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Review of *Singing for a Spirit: A Portrait of the Dakota Sioux* By Vine Deloria Jr

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Singing for a Spirit: A Portrait of the Dakota Sioux. By Vine Deloria Jr. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 1999. Illustrations, afterword, index. 223 pp. \$24.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

This is an engaging account of one of the more prominent Yankton Sioux families by the family's most prominent contemporary scion. Saswe and Tipi Sapa (Frank and Philip Deloria) were Vine Deloria Jr.'s great grandfather and grandfather. While Saswe had been an important medicine man and a chief, his son, Tipi Sapa, followed his father's late life conversion to Christianity and became an Episcopal priest, a vocation followed in turn by his son, Vine Deloria Sr. Philip Deloria became one of the most celebrated Episcopal priests of his day, earning church-wide fame, and one of only three Americans whose statues were enshrined in the National Cathedral.

The central part of the book is a republication of a 1917 volume which had attempted to capture some of the Sioux oral traditions that had been passed down to Philip Deloria. Yet this is not merely a republication of Sarah Olden's *The People of Tipi Sapa*, but a new "critical edition" by a contemporary bearer of that same oral tradition. Thus, this Deloria has re-edited and rearranged materials in keeping with family memory—including memory of Philip Deloria's own specific criticisms of Olden's publication. Moreover, Deloria has added an eighty-seven-page introduction of fascinating historical insight into his great grandfather, grandfather, and father as well as

a brief conclusion following the Olden text. Almost all readers with interest in Indian peoples of the Dakota Territory will find this volume compelling.

Not all will be pleased, of course. Some discontent will undoubtedly come from those more faithful and romanticizing Christians and certain ethnohistorians who want to continue the Philip Deloria hagiography. They will be deeply disappointed to read the younger Deloria's interpretation of the nature of his ancestors' conversion. Embracing Christianity was genuine and provided Indian people with a "bridge" of transition from a life of freedom to their new postconquest life. Yet the people in this story found ways to reshape the missionary gospel in order to embrace their own culture and traditions. Philip Deloria, it seems, was equally fluent in "talking" Episcopalian with Episcopalians and in negotiating Yankton cultural traditions.

In Philip Deloria's old age, it was the traditional stories, culture, and lifeways of his people that captured his imagination and not the doctrines of his adopted church. Indeed, in Olden's account there is nothing at all about Tipi Sapa or Saswe's conversion to Christianity or about Tipi Sapa's service as a priest. For that history, one has to read the younger Deloria's introduction and pay attention to his annotations throughout the Olden text. By the end of his life, his grandson reports in the introduction, Tipi Sapa "began to speak out boldly in favor of the old ways."

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