

to curb the sale of alcohol to Indians were ignored, particularly the traffic among those tribes that received annual annuity payments and money to spend.

Unrau provides an important contribution to the study of Indian policy and reform in the trans-Missouri frontier. His study also contains important lessons for residents of Iowa. The Missouri River was a major conduit for the illicit liquor trade to the Sioux, Sauk and Fox, Winnebagos, and Omahas—Indian nations that continue to grapple with the effects of the “white man’s wicked water.”

Becoming and Remaining a People: Native American Religions on the Northern Plains, by Howard L. Harrod. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995. xi, 149 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD H. THOMAS, CORNELL COLLEGE

Howard L. Harrod gives us a remarkably well-conceived and well-documented book. Every paragraph in this short work is crafted. The organization is clear and concise. The author has a case to make, and he makes it with an economy of words, extensive notes, and frequent summaries of where he has been and is about to go. Harrod is an insightful and solid student of the sociology of religion and gives us a highly original and appreciative approach to the place of religion in the tribes of the Great Plains. He argues that religion is a central element in maintaining the identity of these peoples and at the same time enables them to make accommodations to the dramatic changes that came with devastating disease, new technology, and invasions of other Native Americans and Europeans. He suggests that “religious traditions and practice were at the center of the social construction and reconstruction of their identity, and the social change that arose as a response to innovation in their environment [which depended] on religious grounded process of reinterpretation” (102).

The introduction reviews the purpose and content of each chapter and clearly states the perspective the author employs. Harrod seems to be following the lines of thought laid out in his earlier work, *Renewing the World: Plains Indian Religion and Morality* (1987), and is testing his approach to how religious traditions and ritual practices ensured the survival of the people by providing continuity while enabling them to adapt to change.

The Great Plains groups investigated in this study are the Mandan and Hidatsas (early groups of hunters and gatherers along the Missouri) and the Crow and Cheyenne, who apparently separated from those groups and moved West to become powerful and success-

ful buffalo hunters. In this separation, the focus is on the adaptation of old traditions and the creation of new ones.

The review of recent anthropological writings on the selected groups (chapter 2) is helpful and shows how Harrod's approach complements and supplements many of these studies by viewing religious traditions and ritual practices as more central and more dynamic than other scholars have assumed. The author relies on many accepted works of anthropology and history for his source material; he does not bring any new firsthand investigation to this work. His contribution is not in new material or discovering new traditions but in bringing to the surface unexamined insights found in the basic material recorded by reputable scholars. He suggests that he is "reinterpreting" the data of others. Harrod gives us a highly original synthesis of the fundamental religious traditions at the core of these groups and how they provided both stability (continuity) and, through reinterpretation, provided vehicles for adapting to new situations. In one sense Harrod is saying that anthropologists, while admitting that religious traditions are the foundation of Great Plains cultures, have failed to see their power and dynamism.

Oral traditions (including dreams and visions) are at the heart of this approach, as they were "the creative, changing realities that enabled them [Plains peoples] to reinterpret their experience as conditions surrounding them changed" (xi). In the concluding chapter, we are treated to a brilliant essay on oral traditions and ritual practices as essential elements in preserving social identity and creating powerful "communities of memory and interpretation" (102). Harrod presents six characteristics that he believes help us understand both past Native American religions and important aspects of present religious expressions, thus connecting the past with the present. His reflections on the differences and similarities between traditional religions and Christianity, and Native American societies and contemporary state-based societies, show the marks of a perceptive observer.

I highly recommend this book for anyone concerned with Native American cultural identities, history, or religion. The thesis so well developed here can well produce insights into hard questions about how other Native American peoples and cultures survived and changed. We not only learn a great deal about the groups discussed, but find important clues for understanding Native American responses to the European invasions. Students of the history of the upper Midwest region from the Great Lakes to the Rockies will find this book most helpful, and students of the region's Native American cultures will find it a must.

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