions of historiography, how knowledge is gained from the land, the value of the written record, and the contemporary unfortunate binary between orality and literacy. What I most liked to read in this book were Shorter's writings about climbing boulders in Hiak Vatwe, carrying heavy *santos*, the clap of fire-crackers during processions, and how day slipped into night while recounting stories of spirits with a friend. I found myself smiling at parts, nodding, and laughing at others. These writings tell a story that is beautiful, meaningful, and good to hear.

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