

# UCLA

## American Indian Culture and Research Journal

### Title

Vestiges of A Proud Nation. Edited by Glenn E. Markoe; Text by Raymond J . DeMallie and Royal B. Hassrick.

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0x7807tx>

### Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 11(1)

### ISSN

0161-6463

### Author

Raymond, Art

### Publication Date

1987

### DOI

10.17953

### Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

provide a paradigm or theoretical focus which would explain the social and economic processes documented. Furthermore, the material on the contemporary Arctic cries out for a comparative analysis, yet none is given except for a straight-forward account of the "pan-Eskimo movement." (Someone should come up with a better term!) There are no articles in this section on Soviet policy in northeastern Siberia among the Eskimo and Chukchi, although there are earlier works which do so, such as Levin and Potapov's *The Peoples of Siberia* (1964), Hughes' *Under Four Flags* (February 1965 issue of *Current Anthropology*), and Graburn and Strong's *Circumpolar Peoples: An Anthropological Perspective* (1973). The Arctic is potentially a unique case study for the anthropologist's cross-cultural "laboratory," because the Eskimo-Inuit live under four different Western governments—U.S.A., Canada, Denmark, and the U.S.S.R. One can hold constant the variable of culture while studying the dependent variable of Eskimo-white relations. Indeed, Gutorm Gjessing argued in 1960, in an article appearing in *Acta Arctica*, that the case could be extended to include the Saame or Lapps of northern Scandinavia if one focuses theoretically on circumpolar social systems rather than on language and other aspects of culture.

The major shortcoming which I find with this admittedly valuable reference work is its limited Western perspective. This fault lays not so much, I suspect, with the volume editor and the planning committee as it does with those who originally conceived the new handbook series under the guidance of the Smithsonian Institution and its general editor, William C. Sturtevant. The Smithsonian in this instance may be a victim of its own colonial history vis-a-vis Native Americans, and it will remain for Native scholars with an indigenous perspective, or perhaps those social scientists with what C. Wright Mills termed the "sociological imagination," to correct the defect.

*Steve Talbot*  
Oregon State University

**Vestiges of A Proud Nation.** Edited by Glenn E. Markoe; Text by Raymond J. DeMallie and Royal B. Hassrick. University of Vermont, 1986. 176 pp. \$35 Cloth. \$20 Paper.

The Drake, N.D., school board made national headlines a few years ago. It determined that certain books were unfit for the minds of their children. The books were burned. We should offer the Drake community *Vestiges of A Proud Nation* to add to its ashes.

I leafed through *Vestiges* and thought to myself, "What great pictures." They are great pictures—photographically speaking. But I read the introduction only to learn "most of Perkins' original tags had either fallen off or been removed. Many other Plains Indian pieces had entered the museum's holdings in the intervening years, adding to the confusion."

So the museum at the University of Vermont has a collection of Plains Indian art, photography and artifacts? Big deal! Questions remain about who and what and authenticity.

Then as I read the Director's Foreword, Preface, Introduction and Text, I became increasingly dismayed. The ethnicity and ignorance of the writers exhibited itself on page after page. If Raymond J. DeMallie's students were to write as he wrote, he would give them "Fs." But more of that later.

One only has to know the culture of the Lakota to know that every symbol, drawing, artifact design has meaning. It tells a story through its traditional design, symbols and colors. It is *NOT* the documentation of "material culture," as Ildiko Hefferman claims. Rather, based upon Lakota religion, such artifacts tell a spiritual/religious story. Culture is far more than material, and the two terms "material" and "culture" are incongruous for culture is all that is. Culture is like an on-going, ever-flowing stream. Our culture today is our culture. It is no more like the buffalo-hunting culture than the white man's is like the days of the covered wagon. Despite all that has happened, we retained our values, (the base of any culture), and today our culture remains uniquely Lakota.

I don't want to be nit-picky, but even the grammar is bad. As a tiny example, the possessive for the Smithsonian is "its" and not "their."

There are so many errors in fact, it utterly is impossible to comment on each. For example, George P. Horse Capture says tribes travelled in small groups in the winter and gathered in the summer. Well—that depends. I assume he speaks of the Lakota. The Dakota did as he says. The Lakota did just the opposite. All of these writers make the same assumption, or so it seems, that the

horse was the catalyst which propelled the Sioux into greatness. All other Plains tribes had the horse, or had accessibility to the horse. No, it certainly was not the horse, or use of the horse, which made them great. Rather, it was the values which they believed and followed which produced a great people. As to art work, these were refined before the horse came into general use—although art did not remain static and some distinctions were made. The nomadic Lakota did not do pottery. The sedentary Dakota did. In other words, their culture fashioned the migratory life. It is true that art survived but also surviving were their values, religion, symbolism and ceremonies. The Dakota retained most of the ways of the woodland tribes, so their art was floral. The Lakota had a unique style of geometric symbolism told through the use of traditional colors.

Glenn E. Markoe uses the term "Teton Dakota." There ain't no such term. The Tetons are Lakota. No way can they be Dakota. All of the writers in *Vestiges* seem to be confused on this point.

As for DeMallie, he embraces a religious concept for the Lakota which, like the dinosaurs, was extinct hundreds of years ago. He writes, "If their gods had deserted them," etc.

In the beginning white theologians said our people were animists—that we worshipped a white buffalo, a sunrise, a rock. Later, the heirs of earlier white animists said in effect, "Well, certainly, if you're not animists, you're pantheists." This claim held that our people had many gods. Our God, Wakan Tanka, is infinite and exists in all things, in all places at all times. Wakan Tanka is in you and in me, as well as the evergreen tree I see out my window as I write. Our people used expressions of the Great Spirit in their ceremonies as symbols of Wakan Tanka. It is no more fair to say of our religion that we worshipped a beautiful sunrise than it is to say the Catholics worship the Cross.

This misunderstanding, of course is not unique to DeMallie. There are a couple of other points to be made about his historical presentation of the time-frame considered. I do not doubt that he is well-researched. But that research, obviously, is based on white man's documents and white man's interpretation. Take, for example, DeMallie's designation of who was Sioux—a rambling, confused description, to say the least.

The Lakota divided mankind into four: 1) Us, the People, the Allied Ones; 2) Our proven allies and friends; 3) The Neutrals

of whom one had to be careful because one never knew which way they would flip-flop, and 4) The enemy.

Regardless of what anthros, historians and *Vestiges* may say, to the Sioux only the Sioux were Sioux. These were the Seven Council Fires: Dakota—1. Mdewakantowan, 2. Sisseton, 3. Wahpeton, 4. Wapekute; Nakota—5. Yankton, 6. Yanktonais, and Lakota—7. Teton.

The Lakota, after their expansion to the Plains, grew rapidly in geography and numbers. Historically speaking, they soon grew into their own seven tribes; Oglala, Brule, Minneconjous, Sans Arc, Blackfoot, Two Kettle, Hunkpapa. Thus, there were the three divisions of the Sioux, each distinctly recognizable as Dakota, Nakota and Lakota, yet all allied together as the Sioux Nation. DeMallie challenges this concept because of lack of written European sources. So be it. I rest my case against his. His historical essay is based upon pre-conceived thought patterns with such expressions as "the guilty Santee." (p. 29) From our point of view and from historical data, the Santee were not guilty at all.

Then there was this (p. 29): "This disappearance of the buffalo was therefore directly linked to a kind of moral failing on the part of the Sioux, an abandonment of their old ways in favor of those of the white man."

Now come on! Who killed off the buffalo? All evidence suggests other than that claim in *Vestiges*. There was a concerted effort by the military to encourage the complete slaughter of the buffalo herds.

The writing of *Vestiges* is, at times, grandiloquent. The term "Great Sioux Reservation" is used in reference to Sioux land based upon the Treaty of 1868. Whereas, in fact, the Great Sioux Reservation was delineated under the Treaty of 1851. The Treaty of 1868 broke up that Great Reservation into individual tribal reservations—which is to say, one for the Oglalas, one for the Brules, etc.

The historical approach in *Vestiges* is confused. It seemingly lacks organization. While filled with much historical data it is so disorganized as to make it hard to read. It does not go from here to there, but rambles. It is filled with errors—minor though they may be, like placing Fort Keogh at the mouth of the Yellowstone River rather than at the mouth of the Tongue River. But it makes for interesting approaches, not at all unlike the scholarship of 50 years ago.

Royal B. Hassrick in his chapter on "Culture of the Sioux," reveals the same approach as DeMallie, although, his piece is better organized and does go "from here to there."

But Hassrick, too, has the same misconceptions about "gods" and a "hierarchy of gods." And he says, "Warfare for the Plains Indian was the reason for life." That is, of course, stretching a point.

One of the Lakota beliefs was that the future of The People rested in the beings of the women and of the children. A threat to the lives of women and children was a threat to the life of the people and their future. Strategically speaking, the Lakota adopted the tactic that the best defense was an offense. So it was that they earned the reputation as Warriors of The Plains. In the minds of most Americans today, and certainly in the minds of the movie moguls, the Lakota are the prototype of the people called "Indian" by the whites.

Hassrick closes his arguments (P. 77) with: "Only a hollow vestige remained of what was once a vibrant life style."

And I respond: Being a Lakota comes from within and that inner vibrancy vibrates ever stronger in this day.

*Art Raymond*  
University of North Dakota

**The American Indian and the Problem of History.** Edited by Calvin Martin. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. 232 pp. \$9.95 Paper.

As the title of *The American Indian and the Problem of History* suggests, this work has a historiographic emphasis. In the wake of revisionist trends of the 1970s, Indian historians face a number of knotty problems as they endeavor to avoid ethnocentric biases and to incorporate Native American sources and perspectives. Collectively, the papers in this volume assess the achievements and pitfalls of revisionist history and consider methods and goals for future scholarship. For Martin and many of the contributors, a principal concern is the need to integrate an understanding of the interplay between religion and the environment in writing Indian history. "What was *their* metaphysics? Everything we write about [Native Americans]," says Martin, "should follow from this seminal question" (p. 216). Having circulated copies