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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Reincarnation Beliefs of North American Indians: Soul Journeys, Metamorphoses, and Near-Death Experiences. By Warren Jefferson.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8945x1p3>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 35(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

2011-06-01

DOI

10.17953

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in Florida or Papagos and Pimas, Cocopas, Kumeyays, Kickapoos, or Yaquis divided by the US-Mexican border are not generally included in this volume.

I applaud the editor and his efforts, and I know how difficult it is to be comprehensive. My first text on North American Native peoples, *The Indian in America's Past* (1964), managed to include references to the Jibaros of Puerto Rico, Red-Black peoples, East Coast tribes, and Métis groups of the northern plains and Canada, but many other topics could not be covered. We are always limited by constraints of space and time. Thus I recommend *Reflections on American Indian History* as a very useful work, an accurate assessment of Native affairs within the limitations that I have identified.

Jack Forbes (1934–2011)
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Reincarnation Beliefs of North American Indians: Soul Journeys, Metamorphoses, and Near-Death Experiences. By Warren Jefferson. Summertown, TN: Native Voices, 2008. 208 pages. \$15.95 paper.

Reincarnation, or the belief that a human soul can separate from the physical body and experience rebirth into another body at death, is a dominant belief in many parts of the world and a foundational component of numerous traditional North American indigenous religions. Employing the term *reincarnation* to encapsulate physical rebirth and the transmigration of the soul, Jefferson invites readers onto a primarily historic journey through a compendium of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ethnohistoric texts that relay in diverse fashions the concept of the re-embodiment of the soul. Writing in the comparativist vein evidenced in *Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief among North American Indians and Inuit* (1994), Jefferson paints in broad strokes the American Indian religious and spiritual life, addressing a general audience regarding the themes of reincarnation and shamanism within Native American religions. This text includes bibliographic references, an index, and black-and-white photographs courtesy of the Edward Curtis Collection.

Adopting an informal style, Jefferson sifts through the historic writings of diverse anthropologists, ethnologists, and explorers: the works of nineteenth-century Native activist Charles Eastman and ethnographer James Mooney; nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropologists Franz Boas; Boas's students Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Paul Radin; twentieth-century explorer and anthropologist Knud Rasmussen; Antonia Mills, current director of First Nations Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia; and others.

Drawing from these works, Jefferson shares various manifestations of reincarnation beliefs among the indigenous communities of North America.

Jefferson aims to link principally nineteenth-century North American indigenous cosmological and epistemological beliefs of reincarnation with dominant world religions including Christianity, Gnosticism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. He is equally intrigued by the religious conceptions of the transmigration of the soul evidenced in the ancient works of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, as well as findings in the New Physics of the twentieth century that challenge mechanistic models of the universe. Citing “the bootstrap hypothesis,” in which the “universe is [held to be] a dynamic web of interrelated events in which none are more fundamental than any other, and . . . [whose] interaction . . . determines the structure of the whole universe,” Jefferson seeks to establish the validity of the concept of reincarnation for twenty-first-century audiences (15). Positing that perhaps the universe is more complex than we “modern” humans can imagine, Jefferson suggests that reincarnation is more than just an antiquated survival of precolonial cultures. Such literalism is evidenced in his remarks about Rhonda Mead of the Gitksan of the Pacific Northwest wherein he states, “A final indication that Rhonda *is* [italics added] her great-grandmother returned is a birthmark on her right wrist” (26).

Jefferson utilizes narrative descriptions to persuade the reader indirectly of the prevalence of reincarnation beliefs among Native peoples of North America. The narratives included within this compendium cover stories of life, near-death experiences, death, healings, rebirth, and shamanism. Particularly compelling are retellings of shamans shape-shifting into other life-forms including the four-leggeds, two-leggeds, and winged ones.

Assuming a Jungian framework of universal archetypes, Jefferson employs a typological model of cultivators and hunters to explain different attitudes toward life, death, and rebirth. Among cultivating societies, he argues, death is a natural and peaceful occurrence. By contrast, hunting societies reportedly experience death as unnatural and dangerous. What remains unexplained is why a fear of death appears to have grown, rather than diminished, as societies have progressively moved away from hunting and gathering as the primary mode of subsistence toward agriculture, industrialism, and postindustrialism. Some of the communities whose beliefs in physical reincarnation or the transmigration of the soul that are included within this text are Northwest coastal groups such as the Kwakiutl and Gitksan of British Columbia, Inuit of the Arctic, Winnebago (aka the Hochunk) of the Woodlands, Cherokee of the Southeast, Hopi and Cochiti of the Southwest, and Lakota and Omaha of the Great Plains.

Perhaps the most enduring quality about this text is the unification of diverse ethnohistoric accounts from numerous cultural venues and geographic locations throughout North America. Equally invigorating is Jefferson's abbreviated discussion of contemporary perspectives about reincarnation from Thomas Sewid (Kwakiutl) and writer Vic Glover (Blackfoot and African American). Outside of these two accounts and Mills's research of the reincarnation case of Rhonda Mead of the Gitxan, however, the book relies almost exclusively on classic ethnographic and ethnohistoric accounts. Although Jefferson cursorily mentions an "emphasis on the past tense when describing Indian life and culture" and a recognition of the fact that "many of these tribes have survived and are currently sovereign nations," he does little to address this problem within the text, and one walks away with an unclear sense of his knowledge of contemporary indigenous peoples as well as their current ritualistic, spiritual, and religious perspectives (5).

On a lesser note, certain inaccuracies and overgeneralizations within this text about the history of Native peoples in North America and the scholarship of North American Native groups must be problematized. First, Jefferson claims, "Ancestor worship is not found among North American Indians" (7). This statement fails to take into account such activities as the Feast of the Dead among the Six Nations Iroquois, Huron, and Odawa: an event that clearly was created with the intent of celebrating the ancestors.

Second, Jefferson alleges, "For many years after contact it was thought that American Indians had no religion" (29). This too is incorrect. Although many colonizers from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries recognized the presence of Native rituals, ideas, and beliefs, they often disparaged such actions and the weltanschauung of indigenous persons as "devil worship" and an anathema to Christianity. Lacking knowledge and fearing Native spiritual practices, the US federal government repeatedly sought to curb the practice of Native religions. Even with the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act on August 11, 1978, the rights of Native peoples to practice religious freedoms cannot be taken for granted.

Another area that required redress concerns Jefferson's understanding of the chronology and diffusion of the indigenous revitalization movement known as the Ghost Dance. He mistakenly writes that "the Ghost Dance . . . swept across the plains in the 1860s," when Great Plains communities did not join the Ghost Dance until the late 1880s and 1890s (10).

Jefferson also makes statements about the peopling of the Americas that do not reflect the current expertise of scholars within this field of study. He maintains that the first wave of migration into North America occurred fifty thousand years ago (59). Whereas linguists have posited that this date might extend back as far as thirty thousand years ago, archaeologists, physical

anthropologists, and geneticists estimate that the peopling of the Americas occurred between fifteen thousand to seventeen thousand years ago.

Considered *en totale*, Jefferson raises some compelling themes within this text. However, the accuracy and thoroughness of his research will leave the serious scholar with a decidedly unquenched thirst. Based on the reification of historical representations of Native peoples, the marginal integration of contemporary Native perspectives, and the presence of anthropological and historical inaccuracies, I would recommend that students and scholars of the anthropology of religion, comparative religions, and specialists in Native American studies, indigenous studies, and history use this text with care.

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Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America. By Leonard J. Sadosky. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009. 275 pages. \$40.00 cloth.

Leonard J. Sadosky's book, *Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America*, is not a conventional narrative of US and Native American diplomatic history. It contains few detailed descriptions of negotiations and doesn't review, except in the most cursory manner, the contents of various treaties. Nonetheless, is an important work for those who seek to understand the intellectual and political foundation of the federal government vis-à-vis its relations with European nations and with American Indians.

Revolutionary Negotiations traces cross-cultural relations that began with alliances based on parity between colonial officials and American Indian leaders. The practices that kept these relationships intact deteriorated as the United States gained its independence and then coalesced into a federal state. Ironically, as the infant republic sought admission into the "family of nations," it denied Native communities the status as equals, either as foreign entities or as members of the confederation of states.

Sadosky's argument hinges on the idea that between 1648 and 1830, three distinct diplomatic systems were at play in North America: the borderlands, the Westphalian, and the Philadelphian subset of the Westphalian system. For the first of these, the borderland's system, Sadosky draws upon Richard White's concept of a "middle ground" in which neither American Indians nor colonial Europeans possessed sufficient power to enforce their wills upon one another. By beginning his book with Sir Alexander Cuming's unauthorized