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Review of *Life's Journey—Zuya: Oral Teachings from Rosebud* By Albert White Hat Sr. Compiled and edited by John Cunningham

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Life's Journey—Zuya: Oral Teachings from Rosebud. By Albert White Hat Sr. Compiled and edited by John Cunningham. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012. xxi + 186 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, illustrations, glossary, index. \$24.95 paper.

Old-style, mainline anthropologists will probably not like this book. It is certainly not old-style anthropology. It is much, much more important than that. That White Hat fails to cite any of the pertinent literature on Lakotas is much beside the point; indeed, he indicates clearly that he does not much care for all of that literature as a means for finding meaning in Lakota life. White Hat is *Sičangŭ* Lakota and writes from deep within the *Sičangŭ* Lakota traditional knowledge. That is the importance of this book. Others have also written from within the Lakota world, even interpreters or so-called medicine men like John Fire Lane Deer or Peter Catches, but again, this volume is different.

Most importantly, White Hat writes as an extremely proficient linguist who has dedicated his life to understanding the linguistic intricacies of what is, after all, his Native Lakota tongue. He not only grew up speaking the language but also dedicated much of his adult life to listening to fluent elders talk the language and talk about the language. In particular, this book records his learning about the richness of the Lakota culture and its ceremonial traditions and the intricacies of the language, learning he gained from listening to a broad array of interpreters (medicine men).

Throughout the volume, White Hat the linguist engages in a persistent process of challenging many of the conventional categories of cognition that anthropologists, missionaries, government functionaries, journalists, and others have made second nature in any interpretive discussion of Native traditions. He starts in the introduction by debunking the common modern Lakota usage of the term *Wakaŋ Taŋka*, which typically “translates as ‘Powerful Being’” as a Euro-Christian insertion into and imposition on Lakota culture, a device for describing the Euro-Christian god. At the same time, he would disabuse the reader of any idea that *wakaŋ* means sacred. The word is far

more powerful than that simple Euro-Christian designation of something related to divinity.

Missionaries used the word *wac̓ekiye* to signify the Euro-Christian idea of prayer; White Hat counters that the word actually means “to acknowledge or embrace a relative with honor and respect.” As he further explains, the missionary mistranslation of *wac̓ekiye* describes “bowing and kneeling to a supreme power, which is much different from the original meaning of acknowledging or meeting a relative.”

Even the title of the book, *zuya*, is a word that stands to be corrected in White Hat’s linguistic analysis. As most Lakota dictionaries and many Lakota people themselves might tell us, *zuya* means war, warpath, or warrior. This is another hypermilitarization of Indian peoples, in this case Lakota people, and it is an imposition of the Euro-Christian colonizers’ malignant fantasy that Lakotas themselves have internalized. White Hat reports a very different traditional meaning of the word: life’s journey. As such, it describes the typical journey of a young man investigating the world.

There is much to be learned from this book about *Sičangu* Lakota traditional knowledge, and by extension, about Indian people more generally—even though White Hat is very careful to insist that he is speaking only about his own people.

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