

Comprehensive Examination #1

Native American Religions:

The Lakota

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Introduction

Long before the First Amendment to the Constitution promised religious freedom to citizens of the United States, before the first Separatist Pilgrims fled religious persecution in England and established Plymouth Colony, even before "Columbus sailed the ocean blue" in pursuit of God, gold and glory, Native American societies throughout this continent maintained their own distinctive religious traditions. The purpose of this paper is to examine the ways in which American anthropologists have studied these religious traditions. Anthropologists outside the United States and scholars outside the discipline of anthropology have contributed to the study of the peoples and cultures indigenous to North America, but it is fair to say that American anthropologists and Native Americans have enjoyed/endured a unique relationship.

American anthropology has been built on detailed studies of the living behavior, the buried remnants of earlier periods, the vanishing complicated languages, and the remembered customs of the American Indians. . . . Had there been no American Indians American anthropology would not have been the same (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 1-2).

Native American religious traditions are both heterogeneous and holistic; there is a tremendous variety of religious beliefs and practices among Native American societies, while within each society these traditions function in a way that touches on every aspect of individual

and communal life. It would be impossible to survey this religious diversity while placing each religious tradition in cultural and historical context and also considering how these religions have been studied by American anthropologists. In order to facilitate a more focussed study, the Lakotas of present-day South Dakota will be used as a representative case study. The Lakotas have been selected because they have been the subject of a number of important studies during the past century, and because Lakota religion today is a healthy, thriving tradition whose popularity continues to grow among the Lakotas, among other Native Americans, and even among non-Indians.

I begin this paper with a brief overview of the historical and contemporary context for the study of Native American religions, and then proceed to a historical overview of the anthropological tradition as it is evident in the scholarly literature on Lakota religion. In each of the six sections, I survey the important figures and methodologies that characterize a particular theoretical school, and then I evaluate the way in which these methodologies have been applied to the study of Lakota religion. This paper is thus both a history of anthropological theory and methodology and an overview of the study of Lakota religion; though employing a historical framework and a specific case study, my primary concern is neither historical nor phenomenological, but methodological.

Put in its broadest terms, the question is this: How have anthropologists studied religion?

The Study of Native American Religions

By their very nature, Native American religions are not susceptible to many of the techniques employed when studying the dominant Western and Eastern religions. Most Native American religions developed in the context of non-literate cultures and therefore do not have traditions of written scriptures; though Western scholars have recorded volumes of stories, songs, and teachings, most surviving Native American religions continue as oral traditions. Many of these religious traditions also uphold a practice of strictly regulated secrecy in relation to certain beliefs and ceremonies, so that scholarly (or any public) discussion of these things is proscribed. Today the very existence of some Native American religions is threatened by demographic fragility, the product of a combination of historical and contemporary factors that together form the context for both the study and the practice of these religious traditions.

The Historical Context

If Christopher Columbus' first descriptions of the people who met him on the beach of San Salvador can be called "the birth of American anthropology" (Sale 1990, 96), his understanding of their religious life also typified the attitudes of Western scholars who would follow him: "I think they can easily be made Christians, for they seem to

have no religion" (Fuson 1987, 77). Early explorers, missionaries, and government agents were slow to acknowledge the diversity, the complexity, and even the existence of Native American religious traditions, and "the time is scarcely remote when white people thought there were tribes without religion in America" (Hultkrantz 1979, 1). Even many early-twentieth-century scholars believed

that primitive peoples must have the crudest religious conceptions, . . . that, the simpler the technology and social structure, the more degraded the religious, and indeed any other, conceptions; . . . It was not uncommon at the time to deny that the least culturally developed peoples had any religion at all (Evans-Pritchard 1965, 106-7).

Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa), the famous Santee Sioux physician and writer, introduced The Soul of the Indian, his attempt to describe the religious life of Native Americans, by suggesting that "the religion of the Indian is the last thing about him that the man of another race will ever understand" (Eastman 1911, x). This lack of understanding formed the basis for an extensive program of Christian missionization and government suppression of Native American religions, a program which continues today in a variety of forms.

The long process of territorial invasion and land dispossession, accompanied by widespread population destruction through both epidemic disease and military engagement, understandably affected the ability of Native American societies to maintain their religious traditions.

Hundreds of "revitalization movements" (Wallace 1956) give ample testimony to the religious impact of individual and social deprivation; the struggle for survival created a crisis of confidence in the old ways, which sometimes prompted their revitalization and other times led to their outright rejection:

During the Modoc War the strongest doctor was supposed to be Curly-headed Doctor. He took a long cord and painted it red and put it around the whole camp. He said that the federal soldiers would fall down and die if they touched the string; they would never be able to cross it. . . .

A few days later we saw soldiers coming toward our camp. . . . They shouted, "Fire," and the soldiers shot all around. They then ran over the string. The string did not kill the soldiers; Indian bullets did that. I saw it with my own eyes. After that I didn't believe any more (Margolin 1981, 174).

The United States government and a variety of Christian missionary organizations joined forces in the midst of this situation of religious and cultural crisis; their concerted effort to "Christianize and civilize" Native Americans continued the assault on indigenous religious traditions. For example, the Lakota Sun Dance was prohibited by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1881, not long after the Episcopal Church began mission work in western South Dakota and five years before Catholic priests and teachers arrived. This proscription of the central Lakota religious ceremony was not officially lifted until 1933. Though the oral tradition testifies that the Sun Dance was never eliminated entirely, its underground existence and subsequent revival

as part of an officially sanctioned annual fair threatened the vitality and integrity of the ceremony (MacGregor 1946, 91; DeMallie and Parks 1987, 75, 107, 121).

While the climate for religious freedom on reservations has improved since the implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934, demographic shifts since World War II have introduced a new challenge--urbanization--to the maintenance of Native American religious traditions. The lack of effective, long-lasting economic development on reservations has forced many Native Americans to seek employment opportunities by relocating to urban areas often far from home; more than half of all Native Americans now live in urban areas. This situation prevents many of them from participating in the religious and cultural life of their own tribe and particularly impacts young people, as new generations are born and raised away from their tribes. John Snow, Chief of the Wesley Band of Stoney (Assiniboin) Indians, believed this was one of the primary concerns for the Indian Ecumenical Conference, which was intended "to create [religious] awareness and challenge the young people. Many of our young people are now rediscovering our proud heritage" (Snow 1977, 147).

The Contemporary Context

Though this history of oppression has challenged the survival of Native American religions since the beginning of the European invasion, attitudes and practices prevalent in

contemporary American society also threaten to compromise these traditions. Images of Native Americans have played a prominent role in American popular culture since the colonial period; the Indian has been "a central figure in the New World iconography."

Nowhere was he more central than in the expressive forms of American popular culture. These oral, visual, and dramatic expressions are vital forms in American culture. They describe, codify, and present the image of the Indian while defining the set of operative values by which Anglo-Americans have approached the Native American. . . .

As these expressions acted together with events and ideas, they projected, extended, reinforced, and maintained the images of the Indian that suited the uses of the culture in any given region, time, or situation (Green 1988, 587).

The rise of the American counterculture during the 1960s was accompanied by increasing interest in issues related to spirituality and the environment. Historic images of Indians were resurrected and exploited during this period, even as many Americans saw themselves as sympathetic to the needs of Native Americans; one memorable television commercial featured Iron Eyes Cody surveying the countryside, then shedding a tear over the pollution he witnessed.

From a distance Indians looked perfect: ecologically aware, spiritual, tribal, anarchistic, drug-using, exotic, native, and wronged, the lone genuine holdouts against American conformity and success.

. . . There was a big increase in sales of books about Indians, particularly where specific spiritual or practical lore was presented, even if not always authentic (Brand 1988, 570).

Even more damaging to Native American religions has been the growing New Age movement. The declining influence of Christian churches in the United States--a reflection of the demise of "Christendom" around the world--has led to growing interest in Eastern and tribal religious traditions. For example, writers such as Carlos Castaneda and Lynn Andrews have exploited the interest in Native American spirituality for several decades by publishing "autobiographical" accounts of their experiences with Native American shamans. Castaneda and Andrews have been discredited in both the Native American community and scholarly circles, yet their writings continue to appeal to an affluent, predominantly white audience looking for a romantic and personalized alternative to the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The market for Native American spirituality has continued to grow, and during the 1980s a host of "plastic medicine men" (and women) helped make the New Age movement a growth industry. Native American religious leaders have expressed their concern over this trend for several years, prompting The Lakota Times (a prominent Native American newspaper) to begin an extensive investigation of the problem.

Lakota spirituality has become a fad to many New Age non-Indians and their naivete is being exploited to the limits by phony medicine men, to the dismay of traditional elders.

Some of these exploiters are white men--or women--who claim to be Indian. Some are actually

Indian men and women spreading false rituals for profit (Little Eagle 1991, 1).

While the followers of these religious imposters often regard themselves as among Native Americans' most sympathetic supporters, their attitudes toward Native American culture and religion are dominated by the same racist stereotypes that Evans-Pritchard has identified in the Western academic tradition.

In these theories it was assumed, taken for granted, that [whites] were at one end of the scale of human progress and the so-called savages were at the other end, . . . We are rational, primitive peoples prelogical, living in a world of dreams and make-believe, of mystery and awe; . . . we are monotheists, they fetishists, animists, pre-animists or what have you, and so on (Evans-Pritchard 1965, 105).

It is not uncommon, for example, to encounter non-Indian "New Agents" who promote themselves as traditional Native American spiritual leaders solely on the basis of having read about Native American religions and having attended a weekend seminar on the vision quest. This kind of cultural appropriation can take place only when Native Americans are viewed as "childish, crude, prodigal, and comparable to animals and imbeciles" (Evans-Pritchard 1965, 105). It is also the product of an understanding of religious freedom which believes religious authority should function on the basis of the principles of a market economy.

* * *

Despite this history of religious marginalization, oppression, and exploitation, Native Americans have

continued to assert the reality and the value of their own religious traditions. When Rev. Cram, a representative of the Boston Missionary Society, requested permission to send a minister to the Senecas in order "to instruct you how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably," Sagu-yu-what-hah (called Red Jacket by the whites) responded to him by expressing the sentiments of many Native Americans:

We are told that your religion was given to your forefathers, and has been handed down from father to son. We also have a religion, which was given to our forefathers, and has been handed down to us their children. We worship in that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion. . . . We do not wish to destroy your religion, or take it from you. We only want to enjoy our own (Washburn 1964, 213).

Nearly two hundred years later, widespread cultural revival among Native Americans would seem to indicate that they still have a religion and that they still want to enjoy it. Arthur Amiotte's view of religious life among modern-day Lakotas bears this out:

We have seen a renaissance take place recently in which the Sun Dance was returned somewhat to its formal, intensely sacred character, with many of the same restrictions and dimensions that it had in its historical setting (DeMallie and Parks 1987, 75-76).

If, like Rev. Cram, American anthropologists have carried out their research bearing their own distinctive religious understandings and presuppositions, and if Arthur Amiotte is correct in suggesting that Lakota religion is still alive and well despite all it has been through, then the question

before us is this: How have American anthropologists studied Lakota religion?

Amateur Anthropologists

While the first systematic studies of Native American cultures were not made until three centuries later, explorers and other observers began recording their impressions of Native Americans as early as the sixteenth century. These descriptive accounts were written by a variety of individuals: traders, missionaries, government agents, military personnel, travelers, settlers, white "captives," and even some Native Americans. Their writings tended to focus on what they considered to be the unusual or novel aspects of Native American life, and many of these observers were particularly interested in the religious traditions they encountered. One important source from this period is the seventy-one-volume Jesuit Relations, which consists of reports from Jesuit missionaries in New France during the years 1610-1791 (Thwaites 1896-1901).

The nineteenth-century rise of anthropology as a social scientific discipline coincided with important developments in American natural science, social theory, and political strategy. The Enlightenment-era doctrines of social progress and the psychic unity of humankind persisted, but they also became the basis for new debates about race that were prompted by the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin and the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer.

The nineteenth century was also a period of widespread American expansionism, public policy which political leaders sought to legitimize with the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. The creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1824, the opening of the Oregon Trail in 1843, the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862, and the near-extinction of the Plains buffalo by 1883 all contributed to dramatically changing conditions for Native American life, especially on the Plains, during this period (Liberty 1978, 2).

During the nineteenth century, several dedicated students of Native American culture emerged. Lewis Henry Morgan was among them; he has been called "the father of American anthropology" (Bieder 1986, 194) and a "leading social evolutionist" (Hultkrantz 1983, 6). Morgan was not a professional anthropologist but an amateur, or "someone who engages in an activity out of interest rather than for profit or advantage" (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 112). Morgan, who grew up near the Senecas of New York state, is best known today for his seminal work on the Iroquois, League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee (1851). Assisted by several Senecas including Ely S. Parker, who later became the first Native American to serve as U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Morgan undertook fieldwork in order to investigate Iroquois social organization; his methodology involved data collection "confined to five broad categories: government, people, laws, religious systems, and historical events"

(Bieder 1986, 201). Morgan's main interest lay in legal systems and their relationship to social institutions; he theorized that "a complex reciprocity existed between the mind and these institutions; the mind shaped institutions and, in turn, was shaped by institutions" (212). His interest in "religious systems" was secondary, concerned only with "the study of Iroquois beliefs in the Great Spirit, religious ceremonies, origins of evil, and burial rites" (202).

Morgan used the results of his Iroquois research as the basis for his involvement in the ongoing monogenism-polygenism debate among evolutionary theorists. Morgan was convinced that his work demonstrated the racial unity and Asiatic origin of Native Americans, and he "also believed in a teleological progress for man" (194) against those who argued for the degeneracy of Native American cultures. Though Morgan's later comparative work was dominated by his desire to find empirical proof for his theories, he still made important contributions by "recognizing the significance of kinship structures and providing an evolutionary paradigm for late nineteenth-century ethnology" (194). Morgan's tendency to generalize from particulars was typical of many nineteenth-century ethnologists, who often neglected close examination of the differences between tribes; this habit is clearly evident in League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, where Morgan repeatedly identifies

features of Iroquois culture as representative of "Indian" life.

The first detailed accounts of Lakota religion and culture were published during the mid-nineteenth century by Mary Eastman (1849), James W. Lynd (1864), and Stephen R. Riggs (1869). Though most of his research was performed during the first part of the twentieth century, James R. Walker's work among the Lakotas ranks him among the leading amateur anthropologists. Walker entered government service as an agent and physician in 1877 and was assigned as the agency physician at Pine Ridge in 1896. His initial efforts at treating widespread tuberculosis brought him into contact with Lakota medicine men and spurred his interest in religion. For the next eighteen years Walker spent much of his free time listening to Lakota medicine men, asking them questions, and recording their responses and stories. A 1902 visit to Pine Ridge by the anthropologist Clark Wissler resulted in a cooperative relationship and led to the publication of some of Walker's texts, but Walker also continued to pursue his own research agenda (DeMallie and Jahner in Walker 1980, 4-14). Walker received valuable assistance in recording and translating the texts from several literate Lakotas, including George Bushotter, Thomas Tyon and George Sword.

Walker retired to his Colorado ranch in 1914 and completed his monograph on the sun dance, which he

envisioned as a definitive, synthetic account of the ceremony as it might be carried out under ideal conditions. "In all his studies he attempted to compile an authoritative, composite picture of Oglala culture" (18), and to do so in a way that represented an emic perspective; he was "determined to know the Indian from the Indian point of view" (Walker 1980, 7). Walker believed that Lakota religion revolves around ceremony, so that "a thorough description of the Sun-dance would be an almost complete mythology of the Oglala Titons [sic]" (27). Walker's account of the sun dance is also unique in that his approach to the task included an attempt at describing the symbolic meanings behind various ceremonial activities. The 1917 monograph reads like an instruction manual, with repeated mention of what "should" happen. Walker then turned his attention to a compilation of Lakota mythology, "the ultimate synthesis and systematization of the Oglala world view" (DeMallie and Jahner in Walker 1980, 42). Though he died before completing it, the unfinished manuscript is nevertheless a remarkable literary effort.

Walker's "literary cycle" and many of his other papers--notes, interviews, texts, letters--have been published recently in three substantive volumes. Lakota Belief and Ritual (1980) includes Walker's interviews with a variety of Lakotas as well as previously untranslated narratives recorded in Lakota by Thomas Tyon. Lakota

Society (1982) encompasses materials on social organization and activities that were the by-product of Walker's interest in religion and resulted from Wissler's desire for information about kinship structure. Lakota Myth (1983) brings together a wide range of narratives from a variety of sources, including Walker's synthesis of Lakota mythology. Though Walker's work was marred by the social evolutionary presuppositions which guided him, he made important contributions to the study of Lakota religion as a result of his self-conscious involvement in Lakota life. The professionalization of anthropology resulted in valuable methodological developments, but Walker's research demonstrated that in some cases "there are amateurs' accounts which reveal a deeper insight into aboriginal religion than the works of their professional colleagues" (Hultkrantz 1983, 8).

The Institutionalization of Anthropological Research

While amateurs like Morgan and Walker were engaged in their own individual studies of Native American cultures, other developments during the nineteenth century contributed to the institutionalization of anthropological research. Professional societies, museums, and geographical surveys took on increasing importance in the emergence of anthropology as a distinct social scientific discipline; they supported the research of the first generation of professional anthropologists, who were necessarily self-

educated. Albert Gallatin, an amateur who earlier had accomplished the first comprehensive classification of Native American languages, founded the American Ethnological Society in 1842 (Bieder 1986, 16). Congress established the Smithsonian Institution in 1846, which sponsored Morgan's comparative study of kinship systems and later became the home of the Bureau of American Ethnology. The American Museum of Natural History was founded in 1868 and rose to prominence under the leadership of Franz Boas beginning in 1895 (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 152-53, 276-77).

Continuing westward expansion, stimulated by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, prompted a series of expeditions and surveys intended to explore newly claimed lands in the trans-Mississippi West. These geographic surveys collected information on the natural history of these regions and on the Native Americans who had lived in them for centuries; the surveys were conducted even as the U. S. military fought the "Indian wars" and established the reservation system. Major John Wesley Powell, a Civil War veteran and accomplished explorer and geologist, led one of the most important American explorations of the West, the 1867 Colorado River expedition. When Congress chartered the U. S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1879, it formalized the division between (government-sponsored) geological and ethnological research, and Powell

was named the first director of the BAE (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 153-54).

"The BAE was Powell's personal creation," so it understandably "emerged from the Survey tradition . . . The BAE was to be a permanent anthropological survey" (Hinsley 1981, 147). Powell's experience in the field had made him aware of the effects that invasion and dispossession were having on Native American societies, and he believed that the rapid destruction of traditional cultures called for an extensive program of what was later called salvage ethnography. He also had some interest in theorizing about historical migration and cultural diffusion, so that from its very inception the BAE "blended the historical and classificatory orientations that had coexisted for decades within American anthropology" (150).

Powell drew simultaneously on two anthropological traditions, one from the natural sciences, the other deriving from . . . moral philosophy. . . . The scientific premium of the survey lay on discovery and description. . . .

In contrast to the believer in the natural-science survey, the conjectural historian sought an all-embracing account of man's mental, social, and moral evolution based on comparative observations and organized in various series of stages (152-54).

Powell viewed Native Americans through the lens of a "crude unilinear evolutionism" which described cultural development as a progression from savagism through barbarism to civilization (Hultkrantz 1983, 9-10); he was a better administrator than ethnologist, and the most lasting contribution of the early BAE was his "Classification of

American Indian Languages," published in 1891 as the Eighth Annual Report (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 155). Other annual reports included a series of tribal monographs, many of them on tribes in the Southwest and the Plains, which remain an important resource for the study of Native American religions (Hultkrantz 1983, 10).

The first professional anthropologist to study Lakota religion was Alice C. Fletcher, who wrote about the Pine Ridge sun dance in 1883 and several other ceremonies in 1884. Fletcher was followed by James Owen Dorsey, whose "encyclopedic survey" of "Siouan Cults" was published in 1894 as the Eleventh Annual Report of the BAE. Dorsey worked as a missionary among the Poncas during the 1870s but joined the BAE at its founding (DeMallie and Jahner in Walker 1980, 56). Working under Powell's direction, Dorsey conducted fieldwork among several Plains tribes, though his chapter on "Dakota and Assiniboin cults" relied on published literature and manuscript materials, which in 1894 already included sixteen citations. In 1887 Dorsey worked with Bushotter, who provided Dorsey with 258 manuscripts and sketches (Hinsley 1981, 174); like Walker after him, Dorsey synthesized these texts into "an arrangement of the material after translating it" (Dorsey 1894, 451). For the balance of the monograph he relied on "statements made by Indians"; he was convinced that "it is safer to let the Indian tell his own story in his own words than to endeavor to question

in such a manner as to reveal what answers are desired or expected" (361, 365).

The BAE's continuing interest in linguistic analysis is evident in Dorsey's concern for terminology, especially as it related to ongoing debates over theistic beliefs and attitudes toward supernatural phenomena among Native Americans (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 154). Dorsey defined a "cult" as "a system of religious belief and worship, especially the rites and ceremonies employed in such worship" (Dorsey 1894, 361). Making use of an anecdotal style, Dorsey produced a wide-ranging survey of Lakota religion. In the concluding chapter of his study he made a preliminary attempt at a comparative analysis of his findings, though throughout his career he refused to theorize from the ethnographic data (Hinsley 1981, 175).

Dorsey ended his monograph by remarking that "Since the present article was begun there has arisen the so-called 'Messiah craze' among the Dakota and other tribes of Indians," a phenomenon he did not feel "competent to describe" (Dorsey 1894, 544). At this point in his career Dorsey preferred to spend his time in the BAE's Washington office, so Powell sent James Mooney, a young and energetic fieldworker, west in order to investigate the Ghost dance and its relationship to the "Sioux outbreak" at Pine Ridge. Mooney visited many of the tribes and individuals involved in the movement, including the messiah Wovoka, and recorded

all of the movement's songs (DeMallie and Jahner in Walker 1980, 56). His report was thorough and multidisciplinary; by placing the Ghost dance in the context of Lakota history and religion and by considering social and psychological factors involved in the rise of the movement, Mooney anticipated future developments in anthropological theory (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 257).

The American Ethnographic Tradition

The period of 1880-1920 has been called "the Golden Age" of American anthropology and became its "classical period" (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 11) largely because of the efforts of one person, Franz Boas. Through his leadership role in the professionalization of anthropological societies, museums, and university departments as well as through his own extensive fieldwork, Boas singlehandedly turned anthropology into an acknowledged scientific discipline; "with Boas, anthropology had come of age" (Harris 1968, 252). Boas trained nearly every important American anthropologist working in the first half of the twentieth century: Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Edward Sapir, Melville Herskovits, Paul Radin, Clark Wissler, Leslie Spier and Ruth Bunzel among others.

The image of Boas which had the greatest appeal to his students was that of a professional scientist who had raised anthropological research methods and standards of proof to a level with which even a physicist would feel comfortable (252).

"For Margaret Mead, Boas was 'the man who made anthropology a science'" (252).

Boas came to North America in 1888, where his first field research dealt with religion among several Northwest Coast tribes. In 1893 he supervised the arrangement of the ethnological collections at the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, then became Curator of Ethnology at the American Museum of Natural History. His approach to this work foreshadowed his later contributions to anthropological methodology; his principle of arrangement

marked a departure in museum technique by grouping together--stressing ethnic rather than typological connections--all the materials from one tribe or one area to illustrate a way of life (Mead and Bunzel 1960, 305).

Boas continued periodic fieldwork and in 1899 became the first professor of anthropology at Columbia University, where he pursued his vision of the emerging discipline. He initiated a radical revision of the way anthropologists approached tribal societies by suggesting that each culture must be understood as a complex, integral whole. A hallmark of Boas's methodology was his multidisciplinary approach; he believed that any scholarly perspective--historical, sociological, psychological--is useful if it contributes to achieving a total understanding of a culture.

His students steadfastly denied that Boas was the leader of a "school," though "the label historical particularism has come to be associated with the Boasian

period" (Harris 1968, 250). Boas's methodology was historical in the sense that he emphasized the importance of diffusion in understanding how cultures develop and change.

To sum up the whole situation it seems to me that there are three questions that should be answered in all anthropological investigations. First, how does a culture come to be what it is at the present time? Second, how does the culture as it exists at the present time determine the life of the people, and how do individuals influence the culture? And third, how far is it possible to recognize tendencies to future development in the present status of the culture? (Boas in Helm 1966, 208-9)

His methodology was particularistic in that he consistently eschewed the temptation to theorize or to generalize on the anthropological data in any way; ethnography was "an exactly idiographic description of tribal societies" (La Barre 1971, 3).

[I]t seems justifiable to question whether any generalized conclusions may be expected that will be applicable everywhere and that will reduce the data of anthropology to a formula which may be applied in every case, explaining its past and predicting its future. . . .

Cultural phenomena are of such complexity that it seems to me doubtful whether valid cultural laws can be found. The causal conditions of cultural happenings lie always in the interaction between individual and society, and no classificatory study of societies will solve this problem. . . .

In short, the material of anthropology is such that it needs to be a historical science, one of the sciences the interest of which centers in the attempt to understand the individual phenomena rather than in the establishment of general laws which, on account of the complexity of the material, will be necessarily vague and, we might also say, so self-evident that they are of little help to a real understanding (Boas 1932 in Mead and Bunzel 1960, 589-90).

Though he published more than five thousand pages on the Kwakiutl, Boas never produced a comprehensive analysis of Kwakiutl culture (Goldman 1980, 334-35).

Boas made other important methodological contributions to anthropological research. He realized that an emic perspective on any culture is impossible without the use of the native language, and "he was the first anthropologist to train an informant to record cultural information in the informant's own language" (Helm 1966, 211). Understandably, Boas's primary interest concerning religion lay in mythology. He was responsible for the publication of "a treasure of Indian myths" through the American Folklore Society, which he helped found in 1888 (Hultkrantz 1983, 19), and one of the few comparative studies he produced during his career was an article on mythology and folklore (Boas 1915). By the end of his career Boas had produced more than seven hundred articles in all four of the traditional fields of anthropology: ethnology, linguistics, physical anthropology and archaeology. With his strong emphasis on an empirical foundation for anthropological research, Boas marked a sharp division between American and European theorists, and his redefinition of the goals of the discipline signaled the transition to cultural anthropology from the evolutionary perspective of the nineteenth century.

The Plains tribes were the focus of much of the salvage ethnography initiated by Boas, and several of Boas's

students conducted research on Lakota religion and culture. In 1905 Boas was succeeded at the American Museum of Natural History by his protege Clark Wissler, whose first major project was "a prolonged and systematic survey" of societies of the Plains tribes (Wissler 1912, v). Wissler demonstrated his commitment to the Boasian tradition when he outlined the methodology used in this survey. Earlier scholars

formulated general explanatory theories for the origin of all primitive societies . . . Our method, however, has been empirical, beginning first with the collection of data irrespective of these general points of view, followed by their publication in the form and order of accumulation; then in turn subjecting these individual reports to comparative analysis. Our ideal has been, first of all, the gathering of adequate data and its presentation in full detail for each tribal group (v).

Wissler's 1907 article on Lakota mythology consists of the texts of ten myths recorded at Pine Ridge and includes no comparative or theoretical analysis. But the Plains survey was also influenced by the emerging culture-area concept that has come to be identified with Wissler.

This study was originally projected on the assumption that as a whole these organizations of the Plains Indians were a phenomenon of culture diffusion and that a close analytic study of them in detail would reveal the approximate places and relative times of their origins (vii).

Wissler's 1912 monograph on Lakota societies and ceremonial associations includes ethnographic data on men's societies, feast and dance associations, and dream cults. At the conclusion of the survey, which produced monographs on

fifteen different Plains tribes, Wissler (1916) contributed a brief comparative analysis of the data, though he was careful to acknowledge the incomplete, tentative nature of such interpretations.

Other Boas students who worked among the Lakotas were Frances Densmore, who published an important compilation of ceremonial songs and narratives in 1918, and Ella Deloria, a member of the Yankton Sioux tribe. Deloria studied under Boas at Columbia University and then collaborated with him on several projects related to Lakota linguistics. She devoted much of her career to working with Walker's materials. Deloria's first article on Lakota religion was a revision of a sun dance narrative written by George Sword and originally published by Walker in 1917 (Deloria 1929); she corrected some typographical problems and provided the original Lakota text as well as literal and free translations. In 1932 she published sixty-four Lakota "tales," again with Lakota texts and translations which she arranged in four groups according to the way in which Lakotas categorize them. This collection includes stories about the trickster Iktomi and other mythological characters that are "part of the common literary stock of the people" (1932, ix). Deloria's most important joint publication with Boas was the definitive Dakota Grammar (1941), for which she functioned as both researcher and informant. "Her major work on Sioux religion (which was not quite finished before

her death in 1971) has not yet been published" (DeMallie and Jahner in Walker 1980, 59).

Although twentieth-century anthropology has witnessed the rise of a variety of methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives since the Boasian period, the distinctly American tradition of ethnographic description has continued to form the foundation of anthropological research. Stephen E. Feraca, a Columbia University graduate student during the 1950s, conducted fieldwork during five summers at Pine Ridge and published a survey of Lakota religious practices (1963). He was one of the first anthropologists to write about yuwipi and about the presence of the Native American Church (the peyote religion) among the Lakotas, and also one of the first to acknowledge the survival of many Lakota religious ceremonies during the reservation period. Feraca's research focussed on traditional ceremonies and medicine, and he concluded that "no one other ceremonial of Teton Dakota culture is as characteristic of that culture as is the Sun Dance" (11). Though his monograph is uneven and is marred by a consistently superficial understanding of and appreciation for Lakota religion and culture, Feraca's comprehensive view of reservation life reflected an important shift in anthropological attitudes about "real Indians": the days of salvage ethnography are past, and contemporary Native Americans have been deemed an acceptable subject of

anthropological study. Feraca demonstrated the influence of another post-Boasian development when he suggested that his research might be useful for government personnel "and ethnologists engaged in applied anthropology" (vii).

The most recent ethnography of the Lakotas is Elizabeth Grobsmith's 1981 study of the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. Grobsmith acknowledged that

the Sioux are probably one of the best documented tribes in native North America. Unlike many tribes whose language and culture are only vaguely known, nearly every aspect of Lakota life--ritual, tradition, language--has been recorded and preserved (ix).

Nevertheless, her account is a valuable contribution to the literature because it presents a balanced and perceptive view of contemporary reservation life. Grobsmith discussed the cultural and historical context for her study and then surveyed community life, religion, language and education. Her approach to religion was free from the materialist skepticism so common to anthropological interpretation, which allowed her to consider the complexity of Lakota religious identity without preconceived notions about what Lakota religion is.

Since the introduction of Christianity over a century ago, religious practices of the Lakota have been described as either Christian or native. While there may have been real differences between the two belief systems in the past, the space between them--both physical and conceptual--grows smaller and smaller. It is no longer accurate to interpret religious activity in this "either/or" manner. The compatibility and articulation of the two religious systems--Christianity and native religion--has been a source of great speculation and conjecture ever

since the two systems came into contact. Some scholars claim that Lakota today participate simultaneously in two separate religious systems. Others claim that modern Lakota religion is a syncretic phenomenon, that is, that elements of native religion have merged with Christianity to produce a single unique religion. Still others suggest that modern Lakota participate in both native and Christian worship, but that each system contains numerous elements of the other.

For the Lakota at Rosebud, all of these characterizations are valid (61).

Life Histories

Earlier in his career Boas had focussed on the problem of historical reconstruction in tribal cultures, but by 1910 he was giving more specific attention to the relationship between society and the individual. As he put it in 1935, "how does the culture as it exists at the present time determine the life of the people, and how do individuals influence the culture?" (Boas in Helm 1966, 208-9) Some Boasians continued to work on the research questions formulated earlier by Boas, including diffusion and historical reconstruction (Waal Malefijt 1968, 92-102). But the growing awareness of the importance of the individual in understanding culture influenced many of Boas's students and led to the development of new research methodologies. Paul Radin pioneered the use of biography in understanding cultural history, while Ruth Benedict developed a psychological approach to ethnology that has come to be known as the culture and personality school (Harris 1968, 299).

Radin is best known for his research among the Winnebagos and for his controversial interpretations of Plains religion and culture; though it was not his only interest, Radin specialized in the study of religion more than any other Boasian did (Hultkrantz 1983, 24-27). He placed primary emphasis on oral traditions and the literary documents that could be produced from them. His monograph on Winnebago life (1923) gives little attention to material culture and is devoted instead to narratives: myths, stories, songs, prayers and speeches. Even religious ceremonies are described through narrative accounts. "In short, the book was written as if Winnebago culture consisted solely of oral literature and religious beliefs" (Hultkrantz 1983, 26-27).

Radin was convinced that "to do [cultural] history properly, one must study individuals" (Harris 1968, 299), which means specific men and women in a particular time and place. The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian (1920) is generally considered to be the first full life history of a Native American and represented a new genre of anthropological literature. The book surveys the life of Crashing Thunder, a Winnebago man who was born before the reservation period and who had actively participated in both Winnebago traditional religion and peyotism. Radin recognized the limitations of anthropological research conducted by an outsider, for whom it is impossible to

obtain "an inside view of [the natives'] culture from their own lips and by their own initiative."

For a long time most ethnologists have realized that the lack of "atmosphere" in their descriptions is a very serious and fundamental defect, and that this defect could only be properly remedied by having a native himself give an account of his particular culture (383).

Crashing Thunder used a Winnebago syllabary to write his autobiography, which was then translated by his younger brother and edited by Radin, who was proficient in the Winnebago language. Radin also supplied explanatory notes that place the autobiography in historical, cultural and religious context. Like most Native American autobiographies, Crashing Thunder's account contains "a mixture of narrative and cultural essay" (Smith 1975, 238).

The life histories of several Lakotas have been recorded; among the most noteworthy are several books based on the life and teachings of the holy man Black Elk. Black Elk was born in 1862 and fought against the U. S. Cavalry at Little Bighorn and at Wounded Knee. He knew many famous Lakota leaders--Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, American Horse--and was instructed in the sacred ways by Elk Head, Keeper of the Sacred Pipe (Brown 1953, xiv). John G. Neihardt met Black Elk in 1930 and conducted interviews with him in 1931 and 1944, while Joseph Epes Brown met and interviewed him in 1947; both reported that Black Elk had anticipated their coming and wanted their assistance in recording "his Great Vision" (Black Elk in Neihardt 1972,

xii) and "the sacred things before they all passed away" (Brown 1953, xiv; see also DeMallie 1984, xvii). Though neither Neihardt nor Brown was an anthropologist, their books have been used--and misused--for a variety of purposes by both scholars and the general public and are a prominent part of the literature on Lakota religion.

As a poet, Neihardt made no attempt to present Black Elk's accounts as ethnographic texts; he believed that his function was "to re-create in English the mood and manner of the old man's narrative," which meant giving it "form, coherence, and chronology" (Neihardt 1972, xii, 236). After Black Elk Speaks (1932) achieved widespread popularity during the 1960s, questions about Neihardt's ambiguous role in the editorial process led to closer scrutiny of the "authenticity" of the book. The recent publication of the transcripts from the original interviews with Black Elk has helped to resolve this controversy while also raising new and interesting questions about "as-told-to" autobiographies (DeMallie 1984). Black Elk and Neihardt were assisted by Black Elk's son Benjamin, who acted as interpreter, and Neihardt's daughters, who took shorthand and typewritten notes; several of Black Elk's old friends also participated in the interviews. In what sense can a narrative be considered autobiographical if it has been recorded, transcribed, translated, edited and explained by others and if its subject is not able to read the published text? Even

DeMallie, in reconstructing the interview manuscripts, was forced to make a number of editorial decisions (xxiv-xxvi).

Despite these problems, Neihardt's books remain an important resource on Lakota religion. Black Elk Speaks outlines the role of the individual in Lakota religious life and places the Ghost Dance movement in the context of Lakota religious history, while When the Tree Flowered (Neihardt 1951) includes a number of Lakota myths (DeMallie and Jahner in Walker 1980, 59). The Sacred Pipe (Brown 1953) is Black Elk's account of the coming of the White Buffalo Calf Woman and the seven rites of the Lakotas. Neither Neihardt nor Brown acknowledged the fact that Black Elk was also an active Catholic catechist during the period of their interviews, but these three books still provide a useful survey of traditional Lakota religion from the perspective of one of the more prominent holy men. Vine Deloria, Jr., has gone so far as to suggest that they constitute "the central core of a North American Indian theological canon" (Deloria in Neihardt 1979, xiv).

The Culture and Personality School

While Radin and some of his contemporaries were exploring the uses of biographical narrative in understanding cultural history, ethnology was also expanding to incorporate other methodologies and theoretical perspectives. Ruth Benedict, one of Boas's leading students and his successor as acting Chair of the Department of

Anthropology at Columbia University, was largely responsible for the application of psychological perspectives to the study of culture (Harris 1968, 402). Her book Patterns of Culture (1934) outlined a comparative methodology for viewing cultures as "personality writ large" (vii). While the book has been criticized for its selective and flawed interpretation of the ethnographic data, it was very popular with the general public and brought the concept of culture into common usage.

Benedict shared Boas's historical particularist approach to ethnography, and with him she recognized the tension between a culture and the individuals who compose it (253-54). She also acknowledged that "the facts of diffusion" are the "point of departure" for understanding how specific cultural traits come to be incorporated into a culture (242). But Benedict wanted

to find some integrating principle that would explain both the disparate origins of the elements of which a culture was built and the wholeness which she felt was there in each culture. (Mead 1959 in Harris 1968, 402).

Because she believed that "a culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action" (Benedict 1934, 46), her "integrating principle" was the description of a culture in terms of one or two primary psychological types, the "configuralist approach" (Harris 1968, 398). Benedict argued that as cultures develop they continuously choose from a selection of

behavioral traits; their choices reflect the culture's psychological type and together form a more or less integrated culture. Her interpretation emphasized "a culture's strain toward consistency" (401) and "the idea 'that culture is not an aggregate of traits, but is meaningfully structured in and through organizing patterns'" (Hultkrantz 1983, 63). Unfortunately, the application of psychological theories to the study of religion often led to reductionism: "myths were wishful dreams, beliefs were projections of personality disorders, and rituals were mechanisms for the release of anxiety" (61).

While Benedict's behaviorist approach was the first full-scale application of psychology to the study of culture, the culture and personality school also incorporated other developing psychological theories, especially after World War II. During this period several anthropologists conducted psychological studies of Lakota life. Gordon MacGregor (1946) led a team of anthropologists and other scholars in a study "to determine the nature of Sioux personality" (11). Their "method of socio-psychological analysis" (9) was to study two hundred Lakota school-age children using a battery of Western psychological instruments including intelligence tests, projective tests, and personal interviews and examinations (215-19). This study "operated on the thesis that personality and individual development are the resultants of the interaction

of a number of complex processes": organic processes of the body, psychological processes, and social processes operating in the environment (12). A chapter on "Power, Ceremony, and Church" surveys contemporary religious practices and offers an explanation of them in psychological and functional terms. While one of the goals of the study was to understand how "long-enduring and intense cultural disruptions may be reflected in disturbances of behavior and personality organization" (12), MacGregor's book concludes with chapters entitled "Looking Beneath the Surface" and "Outlook for the Future" that make no reference to the pervasive influence of white racism in creating "cultural disruptions."

One of MacGregor's primary collaborators was Royal B. Hassrick, whose book The Sioux (1964) was an attempt at a historical reconstruction of Lakota life "as it was in the era of its greatest vigor and renown," 1830-70 (ix). Hassrick relied on oral tradition and written accounts to produce a collective, historical account of Lakota culture, but one also dominated by psychological analysis.

Emphasis is laid in the following chapters on Sioux thought and concept, for men are and become in great measure what they think and want themselves to be. Hence what they conceive and how they interpret and rationalize this conceptualization can give insight into what they really are (x).

This last phrase, "what they really are," is an important clue to understanding Hassrick's methodological perspective, which relies on the Gestalt school for its theory of

personality development. The book begins by considering the social and moral organization Lakota life, discusses various aspects of Lakota religion and culture including chapters on cosmology and ceremonies, and concludes with a chapter on "The Individual and the Sioux Way."

In the late-1960s the Indian Health Service sponsored a study of the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation as part of its Community Mental Health Program (Maynard and Twiss 1969). Eileen Maynard, an anthropologist, sought to use demographic and socio-economic data "to suggest some of the causative factors involved in socio-psychological problems confronting the Oglalas" (4). Though the study surveyed several dimensions of Lakota life--history, economics, education, health, social organization, personality disorders--it did not explore the relationship between religion and mental health.

Structuralism

American anthropologists received much of their theoretical orientation during the nineteenth century from European scientific and social thought, but after 1920 the interests and approaches of European anthropology and its American counterpart went their separate ways. This was not the end of the European contribution to American anthropology, however, and several leading European theorists have continued to influence the study of Native American religions and cultures. The culture and

personality school owed much of its theoretical basis to Sigmund Freud and his psychological interpretation of human behavior. During the same period, Emile Durkheim pioneered an approach to social anthropology that focussed on social structure. Like Boas in the United States, Durkheim brought French social science into the twentieth century, and his ideas became the basis for two modern anthropological schools: British social anthropology (functionalism), which is often associated with A. R. Radcliffe-Brown; and French structuralism, which developed partly as a response to functionalism and whose leading theorist was Claude Levi-Strauss (Harris 1968, 464-65). Whereas Radcliffe-Brown believed that social structure consists of a set of readily observable relationships which are expressed in the mutual interactions of individuals in society, Levi-Strauss understood social structure to be "a model of the human mind," a transformation of unconscious patterns and motivations (Leach 1987, 55). This theoretical perspective is outlined in Structural Anthropology (Levi-Strauss 1963).

Structuralism as an approach to cultural analysis has been the subject of much controversy, partly because Levi-Strauss's theoretical formulation is vague and open to interpretation, partly because "in practice, the procedure is intuitive" and highly subjective (60). Levi-Strauss relied on a linguistic analogy to argue that culture is similar to phonology in that it can be analyzed as a set of

binary oppositions which reflect hidden mental structures. Culture is a human invention, "but what is made is a projection of the structure which already exists in the maker's mind" (56), which Levi-Strauss assumed to be a human universal. He was impressed by "the astounding similarity between myths collected in widely different regions," and he devoted much of his attention to the cross-cultural (and decontextualized) analysis of myths in order to demonstrate their common meanings (Levi-Strauss 1955 in Lessa and Vogt 1979, 187). The structural approach can also be applied to the analysis of ritual, social organization, architecture, or any other non-verbal element of culture, though one of the main problems with this methodology is that there are no formal rules to guide the process of identifying distinctive features and the binary oppositions they represent. Structuralist method is most useful "when it is able to show that contrasted patterns in very different aspects of the same cultural system are logically consistent transformations/transpositions of the same abstract structure of ideas" (Leach 1987, 57). Like many social theorists before him, Levi-Strauss believed that his method of analysis is best suited for "primitive" societies because they are culturally "static" (58).

American anthropologist William K. Powers has conducted research among the Lakotas for more than thirty years and has published five books (one of which is

dedicated to Levi-Strauss) and numerous articles on Lakota religion and culture. Powers believes that structuralism is "the perfect lens through which to view human behavior" as part of "a prism of theories and methods," though he acknowledges that its controversial nature makes it appropriate only for "brave souls" (1987, xiii-xiv). While Powers agrees with Levi-Strauss that form is more important than content in cultural analysis, he departs from the conventional structuralist position in suggesting that deep mental structures are not necessarily hidden from their bearers. He contends that

Native Americans in many ways agree naturally with many of the principles of structural methodology and theory, more than any other school of thought. It has been sometimes difficult in my own work really to differentiate between structural analysis, and what the Lakota--without benefit of training in structuralism or anthropology--treat as their own native exegesis of their cultural behaviors. . . . [I]n their explanations of culture in their own language they perceive the world very much as a structuralist does. . . . [Structural principles] are, in Lakota philosophy, an accurate description of the way the universe works (xvi-xvii).

While Powers intends these comments to strengthen his case for the validity of structuralism, it would seem that he is actually refuting one of the primary objectives of structural analysis--the uncovering of unconscious patterns and motivations--by suggesting that this interpretation of Lakota life is roughly equivalent to an emic perspective.

In Powers's first book, Oglala Religion (1977), he argues that the structural approach is the best way to

understand how the Lakotas have maintained their distinct cultural identity despite seemingly overwhelming assimilationist pressure. This method requires the consideration of both continuity and change as "two aspects of the same phenomenon," namely, the process by which cultures transmit themselves in a bicultural context (xii). Powers's central thesis is that while the social relations within Lakota society have changed during the reservation period, the social structure has not. He suggests that the basic Lakota social structure is a pattern of tetradic (a set of four elements), dyadic (two), and monadic (one) components of a heptadic (seven) structure, which he finds replicated throughout Lakota life: in their language, in their sociopolitical organization, in their kinship relations, and in their myths and rituals (170). Powers argues that this structural pattern was evident in their system of sociopolitical organization during pre-contact times (before 1700), but that this structure is now expressed through contemporary Lakota religion. Unfortunately, his reconstruction of sociopolitical organization is based on nineteenth-century secondary sources, and earlier primary sources indicate different forms of organization; "in short, the heptadic configuration Powers supposes to be constant since 1700 is arbitrary and speculative" (Fowler 1979, 405).

Powers has a comprehensive view of Lakota religion and a good appreciation for the complexity and diversity of contemporary religious identities. He is one of the few anthropologists studying Native American religions who has attempted to understand the phenomenon of biculturalism without recourse to the concept of syncretism, suggesting instead the idea of dual religious participation (1987, 94-125). His narrative account of a yuwipi curing ritual is the first book-length study of this important religious practice (1982). It is a detailed description of the ceremony and is written with "a sense of experientiality" (x-xi); his effort to present a complete, idealized account of yuwipi brings to mind Walker's synthesis of the sun dance. Powers's later books on religious language (1986), religion and culture (1987) and music and dance (1990) address various aspects of contemporary Lakota religion and introduce some helpful theoretical formulations: intertribalism as a more accurate term for pan-Indianism (1987, 151), vitalization as a better description of post-IRA tribal cultures than revival or revitalization (1990, 159), and reservationist as an approach to research that is more appropriate than preservationist (salvage ethnography) (4).

* * *

Several other recent books on Lakota religion deserve mention before concluding this survey. Marla N. Powers, the

wife of William, has studied the role of women in Lakota society, focussing especially on their relationship to myth and ritual (1986). Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine considered some of the same questions in their regional study of Plains Indian women (1983). Thomas H. Lewis, a psychiatrist, worked with and interviewed several Pine Ridge medicine men during the 1960s and has just published his interpretation of Lakota medicine from the perspective of medical anthropology (1990). Paul B. Steinmetz, S.J., worked as a missionary priest at Pine Ridge for twenty years and has published an interpretation of Lakota religious diversity that employs the phenomenological methodology of Mircea Eliade (1990). Finally, two anthologies on the Lakota contain important articles on contemporary Lakota religion and culture (Nurge 1970, DeMallie and Parks 1987).

Summary and Conclusions

This survey of leading figures in the anthropological tradition and of the scholarly literature on the Lakotas makes it clear that the ways in which American anthropologists have studied Lakota religion have reflected, to a large degree, the theoretical and methodological interests of their respective historical eras. To put it another way, the anthropological literature on Lakota religion and culture may tell us more about American anthropologists than it does about the Lakotas. This very theme was addressed in 1984 at a symposium sponsored by the

American Ethnological Society, "Social Contexts of American Ethnology, 1840-1984," at which the symposium organizer pointed out the need for anthropologists to consider their own "tribal history" (Helm 1985, 2). Let us briefly review, in chronological order, the major figures in the study of Lakota religion.

Dorsey and Mooney worked at the end of the nineteenth century and were among the first professional anthropologists to enjoy institutional sponsorship. Dorsey recognized the importance of language and focussed on questions of terminology and categories, especially with relation to the "high god" debate and ceremonial practices. Mooney engaged in a multidisciplinary study of the Ghost Dance movement, recording narratives, beliefs, songs, and ceremonies while also placing the movement in historical and cultural context. Both Dorsey and Mooney combined limited fieldwork with bibliographic research as they developed their own theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Walker was the archetypal amateur, whose personal interest and tribal focus helped him to penetrate the symbolic meanings in Lakota religion, which he believed revolves around ceremony. He spent eighteen years working with medicine men and other individuals and later synthesized their narratives and writings into idealized accounts of the sun dance and the mythic cycle. Walker was assisted (at a distance) by Wissler, one of the first

Boasians and a committed proponent of the ethnographic tradition. Wissler envisioned ethnology as an empirical science and disliked Walker's synthesizing methodology, though he shared his interest in ceremonial societies and myths. Another prominent Boasian was Deloria, who worked with Walker's texts and recorded other myths and stories as part of her more general interest in language.

Neihardt and Brown worked outside the ranks of professional anthropology but reflected the growing interest in biography as a source of cultural history. Like Walker, Neihardt was more concerned to interpret the meaning of Black Elk's narratives than simply to transcribe them. Neihardt's text presented religious history and myths, while Brown documented the seven rites of the Lakota with only minimal editorial involvement. Both implicitly raised questions about the role of the individual in religious life, and both also explicitly chose to ignore Black Elk's involvement with the Catholic church at the time of their interviews.

MacGregor introduced the use of socio-psychological analysis in studying Lakota religion. His study of two hundred children marked a shift of emphasis from historical to contemporary tribal life and its future, while Hassrick continued the traditional emphasis on historical reconstruction in his study of the Lakota personality. Both MacGregor and Hassrick assumed the normative character of

Western psychology when they employed standard analytical tools in their research. Applied to Lakota religion, the Western (Freudian) psychological tradition proved ultimately reductionistic; this is particularly evident in the 1969 IHS study of Lakota mental health, which did not even consider religion in an otherwise wide-ranging analysis.

Feraca and Grobsmith upheld the central tenets of the ethnographic tradition by emphasizing descriptive fieldwork and avoiding theoretical analysis, with mixed results. But both also broke with the tradition of historical reconstruction and focussed on contemporary reservation life as a worthy object of anthropological study. Accordingly, Feraca and Grobsmith considered peyotism and even Christianity to be dimensions of Lakota religion, alongside more traditional, indigenous beliefs and practices. Powers shared their inclusive scope, though his structuralist perspective led him to a different (and novel) approach to the problem of religious diversity. He resolved the apparent discontinuity between historical and contemporary Lakota religion by asserting that though the observable social relations may have changed, the social structure has not. Powers's interest in symbolic meanings and his willingness to synthesize ethnographic material in order to increase understanding (as in his book on yuwipi) make his methodology similar to Walker's in many ways.

From the earliest accounts of Lakota religion through the writings on Black Elk, the principles and assumptions guiding this anthropological research have represented the perspective of salvage ethnography. The first professional anthropologists showed no interest in tribal people who had undergone post-European-contact culture change, and even later scholars who studied the phenomenon of acculturation tended to idealize pre-contact tribal cultures. Only in recent years have anthropologists acknowledged the essential survival of tribal cultures and learned to consider cultural continuity as a function of fundamental attitudes and values rather than of material culture and social organization. The shift in emphasis from historical reconstruction to contemporary ethnography is one expression of this change, and has facilitated a more inclusive view of Lakota religion. For example, as Powers has shown, the presence of Christian churches among the Lakotas today need not necessarily be interpreted as a form of ideological contamination (though, in most cases, it certainly is still related to the Western colonial enterprise on an institutional level).

Powers's suggestion that structuralism closely approximates the Lakotas own understanding of their worldview deserves close examination, but this claim seems no different from that of all other anthropologists about their own preferred methodologies. Though their interests

and methods have varied widely, every student of Lakota religion from Dorsey to Powers has ultimately pursued the same goal: an emic perspective. What none of them seem to have recognized is the epistemological tension inherent in the very act of pursuing such a goal; the self-conscious quest for an emic perspective is an activity that can originate only from an outsider, that is, from an etic perspective.

Variables such as language ability, degree of cultural immersion, and social location of informants are important in considering the relative success or failure of anthropologists in approximating an emic perspective. Deloria grew up on Lakota reservations and was a native speaker; Powers is fluent in Lakota and Walker understood it, though he needed assistance in recording and translating texts. Walker was initiated into a medicine society and Powers actively "dances Indian." All of the other scholars considered here apparently were not language proficient and experienced a limited amount of exposure to Lakota life. Informants have been predominantly male and drawn from two groups: religious specialists (medicine men, holy men, elders--the authorities) and literate mixed-bloods (translators, fieldworkers--the intermediaries). While the preference for religious specialists in obtaining reliable information may seem self-explanatory, it does represent the imposition of a Western view of religious authority, which

places a premium on orthodoxy. A complete picture of Lakota religion (indeed, of any religion) must include popular attitudes and beliefs taken from a cross-section of the population. The question of informant selection is also important as it is related to the tension between emphasis on the individual and on society in understanding cultural history.

The literature on Lakota religion has come to us from a variety of sources. Dorsey was a missionary who became, along with Mooney, a self-educated professional anthropologist. Walker worked as a physician and government agent and collaborated with Wissler, the first in a series of university-educated anthropologists to study Lakota religion: Deloria, MacGregor, Hassrick, Feraca, Grobsmith and Powers. Neihardt wrote as a poet and Brown as a historian of religion, yet both contributed to the anthropological discussion.

While this body of literature is testimony to the methodological diversity within anthropology and is marked by diverse theoretical interpretations and varying degrees of ethnographic accuracy, taken together it provides a fairly comprehensive picture of Lakota religion, at least on a thematic level. Issues considered in this literature include: religious language and terminology; myths and stories and a classification system for them based on indigenous Lakota categories; beliefs and cosmology; values

and morality; rituals and ceremonies, including the seven principle rites; ceremonial societies; the sacred pipe and other ceremonial objects and art; prayers, songs, and dances; sacred sites, including the Black Hills; the heyoka and yuwipi cults; traditional medicine; religious specialists; gender and age roles; the Ghost Dance movement; religious history, both continuity and change; missionization and religious oppression; contemporary religious diversity, including Christian groups (Catholic, Protestant, Pentacostal) and peyotism (Half Moon and Cross Fire); and the dynamics of religious participation and identity.

While it is easy to be impressed by the scope and weight of the literature by American anthropologists on Lakota religion, a certain danger lies in taking it too seriously. Reviewing the scholarly literature on the Anishinaabeg, Gerald Vizenor writes:

Traditional tribal people imagine their social patterns and places on the earth, whereas anthropologists and historians invent tribal cultures and end mythic time. The differences between tribal imagination and social scientific invention are determined in world views: imagination is a state of being, a measure of personal courage; the invention of cultures is a material achievement through objective methodologies. To imagine the world is to be in the world; to invent the world with academic predications is to separate human experiences from the world, a secular transcendence and denial of chance and mortalities.

. . . Tricksters and the "zestful and wicked survivors" familiar to most people who have shared tribal humor are not to be found in [these books] (Vizenor 1984, 27, 31).

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