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**Review of *Yuwipi: Vision and Experience in Oglala Ritual* By  
William K. Powers**

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*Yuwipi: Vision and Experience in Oglala Ritual.*

By William K. Powers. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982. Maps, bibliography, index. xi + 113 pp. \$13.95.

This volume provides an introduction to contemporary Lakota religious life among the Oglalas of Pine Ridge Reservation. It focuses on three basic rituals that form the core of traditional religion as individuals face the problems and challenges of day-to-day life: the sweat lodge, vision quest, and yuwipi meeting. Although written from an anthropological viewpoint, with an anthropologist's concern for ritual detail, this is a literary treatment, more descriptive than analytical. It paints a vivid picture of these contemporary rituals, recreating in novelistic detail an actual family crisis that prompted a young Oglala man to carry his concerns to a medicine man and seek spiritual renewal in the sweat lodge and vision quest. While the young man prays on a high, lonely hill that his father's health may be restored and his own life redirected on a more meaningful course, his family and friends gather with his father and the medicine man for a yuwipi meeting. In this ritual the medicine man, having made a sacred altar that concentrates the powers of the universe, is wrapped in a blanket and securely bound, to be freed in the darkened room by his spirit helpers who come to learn what the people's needs and wishes are. All present pray for the success of the boy's quest and for the father's health. Next day the boy comes down from the hill and through a final sweat lodge is made ready to rejoin the secular world.

Such a brief scenario does not do justice to the complexity of the book. The real problems of health and psychological well-being on the reservation, the harshness of reservation life,

the personal drama of the medicine man who must face loss of power as his own death approaches, and the remarkable equanimity with which the Oglalas as a people face the changing generations as they face the changing seasons, are all sensitively depicted. The author's ability to reproduce "reservation English"—mixed with Lakota—contributes a valuable tone of authenticity.

Casual readers might be misled by the impression that the sweat lodge and vision quest always accompany the yuwipi ceremony, whereas Powers has described a specific event in which all three occurred together not because it is typical, but because the juxtaposition reveals the multiple interrelationships among them. Specialists in the area will find little new in the book. Many of the ritual speeches, and this same sequence of events, have already been published in Paul B. Steinmetz, *Pipe, Bible and Peyote Among the Oglala Lakota* (1980). Since the book is written in literary style, without footnotes, it is not possible to tell what comes from the author's experiences at Pine Ridge and what is taken from the literature. Without further discussion, it is equally impossible to judge the validity of the sharp line the author draws between traditional Oglala religion and Christianity, and some will suggest that Powers's anthropological imagination predisposes him to divorce traditional Indian culture from other aspects of contemporary life in a way that Oglalas would not. It might also be suggested that Powers has focused far too narrowly on ritual behavior itself, and in so doing he has missed the ideological dynamic that motivates the continuing development of yuwipi as an expression of "the Indian way." But all this can wait for future analytical works of a more technical nature. The present volume provides a good, readable introduction to contemporary Oglala religion.

This slender volume is very attractively produced but is seriously marred by numerous typographical errors, some of which (like "pope" for "pipe" as a symbol on the yuwipi altar, p. 57) can be both jolting and confusing.

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