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1991

Review of The Yankton Sioux

Micheal L. Tate

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Tate, Micheal L., "Review of The Yankton Sioux" (1991). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 633.

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The Yankton Sioux. By Herbert T. Hoover. Indians of North America, edited by Frank W. Porter III. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. Maps, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, glossary, index. 111 pp. \$15.95.

Although numerous nonfiction works about American Indians fill juvenile sections of public libraries, most are written by educators who know little about the subtleties of Indian life. The result is a myriad of books that reflect a "Great Chiefs" approach, or worse yet, a type of composite Native American hero distilled from a variety of tribal experiences. To provide more authoritative books on a variety of Indian

tribes for the young adult and general reading audience, Frank W. Porter III, Director of Chelsea House Foundation for the Study of American Indians, has initiated a 53-volume series of tribally and topically organized books. The length of each volume is rigidly maintained at 111 pages, and the list of projected authors constitutes a "who's who" of anthropologists and historians who are experts in their assigned areas.

The choice of Herbert T. Hoover to author this particular volume on the Yankton Sioux speaks to the credibility of the series. As professor of history at the University of South Dakota for more than two decades, Hoover has not only pursued standard academic research on the Yanktons, but has also become closely associated with respected tribal members such as Joseph and Clarence Rockboy and has participated in many of the tribe's religious and cultural ceremonies. It is also fitting that Hoover and Porter saw a need for a volume on the Yanktons since they have been comparatively overlooked by existing studies on the Sioux peoples. Precisely because they entered into no monumental wars with the United States, as did their Santee relatives to the east and Teton kin to the west, these "middle Sioux" escaped the attention of popularizers and scholarly researchers alike. Yet they played a significant role in the expansive prairie region from Mille Lacs Lake in Minnesota to the Missouri River during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The author provides three introductory chapters that carry the Yanktons from their traditional hunting and agricultural lifestyle through the adjustments of the fur trade era to the major traumas of reservation life during the post-Civil War era. As victims of the 1887 Dawes Severalty Act and the subsequent competency commissions, they witnessed the gradual loss of most of their tribal and allotted lands during the following three decades.

Through all the calamities, the Yanktons remained resilient as they successfully retained their language, culture, and sense of separateness amid all of the buffeting by outside forces. In fact, the Yanktons serve as a good model for the conflict adjustment and cultural survival

themes that abound in Indian studies today. Hoover is at his best in tracing twentieth-century events and stressing the indomitable Yankton spirit that works diligently and successfully to maintain a continuity with the ancestors. His discussions of the Sacred Pipe Ceremony, peyote rituals of the Native American Church, and the ceremonial objects are sensitive portrayals of both the physical dimensions of life and their spiritual symbolism.

Although this book is too brief to be definitive, and although it is directed at a fifteen- to twenty-five-year-old audience, it can be read profitably by all interested persons.

MICHAEL L. TATE
Department of History
University of Nebraska at Omaha