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Review of *Wakinyan: Lakota Religion in the Twentieth Century*, by Stephen E. Feraca.

Tink Tinker
Illiff School of Theology

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Wakinyan: Lakota Religion in the Twentieth Century. By Stephen E. Feraca. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1998. Illustrations, notes, suggestions for further reading. xvi + 104 pp. \$30.00.

This slim volume is essentially a caricature of an older genre of anthropological books about Indians and other colonial "others." The new "revised" edition adds precious little new material or insight to the inadequacies of the 1963 version. Feraca, a one-time US government employee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, has an inconsiderable sense of the complexities of Oglala or Lakota culture. He describes some personal observations of Lakota religious traditions at the surface level, but has no clue regarding the deeper meaning or significance of what he attempts to describe. In the process, he introduces terms like "self-torture" which bias his interpretation of Lakota religious traditions and demonstrate his cultural incompetence to speak on any issues relating to Lakota peoples. Along

the way, Feraca shows utter disdain for the people he presumes to study and interpret for a wider audience. His volume is laced throughout with factual errors, compounded with implicit and explicit racism, including gratuitous insults having nothing to do with his primary anthropological task. One can only wonder at the wisdom (and lingering racism) of the University of Nebraska Press in publishing this awful manuscript.

To sketch some of the highlights of this sketchy book, in successive chapters: Feraca disgorges the standard colonialist history of the Lakotas in seven pages with utter disregard for Lakota interpretations of their own history. He devotes a mistake-ridden fifteen pages to a treatment of the Lakota sun dance. In the following two chapters, which allot seven pages to the "vision quest" and fifteen to the Yuwipi, he makes sure his readers understand that he in no way accords any real power to the religious experiences he purports to describe. While quick to name-drop, referring to Oliver Red Cloud, for example, as "my friend," he is equally quick to ridicule Lakota religious practices. Chapter Five, only fourteen pages, discusses more than twelve different aspects of Lakota religious tradition not addressed in separate (albeit short) chapters, resulting in incredible superficiality along with outright errors in interpretation. Chapters Six and Seven devote a few pages each to an interpretation of "Peyote" and "Herbalism." Since Feraca is blithely unaware of the scientifically acknowledged benefits of much of Lakota and American Indian herbal remedies, he can dismiss "herbalism" as a kind of superstition.

Despite its brevity, Feraca's concluding chapter, like the book as a whole, contains much that is erroneous or false. *Wakinyan* is really a pamphlet merely outlining some basically uninformed observations of Lakota peoples.

TINK TINKER
American Indian Studies
Iliff School of Theology