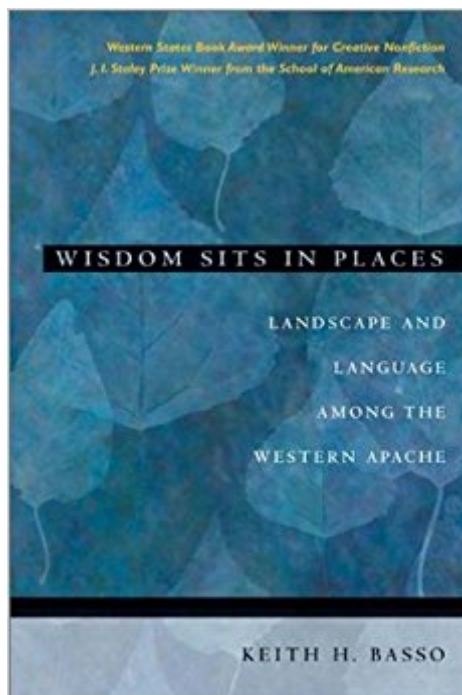


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# Wisdom Sits In Places: Landscape And Language Among The Western Apache



## Synopsis

This remarkable book introduces us to four unforgettable Apache people, each of whom offers a different take on the significance of places in their culture. Apache conceptions of wisdom, manners and morals, and of their own history are inextricably intertwined with place, and by allowing us to overhear his conversations with Apaches on these subjects Basso expands our awareness of what place can mean to people. Most of us use the term sense of place often and rather carelessly when we think of nature or home or literature. Our senses of place, however, come not only from our individual experiences but also from our cultures. *Wisdom Sits in Places*, the first sustained study of places and place-names by an anthropologist, explores place, places, and what they mean to a particular group of people, the Western Apache in Arizona. For more than thirty years, Keith Basso has been doing fieldwork among the Western Apache, and now he shares with us what he has learned of Apache place-names; where they come from and what they mean to Apaches. "This is indeed a brilliant exposition of landscape and language in the world of the Western Apache. But it is more than that. Keith Basso gives us to understand something about the sacred and indivisible nature of words and place. And this is a universal equation, a balance in the universe. Place may be the first of all concepts; it may be the oldest of all words." N. Scott Momaday "In *Wisdom Sits in Places* Keith Basso lifts a veil on the most elemental poetry of human experience, which is the naming of the world. In so doing he invests his scholarship with that rarest of scholarly qualities: a sense of spiritual exploration. Through his clear eyes we glimpse the spirit of a remarkable people and their land, and when we look away, we see our own world afresh." William deBuys "A very exciting book; authoritative, fully informed, extremely thoughtful, and also engagingly written and a joy to read. Guiding us vividly among the landscapes and related story-tellings of the Western Apache, Basso explores in a highly readable way the role of language in the complex but compelling theme of a people's attachment to place. An important book by an eminent scholar." Alvin M. Josephy, Jr.

## Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: University of New Mexico Press; 1st edition (August 1, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0826317243

ISBN-13: 978-0826317247

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.5 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 58 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #12,365 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #18 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Native American Studies #121 in Books > History > Americas > United States > State & Local #211 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology

## Customer Reviews

Basso, an anthropologist who has done fieldwork among the Western Apache of Arizona for over 30 years, provides a fascinating scholarly study of the meaning and significance of the Apache place names found in the area surrounding the community of Cibecue, Arizona. Some Apache place names describe features of the landscape or climate, while others derive from historical or mythological events. All, however, are rich in descriptive imagery and depth of meaning for the Apache people of the area. With the help of several Apache informants, Basso explores the place worlds underlying the names of localities and through them lets the Apache express their own understanding of their history, identity, values, and morality. This work, which won the Western States Book Award for creative nonfiction, is a valuable contribution to anthropological studies of place and location. At the same time, it provides a sensitive perspective on the Apaches' understanding of themselves. A useful addition to anthropology and linguistics collections in academic libraries. Elizabeth Salt, Otterbein Coll. Lib., Westerville, Ohio Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"This brilliant book on linguistic awareness of local landscapes is a gem." --(Arizona Republic )

The book is great. The kindle version doesn't give page numbers from the original book, which makes it impossible for me to cite in writing.

One of my favorite authors that has shared the perspectives of the Western Apache people in a culturally sensitive and careful manner that helps the reader understand the value, importance and relationship with place.

In this book, Keith Basso presents the Western Apache at Cibecue. His decades long interaction with these gentle, articulate people provides us with an intimate and respectful view of a powerful

tradition among them: the invocation of place names to educate, elucidate, and even entertain. Place names are normally highly descriptive: one can easily identify and understand why a certain place has the name it does. But the real power of the place name is less in its description than in the anecdote accompanying the name. These anecdotes teach some important moral lesson. By merely invoking the name, the lesson is recalled and no one is directly humiliated, scolded, shamed. The lesson to be learned is played out by the characters in the story and hence depersonalized. In this gentle, non-threatening way, individuals are taught the important lessons of living successfully within the culture of the Western Apache. We would do well adopt this tradition into our own culture and begin training our children in ways that build up instead of ways that shame and tear down.

Basso has given us a marvelous treasure. Built on years of painstaking study and reflection he has offered a remarkable study of Western Apache wisdom with minimal, though hugely significant, expositions which enlighten us all about the importance of place in human life.

A concise, thoughtful book that i enjoyed. Basso is self-aware, referring to both his missteps and successes with great humility.

way too dry, I would rather have read an anthology of the personal stories but, then again, that's not the thesis of his book

An insightful and interesting read. I had to read it for a class, but it made me question my conception of names, places and piqued my interest in ethnographic works.

Amazing and transformational!!!! Also suggest The Way of Zen.

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