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The Price of a Gift: A Lakota Healer's Story. By Gerald Mohatt and Joseph Eagle Elk.

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area and people. This approach leads to much supposition and inference about his life based on studies of the environment, times, and cultures in which Inigo lived. Pages and pages go by in *Inigo of Palsomi* without even a mention of his name. When he is mentioned, it is frequently qualified by statements such as “while there is no direct evidence, it is likely that” or “it was probably” or “it is interesting to speculate.” The book builds a fragile skeleton of Inigo’s life, but no flesh. It does a better job of illustrating pre- and post-Mission system life in general than it does in revealing Inigo’s life to the reader.

There are ten figures and twelve tables in *Inigo of Rancho Palsomi*. They include information such as the genealogical reconstruction of Inigo’s family, birth, baptism, and death records, and maps of the Rancho Palsomi area over a 125-year period. But again, they contribute very little insight into Inigo. The maps, in particular, are disappointing. They are hard to read due to their size and do not provide the reader with any overall picture of the region that is discussed in the book. It is difficult to follow the flow of land loss and ownership and colonization in the book.

The book would have benefited from one good map showing the entire geographic region discussed in the book as well as historic and contemporary overview maps of the entire Ohlone ancestral territory and the Mission Santa Clara area. This lack of visual reference is quite unsatisfying.

The authors never explicitly denigrate the Ohlone culture and they clearly acknowledge that the mission system was genocidal, but there is a tone of paternalism that runs throughout the book. For instance, the authors state that Inigo was “protected” and “treated well” by his neighbor when he “decided that it was no good for an Indian to have land” and took Inigo’s land and proceeded to give “him wine and kill him with kindness” (p. 130). In one passage about Inigo’s state of mind while under the mission system, the authors assume that “he wanted to and did assimilate into the Spanish colonial system . . . borrowing from the Spanish he recreated himself, rejecting much of his Indianess in favor of being more like the Spanish” (p. 69). It is also hard to overlook the frequent use of the term *tribelet*, a patronizing term that imposes a model of community and identity that overlooks the complexities of Native relationships.

Overall, this book is an anthropological look at pre-contact Ohlone culture and life at the Santa Clara Mission. It is not a book about Inigo and thus its title is misleading. In this light, the book does not uncover any new ideas, research, or themes. I do not recommend it.

Zo Devine

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The Price of a Gift: A Lakota Healer’s Story. By Gerald Mohatt and Joseph Eagle Elk. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 226 pages. \$29.95 cloth

Aptly titled, *The Price of a Gift: A Lakota Healer’s Story* is a thoughtful, sensitive portrait of Joseph Eagle Elk’s life and work. Much of the work is based upon

tape-recorded interviews with Eagle Elk in what turned out to be the last year of his life. Co-author Gerald Mohatt skillfully adds the stories of others as they describe Joseph Eagle Elk touching their lives. An introduction, as well as a conclusion and epilogue frame the core of the work and are important to the book as a whole. Gerald Mohatt's long, rich relationship with Eagle Elk is glimpsed most clearly in these framing chapters. The book is better than typical as-told-to biographies. Mohatt, a psychologist, knew Joseph Eagle Elk well, and over any, many years, as a friend and colleague in the work of healing. The work succeeds in its attempt to present a complex portrait of the life of this Lakota healer.

Gerald Mohatt's introduction serves several purposes. Perhaps most important, we see co-author Mohatt is no newcomer to the Rosebud Reservation, living there from 1968 to 1983. He continues to return each year, maintaining his relationships in the Lakota community and considers the Rosebud community his home. Something of Joseph Eagle Elk's relationship with Mohatt is revealed in the introduction. Mohatt also provides the reader a glimpse of his own grappling with how to best convey Joseph Eagle Elk's life. The introduction effectively provides just enough attention, for a biographical work, to literature on Lakota spirituality, providing some contextual information for readers unfamiliar with the topic. The fine "Glossary of Lakota Terms" at the end of the book is helpful in this respect as well, in addition to its usefulness in understanding the Lakota words included in the text.

The meat of the text is organized in four parts, corresponding, we are told, to the manner of Joseph Eagle Elk's own telling of his life in the interviews with Gerald Mohatt. In an overall sense the four parts are chronological, beginning with Eagle Elk's youth. Within each of the four parts of the main text there are three chapters, forming a general pattern. The first chapter of each part consists of Eagle Elk speaking about his life, forming the chronological thread of the book. At times the details of events in these chapters are challenging for the reader unfamiliar with them, but their inclusion is important in enabling the reader to tune into Joe Eagle Elk's manner of speaking. The second chapter of each part, in all but one instance, is a relatively short, reflective statement or teaching of Joseph Eagle Elk. The third chapter of each part consists of what might be called a case history, in which a person or persons with whom Eagle Elk worked in his healing practice tells their story and the healer's affect on their life. These second and third chapters are located in time during his career as a medicine man. Whether in his own words or through the recollections of individuals he touched in his healing work, these chapters provide a rich sense of Eagle Elk's thinking, his work as a medicine man in Lakota society, and the man himself.

Though his father and grandfather were medicine men, Joseph Eagle Elk struggled with the gifts the spirits offered him. At age eight he had a powerful dream, one that came to him numerous times. His family, including his father and grandfather, told him to ignore it, and instructed him not to go to ceremonies. Not until age thirteen did his father ask for Joseph's help with ceremonies from time to time, and finally ask him to participate by entering the sweat. While living with his grandparents in his youth, Joseph Eagle Elk

had been removed from school by the local authorities because members of his family participated in ceremonies. From his late teens into his early thirties, though Eagle Elk participated in ceremonies from time to time, the main focus of his life was spent working on ranches, mostly in Wyoming and Nebraska. He returned home to South Dakota at various intervals. During this period he had some troubles with the legal system, though fortunately none with disastrous long-term consequences.

After an early 1960s marriage to Victoria, with whom he was to spend the rest of his life, family responsibilities came to Joseph Eagle Elk. It is during this period that his early spiritual gifts began to emerge once again. The spirits came to him, chiding him for not embodying the dream of his youth. Trying to come to terms with his experiences, Eagle Elk went on two vision quests the same summer, so urgent was his need. The spirits were coming to him constantly and he needed to resolve for himself how he was to respond. During the second vision quest the spirits told Eagle Elk that if he would not accept their gift, death would be there for him. From the instructions he received Joseph Eagle Elk set up in ceremony the altar the spirits showed him, and continued to do as they instructed.

One of the most useful features of *The Price of a Gift* is the extent to which it shows us Joseph Eagle Elk's own thought processes as he approached his work. At points he mentions the difficulties of being a medicine man. All too often those he helps express no concern for the toll his work takes on him. Great demands are placed on his time and energy conducting ceremonies, making it functionally impossible to keep a job to support his family. These same demands make him often unavailable for meeting family responsibilities, though it is his heart's desire to be a strong family man. The reader does not sense that Joseph Eagle Elk is complaining, but simply describing his experience. He made his choice and seems to have been at peace with it. From the time he first consented to work with his first spirit helpers, Eagle Elk struggled to understand and deepen his knowledge of what they were requiring of him. At times he had doubts, not always immediately understanding what he was being told to do, though he faithfully rendered the spirits' instructions to his patients. He is clear that occasions came when he used his human abilities, unassisted by the spirits, because he knew he could help a particular person. Joseph Eagle Elk recognized that doubt, whether his own or his patient's, could place limits on the effectiveness of the treatment.

Eagle Elk articulates other limitations as well. The ceremonies are most effective when all participants are of one mind, and the book provides several examples, including the healing cases chapters, in which this circumstance was not achieved. When performing the kettle dance, he did not carry through in the expected way due to this situation. The patients themselves need to be in a condition of readiness for the ceremony, both in terms of logistical necessities and their own state of mind. This emerges from some of the accounts of persons other than Eagle Elk that appear throughout the book as well as from the medicine man himself. The spirit helpers of a particular medicine man determine what sorts of healing can be treated, and at times they will simply tell the patient they need to go to a Western doctor. When the right conditions

obtain, however, the spirits can do their work. The conclusion gives us some of Eagle Elk's thoughts in the last days of his life, when he knew his death was close. It may have been possible for such material not to have been included in the text, and co-author Mohatt is to be commended for retaining it and providing a fuller view of Joe Eagle Elk as a person, and as a practitioner in the Lakota tradition.

The substantial epilogue to *The Price of a Gift* makes for interesting reading. It is a record of a conversation among a group of psychologists, including Gerald Mohatt, psychotherapists, and members of the Rosebud tribe described by the co-author as "recognized leaders engaged in traditional rituals" (p. 160). All participants in this conversation met and worked with Joseph Eagle Elk, and in it they reflect on the ways in which their relationship with him influences their own work. The chapter will be of interest to everyone concerned with understanding healing across cultures. It deepens the reader's sense of Joseph Eagle Elk as a person. The issue of cultural appropriation is touched upon briefly here as well.

A substantial virtue of *The Price of a Gift* is the insight it provides into one contemporary Lakota healer, his life, and his world. The title is to be taken seriously. The work as a whole makes it clear that it is the spirits who provide the power and decide who will be given the ability to understand how to use it. These gifts come with substantial obligations. A further strength of the book is that it conveys this point without being heavy-handed. Perhaps some of those who might seek to appropriate Lakota spirituality for their own purposes will read *The Price of a Gift* and be dissuaded from their foolishness. Yet clearly Joseph Eagle Elk worked with people from many cultural backgrounds. Co-author Gerald Mohatt is to be congratulated for assembling a fine portrait of his friend Joseph Eagle Elk. The reader has the sense that he is presented as he actually lived. *The Price of a Gift: A Lakota Healer's Story* is a welcome addition to the literature.

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The Scalpel and the Silver Bear: The First Navajo Woman Surgeon Combines Western Medicine and Traditional Healing. By Lori Arviso Alvord and Elizabeth Cohen Van Pelt. New York: Bantam Books, 1999. 205 pages. \$23.95 cloth.

Alvord and Van Pelt are listed as co-authors, but Alvord's is the only voice heard throughout the book. She is the central figure, and it is her abbreviated biography that serves as the backdrop for the sampling of cultural information about Navajo tribal philosophy, cultural teachings, and selected tribal health beliefs and healing practices. The personalizing of the cultural information with medicine does make for an interesting reading, but the sketchy biographical background leaves the reader realizing they learn less about Alvord, the physician, and more about her message: modern medical practi-