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Review of *Lakotas, Black Robes, and Holy Women: German Reports from the Indian Missions in South Dakota, 1886-1900* Edited by Karl Markus Kreis

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Lakotas, Black Robes, and Holy Women: German Reports from the Indian Missions in South Dakota, 1886-1900. Edited by Karl Markus Kreis. Translated by Corinna Dally-Starna. Introduction by Raymond A. Bucko. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xvi + 303 pp. Map, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00.

The literature on Native American dispossession grows with every year, and there are times when the historiography of the American West seems in danger of becoming repetitive. *Lakotas, Black Robes, and Holy Women* addresses this problem by revealing untapped sources and new perspectives on the West as the Great Plains increasingly fell under U.S. control.

This monograph focuses on the Catholic missions in South Dakota—the Holy Rosary Mission on the Pine Ridge Reservation and the St. Francis Mission on the adjoining Rosebud Reservation—during the critical years of 1886-1900. Staffed by a handful of Jesuits and Franciscan sisters, many of whom were directly from Germany, these missionaries worked to Christianize and “civilize” the Lakotas. Teaching the young at Indian schools, and administering the sacraments to converts, the missionaries were eyewitnesses to the Ghost Dance on the Pine Ridge Reservation and the tragedy of Wounded Knee.

The structure of the book is fairly straightforward. Raymond A. Bucko, a respected anthropologist and scholar of the Lakotas—and a Jesuit himself—lays out a broad history of Catholic missions to the Lakotas, and makes a number of important observations on the intersection of faith and culture in the mission context. Following this, Karl Markus Kreis outlines the development of the Holy Rosary and St. Francis missions and their overall impact. Kreis details how changes in U.S. Indian policy shaped the Lakota missions as well as what these Catholic missionaries thought about both the U.S. government and their missionary competitors, the Episcopalians. Lakota conversions were motivated by a desire “to save souls from paganism and Protestant heresy,”

Kreis argues, and though Catholic missionaries displayed a condescending paternalism at times, their relationship with the Lakotas was amiable. Before Wounded Knee, for example, Father Johann Jutz attempted to bring the Lakotas and U.S. Army to an understanding, and, even after the massacre, the Holy Rosary Mission served as a safe haven for both parties. This overview ends on page 68; the rest of the book is a collection of primary documents, edited by Kreis and translated into English by Corinna Dally-Starna. Including annual reports, mission journals, and a German-language Catholic missionary magazine, these sources provide an excellent view of Plains life, the Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee, and the complex interrelationships among the Lakotas, Catholic and Episcopalian missionaries, and the U.S. government.

Lakotas, Black Robes and Holy Women is neither broad enough to introduce the reader to the literature, nor is Kreis’s material interpretive enough to add to the debate. The monograph serves as an excellent document reader, however: anyone interested in Wounded Knee, turn-of-the-century life in the Great Plains, or the Lakotas will appreciate the book’s primary sources. Finally, Kreis’s bibliography reveals a growing body of German-language scholarship on the Lakotas and the Great Plains. One hopes that scholars will follow Kreis’s and Dally-Starna’s work and begin to integrate the various historiographies on the American West.

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