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Red Man's Religion: Beliefs and Practices of the Indians North of Mexico

Ruth Murray Underhill

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0 of 4 people found the following review helpful. GoodBy KmmThe book was in good condition. But the one I got wasn't the one that was pictured but a later model. My teacher said it was fine so I kept it.1 of 1 people found the

following review helpful. Early overview of American Indian Religion By Ernest Schusky Pre WWII anthropologists recognized that American Indians shared common elements of religious life despite striking cultural differences among culture areas such as the Plains, the Southwest, and Northwest Coast. For example, almost all tribes regarded four as a sacred number and the circle as a sacred symbol. Underhill brings the knowledge of her times together to underline these similarities, but she also gives us an impressive overview of North American tribal religions. As a BIA anthropologist she spent much of her life working with Indians and sharing with other anthropologists what they were learning. Her depth of knowledge for the Southwest is most impressive, but she also was well versed in the religions of other culture areas. I rate the book with only four stars because it is dated.

Among the topics considered in this classic study are world origins and supernatural powers, attitudes toward the dead, the medicine man and shaman, hunting and gathering rituals, war and planting ceremonies, and newer religions, such as the Ghost Dance and the Peyote Religion. "The distinctive contribution of [Red Man's Religion] is the treatment of topics, the insight and the perspective of the author, and her ability to transmit these to the reader. . . . Traits and aspects of religion are not treated as abstract entities, to be enumerated and summated, assigned a geographic distribution, and then abandoned. No page is a dry recital; each is an illumination. Insight and wisdom are framed in poetic prose. An offering of information in such a medium merits gratitude." American Anthropologist