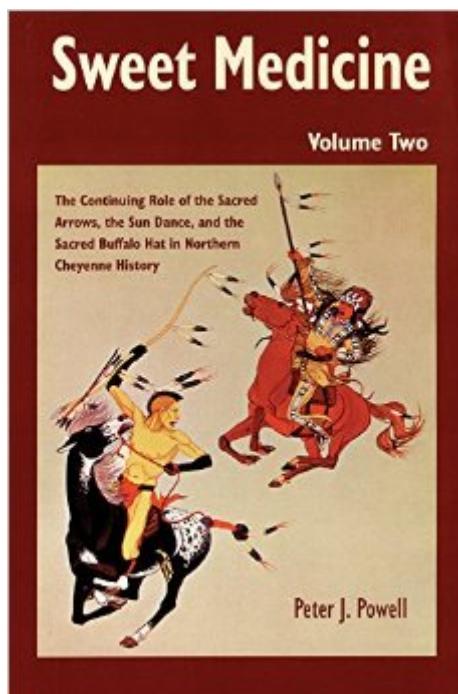


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Sweet Medicine: Continuing Role Of The Sacred Arrows, The Sun Dance, And The Sacred Buffalo Hat In Northern Cheyenne History (Civilization Of The ... Civilization Of The American Indian Series)



Synopsis

Sweet Medicine is the most comprehensive record ever made of the ceremonies of the Northern Cheyennes. Volume One recounts tribal history against the background of the two great spiritual tragedies in Cheyenne life, the loss of the Sacred Arrows and the desecration of the Sacred Buffalo Hat. Volume Two records the contemporary Sacred Arrow and Sun Dance ceremonies in their entirety. Father Peter J. Powell, who has observed and participated in the rites many times, was given special permission by the Keepers of the Two Great Covenants, the Chiefs, the Headmen, and the Priests to record them in words and photographs.

Book Information

Series: The Civilization of the American Indian Series (Book 100)

Paperback: 994 pages

Publisher: University of Oklahoma Press (June 15, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0806130288

ISBN-13: 978-0806130286

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 2.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #775,139 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #251 inÂ Books > History > World > Religious > Ethnic & Tribal #442 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Mythology & Folk Tales > Folklore #1331 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Customs & Traditions

Customer Reviews

Father Peter J. Powell (who, contrary to the misinformation passed in another reader's review, is an Episcopalian priest) is the premium scholar of Cheyenne culture and religion. A Sun Dance priest himself, adopted by the Cheyenne, Father Powell renders the beautiful story of Sweet Medicine in evocative prose. After reading his work, I was privileged to meet Father Powell on a sad, but touching occasion, when he presided over the funeral of the great Cheyenne educator Bill Tall Bull in Lame Deer, Montana several years ago. Father Powell is held in great reverence by the Northern Cheyenne people, and on that day was sought out after the service by countless members of the tribe with greetings, hugs, and thanks. I can recommend SWEET MEDICINE without reservation to anyone with interest in Plains Indian culture.

Some people don't like the idea of a priest writing a book about Cheyenne myth and ritual. Too bad for them. Who better to understand it than one who is completely accepted by the Cheyenne people and, indeed, one of the holders of the sacred regalia of the Arrows and Medicine Hat? Peter Powell has done the world an undying favor by meticulously recording, with the utmost exactitude, in both words and pictures the sacred rites (and their meaning!) of the Cheyenne people? Ignore the reviews of those who just don't -or can't- get the point of this magisterial work and instead buy it and enter into a magical world.

One way of regarding what Father Powell accomplished in his epic treatise on Northern Cheyenne history is look at Vine Deloria's appraisal in "God Is Red." Deloria states: "Powell's work, particularly his style of exposition, was based primarily on conversations with reservation people and reflected their language. An Anglican priest who operated St. Augustine's Indian Center in Chicago, Powell viewed all religious expressions as sacred and consequently treated the Cheyenne tradition with respect. His book did not take the superficial approach of listing the quaint beliefs of the Cheyennes as if the reader and the author were beyond such superstitions. 'Sweet Medicine' impressed Indians with the validity of their own traditions." Deloria's comments on Powell's work deserve serious consideration. After all, Deloria set the tone in Chpt. 4 of "Custer Died For Your Sins" for criticizing the historical relationship between anthropology (be it of the professional or self-taught variety) and American Indian communities. The fact that Deloria points to "Sweet Medicine" as an exceptional work is an indication that the study of American Indian culture and history is possible--even by non-Indians--when the resulting discourse is driven by indigenous sources of knowledge, as opposed to forcing research to fit the expectations of a largely non-Indian Academy.

What a wonderful book for anyone interested in a deep study of Cheyenne culture! Written with great skill and with impeccable documentation, the book describes the deep meaning of the Sacred Hat, Arrows Bundle and the Sundance. I recommend it without reservation to anyone interested in a real understanding of the Cheyenne people.

Reading Sweet Medicine is a marvelous experience. It is history and religion and culture all in one. You get to know about the Cheyenne people and what makes them who they were and are. Every one knows the Sioux first and foremost. The Cheyenne are always mentioned second. To me they are first among the plains tribes. I cherish this book for what it is and what it teaches. It is invaluable as the portrait of a people and their religion and their way of life. I was lucky enough to buy it as a

hardbound set before it went to paperback. However you can find it, it is well worth the price and will be a welcome addition for those, like me, who collect or those who just want to read the best book on the subject. This is it. bar none.

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