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Review of *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge: History and Contemporary Practice* By Raymond A. Bucko

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The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge: History and Contemporary Practice. By Raymond A. Bucko. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. Illustrations, notes, references, index. vii + 336 pp. \$40.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

Native Americans, including the Lakota of the Great Plains, are mistrustful of anthropologists. For four centuries, white explorers, settlers, and scholars have defined Native American life, culture, and values. Because these cultural records are kept in writing, people from western cultures regard them as authoritative. The result is the current tendency for readers to trust the records of a white investigator more than the spoken word of a Lakota. The mistrust Lakotas have of anthropologists is the result not only of inaccurate accounts but also the assumption that the recording authority has a "true" understanding that is more accurate than the truth of the Lakota informant.

This study of the Lakota Sweat Lodge is a welcome change in ethno-documentation. Father Bucko sets several tasks for his study. He begins, as an academic anthropologist would, with a historical analysis of the sweat

lodge ceremony using written accounts from the past three centuries. The study then turns to an analysis of contemporary Lakota understanding of the ceremony, setting the contemporary dynamics of Lakota thinking as a context. Father Bucko proceeds to examine the characteristics of the recording participants and the factors that may have affected their understandings. After considering the place of language and communication during the ceremony, he explains the thoughts and experiences of particular individuals he has encountered among the people of the Pine Ridge reservation. The study concludes with discussions of the social pressures resulting from the sweat lodge and how the ceremony creates cohesion among Lakotas as well as across racial and ethnic lines.

There is nuance in this study that verifies both the integrity of Father Bucko and the truth of his findings. He gives no recipe for this ceremony; instead he reports common trends among the several ceremonies he has attended and clarifies the Lakota practice of balancing historic tradition with contemporary exigencies to create a "traditional" ceremony. Making no secret of his status as a Catholic priest, Father Bucko accurately relates the "dual practice" of contemporary Lakotas who participate in both the Quaker Plan churches as well as historic Lakota ceremonies. The study is particularly sensitive in its refusal to identify individual Lakotas to protect both the communality of Lakota tradition as well as the privacy of informants.

The only readers likely to be disappointed with *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge* are those who do not know the tradition and only want-to-be . . . Lakota.

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