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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Lakota Society. By James R. Walker. Edited by Raymond J. DeMallie./Lakota Myth. By James R. Walker. Edited by Elaine A. Jahner.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0v79j9h7>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 8(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

1984-06-01

DOI

10.17953

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Reviews

Lakota Society. By James R. Walker. Edited by Raymond J. DeMallie. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982. 207 pp. \$19.95 Cloth.

Lakota Myth. By James R. Walker. Edited by Elaine A. Jahner. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983. 428 pp. \$27.95 Cloth. \$14.95 Paper.

Lakota Society and *Lakota Myth* are volumes two and three in the four-volume series of the James R. Walker archival material on the Oglala Lakota. Dr. Walker gathered this material on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota between 1896 and 1914 during the time he was a physician at the hospital there. The first volume, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, includes a brief biography of Walker and the documents of the holy men on Lakota belief and ceremonies. The fourth volume will present an overview of Oglala culture from the standpoint of one member, George Sword. The second volume contains documents on the structure of Lakota society, on hunting and war practices and three winter counts. The third volume contains myths as narrated by five Lakota men and as systematized by Walker himself. During my twenty years on the Pine Ridge Reservation I found little awareness of most of the material found in these volumes. If it had not been for the confidence that the Lakota put in Dr. Walker, most of the material in these volumes would have been lost. Native Americans should realize the contribution that ethnology has made to their own tradition. Along with the work of Frances Densmore, and to some extent James Dorsey, these four volumes will always remain the classic material on the Lakota People and essential reading for anyone interested in a serious study of these people.

In the introduction to *Lakota Society* Raymond DeMallie makes an important point. Since four and seven are sacred numbers

used as conceptual tools by the Lakota, it is not surprising to discover that the historical documents do not support the actual existence of the Seven Council Fires (pp. 4, 11). From the perspective of written history the Seven Council Fires must be considered legend, not historical actuality (p. 11). William Powers collaborates on this in stating that ". . . must be regarded as a typology restricted to a specific time period, probably no earlier than about 1700" (Powers 1975, p. 15). Powers shows it takes considerable investigation to determine when each one of the Seven Fireplaces became historical identities. DeMallie concludes that the Walker documents contain abundant material for rethinking our accepted view of Lakota life (p. 13). Section I on the structure of society contains documents on the divisions of the Lakota, the nature of Lakota government, various societies, marriage and divorce, kinship terms and Oglala social customs. I find documents 19, "Marriage and Divorce" and 22, "Oglala Social Customs" to contain more information gathered together in one place than any other source. Section II contains documents on hunting, war and ceremonies from the warrior's point of view as a significant contrast to the holy men. Since the buffalo was the center of Lakota culture, the detailed description of the communal buffalo chase is of extreme importance. Section III contains documents on the Lakota concept of time and history and the texts of three Oglala winter counts, that of No Ears, Short Man and Iron Crow, and commentary and references to other historical sources. There are year by year pictures of one of the counts.

Lakota Myth contains the myths related by five Lakota, all having outstanding literary talent, and Walker's own Literary Cycle in which he systematized the myths he had collected and changed them from lore to literary epic. This volume contains Walker's unpublished work on myth and legend. The introduction presents an excellent historical background of how these documents were written. Personal and cultural crisis, the presence of Walker and the transition from an oral to a written culture all lead to a new level of reflection which resulted in literary production which simply would have been impossible in an earlier age (p. 16). The same change occurred in their belief system, from the Wakantanka of the old religious tradition to a belief in a personal Supreme Being, namely a movement to a new reflection introduced by Christian influence.

Of special importance is the detailed treatment of Ella Deloria's evaluation of the Walker material, done at the request of Franz Boas. Her extensive critique of Walker's creation story is most helpful. In a table of Lakota spirits (pp. 30-33) Elaine Jahner shows which spirits are unique to Walker and which are found in other sources. Fire Thunder, whom Deloria interviewed, discounted the personification of certain natural phenomena and the existence of a coherent body of tales passed down only through a medicine men's organization (p. 18). The conclusion that Deloria and her friends arrived at on Sword's stories was that it was ". . . the work of a 'clever' Lakota storyteller and that the stuff of which they are built is Lakota, 'but that the tales as such, had never been in oral tradition'" (p. 22). But as the literary expression of that particular time this material does give us an understanding of Lakota tradition. It is difficult to determine just how far back the Lakota religious tradition as we know it goes or how well it expresses the past. The myths in this book, despite any modern influences—including Christianity—give us some of the best insights available on the Lakota worldview, their attitudes toward nature and the world of the spirits and toward religious and social values.

The myths presented in the book are "When the People Laughed at the Moon," "Tate: A Myth of the Lakotas as It Is Told in Their Winter Camps" and "Stone Boy" by George Sword; "The Buffalo Woman," "The Wizard and His Wife" and "The Mysterious Lake" by Left Heron; "The Stone Boy" by Bad Wound; "The Feast by Tate" by Little Wound and No Flesh; "Iktomi" and "Lame Rabbit" by Thomas Tyon; and "Wooing Wohpe," a miscellaneous narrative. Walker's Literary Cycle includes "Creation of the Universe," "The Pte Cycle" and "The Founding of the Four Directions." The introduction to each myth brings out its significance. Comparison is made to other versions of the same myth.

These books will always remain a primary source of research and serious study. The references to all the pertinent literature will serve as an annotated bibliography and relate the material to previous research. The introductory material gives the reader excellent background to comprehend the material. The critical evaluations enable one to interpret the material intelligently. Lakota names and terms are used when significant without burdening the general reader with an excessive amount. I can

find no flaws in these two volumes. I feel that this series is ethnology at its best.

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Living the Sky: The Cosmos of the American Indian. By Ray A. Williamson. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984. 366 pp. \$19.95 Cloth.

Ray Williamson is an astronomer by academic training (Ph.D., University of Maryland, 1968). For the last fifteen years he has lived in Annapolis where he was a member of the St. John's College faculty between 1969 and 1979. *Living the Sky* is grounded in the newly emerging interdisciplinary science of archaeoastronomy and the significance of celestial events for pre-Columbian Native American groups. It is one of only a handful of books to address these topics and should establish itself as an influential and useful volume in forthcoming years.

Living The Sky fulfills a number of important functions in the developing science of archaeoastronomy (a discipline that attempts to merge anthropological theory and methods with the astronomical study of the cosmological beliefs and practices of pre-literate Peoples). It serves as an introductory text to archaeoastronomy in North America. More importantly, it provides the next generation of archaeoastronomers with what has been called a "program statement" for the continued pursuit of their collegial enterprise. Finally, it levels well-placed criticism at some of the field's early work, and this can only contribute to the growth of critical interchange that all intellectual schools require to survive.

Living The Sky describes and explains the importance that American Indian groups attributed to solar, lunar and stellar events in their daily and sacred lives. The volume records, at great length and in sufficient detail, the existing anthropological and astronomical data available on the American Indians' study and use of the sky to orient their earthly existence. Williamson effectively presents and documents his principal theme: Native Americans living before the advent of European colonization were skilled and knowledgeable sky-watchers who constructed their dwellings and lived their lives in accordance with their astronomical and mythic interpretations of the heavens. In the process he recounts dozens of exciting stories of scientific