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Review of The Medicine Men: Oglala Sioux Ceremony and Healing.

Beatrice Medicine
Wakpala, South Dakota

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The Medicine Men: Oglala Sioux Ceremony and Healing. By Thomas H. Lewis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. Introduction, illustrations, bibliographical notes, notes, bibliography, index. 219 pp. \$19.95.

As a Lakota person, it seems more pertinent to me that those publications that deal with specific groups, i.e., Oglala, be reviewed by persons from that band. Tribally controlled colleges on reservations could possibly be sources for the reviews.

The author, Thomas H. Lewis, spent almost a decade on Pine Ridge Reservation. Like his predecessor, James R. Walker, also a medical practitioner, he focused his book upon Lakota healing arts. Lewis's book, however, is somewhat superficial. It does not reflect the right ethnographic detail which one finds in Walker's work. Of course, the Oglala medicine men of whom Lewis writes evidence generations of cultural change. It is a tribute to them that so much of the ceremonial detail is still manifest and functional to a Lakota group. Even if Lewis

belittles the shamanistic enterprise—"In the night sing, for example, the flashing blue sparks are obviously produced by a wheel-and-flint cigarette lighter" (p. 42), it also indicates that there is still a Native belief system that sustains and meets the needs of people living in an impoverished and precarious world. That some non-Indians also contact these "wheel-and-flint" ritualists indicates the value of Lakota ritual in an inter-ethnic encounter. This book is important because it speaks to the viability of Lakota ceremony and the ritual practitioners who maintain a previously suppressed belief system.

Dr. Lewis paints a most dismal picture of reservation life, which many of the Pine Ridge residents may find objectionable. Perhaps this landscape of poverty, drunkenness, licentiousness, and other maladjustments were essential in order to deal with ceremonial curing. Curing also includes the use of herbs. The elicitation of coping strategies defined from an emic (insider) view of the client-ritualist relationship might have added new insights. This would be helpful in prevention programs which are so desperately needed on all Lakota reservations.

This book, however, does present some appreciation of field work and the politics of research. It is valuable for there are statements about actual curing rites and performances of the Oglala practitioners themselves. These articulations are episodic and idiosyncratic but do not reflect the valued view of personhood by which Lakota people allow variation. Contemporary ceremonies such as *yuwipi*, *heyoka*, peyote, and the Sun Dance are featured. As the ritual of the Sun Dance is assuming an intertribal relevance, it is important to see its development on Pine Ridge.

A cogent Native conclusive interpretation of ritual function might have been given in a summative statement. Perhaps Dr. Lewis's conclusions in which he attempts to encompass Lakota rituals into a superimposed theoretical stance might have been more effective if the theory were spelled out in the beginning of the book.

In books about indigenous peoples, the heuristic value should be noted. This book, although it has its limitations, could be effectively used in courses in anthropology, Native studies, and religious studies. With the heightened interests of "New Age" adherents to Indian belief system, this book may find a new audience.

BEATRICE MEDICINE
Wakpala, South Dakota