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Review of *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe* By Black Elk

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The Gift of the Sacred Pipe. By Black Elk. Originally recorded and edited by Joseph Epes Brown; edited and illustrated by Vera Louise Drysdale. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982. Illustrations, index. xii + 106 pp. \$29.95.

This is a beautiful coffee-table book. One wonders why a university press chose to publish it. Though the illustrations to the book are lovely and in the spirit of Black Elk's account of the major ceremonies of the Lakota people, they do not add to our scholarly understanding of those rituals. Furthermore, in editing Joseph Epes Brown's original text, Drysdale removed all footnotes and much of the technical detail concerning Lakota iconology that was included by Brown and Black Elk in the original *Sacred Pipe* (1953). As a consequence, this account of the ceremonies is readable but lacks the density, the explanatory power, and the profundity of the earlier version. What scholars

need now is not more work popularizing the beauty of precontact life, but rather, more comparative analyses of what the various holy men said about the meaning of what they were doing; more analyses of precontact and early contact art and literature in relation to the ritual and ritualistic semantic systems of the period; and serious examinations of the profound philosophies behind ritual, art, and literature. Finally, we need various analyses of the ceremonies both as statements of religious encounter with the numinous and as devices for establishing a cultural relationship to the plains. This book, beautiful as it is, will not satisfy any of these scholarly needs.

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