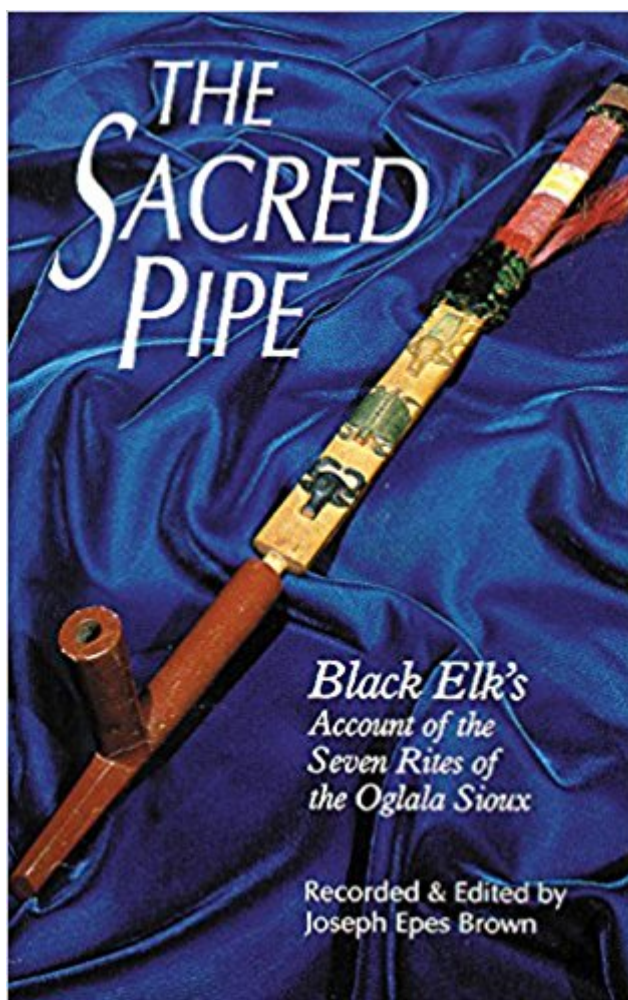


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# The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account Of The Seven Rites Of The Oglala Sioux (The Civilization Of The American Indian Series)



## Synopsis

Black Elk of the Sioux has been recognized as one of the truly remarkable men of his time in the matter of religious belief and practice. Shortly before his death in August, 1950, when he was the "keeper of the sacred pipe," he said, "It is my prayer that, through our sacred pipe, and through this book in which I shall explain what our pipe really is, peace may come to those peoples who can understand, and understanding which must be of the heart and not of the head alone. Then they will realize that we Indians know the One true God, and that we pray to Him continually." Black Elk was the only qualified priest of the older Oglala Sioux still living when *The Sacred Pipe* was written. This is his book: he gave it orally to Joseph Epes Brown during the latter's eight month's residence on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, where Black Elk lived. Beginning with the story of White Buffalo Cow Woman's first visit to the Sioux to give them the sacred pipe, Black Elk describes and discusses the details and meanings of the seven rites, which were disclosed, one by one, to the Sioux through visions. He takes the reader through the sun dance, the purification rite, the "keeping of the soul," and other rites, showing how the Sioux have come to terms with God and nature and their fellow men through a rare spirit of sacrifice and determination. The wakan Mysteries of the Siouan peoples have been a subject of interest and study by explorers and scholars from the period of earliest contact between whites and Indians in North America, but Black Elk's account is without doubt the most highly developed on this religion and cosmography. *The Sacred Pipe*, published as volume thirty-six in the *Civilization of the American Indian Series*, will be greeted enthusiastically by students of comparative religion, ethnologists, historians, philosophers, and everyone interested in American Indian life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a faithful transcription by Mr. Brown of the words of Black Elk, the last of the Sioux holy men to know his tribe's religious rites, together with their history and significance . . . Mr. Brown lived with Black Elk on the reservation, and the holy man, in order to preserve the Siouan rites both for the whites and for his own people, told him all he knew of the rites. --Saturday Review  
Mr. Brown brought to his task genuine respect for the vanishing culture of the Sioux and for the values of their religious system. --Library Journal  
His admiration for Black Elk and his people is obvious . . . He has done a fine job producing a book that is a valuable contribution to American Indian literature. --San Francisco Chronicle

Joseph Epes Brown (1920-2000) was an American scholar whose lifelong dedication to Native American traditions helped bring the study of American Indian religious traditions into higher education. His book, *The Sacred Pipe*, is an account of his discussions with the Lakota holy man, Black Elk. "I traveled among many of the prairie Indians," Brown said, "and after meeting the old Sioux priest Black Elk, I was asked by him to record the account he should give me of his ancient religion. This volume I really consider to be his work and his contribution to the Sioux."

This is for those who have a keen interest in Native Ways of honoring all that is. If you have no real interest in their ways this will not likely suit you. For those who have a taste for understanding a connection to our own existence and all that is natural and have had some interaction with the old ones and their ways of honoring the earth and all she gives us....this is for you. I am Tsalagi...Cherokee and there are many lessons here....

Those keywords I had to press to get here are so stupid in relation to this book. It seems to want me to treat this as fiction. It is not fiction. It is an accurate anthropological account of information and biography about an important historical person. The information is about the 7 Sacred ceremonies of the Oglalla Sioux which he thought were metaphorical and cultural equivalents to the Rites of the Catholic church. He became a deacon in the church as an elder and saw how to pass on his wisdom that both church and Oglalla Ceremony had much in common, but this book is especially

valuable because it details a lot of cultural information.

This book isn't long, but it is another of the Black Elk books that I love. John Neidhardt writes in *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, The Premier Edition that Black Elk was waiting outside his home and appeared to be waiting for him. Joseph Epes Brown had read *Black Elk Speaks* and wanted to meet Black Elk and write about Lakota sacred rituals. Neidhardt told him Black Elk would not speak to him, but JEB went anyway. Black Elk was expecting him and collaboration was born to preserve what Black Elk wanted preserved. To any that feel Black Elk was exploited by the white man, I say he knew exactly what he was doing. Black Elk wanted to preserve his visions and thus *Black Elk Speaks* was born. Then he wanted to preserve these sacred rites for his people and thus this book was born and dedicated to his people the Sioux. Those who have touched shamanism and the spiritual know the truth of such things. If you have read about ancient spiritual practices, you will recognize common threads with other spiritual/shamanic traditions. JEB recounts he met Black Elk in 1947, three years before he passed. Black Elk's son Benjamin helped to translate for the book so again I reiterate as with *Black Elk Speaks* I doubt there could be much misstep in the translation of Black Elk's words. The story of the gift of the sacred pipe is told, ancestor or spirit respect/worship, the sweat lodge rite of purification, lamentation or crying for a vision, sun dance, preparing a girl for womanhood, playing ball, and the making of relatives. I love the little details in the book such as what items they used for the ceremonies, prayers and chants, stories related to the rites, drawings, and historical photos. In the making of relatives chapter, Black Elk puts forth the agenda of peace and love between all men "even if they should be of another nation than ours." The chapter ends with "But above all you should understand that there can never be peace between nations until there is first known that true peace, as I have said often said, is within the souls of men." After reading this book, I felt more keenly our sacred connection to all things and the Great Spirit in all things.

I bought this book to help me write a paper for my college religions class. I dated a guy for three years who was native and I became very close with his family but never really knew what they "believed" in. This book really opened my eyes and cleared up a lot of things that I had only heard snippets about from my close native friends. I learned a lot and felt a lot of emotions while reading.

Really succinct and beautiful recitation of the Oglala Sioux sacred rituals as told by the tribe's last, great medicine man, the mystic, Black Elk. A must-read for any student of comparative religion and

anyone who wishes to understand the zeitgeist of a people who once walked with G\_d at all times in their every day lives. Would that The Sacred Hoop had not been broken! We should all have been blessed to have been born into it.

These two books are classic history. I am a Pipe Carrier and a friend gave me the book years ago, and it was lost in a fire. I was glad to get it again along with the last interview with Black Elk. I spoke to his successor, Crow Dog, and learned so much more. Being Cherokee just means we branched off the original Iroquois Nation , but share many teachings with other Tribal Nations.

This book is difficult to read and it obviously is not written from the words of Black Elk. The narrative is stilted and archaic in many ways. I would recommend it to those who are determined to get through some heavy reading in order to learn about the sacred pipe.

I was a bit cautious after reading "Black Elk Speaks". Nor was I encouraged after finding as many modern "Medicine Man" practitioners on the INTERNET. Fact is, though, I was wonderfully surprised to find the detail and disclosure that I did. I wouldn't characterize this as a "how-to" book, there is enough detail concerning the five primary rituals to allow a person who is not a Native American to appreciate both each activity and its underlying beliefs. Most importantly to me, I feel that I can at least participate in a discussion about the nature of these practices with confidence.

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