

Posudek oponenta disertační práce Kláry Perlíkové
“The Concept of Duality in Culture and Myth of Lakota Indians”
předkládané v roce 2017 na katedře Etnologie

I. Stručná charakteristika práce

The dissertation focuses on the concept of duality in Lakota culture through the examination of Lakota myths, visual arts, and contemporary cultural practices, such as powwows. The author approaches the topic from the perspective of structural anthropology modified by postmodernist critique. The study is based on a research of published Lakota myths, archival research in Native art collections in various European museums, and on the author's fieldwork among the Lakota in summers 2014 and 2015.

II. Stručné celkové zhodnocení práce

The dissertation offers a lot of factual information about Lakota origin stories and their analysis, as well as a wealth of information on the various forms of Lakota (and more generally Great Plains Native American) arts, such as painting, beadwork, quilting, and dancing. In the section on contemporary powwows, the author raises several interesting and important points regarding Native identity, authenticity, and the complicated relations with the US settler-state. However, the whole dissertation feels disjointed. It lacks a strong thesis statement and therefore it is not clear what exactly the author argues about the concept of duality in Lakota culture. Further, the individual chapters are not always clearly linked to the central theme of the work. The dissertation also lacks a literature or state-of-the-field review. Thus it is not clear how this work fits into the current discourse on the topic, whether it expands it or what new knowledge – interpretation it offers, or if it bridges different scholarly fields dealing with the examined topic. While the chapters are very informative, they are more descriptive than analytical. Linguistically, the work is satisfactory, though it would have benefited from proof-reading and editing.

III. Podrobné zhodnocení práce a jejích jednotlivých aspektů

1. Struktura argumentace.

The author clearly indicates the topics she will discuss in each chapter and sub-chapter. Her descriptions of the given topics are clear and easy to follow. However, the chapters and sub-chapters lack a clear argument indicating what exactly the author is arguing about her subjects. In general, the chapters and sections do not have a clear conclusions or concluding remarks that would sum up the arguments and link the discussions back to the central theme. On two occasions, the author concludes a sub-chapter by discussing the topic of the following one. It would be more effective if the author used the space to conclude the current section and clearly linked the discussed topic to a central argument about the concept of duality (67 – 68, 93 – 94). Similarly, in her sub-chapter on quilting, the author mentions the adoption and adaptation of non-Native technique and art, but does not show how exactly Native Americans modified the original patterns or explain what their Morning Star symbolizes or how it differs from non-Native patterns. This issue is mentioned again in a footnote #31 on page 58, in another sub-chapter. This footnote information should have been part of the sub-chapter on quilting, where it would have advanced the discussion.

In general, the author defines the terms and concepts used clearly – she offers definitions of duality and explains her labeling of “Lakota art” and “Plains art.” Little bit lacking is her definition of “traditional art.” She defines it as “art which is usually described as traditional or based on

decoration customs originating in the pre-reservation era" (21) and offers another definition by Hobswam and Ranger in a footnote. However, a chapter on quilting and quilting patterns (42 – 45) clearly shows that the artwork, now considered "traditional," was a reservation era development. Similarly, some of the contemporary powwow dances have developed during the 20th century. The work would be stronger if the author presented her own definition of "traditional" and explained how she is using the term. She should also explain how quilting, a non-Native art, became considered "traditional" by Native Americans.

There are few instances when further analysis, better explanation of historical context, and additional evidence could have strengthened the author's arguments. For example:

* The section on "gendered art" (25) talks about the division of tipi into male and female spaces, the female space being the inside. Yet, the lining of the tipi, the female space, is decorated by men. The author does not explain if this is significant or what it may suggest about the concept of duality in Lakota life.

* In her discussion of spiritual unity among protesters against the KXL pipeline (72), the author suggests the existence of spiritual unity and the ability of Native Americans to "make their concept [of] Mitakuye Oyas'in [concept of spiritual connection to the land] known to farmers..." (74). The author however does not provide evidence to prove that the farmers and ranchers adopted (or understood) this spiritual aspect of the protest and that they did not join it only out of practical concerns for their own livelihood.

* In the section of European powwows, the author argues that European powwow dancers feel they are showing respect to Native Americans by following forms of behavior they [the Europeans] think Native Americans should have (110). This is a problem, which opens up an opportunity to discuss the issues of stereotypes the projections of one's ideas on other peoples and their behavior v. reality. The author could have at least questioned and analyzed the European assumption of "honoring" the Natives, since Native Americans are often not fond of hobbyists and their practices.

The whole sub-chapter on European powwows, while very informative and interesting, seems disconnected from the rest of the work. It's relevance to the concept of duality in Lakota life is not clear. The author argues that there is mutual influence between Native and non-Native powwow dancers (European hobbyists), but the whole discussion shows only the flow of information (or reactions) from Native Americans to the hobbyists (comments on photos and videos of European powwows). The author presents no evidence that would even suggest any influence on Native Americans from Europeans. Thus the argument for dual identity (Native and global) is rather weak and unfounded and does not contribute to the overall theme of the work.

2. *Formální úroveň práce*

Visually, the work is well-arranged, with clearly divided chapters and sub-chapters. Diagrams, visual materials, and footnotes are correctly formatted. The dissertation is written in English, the author's second language, which is, for the most part, satisfactory. There are however some typos, wrong prepositions (for example living "in the land" or "in the reservation" instead of "on the land," "on the reservation"), missing articles, and few incorrectly chosen words throughout the work. On page 42, the author mentions "public schools" for Native Americans. It is not clear, which type of school she means exactly, as Native American children went to either boarding schools or day schools on reservations, not strictly "public" schools. The author should be more specific. The author also needs to be consistent in her spelling of the word "Native" – "native." Overall, the text would have benefited from further proof-reading and editing.

3. *Práce s prameny či s materiálem*

It is clear, the author conducted a careful research in available museum collections in Europe and a serious field work among the Lakota, from which she draws in her work. For example, in a sub-chapter

on beadwork, she effectively uses diagrams of beadwork patterns to explain their appearance and symbolism (p. 29 – 31). In a sub-chapter on painted hides, Perlíková offers pictures of some of the items she studied in the World Museum Vienna (35, 36), but does not quite incorporate these specific images in her discussion (37). She repeats this with photos of quilted blankets and powwow dancers in the following chapters. While these pictures are very informative and help to show the reader what the author is describing, incorporating them into the text directly – analyzing the images presented, would provide specific examples and clear empirical evidence for her discussion. On the other hand, she effectively uses secondary sources and examples of the Pacific Northwest split representation of animals style to offer a comparison to the description of the Lakota painted hides (38 -39), which helps the reader to understand the presented pictures.

The used secondary sources are properly referenced. The author quite effectively uses secondary sources in her sections on Tribal Museums and Identity and her discussion of the concepts of linear and circular worldviews (56 – 69). Similarly effective is her discussion on theories and frameworks used in this work (11 – 14). However, by not including a review of existing literature on the work's themes, the author does not explain why she is using some works and not others. On page 53, she indicates existence of recent works dealing with Native identity, but does not offer any examples. Further, Perlíková seems to dismiss (at least to a degree) works on American Indian history (for not explaining of what it means to “be Indian”) and works written by non-Native authors (53 – 54). And yet, some of these works would have been helpful for her later discussion. For example, Roland Niezen's work, based on his research and experience with Canada's First Nations, would have provided a useful background for the discussion of Native identity and its construction vis-à-vis the dominant society. A book by Native American authors Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Warrior *Like a Hurricane* would have helped with the author's chapter on powwows, pan-Indianism and the role of culture in political (and cultural) self-representation (81 – 83) by providing historical context to these issues. A crucial work that should have been included in the sub-chapter “Dual Realities and Paradoxes at Powwows,” is Paul Rosier's *Serving Their Country* (84 – 89). In this book, Rosier analyses the historical development of what he terms “hybrid patriotism,” a dual identity of Native Americans and their conflicted relation to the United States, which directly speaks to the author's discussion of Lakota's attitudes toward the presence of the American flag at their powwows.

4. *Vlastní přínos*

The work is based on an extensive primary research, combined with published primary sources and secondary literature. It offers the reader wealth of information about Lakota historical and contemporary art, spiritual traditions and cultural practices, through which the author attempts to demonstrate the concept of duality. The dissertation introduces a topic that is not yet that well known among Czech readers and thus enriches the knowledge on the topic in this country.

IV. Dotazy k obhajobě

Since the dissertation does not offer any literature or state-of-the-field review, can you tell us, what the current discourse on this topic is (duality, Native art, Native identity, self-representation, etc., including Native and non-Native views), what are the major works that have been published, what are their strengths and shortcomings, and how does your work fit in?

In your section on painted hides you compare the style to that of the Pacific Northwest split representation of animals, arguing that a transformation took place. Can you elaborate more on this? What does this similarity in animal depiction suggest? Do you see its roots in a possible contact and

trade between the peoples or is there a deeper spiritual connection that could perhaps suggest the centrality of the concept of duality outside the Lakota culture?

In your chapter on powwows, you discuss the internal and external forces shaping Lakota powwows and their connection to pan-Indianism (82). You claim that contemporary powwows have their origin in Lakota / Plains cultures and practices and thus contributed to pan-Indian cultural self-representation. At the same time, you argue that contemporary Lakota powwows are also influenced by pan-Indianism. Can you explain the historical development of contemporary powwows and pan-Indianism and their mutual influences? What are the specific aspects of Lakota / Plains culture and practices that got incorporated into pan-Indianism? What are the specific examples of outside / pan-Indian practices we can see within Lakota powwows? Are you aware of any specific differences between Lakota powwows and those elsewhere in the United States?

V. Závěr

Despite my objections and critique, the thesis presents a serious research and valuable information and fulfills the requirements for a dissertation work. Thus I recommend it for defense. However, a passing grade will depend on the author's ability to satisfactorily address the dissertation's shortcomings and defense committee's questions.

7. 2. 2017