



Kiowa Hymns (2 CDs and booklet)

By Ralph Kotay

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This remarkable two-disc collection features sixty-six Native Christian hymns sung by the Kiowa elder and singer Ralph Kotay. Particularly well-known for their song traditions, which range from peyote and powwow songs to hand-game and church songs, the Kiowas are a Southern Plains Indian tribe that today resides in southwestern Oklahoma. The Kiowa Christian hymn tradition first emerged around the turn of the twentieth century and combined the sound, structure, and style of European-American Christian hymns with pre-Christian Kiowa songs. In the early twentieth century, Christian churches enjoyed a dominant position in the Kiowa community, as did Kiowa hymns.

By the mid-twentieth century, however, Kiowa traditions—which now included Kiowa church traditions—were on the wane; of special concern was the declining use of the Kiowa language. Kiowa elders began to recognize that preserving and maintaining Kiowa hymns was of particular importance in preserving and maintaining the Kiowa language. In 1962 a committee of Kiowa Indians collected several dozen Kiowa Christian hymns in a manuscript, written phonetically in Kiowa with English translations. Passed from hand to hand for the last four decades, the hymnbook has long been out of print and survives today only because individuals have copied it over and over again.

To preserve the knowledge of these songs for future generations, Kotay sat down on a sultry July afternoon at his home in Apache, Oklahoma, and recorded them. The resulting collection will help ensure that these hymns remain a rich and enduring part of the cultural heritage of the Kiowa people.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Ralph Kotay is a noted Kiowa singer whose work has been featured in a number of publications and recordings, including *Songs of Indian Territory* and *Remaining Ourselves: Music and Tribal Memory*. The *Kiowa Hymns* CD set was produced by Ralph Kotay, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Chris Wendt, and is sponsored by the Center for Media Design at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

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