



Amada's Blessings from the Peyote Gardens of South Texas. By Stacy B. Schaefer. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015. 320 pages. \$29.95 paper; \$29.95 electronic.

Ethnographer Stacy Schaefer carefully delineates the people and events in the 101-year life of Amada Cardenas: a *peyotero*, symbol of goodness of humanity, and caretaker of the peyote gardens of south Texas. Amada and her husband, Claudio, devoted their lives to helping Native Americans obtain peyote, a small, spineless, vision-producing cactus that is considered a divine sacrament and medicine of the Native American Church (NAC). Peyote only grows in the southern parts of Texas and northern Mexico, making *peyoteros*, who guide, harvest, trade, and sell peyote, critical focal points for Indians to obtain this vital plant. Beginning in 1993, Schaefer spent many years staying at Amada's house, observing and immersing herself in the worlds that revolved around Amada's family, friends, and visitors.

Schaefer's prior publications on the peyote-using Huichol of Mexico are also based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork. Admitting that she is not an impartial, distant ethnographer, she claims close family relations with peyote-using communities and cultures. Her ethnography compiles information from publications, films, field notes, personal experiences, and numerous interviews with Native American Church members, lawyers, and political leaders from the 1990s to 2011. Following a review of the major literature on peyote by James Mooney, Omer Stewart, and Thomas Marsoukis, the author provides an "in-depth look into Amada and her life, from the cultural and ecological history that influenced her from the time she was born to the people and events in her life that contributed to her personal evolution. It describes interpersonal relationships she had with individuals and how her sage, penetrating, loving-kindness found its way into the hearts and minds of multitudes of people from many walks of life" (14).

The book provides a detailed description of Amada's centennial birthday celebration and the people who traveled to Mirando City, Texas from throughout the United States and Mexico. A colorful and socially nuanced portrayal of this event introduces the book's main characters, issues, and historical and cultural context. For decades Amada and Claudio were major employers and contributors to Mirando City's social, political, and cultural life while engaging in the hard work of harvesting and drying peyote in hot desert conditions. Even though Mexican Spanish and Tex-Mex were the predominate languages of the area, Amada's property was a place where people converged for worship, prayer, healing, and spiritual introspection. Brought up in the Spanish-speaking Tejano culture of South Texas, she was a devoted Catholic as well as a member of the Native American Church. Amada and her family worked hard to make everyone who came to their place

feel welcome. Schaefer's 101-year life-history provides a panorama of the major ecological, political, and legal developments influencing the emergence of the Native American Church. It outlines the role this institution played in protecting freedom of religion throughout North America.

For example, two notable Texas legal developments in 1954 and 1968 set legal precedents for the practice of Peyotism today. Insight into how these were planned and orchestrated demonstrates the proactive and purposeful actions used to resist colonial and settler governments. The 1954 arrest of Claudio Cardenas tested the Texas law restricting the shipping of peyote. The president of the NAC-United States, Allen P. Dale (Omaha), and a highly respected attorney together spoke before the March 15, 1954 Laredo grand jury, which agreed not to prosecute. That same year a special session of the Fifty-third Texas Legislature in Austin then amended the Texas Narcotic Act, striking both the words "peyote" and "mescal beans" to protect ceremonial use of these plants. Almost fifteen years later, the Texas Dangerous Drug Act of 1967 once again threatened access to the sacrament by prohibiting *peyoteros* from providing peyote. Native American Church of North America leaders Allen P. Dale and Franks Takes Gun planned a test case which began when Navajo David Clark volunteered to drive out of Amada's driveway with peyote and was arrested. In 1968 the 49th Judicial District of the Texas state court made a historic decision in *State of Texas v. David S. Clark*, ruling that the Dangerous Drug Act was unconstitutional. State law was then amended during the regular session of the Sixty-first legislature in 1969 to specifically exempt NAC members with at least 25 percent Indian blood when the peyote is used in a bona fide religious ceremony.

The implementation of these laws created a range of state and national policies and regulations that required persons to be members of recognized tribes and local NAC chapters. Amada became a board member of the Native American Church of North America, designating her property as the main address for the church and political organization. Individuals who traveled to the Texas peyote gardens to obtain peyote were required to have a letter from their NAC chapter, and the *peyoteros* needed to be licensed. These restrictions further bureaucratized the Native American Church, with regular organizational meetings and written minutes, while entangling individuals in dues, forms, membership cards, and blood quantum politics.

Similar to other descriptive ethnographies, this book contains very little jargon and theory. Even though Schaefer has expert knowledge in peyote use among the two very distinct cultures of the Huichol and Native North America, she refrains from the comparative analysis and theorizing which is the hallmark of ethnology. Only in the endnotes does she delve into analysis. Moreover, Schaefer excels in the written form of storytelling, making this book a pleasant read for members of the Native American Church and scholars of Native America. An appendix presents NAC charters and official documents from the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), a valuable resource for NAC members and for future scholars. This important book will be useful for courses in Native American studies, comparative religions, and legal and political

studies. Considering the rich details, personal perspectives, and legal and political information, this will be considered a major book in the long history of scholarship on peyote and the Native American Church.

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Ancestral Mounds: Vitality and Volatility of Native America. By Jay Miller. Foreword by Alfred Berryhill. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015. 218 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$55.00 electronic.

Myriad earthen constructions, including mounds of various forms and geometric earthworks, are spread across the heart of our continent. As “new” Americans pushed west from the original colonies after the revolution, these constructions inspired awe, but also concern: they stood as testaments to indigenous ingenuity and their long-term presence in the land settlers were taking for their own. Mounds are thus entwined in the colonial project of building America, a legacy that continues, which gives much importance to the aims of this book. In *Ancestral Mounds*, Jay Miller sets out to deconstruct static views of the mounds of the Eastern United States and to provide a new understanding of these features informed by firsthand accounts of mound building among indigenous communities today.

In the face of “American progress” these constructions became subject to destruction, not only by physical decimation of many mounds, but also by misinformed theorizing that denied their origin with indigenous peoples, largely in the form of the Mound Builder Myth. This popular, highly regarded myth posited that a white race (“mound builders”) built the mounds and American Indians came after, killing this white race. President Andrew Jackson referenced this myth in regard to the Indian Removal Act in his first annual message to Congress on December 8, 1830. Scholars did not debunk it until Cyrus Thomas’s 1894 report on the Bureau of Ethnology’s mound explorations, but scholarly debunking hardly stopped the circulation of theories denying that American Indians built mounds. Today one can find a wide variety of such theories—a simple internet search will make this clear, be it mound builders who were aliens, giants, or from Atlantis. Sadly, such ideas can find wider audiences than scholarly studies of mounds, most of which are done by archaeologists.

Why are such speculative theories, such “fantastic” ideas, so popular? Although this is not directly under consideration in Miller’s book, his work makes an imperative intervention on this point. Archaeologists typically approach mounds as static features that are only of and in the past. In contrast, although speculative theories of mound building are completely erroneous, many of them do offer a dynamic view of mounds: that is, mounds remain important in today’s “fantastic” systems—as ongoing communications from aliens to people on earth, for instance. In *Ancestral Mounds*, Miller emphasizes how continuity is also key to the real story of the mounds of the Eastern United States. If such dynamism is integrated into archaeological and other