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Review of Yellowtail: Crow Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief.

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Yellowtail: Crow Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief. As told to Michael Oren Fitzgerald. Introduction by Fred Voget. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991. Appendix, notes, suggested readings, index. xxvii + 241 pp. \$21.95.

Social ills plague Indian reservations in the United States as they have since the day those institutions were born. From within the Indian community, an elderly holy man has raised his voice to prescribe a return to traditional Indian religion.

Thomas Yellowtail, a Crow, was a healer and top religious official in the Sun Dance, the spiritual centerpiece of Plains Indian religion. Yellowtail explains reservation social problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and poverty as manifestations of declining values. In abandoning daily spiritual contact with nature and prayer for the fast pace, mechanized ease, and immoral television of modern society, Yellowtail says Indians have lost touch with the Sun Dance, its values, and thus with the ability to achieve their spiritual and economic potential. Furthermore,

because proper practice of the Sun Dance is necessary to the world's continued existence in Crow belief, the decline of the Sun Dance portends the end of the world. Yellowtail dictated his autobiography to his adopted grandson in an effort to preserve the Sun Dance religion and Crow culture and, consequently, the world.

The three-section book tells Crow history and traditional Indian ways through Yellowtail's life, explains the Sun Dance religion and ceremony, and offers Yellowtail's prescription for an ailing society. Michael Oren Fitzgerald, Yellowtail's adopted grandson, interviewed his grandfather during a four-year span in the early 1980s. Fitzgerald proves an unobtrusive organizer, allowing his grandfather's wise, mellow character to sparkle in print.

Yellowtail, who lived from 1903 until 1988, grew up on the Crow reservation in Montana. His parents and other tribal members who experienced the "olden ways" taught him traditions that allowed him to become a medicine man and spiritual leader. Thus he links traditional Crow ways to the twentieth century and beyond.

Yellowtail emphasizes the importance of devout year-round observance of Sun Dance rituals such as daily prayer, monthly prayer meetings, and sincerity and perseverance in daily life. Through continuing commitment to the Sun Dance, Yellowtail feels the Crows and other Indians can find the moral guidance, inner peace, and personal strength to overcome their social problems.

Yellowtail's concern transcends the boundaries of the Crow reservation to include other tribes and non-Indians. Fitzgerald emphasizes this by closing each chapter with a spiritual quotation from Indian leaders, often non-Crows. Non-Indians, too, can improve their lot and the world by devoutly following a religion, according to Yellowtail.

Can spiritual healing and strong moral character overcome the social problems plaguing today's Indians and society at large? Yellowtail says they are the answers. Others might argue for education and economic development.

Regardless, Yellowtail's autobiography preserves Crow spiritual heritage and gives insight into a dynamic man and his religion.

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