

*Straight with the Medicine: Narratives of Washoe Followers of the Tipi Way.* Warren L. d'Azevedo. Heyday Books, Berkeley, 1985, ix + 54 pp., 14 illus., \$5.95. (Originally published in 1978 by Black Rock Press, Reno.)

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The Washo (Washoe, *Wa She Shu*) are ethnographic, and were prehistoric, inhabitants of the Sierra Nevada in western Nevada and eastern California. The Lake Tahoe Basin was an economic and ceremonial center for these people who followed seasonal rounds between the Sierran and Great Basin provinces. In the 1850s and 1860s, Euroamerican settlement in the fertile valleys along the eastern edge of the Sierra led to disruption of their native lifeways and political structure.

The Washo received relatively little Federal assistance in subsequent years. Tribal members relied on wage labor, and they lived on ranches or in "Indian colonies" on the outskirts of Euroamerican towns and cities. Concomitant with these rapid, often detrimental, cultural changes, various religions were introduced and provided followers with a sense of being.

Most of the religions were of Euroamerican Christian origin. Some, however, were Native American with distinctive Christian elements. Two Native American religious movements adopted by some of the Washo are noteworthy, the Ghost Dance Religion introduced in the late 1880s and the Tipi Way (Native American Church) introduced in 1938. Few data survive on Washo involvement in the Ghost Dance Religion which originated in western Nevada and effectively ended at Wounded Knee. *Straight with the Medicine* provides us with valuable insights into Washo participation in the Tipi Way.

The book contains thirteen stories related by Washo members of the Tipi Way to Warren d'Azevedo between about 1953 and 1955, and in the early 1960s. These narratives recount some of the tenets, practices, and history of this variant of the Native American Church accepted by its Washo adherents. Two stories ("Stranger in the Tribe," "Straight with the Medicine"), told during Peyote Meetings, reveal the Church's role in assimilating its members and how the Medicine can help them in achieving peace with themselves. These and other stories from conversations reveal the religion's tenets ("The Tipi Way," "Praying"), ceremonial paraphernalia ("Feathers," "My Outfit"), aspects of the Peyote ceremony ("This Herb," "Songs"), and Peyotists' and Native American tales ("The Stranger and the Spider," "The Indian Doctor and the Peyote Chief," "Two Friends," "Creation").

"Straight with the Medicine," the title story, is the story of a marginal, but earnest, Church member. His association with the Tipi Way began in the late 1930s through contact with Sam Dick and Lone Bear when the Church was initially introduced to the local Washo population by Ben Lancaster. Although a chronicle of one person's experiences, it also reflects contemporary problems faced by many twentieth-century Washo and their struggle to resolve them. Many of the social injustices the Washo have been subjected to ended in the interval covered by the story, and the detrimental effects of these former practices are diminishing. Among the mechanisms providing a definite set of values and a support group has been the Tipi Way. To be "Straight with the Medicine," however, requires seeing beyond the processes and trappings of the Church which the teller could relate but not fully achieve. One hopes he was successful.

Peyote, Peyote songs, and use of tipis are among the distinctly non-traditional Washo

traits adopted by Washo followers of the Tipi Way. Of particular interest, however, are comparisons made by informants emphasizing differences between the Tipi Way of Washo and other followers of the Native American Church. The individualistic character of the Washo is evident in several stories. In "Feathers," for example, the rationale for use of a magpie feather Peyote fan rather than an eagle feather fan is explained. Similarly, the use of sagehen, hummingbird, parrot, and pheasant feathers is discussed.

Because the stories are narratives, their content and delivery reflect Washo character and humor. In addition to contributing to Washo and Native American studies, the book is enjoyable reading. Much of this must be credited to d'Azevedo for his judicious editing of raw tapes and field notes. The Tipi Way is neither widely nor openly practiced by the Washo, so specific references to many people and places have been removed in deference to the followers' privacy. It is also evident that those relating the stories to d'Azevedo did so knowing that they could be assured that their words would be treated wisely. I believe they would not be disappointed.

*Straight with the Medicine* was initially published in 1978 as a "press" book limited to 105 copies. In that form, it is a rare, collectible book seldom encountered outside of private book collections and rare book rooms of a few libraries. This work has remained an obscure reference for the anthropological and Washo communities until this slightly modified facsimile reprint was published by Heyday Books. It is a welcome, affordable source of contemporary Washo data, as well as an excellent set of readings on Native American religion and world view.

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