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**The Native American Sun Dance Religion and Ceremony: An Annotated Bibliography.** Compiled by Phillip M. White. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998. 115 pages. \$55.00 cloth.

The field of American Indian studies has grown dramatically during the past ten years, and especially since the 1960s and 1970s when such classic works as N. Scott Momaday's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *House Made of Dawn* (1966) and Vine Deloria Jr.'s *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969) were published, and when the American Indian Movement and other Indian rights groups began to force pressing indigenous social and religious issues into public consciousness. Today one need only count the number of universities with American Indian studies programs, or observe that the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* is twice as thick as it was ten years ago, to see that the field continues to flourish. More importantly, much of the collection and evaluation of primary sources pertaining to traditional American Indian culture is now readily available to the non-specialist, enabling students and teachers more dependable and accessible sources from which to work. These primary sources also enable students to differentiate between superficial or ethnocentric interpretations of Native culture and those works that represent legitimate and meaningful additions to the body of knowledge pertaining to American Indian studies.

Perhaps the most misunderstood Native ceremony is the Sun Dance, which is practiced by many Plains tribes and can be traced back almost three hundred years. Phillip M. White's *The Native American Sun Dance Religion and Ceremony: An Annotated Bibliography* presents the first comprehensive bibliography of the Sun Dance and offers informative and objective annotations for each work. The sources included derive from newspapers, journals, books, theses and dissertations, and the Internet. The introduction offers an adequate overview of the Sun Dance's history, dynamics, and religious significance.

The sources in White's bibliography range from mid-eighteenth-century European reports of the Sun Dance to contemporary works, and include historical, anthropological, religious, and social aspects of the ceremony. A brief section entitled "Core Collection" is included after the introduction and lists the major works on the Sun Dance, as well as several works to reference for brief overviews and summaries of the ceremony. The 335 entries are arranged alphabetically by tribe, and all include annotations, most of which are about half a page in length. In his annotations, White concisely relates the main ideas and focus of each work, offering evaluative commentary when necessary while still maintaining scholarly objectivity by using direct quotations. The book also includes an index, a map of the Great Plains Culture area, and a drawing of a Sun Dancer.

Of the many Plains Indian ceremonies, the Sun Dance is the most complex, involving the combination of other ceremonies, such as the use of the pipe, vision seeking, and the purification ceremony (commonly referred to as the "sweat lodge ceremony"). As White describes, "The Sun Dance is a religious experience, involving vows, prayers, fasting, singing, dancing, sacrific-

ing, and suffering in order to appeal to God (in whatever name He is called) to look favorably upon those who are appealing to him" (p. xix). One who has pledged himself to the Sun Dance must pray and fast for four days, during the day dancing in the Mystery Circle, facing the Sacred Tree, and calling on the spirits to send his voice to the Creator in order to reaffirm his relationship to all of creation and his responsibility to aid his people. If piercing takes place, the pledger is tethered to the Sacred Tree by cords attached to skewers ("piercing pins") that are placed under the skin on the chest, or the pledger may have them attached to his back and drag a buffalo skull until he breaks free, all the while blowing an eagle bone whistle. The importance of sacrificing one's flesh is that when an individual is born, all that is really his own is his body, thus the only thing one can really give, so in this way it is a true giving of oneself. However, because of the sacrificial nature of the ceremony, the U.S. government outlawed the Sun Dance, along with other traditional ceremonies, in 1884, during which time the Sun Dance went underground. After passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 the Sun Dance was once again practiced publicly, though piercing was still not allowed. By the 1960s it was again flourishing among the Plains tribes, and continues to flourish in various forms today.

The significance of the Sun Dance to the Plains tribes cannot be overstated, for it is considered the most sacred of all ceremonies. In the struggle to retain traditional ways and religion, communal ceremonies like the Sun Dance are extremely important—they solidify group identity and purpose. Today, the focus of the dance is religious and a "thanksgiving to God for good fortune, good health, and protection," whereas originally the focus was to prepare hunters and warriors to be brave (p. xix). The Sun Dance is a major commitment of time and energy, involving many people and much preparation. Contemporary Sun Dances last from twelve to sixteen days depending on the Sun Dance intercessor, or leader. There are four days of preparation during which the purification ceremony is done each day and the pledger vision seeks with the pipe; then four days of praying, fasting, and dancing (the Sun Dance proper); and then for four days the pledger is considered very sacred and walks in a sacred manner.

By studying the wide range of sources on the Sun Dance, one can trace the social influences that shaped the contemporary Sun Dance, and, among other things, the impact of Western culture on Native religion and belief. For example, James R. Walker, a physician on Pine Ridge Reservation from 1896 to 1914 who interviewed a number of Oglala-Lakota elders (books based on his work include *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, *Lakota Society*, and *Lakota Myth*), was told that *Wakantanka* was not a personified "God-head" (in the Western sense) but rather referred to the *Wakanpi* (the *wakan* beings). James O. Dorsey, in *A Study of Siouan Cults* (1894), also expressed doubt concerning the Sioux's alleged monotheism. Today, many see, or at least describe, the "supreme being" in thoroughly Western terms. However, this does not necessarily mean that their relationship to the Creator is experienced in those terms. As many scholars have pointed out, Native peoples often spoke to non-Indians using non-Indian terms but then among themselves retained their traditional con-

cepts in their own language; furthermore, some Native words have no easily rendered English equivalent.

The above discussion is not intended to imply that change is necessarily negative. All religions and cultures undergo change. The continual tension between the continuity that tradition supplies and the change that enables a group to adjust to social circumstances exists in every culture. The history of the Sun Dance is a prime example of the interaction of such forces. As scholars more fully understand traditional ways, more meaningful analysis and comparative study can be made in order to explain further the relationship between Indian and non-Indian cultures. More importantly, as Indian scholars such as Phillip White continue to engage in American Indian religious and cultural scholarship, the voices of the indigenous people of North America will remain strong and independent. And those of us who are non-Indian will gain further opportunities to learn from their wisdom.

Overall, White's bibliography is an important contribution to American Indian studies, for it allows the non-specialist and the specialist a useful tool for beginning or furthering his or her research. White states that the intended audience of the book is tribal teachers, college and high school students, and advanced researchers. His diligently and thoughtfully annotated compilation is sure to aid all students in furthering their understanding of and appreciation for American Indian religion and ceremony.

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### **Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians.**

Edited by Devon A. Mihesuah. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. 213 pages. \$15.00 paper.

In this book, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn tells us that "bad art has a harmful effect on society." What is bad and what is good when we are talking about Native American artistic production? Cook-Lynn has a clear idea. Good art, like Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, communicates "traditional values" and speaks from the perspective of "tribal realism." Good art leaves Indian readers optimistic and ready to "affirm their lives as Indian people." Bad art is self-serving, "personal, invented, appropriated, and irrelevant to First Nation status in the United States" (pp. 130–132). It is also, she explains, usually penned by whites or urban mixed-blood Indian intellectuals who have abdicated their moral stance on Indian sovereignty and become cynical, individualized, and disengaged. Sherman Alexie? His work is popular, but it does not seek to advance tribal rights. Therefore, in Cook-Lynn's opinion, it is art that does not deserve status as Native American any more than Disney's *Pocahontas*.

Who decides what is legitimate art or scholarship? Who decides what is publishable? Who determines who can speak for whom? Such questions frame the debate in *Natives and Academics*, the most recent entry in an ongoing debate over scholarly sensitivity, accountability, and ethics in writing about