UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Edited by Jerome Rothenberg.

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8sj212dj

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 10(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Blicksilver, Edith

Publication Date

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <u>https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/</u>

eScholarship.org

in Seminole and Creek culture. Of course, all this comes from one informant. No one informant can capture the empirical knowledge of an entire culture that has evolved and is still evolving. But the beauty of Willie Lena's recollections makes for great sadness as we wonder about the lost knowledge of other Seminole and Creek elders. In borrowed language, how green must have been their valleys of them that now are gone. One can only hope that the descendants of the Willie Lenas will add to the glimpse of an elaborate world that his book provides.

Joy Chaudhuri New Mexico State University

Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Edited by Jerome Rothenberg. Berkeley: The University of California Press. Second edition. 1985. pp. 636. \$39.95 Cloth. \$14.95 Paper.

Jerome Rothenberg has authored over forty books of poetry and translation, of whom Kenneth Rexroth wrote: "(He) is one of the truly contemporary American poets who has returned United States poetry to the mainstream of international modern literature. . . . No one writing today has dug deeper into the roots of poetry." Praised as a "master anthologist" by Richard Kostelanetz, his publications include *Shaking the Pumpkin*, and with Diane Rothenberg, *Symposium of the Whole: A Range of Discourse Toward an Ethnopoetics*. He has taught at the University of California, San Diego, and recently held the Aerol Arnold Chair in Literature at the University of Southern California. His *Pre-Faces* (1982) received the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award.

Technicians of the Sacred was first published in 1968, and Rothenberg has revised and expanded his selections to include European entries. His aim has been to rediscover the "Archaic" world of myth, vision and revelation, and connect these worlds of primarily oral traditions to the poetic culture of the world, focusing upon its multiple faces and possibilities.

The range of entries include material by American Indian, Siberian and ancient European shamans; African, Cherokee, and Eskimo folk experiences compared with contemporary events; sound-poems of the Australian Aborigines and northern Russian wordless incantations; picture-poems and writings from Ojibwa, Lapp, and Aztec sources; wedding and funeral ritual contributions from Polynesia, and folk tales from Hawaii.

Rothenberg insists that we must "avoid clichés about the poetics/ethnopoetics of technologically *simpler* cultures . . . that we must question . . . that traditional art and poetry are collective rather than individual . . . that we must not assume that it is our culture alone (or those cultures most like our own) that has introduced reflexivity-self reflection into the creative process . . . , and that we can no longer assume that the poetry and ritual of traditional cultures aims at stasis rather than at change/transformation not only in a mystical sense but in a social sense as well." In addition, the editor's research has discovered that much primitive or traditional material is the work of contemporaries, and visionary entries are found in both old and new sources. Rothenberg attempts to understand and translate the sound of the original material, and interpret the relation between the words, the music, the dance and the event, showing the universal patterns that exist. The commentaries give the setting and background of each work with valuable drawings included.

A third edition should include an index.

Edith Blicksilver Georgia Institute of Technology

Havasupai Habitat: A. F. Whiting's Ethnography of a Traditional Indian Culture. Edited by Steven A. Weber and P. David Seaman. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985. 288 pp. \$21.95 Cloth.

Havsuw 'Baaja: People of the Blue Green Water. By Stephen Hirst. Supai, Arizona: The Havasupai Tribe, 1985. 259 pp. \$18.00 Cloth.

In the year of the tenth anniversary of the return to the Havasupai Tribe of 185,000 acres of their traditional land in the Grand Canyon region, two disparate books appeared to add immensely useful contributions to the already extensive literature