

Jordan PAPER, *Offering Smoke: The Sacred Pipe and Native American Religion* (Edmonton, Alberta, University of Alberta Press, 1989. xv + 161 pp. 0-88864-202-4)

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Witmer, Robert, *The Musical Life of the Blood Indians*. Ottawa, National Museums of Canada, 1982.

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In *Offering Smoke*, Jordan Paper of York University, Toronto, Ontario, has produced a work to help scholars and other readers increase their appreciation of the importance of the pipe in Native American religion. Calling the pipe the "core ritual and symbolic heart" (p. xiii) of many Native traditions and comparing its role to the Torah in Judaism and the Qur'an in Islam (p. 13), he emphasizes its place in the religious life of indigenous peoples of North America by capitalizing the word and prefacing it with "Sacred" ("Sacred Pipe") throughout the work.

Paper opens the work with a description of a contemporary pipe ritual and some observations about the use of tobacco in Native American religions. Over the next four chapters he discusses the pipe in relation to ritual, myth, typology and symbolism, and finally geographic distribution and history. These chapters are followed by an epilogue on persecution and revitalization that summarizes the effects of European settlement in North America and highlights the way the pipe has been used in recent decades to unite Native peoples in pan-Indian movements. Each of the sections in the book is able to stand alone as a self-contained unit; Paper's argument that the pipe is central to Native American religion serves to integrate the separate discussions.

The overall organization of the work reflects an interdisciplinary approach. In the chapters on ritual and myth, Paper surveys published ethnohistoric data and ethnographic studies to find records of the use of and attitudes towards the pipe by different Native peoples from the sixteenth century to the present. The chapter on geographic distribution is based on several years of study in the major museum collections and suggests a more widespread use of pipes in pre-contact Native cultures than previously argued. An appendix outlines the methodology and criteria used to select data.

Notwithstanding Paper's impressive array of data gathered from diverse sources, it is never quite clear what he is demonstrating and what he has

assumed. Paper argues for the historicity of pipe ritual in order to counter views that widespread use is a post-contact phenomenon (p. 35, 90, 96, 112), views which, in his terms (p. 112) “bias the courts away from recognizing the legitimacy of pan-Indian religion, the major form of Native religion to be found in the many modern pan-Indian contexts: cities, schools, gatherings, and prisons”. In fact, he expresses the hope that an understanding of the historical dimension of pan-Indian pipe-centered religion will help the governments of Canada and the United States recognize the legitimacy of Native American religion and accord it legal status (pp. 15, 113). That intention is noble, as are his attempts to off-set the often far too textually-centered understandings of religion, but Paper overkills his case. For example, he claims (p. 35) that anyone who has participated in North American Native religions knows the contemporary pipe ritual described at the beginning of the work “is identical in all particulars with what is to be found in the ethnohistoric and ethnographic documents”. Yet, the point is, it is not identical in all particulars with the earlier records of use Paper provides, nor is the contemporary pipe ritual described by Paper uniquely representative of the many situations in which the pipe features today. Careful attention to the circumstances presented in the ethnohistoric and ethnographic accounts indicates that the pipe was used in conjunction with negotiations, talks, adoptions, funerals, yearly celebrations, among other events. To call all these occasions pipe rituals or pipe ceremonies is to ignore contextual detail, allowing Paper to appropriate the pipe for his own purposes, which include understanding the history of modern pan-Indian religion (p. 116). In his zeal for diachronic continuity, Paper may well be forcing the past into a likeness of the present, and creating out of that past a religion centered on the pipe. As Paper makes an important contribution to our understanding of the range of pipe use in pre-contact North America, these criticisms of Paper’s analysis may appear quibbling, especially when there is sympathy, as I certainly have, with his purposes. Except, there is something that leaves me uneasy; where Paper over-generalizes, he is robbing the past, and the people who have inherited that past, of a chance to speak by not listening. This is a mistake we have made before and it detracts from an otherwise worthy endeavour.

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