UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Upward Moving and Emergence Way. By Father Berard Haile, O.P.M., Karl W. Luckert, editor.

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/60g9v3px

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 7(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Hanson, Jeffrey R.

Publication Date

1983

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

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

The Upward Moving and Emergence Way. By Father Berard Haile, O.F.M., Karl W. Luckert, editor. Navajo Orthography by Irvy W. Goosen. Figs. and illus. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981. 239 pp. \$17.95 (Cloth), \$11.95 (Paper).

Upward Moving and Emergence Way is volume seven in the Tribal Religions series available from the American University of Nebrask Press, Lincoln, It is a narrative of the Navajo creation and emergence, in mythical form, collected by Father Berard in 1908. According to Karl W. Luckert, this recently rediscovered work is reminiscent of significantly different from, the Mary C. Wheelwright publication of Father Berard's Emergence Myth According to the Hanelthnayhe or Upwardreaching Rite (Santa Fe, 1949). The major point of departure between the two works is that the present volume contains the complete, original narrative as recorded by Father Berard, while the Wheelwright version was written as a condensed form of the original.

Upward Moving and Emergence Way is divided into two parts, in addition to Luckert's introduction. Part one (chapters 1-13) consists of the creation and emergence narrative itself, as told to Father Berard by the Navajo singer Gishin Biyé. The narrative is long, detailed and highly structured, and comprises all but fifteen pages of the book. Here the reader is introduced to the myths and legends recreating the Navajo emergence from twelve previous underworlds leading upward to their present worldly existence. This ascent by the ancestral Navajos was accomplished by passage through a reed conduit, and the rich ceremonialsim of the Navajo upward moving chantways finds its genesis in this mythic experience.

The myths are highly structured and interconnected as central figures such as First Man, First Woman and Coyote pass successively from one world level to the next. The narrative is aided by numerous drawings and illustrations of cosmological and cosmographic symbolism. Since Navajo chantways are inexorably connected with the concepts of the spiritual healing of mind and body, it is not suprising to see themes of life, death, health, sickness and renewal

pervading these myths.

Reviews 105

Part two, by contrast, is very short, consisting of one chapter (14). In it is described the hanelthnayhe, or upward-reaching rite, as it was performed by Gishin Biyé, in 1908, and observed by Father Berard. The occasion for this chantway was the birth of twins by a Navajo woman who subsequently fell victim to spells of swooning and weakness. As illness among the Navajos has strong spiritual connections, in this case a form of ghost sickness, this curing chantway was decided upon. The ensuing rites were recorded by Father Berard in meticulous detail to the extent he was able to observe them.

The major contribution of <u>Upward Moving and Emergence</u> <u>Way</u> lies in its reproduction of an original narrative as recorded by Father Berard during the first decade of the 1900s. Thus it is of immense historical value. In addition, this book is testimony to his deep interest in Navajo religion and cosmology as well as to his talents as an ethnographer, Karl W. Luckert has done a commendable job in arranging and editing Father Berard's typescript and accompanying notations for publication.

Specialists in Navajo religion and cosmology as well as scholars of comparative religion should find the Gishin Biyé version of the Navajo creation and emergence both rigorous and thought provoking, and therefore potentially rewarding. The non-specialist, general reader, or newcomer to the study of American Indian religions, however, may find the narrative tedious and confusing in places. Its length, esoteric symbolism and intricate themes might distract the unprepared reader from the overall continuity of the myths and their connection with the chantway performed by Gishin Bivé. It would have been helpful had there been a summary overview of the cultural context of Navajo healing ceremonies in general and the upward moving chantway in particular, to aid the novice reader. Luckert's introduction would have been an appropriate place for such an overview. I would, therefore, caution those unfamiliar with Navajo culture, society and ceremonialism to acquaint themselves with a general work on these subjects and then read Upward Moving and Emergence Way. This will hopefully render their reading much more meaningful and rewarding.

> Jeffery R. Hanson University of North Dakota