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Author

Campbell, Gregory R.

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The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt. Edited by Raymond J. DeMallie. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. 452 pp. \$19.95 Cloth.

In 1932 the poet laureate John G. Neihardt novelized the life and visionary experience of the Oglala holy man Black Elk. The basis for his book, *Black Elk Speaks*, was a series of interviews conducted during the summer of 1931 with Black Elk and, initially, other Oglala elders. Later interviews in 1944 would be used by Neihardt to write *When the Tree Flowered*. Contained within these recorded conversations were Black Elk's teachings of Oglala culture, history and one man's knowledge of Oglala religious expression.

These novels, particularly *Black Elk Speaks*, have emerged as a canon of Native American religious thought. Despite the widespread popularity of these works, their relevancy has never been fully ascertained. *The Sixth Grandfather* accomplishes this task. For the first time the entire body of the original Black Elk-Neihardt interviews has been transcribed, edited and annotated. Much of this material did not appear in either book, making this collection a valuable addition to the burgeoning volumes of Lakota ethnographic literature. The editor, in this light, is to be commended for his interpretive and editorial efforts.

The book is divided into three major parts. In Part I DeMallie succinctly places the life of Black Elk, his vision and Neihardt's relationship with the Oglala holy man into historical context. Central to comprehending Black Elk as an historical personage is his vision. It pervaded every aspect of his life and was the binding force by which Neihardt and Black Elk entered into each others' lives. As a poet Neihardt became the means for Black Elk to convey his vision. For Neihardt the teachings that Black Elk transferred to him presented a universal message about the condition of humankind. Neihardt viewed Black Elk's religious experiences within the context of literary art. Despite the apparent differences in interpretation and subsequent motives, both men strove to relate the beauty and spiritual qualities inherent in Black Elk's message.

Part II presents the text of the 1931 interviews from which Neihardt wrote *Black Elk Speaks*. The interviews relay the story of Black Elk's life from his early childhood, into his spiritual awakening and concludes with Black Elk's prayer to the Six

Grandfathers on top of Harney Peak in the Black Hills. In his introductory statements to these interviews DeMallie interprets his vision in relation to Lakota religious practice. From this perspective the greatness of Black Elk's vision lies not in its uniqueness but in its representativeness.

It synthesizes religious themes in Lakota culture and balances all aspects of the Lakota world: destruction and renewal, the powers of the earth and sky and of land and water, the four directions, the living and nonliving (both dead and unborn). Perhaps its most striking feature is the representation of the circle of life as enclosing a central tree, symbolizing regeneration, with crossed roads from south to north and west to east, the former symbolizing life and harmony and colored red, the latter symbolizing warfare and destruction and colored black (p. 86).

Through the use of universal Lakota symbols the vision provides a sacred framework whereby Black Elk conceptualized Lakota history and his place within it. It is the interplay between his own life, the vision, and the historical context of these life cycle events that is embodied in the 1931 interviews. Black Elk's life becomes a conduit where the sacred and the profane of historical events are unified into a comprehensible course of events. That is, Black Elk viewed his own life as an integral component of this sacred history.

The final part of *The Sixth Grandfather* has the 1944 interviews which were requested by Neihardt. For those of us interested in Lakota cultural history the inclusion of these interviews is particularly important. Black Elk presented Neihardt the development of Lakota culture through a carefully selected body of mytho-historical events drawn from a large compendium of Lakota oral tradition. Just as in his teachings given to Neihardt in 1931, Black Elk used a cyclical temporal pattern to convey the history of the Lakota nation. He infused much of the history with mythic themes that expressed important historical events. Black Elk brilliantly led Neihardt from the origins of the Lakota Nation to the formation of other Nations through geographical separation and linguistic diversification. From these original texts it is possible to somewhat comprehend Lakota history as a social contract for the formation of a Nation. Black Elk conceived of history

not as a series of events in chronological order but as a series of social demarcations which impacted the Lakota.

The Sixth Grandfather provides an excellent data base to compare Neihardt's published works with the original source material. To this end the editor has included two appendices to assist the interested reader. Appendix A indexes all the material in the interviews to the appropriate pages in Neihardt's works. Appendix B is an orthography which was used in standardizing the Lakota words found in the interview notes. Both appendices are extremely useful and are valuable research aids.

The importance of this book transcends its value as a literary tool. *The Sixth Grandfather* provides valuable insight into Lakota culture as well as the symbolic complexity and richness of Lakota religious thought. Aside from its obvious contribution to Lakota ethnography, *The Sixth Grandfather* remains a remarkable body of teachings that deserves contemplation as a way of knowledge and not just mere ethnographic fact.

Gregory R. Campbell
University of Oklahoma

The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846–1890. By Robert M. Utley. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984. 325 pp. \$19.95 Cloth. \$10.95 Paper.

Utley has produced an excellent contribution to the fine Histories of the American Frontier Series. The work is the best overview of military-Indian conflicts involving the expansion of the frontier in the Trans-Mississippi West and of reformers' efforts to correct alleged abuses following the Civil War. Based on the author's wide research and extensive reading, this work builds on his earlier *Frontiersmen in Blue* (1967) and *Frontier Regulars* (1973) as well as his collaborative *The American Heritage History of the Indian Wars* (1977). *The Indian Frontier of the American West* culminates years of experience in the West and scholarly publishing on that field.

Utley first introduces the reader to a broad summary of tribalism and cultural change in the West, focusing on the Nez Perce and the Blackfeet. The author then surveys the foundations of American Indian policy in the decade prior to the Civil War, examining broad themes of progress and assimilationist