

ARTICLE

“Songs to Soothe a Mother”: Chronotopes of Gender in Kiowa War Mother Songs

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Abstract

During World War II, a prolific Kiowa composer named Lewis Toyebo initiated a new choreo-musical genre called War Mother songs for the Kiowa War Mothers Chapter 18 as a means of encouragement while their sons deployed overseas. This article examines how these songs simultaneously evoke pre-reservation and post-reservation chronotopes of Kiowa martial motherhood. Through ethnographic research with Kiowa Elders, singers, War Mothers, and descendants of Kiowa composers, I analyze how War Mother songs express these chronotopes through musical (War Journey drumbeat), functional (preparing warriors for deployment and honoring returning veterans), and linguistic means (blending “Old Kiowa” and “Modern Kiowa”). Analysis of these chronotopes reveals how Kiowas creatively responded to settler colonialism to maintain gendered roles and personhoods that were important to their cultural identity. This article provides an ethnomusicological perspective on how chronotopes of gender are expressed through dynamic forms of music and dance.

Keywords: chronotopes; indigenous dance; indigenous music; Kiowa; Kiowa War Mother songs

Āñ:kó (Let’s begin).¹ On a hot summer day in early June of 2017, I sat with Phil “Joe Fish” Dupoint at the Kiowa Museum in Carnegie, Oklahoma. Joe Fish² was the principal singer for many dance societies in the Kiowa Tribe, including the

¹This article follows Kiowa protocols of storytelling. Additionally, I follow Gregory Younging’s (Opaskwayak Cree) (Younging 2018) and Jessica Bissett Perea (Dena’ina) and Gabriel Solis’ (Perea and Solis 2019) Indigenous writing style which calls for refusal of italicizing Indigenous languages. I use the Modified Parker McKenzie Orthography in this article which has been used as the standard writing system by the Kiowa Language Department because it contains diacritics that accurately reflect the prosody and pronunciation of the Kiowa language. See (Poolaw and Poolaw 2016).

²Joe Fish was a renowned singer, historian, and Elder in the Kiowa Tribe. He was acknowledged by the Kiowa community as a prominent knowledge keeper of Kiowa music.

Tõn:kõn:gàut.³ As we sat at his desk in the Kiowa Tribal Museum, Joe Fish talked about the longstanding tradition of warriorship among the Kiowa People. He made it apparent that warriors, both past and present, are still honored through song and dance. Joe Fish closed his eyes and told a story of how Kiowas in World War II developed a new genre of song and dance for departing Kiowa soldiers:

So there comes the second World War, and at that time the older men inspired the younger men. They wanted to go. When they left, they went through basic training. [They] came home and then left. These mothers, grandmas, aunts, sisters thought about their men. “How are they doing? Are they in harm’s way?” There was so many things going on in their minds. Lewis Toyebo, he would see his aunts, his mom, his grandma. They would be looking out that window and they would be talking like they’re talking to someone. They were praying. “God look over my sons, look over my nephews, they’re away from home. Maybe they’re in danger. Keep those guardian angels around them. Bring them home safely” ...And that’s how the women would be talking. They would be crying. There was an old man, Lewis Toyebo, he had this gift of song. And different tunes would come his way and he would put words to those songs. And so, that’s the beginning of the War Mother songs.⁴

This article focuses on Lewis Toyebo, a prolific Kiowa composer, and how he initiated Kiowa War Mother songs. Centering on the inception of Kiowa War Mother songs, as a new choreo-musical genre, reveals how Kiowas maintained and negotiated traditional Kiowa gendered personhoods and roles through music and dance in the mid-20th century.⁵ My argument in this article is that Kiowa War Mother songs and dance simultaneously evoke two chronotopes of Kiowa martial motherhood, namely the pre-reservation and post-reservation chronotopes of the “Kiowa mother” during World War II. I show that War Mother songs and dance elicit the pre-reservation martial chronotope through musical (War Journey drumbeat), functional (using song and dance to prepare warriors before departing for battle), and linguistic means (use of “Old Kiowa”, or language used during pre-reservation times). I also describe how War Mother songs evoke the post-reservation martial chronotope through musical (recontextualization of War Journey drumbeat), functional (using War Mother songs before a Kiowa soldier’s deployment and to honor returning Kiowa veterans), and linguistic (use of “modern Kiowa” phrases that reflect 20th-century realities) means. Overall, I contend that the simultaneous elicitation of these two chronotopes through song and dance reflects Kiowa cultural resiliency and that Kiowas continued gendered personhoods and roles because it was important to them in being Kiowa.

³The Tõn:kõn:gàut, or Kiowa Black Leggings Society, is a warrior sodality exclusively for Kiowa male veterans. Kiowa War Mother songs are commonly performed at Tõn:kõn:gàut. See (Ahtone 2014). See (Meadows 2024) about contesting martial gender roles in Tõn:kõn:gàut.

⁴I provide long quotes from interview transcripts of Kiowa Elders who have now passed. I received permission from each of these Elders to use interviews for this article. Out of respect for their memory and knowledge, I do not paraphrase their stories so that their words can be expressed in their own way.

⁵See (Tone-Pah-Hote 2019). Tone-pah-hote similarly discusses how Kiowas adapted their choreo-musical practices during and after forced relocation to Indian Territory (now called the state of Oklahoma).

My ethnographic research was conducted with several Kiowa Elders, Kiowa singers, Kiowa War Mothers, and the descendants of two main composers of Kiowa War Mother Songs: Lewis Toyebo and James “Jimmy A” Anquoe. I primarily interviewed Delores Toyebo Harragarra, the daughter of Lewis Toyebo, and Jim “Ducky” Anquoe, the son of Jimmy A, who both witnessed their father’s composition process and performance of Kiowa War Mother songs during World War II.⁶ I provide only a small portion of the history of Kiowa War Mother songs and acknowledge that there were several other composers of Kiowa War Mother songs, such as Jimmy A, Frank Kaubin, among a few others.⁷ This article does not seek to downplay their contributions but rather focuses on Lewis Toyebo’s initial creation of Kiowa War Mother songs. As a Japanese American scholar, I encourage the reader to privilege the voices of the Kiowa War Mothers as the stories and songs described in this article belong to their organization.

Chronotope (lit. time-space) as a concept and analytical framework has gained considerable traction among scholars over the past few decades. Deriving from literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin’s novelistic chronotope (Bakhtin 1981), social science scholars have used *cultural chronotope* to examine the semiotic process of creating and invoking “a sketch of personhood” in time-space configurations (Agha 2007:321). Chronotopes, in this sense, can evoke multi-layered locales, personhoods, and “invokable chunks of history” (Blommaert 2015). While scholars have examined chronotopes of various identities, such as generational (e.g., Blommaert and De Fina 2017), racial (e.g. Rosa 2016; Pardue 2018), and (trans)national identities (e.g. Wang 2022), the ethnographic study of chronotopes of gender, however, remains undertheorized in academic literature. Anthropologists on the panel “Chronotopes of Gender” at the 2023 American Anthropological Association Conference showed that gendered personhoods, values, and performances are chronotopically situated, and that a particular gendered subject is endemically linked to “heres” and “theres.” These insights underscore the need for further ethnographic inquiry on how gendered identities are constructed, negotiated, and contested within specific temporal and spatial configurations.

Building on this growing body of chronotopic scholarship, scholars have increasingly explored chronotopes in other expressive modalities. In particular, scholars have also applied chronotopic analytical approaches to music (e.g. Fox 2004; Samuels 2004; Dent 2009; Faudree 2012, 2013; Wirtz 2016; Politz 2018; Elyamany 2023) to show how musical practices evoke time–space configurations of personhoods and social histories. While some of these ethnographic case studies do not explicitly use chronotope as an analytical framework, they analyze musical semiotic processes that elicit cultural roles and personhoods in relation to temporal and spatial frames. Notably, linguist Nashua Elyamany (2023) synthesizes the study of chronotopes, gendered personhoods, and music and dance through her analysis of chronotopic choreo-musical performances

⁶I conducted research through Kiowa cultural protocols, such as presenting food baskets, tobacco, and monetary compensation to Kiowa Elders and singers. Additionally, this article was reviewed and given permission for publication by Kiowa Elder Delores Harragarra and the Kiowa War Mothers organization. I privileged doing research “the Kiowa way” to maintain respect for Kiowa sovereignty.

⁷Knowledge is sometimes contested in Kiowa communities.

of gendered identities, specifically chronotopic configurations of female agency, in two musical numbers. Given that music often goes hand-in-hand with dance, this work highlights the rich potential for further investigation of the intersection between chronotope, gender, and music and dance.

This article offers several contributions to scholarship on chronotopes. First, this article provides an ethnomusicological perspective to the semiotic process of creating and evoking chronotopes of gender through music and dance. I examine the role of the composer as an agent in making creative choices in the production of songs within a repertoire of musical signs. I show that the composer engages in semiotic processes that create, organize, and produce musical elements that elicit gendered personhood, time, and space. Second, given the small amount of literature⁸ on chronotopes of Indigeneity, my paper centers Kiowa understandings of gender, time, and space. This paper shows that Kiowa chronotopes of gender are cyclically connected to Kiowa martial motherhood in the past, present, and future. Ethnomusicologist and musician John-Carlos Perea (Mescalero Apache, Chicano, German, and Irish) (2013) explains that Indigenous musical epistemologies consider the past, present, and future as constantly simultaneous and interrelated. I contend that the cyclicity of Kiowa martial motherhood in Kiowa War Mother songs not only reflects Kiowa epistemology and ontology but also demonstrates Kiowa cultural resiliency and continuity. Chronotopes of Kiowa martial motherhood from the past are simultaneously connected to the historical present (World War II) and extended into the future (for the next generation of Kiowas) through song and dance. The dense layering of audible and embodied Kiowa chronotopes of gender simultaneously evokes Kiowa relationships to land, the social history of Kiowa resilience in the face of settler colonialism, the continuation of roles and responsibilities of Kiowa mothers during times of war, and the longstanding ethos of Kiowa warriorship.

Shifting Kiowa martial songs and dances

Kiowas consider the pre-reservation era as a time before the late 19th century when Kiowa people freely roamed the Great Plains as nomads from as far as modern-day Northern Mexico to the Plains of Southern Canada (Mooney 1979 [1898]; Palmer 2003). During pre-reservation times of war, Kiowas engaged in Intertribal warfare (e.g., Kiowas historically fought Cheyennes, Comanches, and Osages). Later with the encroachment of settler expansion, Kiowas fought American, Mexican, and Texan forces throughout the 19th century. Anthropologist and ethnohistorian Bill Meadows (2024) notes that Kiowa men were given higher social status based on their war deeds and that Kiowa women were able to rise in social prestige through connection to their male relatives. While Kiowa gender roles separated men as warriors, and women as supporters of male warriors, some Kiowa women have also engaged in battle despite Kiowa pre-reservation gender roles surrounding warfare. For example, Black Bear, the wife of the famous Kiowa war leader Big Bow, fought Mexican soldiers near the Pecos River. Atah, the wife of Bear's Paw, went on a raid to avenge the death of her husband (Meadows 2024, 59). Despite some Kiowa

⁸ See (Faudree 2012) and (Samuels 2004).

women's involvement in warfare, Kiowa gender dynamics continued to privilege male warriorship.

Kiowa gendered personhoods and roles surrounding warfare were expressed through performance of specific Kiowa martial songs and dances. One of these choreo-musical genres was the War Journey, also known as War Expedition (Gúdaugyá),⁹ which was performed before a war party departed for battle. A war party gathered for numerous reasons: to kill an enemy out of revenge, to steal horses or captives, or simply for warriors to test their bravery in the field of battle. Kiowas performed War Journey songs the night before a war party departed to face the enemy. Guy Quoetone, a Kiowa who was born on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache (KCA) Reservation in 1886, described how the War Journey was performed in pre-reservation times:

That was the beginning, in the early days, when they used to have a war party expedition. Going to go on a warpath expedition to old Mexico or some other enemy. That night they take a rawhide, take a rawhide stick, and beat all night. Sing. Young men that take part will have to go on the war expedition. That's enlisting for service. And they sing, and they go out there and outside they are singing. Girls commence to come in, women come in, men come in, and nobody's to come there unless he's going to enlist to go on the war expedition. They sing all night long. After they get through, the next morning, they go out and everybody that took part in that [War Journey dance] that night has to go. Nobody's supposed to sit, just like they're drafted, drafted for service. (Quoetone 1967)

Guy's language use in the quote is noteworthy because he describes the pre-reservation chronotope by using words associated with U.S. military terminology (e.g., "enlisting for service," "drafted for service"). The blending of the pre-reservation chronotope with the post-reservation chronotope through language reflects the longevity of Kiowa male warriorship.

The main musical marker of War Journey songs is the drumbeat accompanied by the specific War Journey dance step. The War Journey drumbeat is performed in a double rhythm that resembles a heartbeat. The War Journey drumbeat was consistent throughout the duration of the entire performance and provided the appropriate rhythm for dancing. Male warriors danced in a clockwise circle joined by their female relative(s) or partner(s) dancing behind them. The rows of male and female dancers created a circular shape moving clockwise around the center of singers. Both men and women danced by taking a step with their left foot to the downbeat of the War Journey drum beat, followed by their right foot.

The singers who led the performance of War Journey songs were a small group of men who were knowledgeable of the songs and collectively drummed on a piece of rawhide, and later, on a double-framed Drum. Kiowa gendered musical roles only allowed men to sing and drum. As one Kiowa woman explained to me, "the men are

⁹ Anthropologist William Meadows (2024) noted that these songs literally translate to "stirring up" songs; however, Delores Toyebo Harragarra explained to me that she interprets the literal translation as "receiving war knowledge" or "strategizing for the battle."

in charge of the spiritual realm, including the Drum, the singing; while women are in charge of the physical realm.” Kiowa gendered choreo-musical roles were enacted in War Journey performance, primarily recognizing men as warriors and women as supporters of warriors.

War Journey dance–music was also performed through collective singing. Women joined in halfway through each repetitive verse while male singers sung through the entirety of each repetitive verse. Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (2008) theorized that participatory music making¹⁰ (and dancing) fosters social cohesion and feelings of togetherness. War Journey dance–music, in this sense, was useful in fulfilling several social functions in times of war. First, an enlisting male Kiowa warrior signaled his martial commitment to the war party through the act of participating through dance. Second, War Journey songs and dance fostered martial morale. Kiowa Singer Evans Ray Satepauhoodle (2006) explained that the songs were “a pep rally so to speak” as they spiritually and emotionally prepared warriors before battle. Kiowa singer Billy Evans Horse described that War Journey songs were performed all night until dawn, and then “at daybreak, they mount their horses and weapons of war, and they go to encounter the enemy” (Billy Evans Horse, n.d.).

Kiowa music and dance served to honor warriors and celebrate when they returned from battle. If a single Kiowa warrior was killed, the Kiowa encampment refrained from dancing in order to mourn. However, if a war party was successful without losing a warrior, women performed Scalp and Victory dances (*Åuldáugúndáu:gyá*) to honor the returning veterans. Women attached scalps of the slain enemy to dance sticks in the Scalp dance and danced with war trophies in the Victory dance. War trophies included articles of clothing, weapons, or important items of the slain enemy. Both the Scalp and Victory dances functioned to publicly honor veterans for their deeds. A small group of male singers rendered the series of Scalp and Victory songs for the women dancers. Similar to War Journey songs, Scalp and Victory songs were either sung with vocables or lyrics. The drumbeat for Scalp and Victory songs, however, was different and marked by a single hard drumbeat at a moderate tempo or a double drumbeat. Women danced while slightly moving their scalp sticks or lances vertically up and down in rhythm with the drumbeat. They danced using small steps, erect posture, and as one Kiowa Elder put it, “they looked dignified in their dance to honor the men.”

Kiowa gender roles through music–dance began to shift during settler colonization in the late 19th century. The U.S. government created a tumultuous time for the Kiowa People and disrupted Kiowa cultural practices. The U.S. military forcibly removed Kiowas from the Great Plains to the KCA Reservation in the southwestern part of Oklahoma after the signing of the Medicine Lodge Treaty in 1867. Kiowas, Arapahos, Comanches, and Southern Cheyennes who refused to settle fought the U.S. in the Red River War of 1874 and did not fully settle onto reservation lands until around the 1880s. Seventy-four Kiowa, Arapaho, Caddo, Comanche, and Southern Cheyenne leaders were incarcerated at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida, from 1875

¹⁰Thomas Turino distinguishes participatory forms of musicking primarily by forms of music that encourage participation of social actors, a blurred or non-existing line between audience and performer, and reflections of egalitarian social values through music.

to 1878 for their involvement in the Red River War.¹¹ On the KCA Reservation, the U.S. sought to continue dispossessing Native lands and attempted to erase Native cultural practices. Among these forced assimilation policies, the U.S. government mandated that Kiowas were not allowed to engage in warfare with other Tribes or the federal government, which greatly impacted Kiowa martial songs and dances. Additionally, the U.S. banned the practice of Native songs, dances, and Ceremonies in an attempt to erase any expressions of Indigeneity.

As a result, Scalp and Victory songs and dances went into dormancy¹² and were later revived by Kiowa women in World War I when Kiowa soldiers who fought for the U.S. returned from Europe. Scalp and Victory dances were then performed again throughout World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and continue to this day. Kiowa women have performed Scalp and Victory dances at the annual Tòñ:kóñ:gàut Ceremony to honor Kiowa veterans since the society's revival in 1958, and they sometimes perform these dances during displays of Kiowa culture for the general public in Oklahoma.

War Journey songs and dance, however, experienced a different transition. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, War Journey songs and dance were recontextualized as social songs and dance and no longer served their original purposes. War Journey later acquired the name "Forty-Nine"¹³ from a joke made by Kiowa dancers who performed at the Anadarko Indian Exposition in the 1950's and a barker announced the carnival show "The Girls of Forty-Nine," themed after the California Gold Rush from 1844 to 1855. When Kiowa dancers performed Forty-Nine dances at night for Intertribal socialization, female dancers were teased if they were "one of the girls of the Forty-Nine." Historian Clyde Ellis suggests that Forty-Nine dances "became a way for young Indian people to carve out their own sphere in the powwow world and to stamp at least part of the goings-on with their own brand of adaptation" (Ellis 2003,117). Song texts were composed in English and various Native languages (e.g., Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa) and often reflected themes of the struggles of young people, love, heartache, and carousing. During the early 20th to mid-20th centuries, Forty-Nines were prominent Intertribal social events before the popular spread of the modern powwow after World War II. In the late 20th century to the early 21st century, Forty-Nines later became associated with drinking and snagging¹⁴ after powwows ended for the day. Forty-Nines eventually lost popularity when gang members began bringing firearms and disrupting dances. The murder of Andrew "Drew" Supernaw on June 4, 2006, at the Forty-Nine in Norman, Oklahoma after the Red Earth powwow marked the drastic decline in Forty-Nine dances. Today, only a few powwows in Oklahoma continue to hold Forty-Nines after the powwow and prohibit alcohol and firearms.

¹¹ See (Tone-Pah-Hote 2019).

¹² See (Ellis 1990, 1999, 2003).

¹³ See (Feder 1964). This was also expressed to me by Dennis Zotigh (Kiowa/Okay Owingeh/Isanti Dakota).

¹⁴ This is a colloquial term in Indian Country to refer to hooking up.

The different transitions of War Journey (recontextualized music-dance) and Scalp and Victory (revived music-dance) in the late 19th and into the 20th centuries are crucial to the development of Kiowa War Mother songs. Within the creation of Kiowa War Mother songs lies the continuation and negotiation of traditional Kiowa gender roles that were expressed through song and dance into post-reservation realities in the mid-20th century.

Creation of Kiowa War Mother songs

During World War II, over 300 soldiers from the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma deployed to the European and Pacific theaters (Meadows 2010, 60). This was the second war where the Kiowa People fought under the American flag in lands that they had previously never stepped foot on.¹⁵ According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, “more than 44,000 American Indians served in the military from 1941 to 1945, including 800 women” (Lindsay et al. 2006, 4). Some non-Natives are puzzled why Native Peoples enlisted in the U.S. military after the government enacted forced assimilation, degradation, and genocide. While there are some conflicting opinions and feelings within Native communities, most Native veterans expressed that they sought to defend *their own homelands and communities*. The U.S. military also created opportunities for Native Peoples to continue traditional warrior practices, roles, and responsibilities.

Kiowa men who enlisted in the U.S. military sustained the long legacy of Kiowa male warriorship on the Great Plains in pre-reservation times. For Kiowa women, this continued Kiowa gendered martial practices that were suppressed through U.S. forced assimilation policies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. On February 10, 1944, a group of 24 Kiowa mothers chartered their own chapter¹⁶ in Mountain View, Oklahoma with the American War Mothers, a non-Native national philanthropic organization to send care packages and aid war efforts (Capes 2017; Meadows 2010, 334). The Kiowa War Mothers were distinct from other American War Mother chapters in that all members were comprised of Kiowa mothers, spoke Kiowa, and continued pre-reservation Kiowa gendered practices surrounding war. Descendants of the original Kiowa War Mothers described to me that the Kiowa mothers did not know where their sons were going and knew very little about the European and Pacific theaters. They faced anxieties and did not know if their sons would return safely.

The establishment of the Kiowa War Mothers Chapter 18, affiliated with the American War Mothers, resonated well with traditional Kiowa gendered martial roles. The Kiowa War Mothers held frequent meetings to pray for the safety of their sons and male relatives overseas, just as earlier Kiowa women had practiced traditional prayers for men in battle before they adopted Christianity in the late 1880s. Meadows notes that Kiowa women often sang Wind songs (*Gómdáu:gyà*) in pre-reservation times for

¹⁵ According to Meadows, approximately fourteen Kiowa men were deployed to Europe during World War I (Meadows 2010, 60).

¹⁶ Kiowas were among a few Southern Plains Tribes (e.g., Otoes, Pawnees, Poncas) in Oklahoma to start their own chapter under the American War Mothers.

the safe return of their male relatives (2024, 60). During World War II, several Kiowas composed Kiowa hymns among Kiowa Baptist and Methodist churches to pray for the safety of the Kiowa soldiers overseas. It was also during this time that Lewis Toyebo (Figure 1) was inspired by the Kiowa War Mothers and created songs specifically for them.

Lewis Toyebo (1892–1987)¹⁷

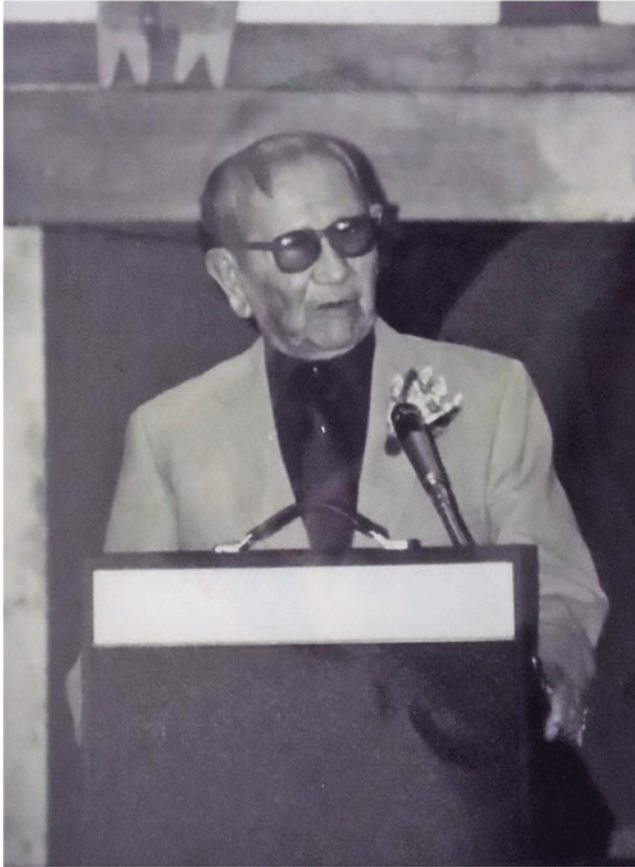


Figure 1. Lewis Toyebo. Photo courtesy of the Harragarra family. Used with permission.

lived with his wife, Richenda Toyebo, on her allotment west of Carnegie, Oklahoma near Stinking Creek during World War II. He was an avid composer of Peyote songs and created approximately 20 War Mother songs during World War II.¹⁸ During World

¹⁷Lewis Toyebo was often referred to as “Louis” Toyebo. Many historical records misspelled his name to “Louis”.

¹⁸Lewis Toyebo was recognized for his War Mother song compositions at the Kiowa Veteran’s Day Celebration in November 8, 1970. Delores Harragarra described that her father hardly sang War Mother songs after World War II.

War II, Lewis and Richenda's son, Ritchie Toyebo, served in the 89th division in Europe. Throughout the war, the Toyebo family kept up with current events in the European and Pacific theaters through newspapers and a battery-operated radio. Richenda was a founding member of the Kiowa War Mothers Chapter 18. Lewis Toyebo's position as a father to a son who fought in the European theater, husband to a Kiowa War Mother, and a well-known composer in the Kiowa community influenced his creation of War Mother songs.

Kiowa Elders expressed that Lewis Toyebo composed songs strictly for the Kiowa War Mothers to encourage them. Delores Toyebo Harragarra, the daughter of Lewis and Richenda, explained to me that "he didn't do it for personal or selfish reasons. He did it to strengthen and help the women, because it was a trying time for them. They had no idea where their loved ones were. And so as in the days when years ago, pre-reservation, old warrior days, I'm sure that's the way it was" (Harragarra 2017). Mildred Tsoodle, a Kiowa who served in the Navy during World War II, also reflected the same sentiment:

The original composer of the War Mother songs, Lewis Toyebo, did not compose these songs for credit or recognition; neither did other traditional Kiowas before him. They were composed as traditional War Expedition songs to give solace and strength and to convey pride. These songs were exclusively for the Kiowa War Mothers, Chapter 18, of the American War Mothers during World War II. (Meadows 2010, 343)

Mildred's recognition of Lewis Toyebo's humbleness and explanation for why he composed War Mother songs is noteworthy because Kiowa composers create songs for others. Delores explained to me that her father composed War Mother songs when he farmed during the day. "I'm sure, being out in the field all day he had plenty of time to *think*" (Delores Harragarra 2017; her emphasis). Many Kiowa Elders, including Delores,¹⁹ in my interviews emphasized the word "think" when discussing why Lewis Toyebo composed War Mother songs. Delores continuously expressed to me that he was not only thinking of the Kiowa War Mothers, but that he also was "thinking like a Kiowa" when composing songs, meaning that her father was operating through pre-reservation Kiowa musical epistemology.

Kiowa musical composition practices are intimately tied with the social history of the Kiowa People and the supernatural. According to Kiowa musical thought, Kiowa songs are not created by humans, but rather by *Dàuk'í* (the Creator or God) and float in ephemeral space. A composer is someone who has the ability to "catch" songs and present them to the people. Anthropologist Eric Lassiter (1998) and Kiowa singers both explained that the connection of song with the supernatural is what gives Kiowa song its spiritual power. The Kiowa community, however, has communal power and agency to accept or reject a song. Joe Fish further described this social process:

If you're humble about it, you'll go out and introduce it (a song) humbly. And how they respond to it, either they'll respond to it in a good way or a bad way.

¹⁹Kiowas use first names in conversation.

If they grab it, they'll take it. Any composition that you make, that's how songs survive. If your own people like it, then it's going to go. (Dupoint 2017)

Kiowa composers compose songs for specific purposes and individuals, and can create lyrics to further express meaning. Lassiter argues that Kiowa “songs with words help to express a *feeling* that is usually difficult to express through language alone” (1998, 174). A few descendants of Lewis Toyabo said that he had the gift of composing and that his songs expressed ineffable pride for the Kiowa servicemen as warriors and sonic encouragement for Kiowa mothers as supporters. This is similar to ethnomusicologist David Samuels’ description of “iconicity of feeling,” or in other words, music’s capability to generate “a deeply felt sense of attachment to the social history of the community” (2004, 11). Lewis Toyabo’s songs for the Kiowa War Mothers conjured deep embodiments and sensibilities of what it meant to be a Kiowa mother during pre-reservation battles into the time of World War II. Similar to pre-reservation times, Kiowa women did not know where their loved ones would be fighting. In the words of Ducky Anquoe, War Mother songs functioned as “songs to soothe a mother” to ease the anxieties that they faced, and acted as musical acts of encouragement for them.

Combining past and present chronotopes in War Mother dance–music

Kiowa War Mother songs evoked chronotopes of pre-reservation and post-reservation Kiowa martial motherhood through the songs and dance themselves as well as the ways they were performed. I contend that the “iconicity of feeling” of encouragement is through the elicitation of these chronotopes in War Mother songs. The pre-reservation Kiowa chronotope was evoked through the iconic resemblance of older music–dances (War Journey, Scalp, and Victory), while the post-reservation chronotope was incorporated through other means, such as Kiowa soldiers carrying and dancing with the American flag, departing serviceman dressed in their American military uniforms, the transformation of previous Kiowa martial music–dances into War Mother music–dance, and sung language reflecting 20th-century realities.

Given that War Journey songs had been recontextualized as Forty-Nine songs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Lewis Toyabo evoked the pre-reservation chronotope of Kiowa martial motherhood into his War Mother song compositions by using the original War Journey drumbeat. As Delores recounted from witnessing War Mother dances, “those old ladies knew what to do” when they heard the drumbeat. The War Mothers carried on embodied knowledge of the War Journey dance that prepared servicemen for deployment. Delores described how the War Mothers enacted the War Journey dance through the War Mother dance:

The young man leads and carries a[n] [American] flag with his uniform on and it's just like a grand entry that you see [at a powwow]. He comes in and he leads. Then usually the president was there of the Kiowa [War Mothers] chapter, and they just stand in line and come into the arena and then they sang those War Mother songs and it's the Forty-Nine step. If you know what the Forty-Nine step is, because that's the same thing, that's what Forty-Nine songs were way back. They were War Journey songs and so that was the way you danced. And so that's the way the War Mothers dance to those songs. (Harragarra 2017)

The War Mothers danced behind a serviceman in a clockwise circle, similar to the War Journey dance. A series of Kiowa War Mother songs were performed in this manner to provide encouragement for both the soldier and the War Mothers. Towards the end of the dance, singers rendered a specific War Mother song that did not have the War Journey drumbeat but rather a single drumbeat, what Ducky Anquoe calls a “[dòát (crying) beat.” The song lyrics describe the perspective of the departing soldier: “táugàu à dàum bánmà [repeated three times] (I am leaving for a long time)/ [dép[góp dé áu tò:dòp (I am leaving my family/relatives)/ t’á:gyà à tò:yí:t’áu (I will travel safely)/ t’á:gyà à àuitsán:t’áu (I will return safely).” Jack Anquoe, a Kiowa singer and son of Jimmy A, mentioned that it was difficult to hold back tears while singing for the Kiowa War Mothers, and often time, the War Mothers lulu-ed (Anquoe, n.d.). A “lulu” (Sáuldàu:gún:gàu), also called an “honor hollar” by Kiowa Elders, is an ululation by women to convey encouragement and recognition of valor. As one Kiowa Elder described, the lulu is one of the greatest ways to sonically venerate a male warrior.

When servicemen returned home from battle, War Mothers as well as members from the Victory Club and Purple Hearts Club²⁰ greeted veterans with an honor dance and a feast. Kiowa singer Ernest “Iron” Toppah recalled how the Victory Club similarly conducted their honor dances:

I remember during World War II, my grandmother was [part of the] Victory Club, that was organized during World War II, early 40s. I’ve seen them walk up to a bus station and maybe a man is coming home and the Elders will walk up to the bus station. The women welcomed him. They hadn’t seen him for years, maybe he’s been wounded. I remember that. Several of them. Badly. To see them again and greet them again, they would sing and they would lulu and just be so thankful and happy to see them. We lived just two blocks from the bus station. We all walked down the house and had a meal with that serviceman. Later on in the evening, they had that legion hut, east side by the grocery store [in Carnegie, Oklahoma] and they had [honor dances]. Strictly War Mother songs and that processional with that honoree. And they had songs and get up and honor him all evening. (Toppah 2018)

Usually, the members of the three female auxiliaries provided a monetary gift for the returning veteran after the honoring took place. As described by Iron Toppah, the returning of a veteran was a joyous occasion. These honor dances were small in size and were performed when individual servicemen returned home (Figure 2). They occurred throughout the week when a soldier was expected to return to the community. A possible reason for this might be that Kiowa veterans served in different divisions in the military and did not return as one cohesive unit, as they would have in pre-reservation times. Ducky Anquoe described a War Mother dance to me a similar where War Mothers danced with war trophies²¹ from World War II:

²⁰The Victory Club and Purple Hearts Clubs were created as women’s auxiliaries during World War II that functioned similar to the Kiowa War Mothers but were not associated with the American War Mothers.

²¹War trophies are material objects brought back from Kiowa warriors as proof of battle deeds.

They used to have Kiowa War Mother meetings at our house and all the War Mothers lined up. They had a German helmet, cartridge belt, first aid, they had all kinds of stuff. In line, the first time I saw it, they were lined up outside and the leaders, all these women had letters. Almost all of them from their sons. And dad and them would start singing. So they marched in. (Anquoe 2017)

The dancing of war trophies is noteworthy as this practice was carried from the pre-reservation Victory dances. This parallels the pre-reservation custom when returning warriors entered the camp in a parade-like manner after a successful war expedition, which was followed by the performance of Scalp and Victory dances to honor them. Yet, the war trophies were items used in 20th-century battle. Ducky also explained that some War Mothers danced with Japanese katanas, a weapon from an enemy with whom Kiowas had not previously fought until World War II.



Figure 2. Courtesy of Horace Poolaw Estate. Kiowa War Mothers honor Pascal Poolaw. Used with permission.

Chronotopes in Sung language

Chronotopes of Kiowa martial motherhood were also evoked through sung language, namely through the combination of “Old Kiowa” (an older form of Kiowa language before forced relocation) and “Modern Kiowa” (Kiowa language use during the mid-20th century). Meadows notes that War Mother song lyrics expressed “the high esteem in which young Kiowa men are regarded as warriors, their willingness to travel far away, the prominence of the U.S. flag throughout the world, the joyous feeling of meeting

returning servicemen, and the courageous deeds, fearlessness, and bravery displayed by Kiowa warriors in battle” (2010, 345). Members of the Kiowa War Mothers Chapter 18 consisted of older women who either grew up in Kiowa society prior to forced relocation on the KCA reservation or during the early period of reservation life.

Lewis Toyebo created lyrics that contained words from what many Kiowa speakers call “Old Kiowa,” a language variety of words and concepts that index the pre-reservation era. Almost all Kiowa War Mothers spoke Kiowa and understood “Old Kiowa,” Kiowa speakers told me that the use of “Old Kiowa” elicits Kiowa itinerant lifestyle and warriorhood on the Great Plains in pre-reservation times. Some “Old Kiowa” words and phrases in the lyrics of War Mother songs include: *Dàum tò:yà* (lit. “traveling the earth,” which implies soldiers going on a War Journey), *Kàu k’í tsàn tau* (lit. “throwing blankets at warriors’ feet”; a pre-reservation gesture of honoring an individual), and *[Gáui[dòlyôt* (Kiowa nomadic camp). In one song, the “Old Kiowa” word “[Gáui[dòlyôt” is used to elicit the time and place when Kiowa people traveled in encampments as nomads across the Great Plains:

[Gáui[dòlyôt dàu tauñ [dégyà tò:yà: (repeated 3 times)

Tauñ [dégyà tò:yà:

[Gáui[dòlyôt dàu tauñ [dégyà tò:yà:

[Gáui[dògùl dàu

Throughout the Kiowa camp, they are talking around

They are talking around

Throughout the Kiowa camp, they are talking around

(About the) Kiowa young men

While Lewis Toyebo included “Old Kiowa” in the lyrics of his War Mother song compositions, he also included modern words and concepts developed during the 20th century that reflect post-reservation realities. Modern Kiowa words in War Mother songs include: *P’au tauñ* (lit. “crossing the water”; referring to soldiers going overseas), *Sòlé* (lit. “soldier”; a Kiowa pronunciation of the English word “soldier”), and *T’áin̄kàuhòl tà:gàu* (lit. “white cloth waving in a good/prideful/reverent way”; the Kiowa word for the American flag). The word “*T’áin̄kàuhòl tà:gàu*” is used in many War Mother songs and often sung in a reverent manner. For example, one song praises Kiowa veterans (“Kiowa young men”) who returned with the American flag:

T’áin̄kàuhòl tà:gàu gò, háiyà è yáí tauñgàu è dàuñ yáí (repeated 3 times)

[Dògùl òñ[góp àn t’èp è áuitsàn

T’áin̄kàuhòl tà:gàu gò

They (Kiowa young men) went with the American flag, they went far to fight

The fine young men came back

They came back with the American flag

Most non-Natives are puzzled that these songs include the word “American flag.” The American flag indexed “death, forced removal, and genocide”²² for the Kiowa People, yet War Mother songs recontextualized the American flag to reflect sensibilities of Kiowa pride, warriorship, and valor. One Kiowa War Mother expressed to me that these words sonically painted the famous picture of American soldiers raising the American flag at Iwo Jima and elicited feelings of pride for Kiowa soldiers. Another Kiowa Elder

²²Dennis Zotigh mentioned this when he was MCing a powwow in Virginia in April 2017.

offered an interpretation of the word suggesting that the literal translation might refer to the flag of surrender, meaning that the U.S. did not fully succeed in settler colonization. While this indexical ambiguity exists, many Kiowa veterans continuously expressed to me that they fought to protect their own homelands and communities by going to fight in distant lands. One Kiowa War Mother song simply states, “the American flag is all over and top of the world,” reflecting that the post-reservation chronotope has internationally extended to lands that Kiowas previously never fought on until the 20th century.

The strategic deployment of “Old Kiowa” and “Modern Kiowa” demonstrates how Kiowas exercise what Indigenous studies and literary scholar Mark Rifkin (2017) calls “temporal sovereignty”—the power to shape Indigenous temporal patterns that refuse dominant settler time formations, which attempt to confine Indigenous Peoples as static and in the unchanging past. Sung language in War Mother songs does not only reflect gendered martial practices in the pre-reservation and post-reservation eras, but it is also active in the creation of these simultaneous Kiowa temporal realities of Kiowa martial motherhood through song and dance. The dense layering of these chronotopic elements of gendered personhood evokes what it means to be a Kiowa mother during times of war in a way that continues and adapts Kiowa gendered cultural practices. As one Kiowa singer said, “these songs will go on and will keep us being who we are as Kiowas, in the past, now, and in the future.”

Conclusion

In June of 2017, I sat with Delores Harragarra in her home and asked about why her mother and other Kiowa women formed the Kiowa War Mothers Chapter 18 organization. After some reflection, she suggested that the American War Mothers’ mission mirrored pre-reservation Kiowa martial gender roles: “That’s why they joined. It’s not an Indian organization, but it’s the *concept*. It was easy for them because that’s what Kiowas have always done” (Delores Harragarra, Interview, June 14, Harragarra 2017; my emphasis). That “concept” for how and why Kiowa mothers chartered their own chapter under the American War Mothers resonated with pre-reservation Kiowa gender roles and created an opportunity for Kiowas to adapt those gender roles during the post-reservation era.

Kiowa War Mother songs and dance simultaneously evoke chronotopes of Kiowa gender roles and personhoods of the “Kiowa mother” tying Kiowa martial ancestry from the pre-reservation era to the 20th century and extending to the future. As ethnomusicologist Beverly Diamond argues, scholars should study “musical practices *as* theory not as objects to which we might apply theory” (2007, 170). This paper has shown that musical and dance performances are sites in which chronotopes of gender are semiotically embodied, enacted, performed, (re)produced, and negotiated. I suggest that by examining the creation of dance-music, in this case, the creation of War Mother songs by Lewis Toyebo, reveals the dynamic nature of how the Kiowa People creatively responded to settler colonization to maintain gendered personhoods, values, and practices that were important to them.²³

²³See (Tone-Pah-Hote 2019).

Today, Kiowa War Mother songs are performed at Tribal Ceremonials, such as the Kiowa Gourd Clan and Kiowa Tòñ:kòñ:gàut, to recognize and honor the Kiowa War Mothers as a prominent female auxiliary in the Kiowa Tribe, as well as to honor returning Kiowa servicemen. The Kiowa War Mothers continue to provide meals and gifts for local veterans in Oklahoma. Several Kiowa War Mothers even served as the national president for the American War Mothers. The continuation of the Kiowa War Mothers organization and the performance of Kiowa War Mother songs and dance engages contemporary and future realities of Kiowa martial motherhood while still maintaining ancestral connection. The current president of the Kiowa War Mothers, Charlene Allen, expressed to me that one of her relatives was a founding member, and now, Charlene serves as the president because her son is a Marine veteran. She described that she is immensely proud of being the president of the Kiowa War Mothers and found the role to be rewarding.

This article also raises newer questions about changing Kiowa gender roles with the increasing enlistment of Kiowa women in the U.S. military in the 21st century. Meadows (2024) describes some of the issues that Kiowa servicewomen experience due to Kiowa and settler misogyny. The Kiowa Women Color Guard is one Kiowa organization that is increasingly celebrating and recognizing the valor of Kiowa women warriors, who are not (or not yet) incorporated in Kiowa warrior societies that are exclusively reserved for Kiowa male veterans. Ralph Zotigh, a Kiowa composer and founder of the powwow Drum group, Zotigh Singers, created a song to honor all Native American women warriors and gifted it to the Kiowa Women Color Guard. This song does not have the War Journey drumbeat, but rather the War Dance drumbeat, a musical marker that is traditionally associated with male warriorship. While chronotopes of gender through musical and dance performance may shift, warriorship remains strong among Kiowas.

Óbàhàù (that is the end).

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