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PAWNEE GEOGRAPHY

HISTORICAL AND SACRED

DOUGLAS R. PARKS and WALDO R. WEDEL

The earth is a fundamental religious symbol for American Indian peoples. Among horticultural and hunting tribes alike, Mother Earth is the female principle, the expression of fertility and creator of life, begetting vegetation, animals, and humans. In this elemental role she often appears conspicuously in religious rituals. For many American Indian peoples, specific geographical features on the earth also figured prominently in tribal conceptions of the sacral world. The Pawnee Indians, who formerly lived in east central Nebraska, provide an instructive example of a people who had an elaborate and unique set of beliefs about such landmarks and

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who incorporated these sites into their ritualism as important symbolic entities, constituting a map of the sacred on this earth. By examining these sacred sites, Pawnee beliefs about them, and their role in Pawnee ritual, and by viewing them within the broader context of other Plains Indian beliefs about revered geographical landmarks, it is possible to gain deeper understanding of the relationship between American Indian concepts of the sacred and the environment in which these peoples lived.

Among Plains Indian tribes, the Pawnees, and particularly one division, the Skiris, are recognized for a religious philosophy and ceremonial life that were at once highly developed and distinctive. They were unique in their belief in a celestial cosmogony and human descent from stars, and they developed an elaborate ritualism, presided over by priests, that commemorated their heavenly origins and association. Their doctors, who healed the sick and manipulated shamanistic powers, were no less distinctive and acquired renown among other Plains tribes as well. Pawnee doctors impressed all spectators by their magical performances, apparently even skeptical whites, who found themselves unable to explain the startling feats they witnessed.¹

Early recorders of this culture also noted a distinctive feature of Pawnee beliefs about the origin of shamanistic power: that there were certain underground or underwater geographical locations where animals of all species met and conferred supernatural powers on selected Pawnee individuals.² In 1922 the anthropologist Ruth Benedict, in a classic paper entitled "The Vision in Plains Culture," drew attention to the Pawnee concept of the animal lodge when she discussed how the normal Plains pattern of a guardian spirit source of shamanistic power was little developed among the Pawnees, who had substituted for it the animal lodge, in which Pawnee doctors learned the mysteries of *all* the animals instead of acquiring power from an individual guardian.³

Although each of the Pawnee animal lodges had its own name, the sites where they were located were denoted by the general term *rahurahwa:ruksti'u*, "(being) holy ground." The Skiri chief White Eagle characterized them thus for the anthropologist Melvin R. Gilmore in 1914, when he and Gilmore visited sites of former significance to the Pawnees when the tribe had lived in Nebraska. At the same time White Eagle related the story of one animal lodge, again referring to it as a "holy ground."⁴ Mark Evarts, an elderly Skiri, characterized the sites of animal lodges as "holy grounds" in letters in 1937 to Oklahoma oilman Robert Ellison, a collector of Plains Indian, and particularly Pawnee, artifacts.⁵ Since there are no known instances in the documentary record of other types of geographical sites being designated by this term, it would appear that it denotes animal lodge sites primarily, if not specifically, and emphasizes the special significance they had for the Pawnees. Animal lodge locations were the preeminent holy sites.

Early ethnographic accounts of the Pawnees recognize varying numbers and identities of animal lodges. At the turn of the century the naturalist George Bird Grinnell recorded five. Anthropologist George A. Dorsey listed four, only two of which matched those given by Grinnell. In 1914 Gilmore recorded from White Eagle five names, only two of which matched

the ones cited by Grinnell and Dorsey. During the first decades of this century, the native Pawnee ethnologist James R. Murie recorded a list of seven animal lodges, all of which were part of the smoke-offering ritual of the Medicine Lodge. Subsequently in 1931 anthropologist Alexander Lesser confirmed Murie's list of seven lodges and added two more that do not appear in any of the other lists. Thus there are fourteen animal lodges recorded in these documentary sources. They are listed in Table 1.⁶

To gain a fuller understanding of the role these lodges played in Pawnee culture, we have taken a multidisciplinary approach in this article. Beginning with a description of two perspectives on the landscape in which the Pawnees lived, we first present an overview of Pawnee historical geography as provided by archeology and ethnohistory: the sites and locations of both the prehistoric and historic villages, which defined the locus of the physical world of the Pawnees. Second, we survey Pawnee sacred geography by reviewing the historical documentation and mythological references to the fourteen recorded animal lodges, and give actual locations and descriptions of these lodges when known—or possible locations when suggested by available references. (We toured through Nebraska and Kansas in August 1982 in an attempt to locate and photograph as many of these holy sites as the documentation permitted.)⁷ Next follows a discussion of Pawnee doctors' rituals and the role that the animal lodges played in them, describing how the lodges had become symbolic reference points and in the final days of traditional Pawnee culture had become transformed from historical to mythologized features of the Pawnee cognitive world, thus constituting a sacred geography for Pawnee shamans. We suggest, moreover, that as a set of symbols the Pawnee animal lodges served to reinforce the distinction between two fundamentally different cultural domains: the shamanistic and the religious. Finally, we survey the notion of "holy site" among other Plains tribes to explore the nature of this concept and to place the Pawnee animal lodge within a wider cultural context.

TABLE 1

PAWNEE ANIMAL LODGES, LISTED BY DOCUMENTARY SOURCE

Grinnell (1889, 1893)	Dorsey (1904)	White Eagle (1914)	Lesser (1929)	Murie (1921/1981)
1. Pa-huk' Hill Island	Pawhuk Bad Land	Pahuk	<i>pa:haku</i> Hill Sitting in Water	<i>pa:haku</i> Mound Sitting on Water
2. Kitz-a-witz-uk Water on a Bank	Ketcawetsak Water upon the Mound	Kicawitsak Water on Bank	<i>kitsu:wi:tsaku</i> Stream of Water Issues	<i>kicawi:caku</i> Spring on the Edge of a Bank
3.	Pakaochtu Mountain Covered with Eagle Down		<i>paksu:k'tu</i> Hill Covered with Down Feathers	<i>paksuktu'</i> Head Covered with Down
4.		Pahua	<i>pahu:a</i> Swimming Mound	<i>pa:hu:'a</i> Swimming Mound
5.			<i>axka:wawik'ti:ku</i> River Bank Talking	<i>ahka'iwa:waktiku</i> Talking River Bank
6.			<i>kutawikutsu</i> <i>raka:wa:wi</i> Hawks Dwelling	<i>kutawiku:cu'</i> <i>ra:ka:wa:wi</i> Hawks' Nests
7. Ah-ka-wit-akol White Bank			<i>axkawita:ka</i> White River Bank	<i>ahkawita:ka</i> White River Bank
8. La-la-wa-koh-ti-tu Dark Island				
9. Pa-hur Hill That Points the Way				
10.	Great Cave of the Bears			
11.		Nakiskat White Bone		
12.		Tsuraspako Girl Hill		
13.			<i>pa rakau</i> Elk Home	
14.			<i>asatatkitaruts</i> On Top of Hill Fresh Dung of Horses But No Horses	

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF PAWNEE BANDS

The Pawnees, until 1876 the most influential and populous of the native peoples of Nebraska, were a loose confederacy of four subtribes or bands—the Skiri; the Chawi, or Grand; the Kitkahahki, or Republican; and the Pita-hawirata, or Tappage—totaling perhaps seven to ten thousand people in the early nineteenth century. The Pawnees were probably represented in the Indian delegation from *Harahey* (*Arahey*, *Arahi*) that met Coronado in central Kansas in 1541, and they had trade contacts with the Spanish during the seventeenth century. They became well known to the French in the eighteenth century and are frequently depicted on maps of the period as *Panis* and *Panimahas*. During the nineteenth century, when they became well known to the Americans, the Pawnees dwelt mainly in a group of “permanent” but frequently moved earth-lodge villages centered around the confluence of the Platte and Loup rivers in east central Nebraska. Village sites attributed to them are distributed from about 15 miles below Fremont on the Platte for approximately 120 miles upstream to Central City and to St. Paul on the Loup. Between Schuyler and Genoa is a series of large and prolific archaeological sites where, as the *Panis* and *Panimahas* of the French documents, the Pawnees lived from the time of their earliest white contacts in the mid-sixteenth century until the latter part of the eighteenth. Other Pawnee villages were located at various times on the Blue River near Blue Springs and on the Republican near its crossing by the present Nebraska-Kansas boundary.⁸

At the time of the explorations of Lewis and Clark (1804–1806) and of Pike (1806), the Pawnees usually lived in two to five or six principal towns, each estimated to consist of 40 to 200 earth lodges, containing from 800 to 3,500 inhabitants, and commonly fortified. Earlier, there were apparently more numerous and smaller villages and hamlets, randomly dispersed and usually unfortified.

Owing in considerable measure to the pio-

neering work of A. T. Hill and the Nebraska State Historical Society since the turn of the century, most of the historic Pawnee village sites have been correlated reasonably well with specific bands. Their approximate times of occupancy, if not the specific dates of residence, have also been determined from the historic documents, and the nature of their material culture inventory has been broadly delineated. At most sites, however, systematic excavations have been limited and much careful work remains to be done. We refer here to the villages and towns inhabited since 1800, when useful records were left by U.S. government officials, army officers, missionaries, traders, artists, and various travelers and other observers.

Pawnee village sites are broadly divided by archeologists into two major categories in terms of their time of occupancy. Those dating after about 1750 are designated *Historic Pawnee*, subject to close documentation, fairly close dating, and often to band identification. Earlier sites, falling in time between about 1550 and 1750, are assigned to the *Lower Loup* phase. Their relationship to the later historic sites can usually be demonstrated from comparison of artifacts, house types, and other material traits, but specific identification with historical documents and with particular bands is not feasible. The material culture remains are generally superior in quality and quantity to the later ones, and the proportion of white trade items is generally much lower than in the historic nineteenth-century sites.⁹

The map locations of twenty of the principal known Historic Pawnee village sites and ten Lower Loup sites are indicated in figure 1. These cover a span of more than three centuries, during which the great majority of the Pawnees lived within the territory previously defined. The Lower Loup sites are more restricted in their distribution than are the Historic Pawnee sites. They cluster fairly well within the Pawnee heartland and are well within the district to which the Pawnees finally withdrew under American pressure during the final two or three decades of their residence in Nebraska.

The ceramic analyses undertaken by Roger

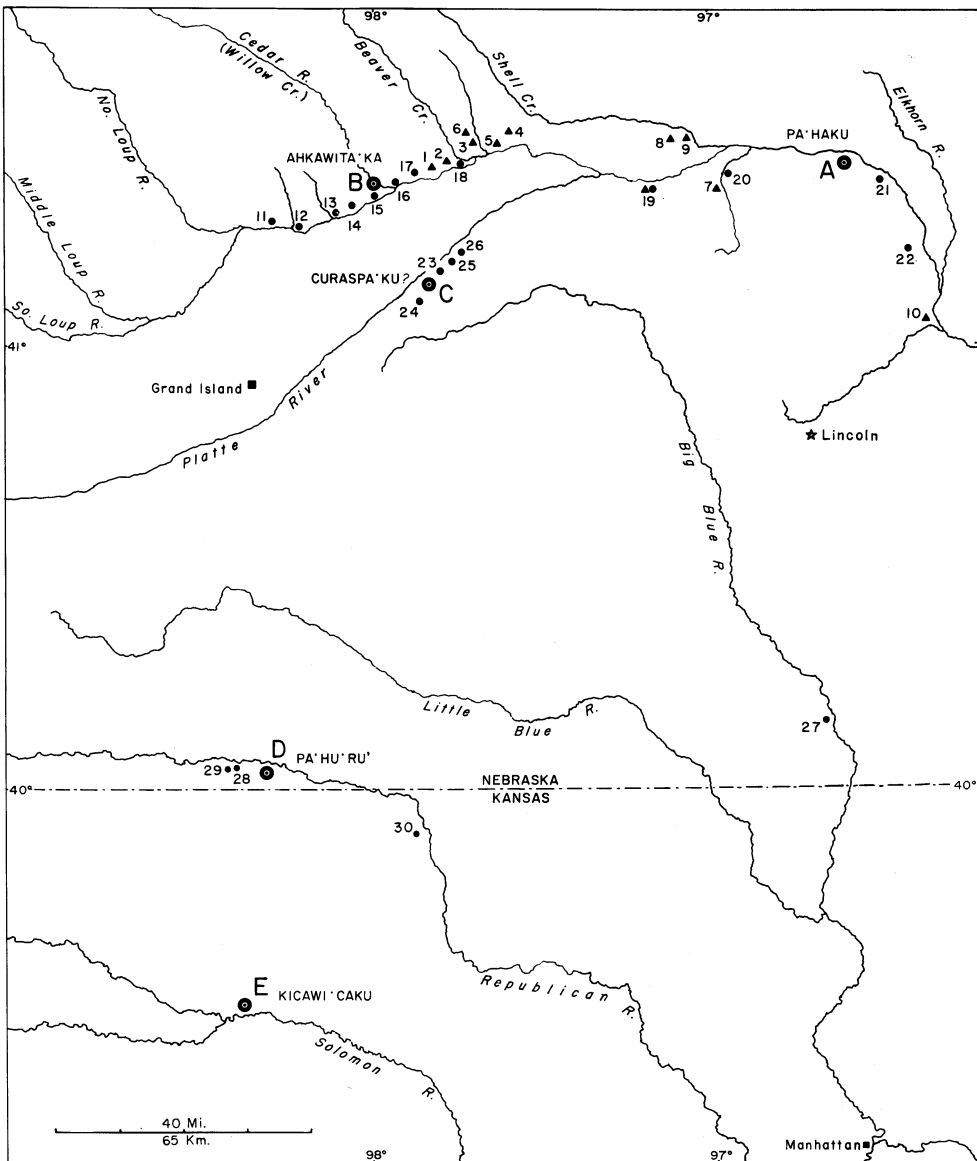


FIG. 1. Pawnee village sites and animal lodge locations in Nebraska and Kansas. Lower Loup phase (ca. 1550-1750): 1, Burkett (25NC1); 2, Wright (25NC3); 3, Larsen (25PT1); 4, Monroe (25PT13); 5, Foley (25PT17); 6, Coffin (25NC16); 7, Barcal (25BU4); 8, Wolfe (25CX2); 9, Gray (25CX1); 10, Ashland (25CC1). **Historic Pawnee (ca. 1750-1876):** 11, Palmer (25HW1); 12, Cottonwood Creek (25NC5); 13, Horse Creek (25NC2); 14, Vogel (25NC11); 15, Cunningham (25NC10); 16, Fullerton (25NC7); 17, Plum Creek or Burnt Village (25NC14); 18, Genoa (25NC6); 19, Bellwood (25BU2); 20, Linwood (25BU1); 21, McClaine (25SD8); 22, Leshara (25SD2); 23, Clarks (25PK1); 24, Hordville (25HM1); 25, P. Nelson (25PK2); 26, D. Johnson (25PK3); 27, Blue Springs (25GA1); 28, Hill (25WT1); 29, Shipman (25WT7); 30, Kansas Monument (14RP1). **Animal lodge locations indicated:** A, Pa:haku (Mound on the Water); B, Ahkawita:ka (White River Bank); C, Curaspa:ku (Girl Hill); D, Pa:hu:ru' (Hill That Points the Way); E, Kicawi:caku (Spring on the Edge of a Bank), Waconda or Great Spirit Spring.

T. Grange strongly support the long-held thesis that Lower Loup and Historic Pawnee materials are essentially temporal variants of the same ceramic tradition. Grange proposes further that the Lower Loup materials are separable into two distinct series, one leading to the historic Skiri and the other to the Chawi-Kitkahahki-Pitahawirata (or South Band) groups. The Lower-Loup-to-historic-Skiri sequence is seen by Grange as developing in the Loup River country, whereas the Lower-Loup-to-Chawi (South Bend) sequence took place along the Platte River, centering around its junction with Shell Creek from the north and Skull Creek from the south.¹⁰

These two localities, archeologically determined, are of particular interest because of their possible correlation with certain French documents. Etienne Veniard de Bourgmont, for example, journeyed up the Missouri River to the mouth of the Platte in 1714. On the map resulting from Bourgmont's records there is a note at the mouth of the Platte to the effect that 30 leagues up this *Riviere des Panis* one finds ten villages of the *Panis* (Pawnees). At 2.76 miles per French league, roughly 80 to 85 miles up the Platte, the river traveler would find himself in the locality where Shell Creek enters from the north and Skull Creek from the south, the area in which Grange postulates that the Lower-Loup-to-Chawi Pawnee development took place. Furthermore, in the anonymous *Description of Louisiana*, credited to Bourgmont, the *Panimaha* or Skiri Pawnees are located another 20 leagues up the Platte. In this locale, 55 to 60 miles above the *Panis*, the eighteenth-century traveler would have found himself in the heart of the Loup River settlements, between the Burkett and Wright sites of the Lower Loup tradition and the Palmer sites of the nineteenth-century Skiri Pawnees. Bourgmont's observations and the resulting map representations fall chronologically into the Lower Loup time frame, and the villages to which they allude are specifically ascribed to the *Panis* and *Panimahas*. The historic documents thus appear to support the archeological interpretations independently suggested by Grange.¹¹

The identification of historic Pawnee village sites with such precision that their individual locations can be accurately mapped today is

largely a development of the American exploration period. Lewis and Clark did not personally visit any of the Pawnee villages but gave locations in distances from the mouth of the Platte or above the Oto village, or similarly in relative terms. Lieutenant Zebulon Pike paid an official visit to the Kitkahahki (Republican) Pawnees on the Republican River, and the exact location of this community has been firmly established in Webster County, Nebraska. This village, now represented by archeological site 25WT1, was visited by a delegation from the other Pawnee villages on the Platte and/or the Loup, but the precise locations of the village or villages from which the delegation came are not known.¹²

By 1811, according to George C. Sibley of the Missouri Company, the Chawi and Kitkahahki bands had abandoned their old villages and were establishing one jointly in an "elevated level prairie" on the north bank of the "Otto" (i.e., Loup) fork of the Platte. The Skiri village was about ten miles farther up the Loup. It appears likely that the Chawi-Kitkahahki village under construction was at the Horse Creek site (25NC2), and the Skiri village was at the Palmer site (25HW1).¹³

In 1819, Major Stephen Long passed through the Pawnee settlements, giving their locations in terms readily reconciled with modern stream names. The Chawi Pawnees were at Horse Creek; the Kitkahahkis were in a separate village four miles above, at the mouth of Cottonwood Creek (25NC5); the Skiris were three miles farther upstream and, like the other bands, on the immediate river bank. These three villages, Long reported, occupied "about ten miles in length of the fertile valley of the Wolf [Loup] River."¹⁴

In 1833, Commissioner Henry L. Ellsworth negotiated a treaty with all the Pawnees whereby the tribe ceded to the United States all lands they claimed lying south of the Platte River. By this time, the Chawi Pawnee had abandoned the Horse Creek sites and had located their village "at the foot of a long range of hills (and within about 50 yards of the Platte)," on the right bank of that stream. This was at the Clarks site (25PK1). The Kitkahahki band was about twenty miles to the northwest, on the Loup. The Pitahawirata (Tappage) band,

here mentioned for the first time as a separate village unit, was eleven miles farther up the Loup, and five miles beyond were the Skiris.¹⁵

Close in time to Ellsworth's observations is the documentation provided by the Reverend John Dunbar, Presbyterian missionary to the Pawnees from 1835 to 1945. In fall 1839, a U.S. Indian agent to the Pawnees, J. V. Hamilton at Bellevue, directed Dunbar and his associate, Samuel Allis, along with the Pawnee interpreter, Louis La Chappelle, to visit the Pawnees at their villages and to seek their approval for removal north of the Loup River. From that visit, carried out in September and October 1839, Dunbar sketched a rough map with important data on the location and size of each of the several Pawnee villages (fig. 2). This map shows the major streams in the Pawnee country, the location of the Pawnee villages and number of lodges in each, and the distance between certain points on the map. Along with Dunbar's letter of transmittal to Major Hamilton dated 19 October 1839, and his own journal and correspondence to his eastern supporters, the map provides key information on the location and numbers of the Pawnees at this time.¹⁶

Dunbar's map includes portions of the Loup Fork and Platte River, downstream as far as the mouth of Shell Creek. Several northerly tributaries of the Loup are indicated, some named, others not. At the lower left is a gloss listing the Pawnee villages and the number of lodges in each. Another gloss at the lower right gives distances between certain points on the map. Taken in conjunction with the published letters and papers of John Dunbar and Samuel Allis, some fairly precise correlations can be made in terms of modern geographical knowledge.

The map, as indicated above, begins at the east with the junction of the Platte River and Shell Creek. The gloss at the lower right reads as follows:

From Shell Creek to Grape Creek is about 20 miles—from Grape to Beaver 3 miles—from Beaver to Willow Creek 12 miles—from the mouth of Willow Creek to present Tapage village 9 miles and about the same from the present village of the Grand Pawnees—from Willow to the first little unnamed creek 1-½

miles and from the first to the second the same distance.

Shell Creek and Beaver Creek retain those same names today; Grape Creek is now Looking Glass Creek; and Willow Creek is the present Cedar River. Between Beaver and Willow creeks on the map are indicated "Two small creeks not named and having little water during the dry season but furnishing excellent corn ground for the Indians." The little stream on the east became known as Plum Creek, where the Presbyterian mission was subsequently located; the one on the west became Council Creek. These two names have been reversed on present-day maps.

Listed by Dunbar in the lower left gloss are the following villages, with lodge numbers:

Grand Pawnee village contains	84 lodges
Capot Bleu's	" " 29 "
Big Nose's	" " 12 "
Little Republican	" " 26 "
Loup	" " 64 "
Tapage	" " 41 "

With the Tapage are 14 lodges of Republicans

270 in all

As indicated on Dunbar's map, the Grand (Chawi) village was on the south (right) bank of the Platte, at what is generally believed to be the present Clarks site (25PK1). According to Dunbar's letter to Joseph Hamilton, accompanying the map, Capot Bleu's village was located on the south bank of the Platte four miles above the Grand Pawnee village, possibly represented archeologically by the Hordville site (25HM1). The Tappage (Pitahawirata) village was at the mouth of a small northerly tributary of the Loup, evidently at the present Horse Creek site (25NC2). A short distance upstream, and also at the mouth of a small tributary from the north, was the Little Republican village, marked by the Cottonwood Creek site (25NC5). A short distance farther up was the Loup (Skiri) village, probably at the Palmer site (25HW1). Big Nose's village of twelve lodges is shown on the south bank of the Loup, between the Tapage and the Little Republican villages, but somewhat nearer the latter. No archeological site that might correspond to this location is known

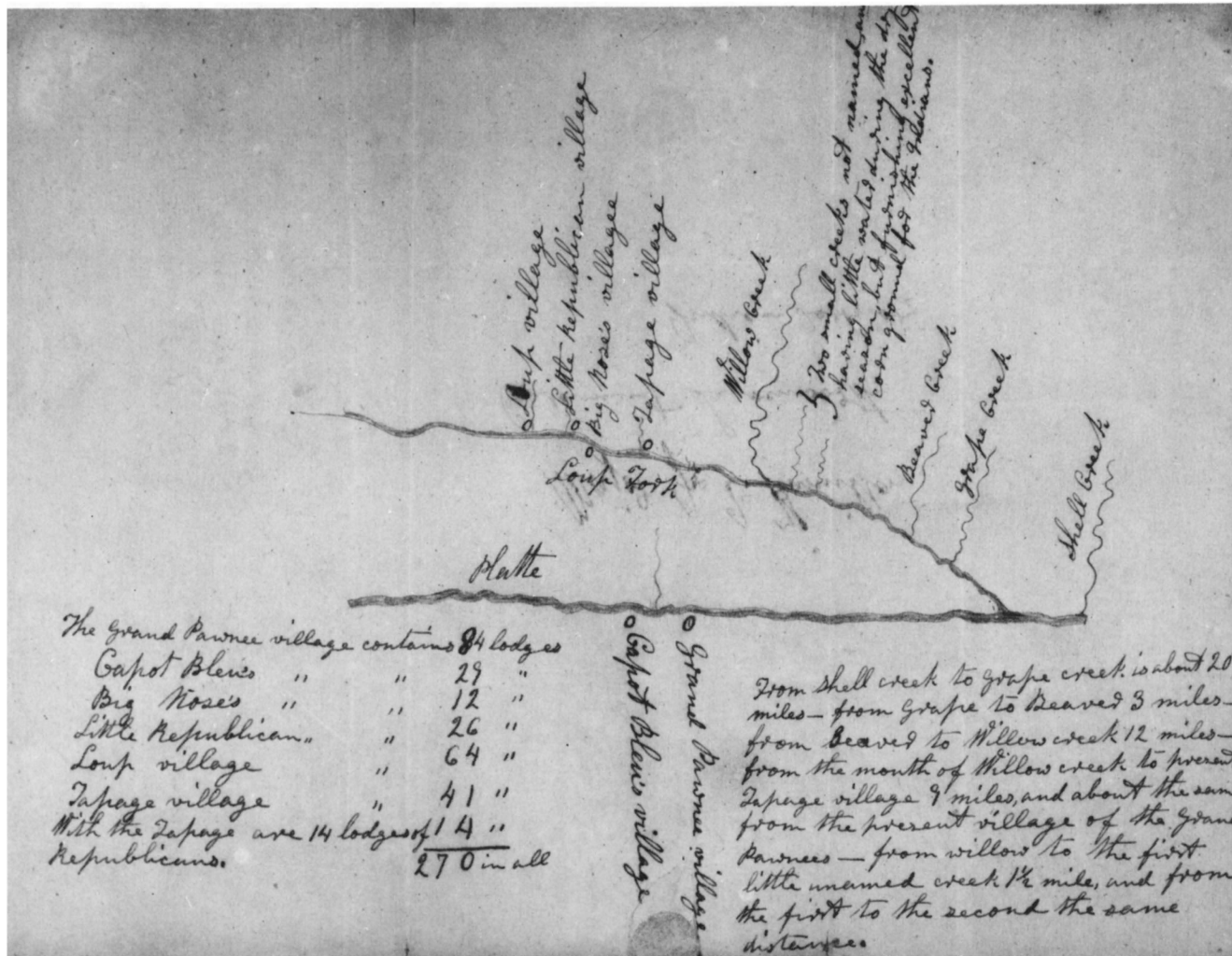


FIG. 2. John Dunbar's 1839 sketch map of Pawnee village locations. Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Service.

to us. Much, perhaps most, of the terrain between the Loup and Platte at this locality was low-lying and boggy in the nineteenth century and was avoided by the Indians for permanent town sites.

Dunbar's reported distances cannot be unreservedly accepted. A notable example is the distance he gives of about nine miles from the mouth of Willow Creek (present Cedar River) to the Chawi village on the Platte. When Major Clifton Wharton and the First Dragoons visited the Pawnees in 1844, they arrived first at the principal Chawi Pawnee village (Clarks site) and reported that the Kitkahahki Pawnees were situated nine miles farther up and on the same side of the river. The Skiris had moved from the Palmer site but were still on the north side of the Loup below the mouth of the Cedar River at the Fullerton site (25NC7), eighteen miles from the Chawi Pawnees, with the Pitahawiratas nine miles above the Skiris. Some of the Chawi, Kitkahahki, and Pitahawirata bands were establishing a new village between the Skiris and the newly built Presbyterian mission on Plum Creek (now Council Creek). Lieutenant J. H. Carleton of the dragoons wrote that the Pawnee interpreter, a Canadian Frenchman named Cleghorn, had informed the dragoons that the Grand and Skiri villages were "not over ten miles apart, and that the road was excellent." Instead, the dragoons found themselves "amongst a series of lagoons and quagmires," heavily mosquito-infested, and did not reach the Loup village, "directly north across the valley, and distant about 20 miles, following the trail" until nearly midnight. This distance closely approximates that between Clarks and the Fullerton site at the mouth of the Cedar, where the Skiri village stood in Carleton's day.¹⁷

The following April, in company with Agent Hamilton, Dunbar stated that "a census was taken, which may be relied on as correct, (or nearly so)." In this report, the lodge numbers were assigned to bands as follows, though the total number remained as reported in the previous fall: Chawi (Grand), 84 lodges, 1,781 people; Kitkahahki (Republican), 81 lodges, 1,823 people; Pitahawirata (Tappage), 41 lodges, 832 people; Skiri, 64 lodges, 1,906 people. Totaling about 6,342 persons, this was

approximately half the official figure being given routinely by the reports of the commissioner of Indian affairs for several years. By implication, the villages of Capot Bleu and Big Nose on Dunbar's map were Kitkahahki. Dunbar's remarks suggest repeated fragmentation of the Kitkahahki band into two or more separate villages.¹⁸

By 1851 the Pawnees had relocated in two large villages on the south side of the Platte River, the South Bands probably at the Linwood site (25BU1) and the Skiris at the McClaine site (25SD8). Following the Table Rock treaty of 1857, the tribe moved to the vicinity of Genoa (25NC6), where the agency and a school for the children were established. It was here that the well-known western photographer William H. Jackson made a series of notable village-scene exposures in 1871 on his return from participation in the Yellowstone expedition led by Ferdinand V. Hayden. And here the Pawnees remained until their final move to Indian Territory in 1874-75.¹⁹

The preceding historical data suggest that the Pawnees were, from the earliest recorded times to the period of their American contacts, most deeply involved with the Platte and Loup valleys centering around their junction. Residence elsewhere, as on the Blue River near Blue Springs and on the Republican intermittently from about 1775 to 1826, was of much shorter duration and in significantly smaller numbers. It is not surprising, then, that the Pawnee sacred places identifiable today are mostly in the Platte-Loup section of their old territory (fig. 1). Only one sacred place is known on the Republican. Only one animal lodge, Waconda Spring, was outside the known Pawnee village territory; it was, however, a spot of deep religious and mythological interest and veneration to many prairie tribes and not uniquely to the Pawnees.

THE ANIMAL LODGE IN PAWNEE CULTURE AND MYTH

In the world view of the Pawnees, and particularly the Skiris, a fundamental distinction was drawn between celestial and earthly non-human (or supernatural) beings. The celestial

deities—the stars, the sun, and the moon—were subservient to Tirawahat, the amorphous and expansive creator of the universe spoken of as Our Father Above (*ati'as titaku ahrakitaku*), who created the celestial beings, assigned them their stations in the heavens, and gave them their powers. These celestial gods, who were arranged in a fixed pantheon, were involved in one or another way in the creation of the world and its inhabitants, and in maintaining its present order. Certain stars created the first human beings on earth, each of whom was believed to be the founder of a Skiri village—its first chief and the keeper of its sacred bundle. The office of the chief was hereditary, so in theory each Skiri village was able to trace its origin back through its chiefs to a particular star. Although the village chief was the earthly representative of a star, the intermediary between the people and the heavenly beings was the leading priest of the village, who knew and performed the rituals of the sacred bundle owned and kept by the chief. Through ritual and sacrificial offerings he tried to achieve good fortune and an orderly world for his village.

Animals (*rahrurakhi*) were the terrestrial media for the celestial gods, who were the ultimate source of knowledge and power. Primary among the stars was the Black Star in the east, who watched over animals and made them speak to those fortunate Pawnees who then “became mysterious and were like the animals.”²⁰ The powers that the animals could bestow were the ability to cure disease or illness, to perform magical feats or legerdemain, and to “shoot” tricks or hypnotize other individuals. These were the powers of the doctors, and thus the animals were their deities, enabling them to minister to the individual personal needs of the Pawnees.

Among these earthly media there was no fixed pantheon, only an amorphous group of different animals, each possessing similar powers that could potentially be used by man. Some animals, like the bear, were thought to be especially powerful, but all animals, and even insects, figured in the mythology of the doctors. Each could potentially bless a man and endow him with curative power and the ability to perform feats of magic.

Most doctors were organized into secret medicine societies, which were loose associations made up of members whose lives were under the influence of the same animal and who shared similar curative powers. Usually a society included several noted doctors, a few novices, and a large number of attached members who took part in the dancing of the society but did not know its secrets. There were a number of these societies, which regularly held two dances a year, one in the spring and one in the fall.²¹

Separate from the individual medicine societies was the Medicine Lodge (or Doctors' Lodge), which was a corporation of sorts that met twice a year. The Skiris and each of the Pawnee bands had its own Medicine Lodge, whose members were leading doctors, including those from the medicine societies. All were men of outstanding ability who had applied for a seat (or booth) in the Medicine Lodge, had performed successfully, and consequently had been given permanent status in the organization. Like the medicine societies, the Medicine Lodge had two yearly dances, one in the spring and another in the summer. In addition there was a great dramatic performance in late summer or early fall. For the Skiris it was the Thirty Day Ceremony, during which the doctors lived in the Medicine Lodge for a month and performed daily, impersonating their animal guardians and practicing legerdemain.²²

There were two ways to become a doctor: indirectly, through apprenticeship to an established doctor, or directly, through a dream (or vision) experience. The former route—by undergoing a long apprenticeship—was the usual one, since, among the Pawnee, doctors were trained and not suddenly made through dreams or visions. Although dreams were important, an individual customarily became a doctor by succeeding one's teacher at his death.²³

Of particular interest here is the doctor's dream, and specifically one form of it, as a source of doctoring powers. The Pawnee concept of the animal lodge seems to be unique among the Plains tribes. In most dream experiences of Plains Indians, an individual was given powers (or medicine) by a particular animal—the

buffalo, bear, elk, or whatever. He was, as the Pawnees would say, "blessed by" that animal. But in many Pawnee dreams an individual, usually a poor young man, was taken into an underwater or underground lodge in which there was a wide array of different animals organized like the doctors in the Pawnee Medicine Lodge. At the west end of the lodge sat four leaders. They were flanked on both the north and south sides by various species of animals ranged along the two walls of the lodge, and on either side of the door in the east sat two errand men. There were, in addition, various spokesmen and a messenger. The animals meeting there were said to be holding council and frequently were singing, dancing, and performing legerdemain, just as the doctors did in their Medicine Lodge.²⁴

In most stories the animals would debate what they should do with the human intruder—whether to eat him or to help him—and ultimately they would decide to bless him. Then over a period of days each animal in turn taught the young man its powers, which he later took with him on his return home. The buffalo, for example, would bestow unusual force or power, and sometimes invulnerability. The bear would also confer great power and invulnerability as well as the ability to cure wounds, while the wolf would give craft and the deer would give fleetness. Usually, however, most of the knowledge the person learned was that of the doctors: a knowledge of the herbs used in curing and of the mysterious feats performed in the Medicine Lodge.

A story of this sort is given as the source of the first Skiri Medicine Lodge and later as an explanation for the Medicine Lodges of the other Pawnee bands. Similar stories in which an individual was given shamanistic powers by all the animals in one of the animal lodges are common. The concept of the animal lodge had developed, in fact, until it permeated Pawnee mythology and had become the predominant explanation of shamanistic power.²⁵

Specific animal lodges, moreover, became the objects of an elaborate smoke-offering ritual in the Medicine Lodges of the Chawis and

the Skiris. They became symbolic reference points associated with the four semicardinal directions and the west. In this way the animal lodges became a distinct set of symbols integrated into the Pawnee ritual system and constituted, for Pawnee doctors at least, a map of the sacred on this earth.

SACRED SITES OF THE PAWNEES

Each of the sacred sites mentioned in the documentary sources (table 1) is discussed below. For each site, we present a linguistically accurate form of the Pawnee name, together with its translation; the sources—in myths or ethnographic accounts—where it appears; location and descriptions, when given; and the results of our attempts to find, describe, and photograph the site, when it has been possible.

Pa:haku (Mound on the Water). Mound on the Water was said to be the first animal lodge known to the Pawnees, as well as the source of the Skiri Medicine Lodge and their doctors' powers to heal. It was also generally recognized as the primary lodge among the other Pawnee bands. Indeed, its paramount importance to the Pawnees can be inferred from Gilmore's mention of the attitude of other tribes toward it:

All the other tribes throughout the Great Plains region also know of the veneration in which this hill is held by the Pawnees, so they, too, pay it great respect, and many individuals of the other tribes have personally made pilgrimages to this holy place. The people of the Dakota nation call it Paha Wakañ, the Holy Hill.²⁶

The story of Mound on the Water has been recorded in many versions, which differ considerably in detail but relate the same basic story. Murie recorded the fullest version.²⁷ In it a young man dreamt of a water monster that told him to travel to the Missouri River. The young man made the journey, and when he reached the river, the water monster appeared out of the water and influenced him to jump into the river. After diving into it, he found

himself in a lodge filled with many different animals, which taught him many mysteries and instructed him to build a medicine lodge outfitted and organized as the historic Skiri Medicine Lodge was. After he returned home, he enlisted the aid of the village to build the lodge as he had been bidden to do. On subsequent nights various animals came to him in his dreams and taught him more mysteries. Finally he traveled to the bluff now known as *pa:haku* (Mound on the Water) and there was taken into the animal lodge, where over a period of several days he was taught additional doctoring mysteries by many animals. When he returned home, he organized the first Skiri Medicine Lodge.

In different versions of the story the site of this lodge is described as an island in the Platte River or as a cave under an overhang or promontory along the bank of the Platte. In Murie's account, the young man sat on a high bank overlooking the Platte near present-day Fremont, Nebraska. From where he sat he saw an island; at dusk sparks of fire came up from the

island and mysterious noises emanated from the water. Fishes with fiery mouths splashed in the water, while he heard drumming, singing, and screams followed by peaceful interludes as if there were dancing. Then he fell asleep, and when he awoke he was in an animal lodge.

Grinnell, who translates the name as "hill island," says it is a cave under a high bluff near Fremont.²⁸ The Skiri chief White Eagle, who went with Melvin Gilmore on a tour of Pawnee village sites in Nebraska in 1914, identified *pa:haku* as the bluff, the location of which Gilmore carefully recorded. Further corroboration of this site as a bluff comes from Harry Mad Bear, whose grandfather was a prominent Skiri doctor in Nebraska. In Mad Bear's version of the story of *pa:haku*, recorded in Pawnee in 1966, he says, "It was not an island, but it was a cliff overhang, a drop-off there."²⁹

The lodge itself is sometimes described as being under the water and other times as a cave, the entrance to which is at the water level under the bluff.

On the basis of Gilmore's description, we



FIG. 3. *Pa:haku* on the south bank of Platte River about six miles west of Fremont, Nebraska. View is southwest from the abandoned Chicago and Northwestern bridge. Photo by Waldo R. Wedel, August 1982.

located *pa:haku* about six miles upstream from the McClaine village site, on the south (right) bank of the Platte River (fig. 3). (It is located in NE ¼ Sec. 22 and NW ¼ Sec. 23, R7E, T17N, in Saunders County, Nebraska.) The bluff rises about 180 to 200 feet (55–60 m) above the normal river level, is heavily wooded with hardwood timber and a few junipers, and faces toward the north. Since we saw it only from the abandoned Chicago and Northwestern railroad trestle, we could not determine whether or not the bluff was rocky at water level. The face of the bluff is steep, and there are no signs of undercutting by water, or of a cave or an overhang.

Kicawi:caku (*Spring on the Edge of a Bank, or Spring Mound*). This site is frequently mentioned in Pawnee stories, but in none of them is it cited as the source of any specific power. Rather, it is mentioned simply as the location of an important animal lodge where mysterious powers were reputedly bestowed on individuals.

The Pawnee name *kicawi:caku* literally means “water (or spring) on the edge of a bank (or hillside).” In English it is denoted simply as Spring Mound or Spring Hill. Descriptions of the site in stories suggest an intermittent spring on the top or side of a hill. In 1966 Harry Mad Bear described it as a place where at certain times during the day water would all at once spill out of a hole and spread over the surrounding sloping ground.³⁰ Grinnell says this about it:

This is a mound, shaped like a dirt lodge. At the top of the mound, in the middle, is a round hole, in which, down below, can be seen water. At certain times, the people gather there, and throw into this hole their offerings to Tirawa, blankets and robes, blue beads, tobacco, eagle feathers and moccasins. Sometimes, when they are gathered there, the water rises to the top of the hole, and flows out, running down the side of the mound into the river. Then the mothers take their little children and sprinkle the water over them, and pray to Tirawa to bless them. The water running out of the hole often carries with it the offerings, and the ground

is covered with the old rotten things that have been thrown in.³¹

The location of the site is given by both Murie and Grinnell as on the Solomon River in Kansas, while Gilmore gives a very precise description of its location, enabling us to identify it as Waconda or Great Spirit Spring, the most famous and widely known spring in Kansas (figs. 4 and 5).³² (It is in the SE ¼ Sec. 25, T6S, R10W, about 3 miles east and 0.75 miles south of the center of Cawker City in Mitchell County, 3½ miles airline below the junction of the North and South Forks of the Solomon River.) Now submerged beneath the waters of Glen Elder reservoir, it was a natural artesian spring—almost unique in Kansas—by which water from the Dakota sandstone rose through a natural crack or fissure to the surface under hydrostatic pressure. It was situated on top of a natural rock mound that rose 42 feet above the surrounding Solomon River floodplain. The mound was composed of hard and porous stratified limestone in the form of a truncated cone, 300 feet in diameter across the base and 150 feet across the top. The top of the mound was essentially flat, and about 1½ feet higher than the surface of the river terrace to the north. In the center of this mound was the spring vent, an inverted cone-shaped basin 35 feet deep at its center and from 52 to 56 feet in diameter. The Solomon River flowed a few hundred yards south of the spring mound. Within the spring the water rose virtually to the top of the mound, most of it escaping through openings on the flanks of the mound.

The mound was formed by deposition of mineral water from solution, forming layer upon layer until its maximum height was attained. The water is highly mineralized and was supposed to possess valuable medicinal properties. The principal salts were sodium chloride, sodium sulphate, magnesium sulphate, magnesium carbonate, and calcium carbonate. As early as 1884, construction of a spa was begun; before that, beginning in the 1870s, bottled water from the spring was widely marketed under the name of “Waconda Flier.”



FIG. 4. *Aerial view of Kicawi:caku, Spring on the Edge of a Bank or Waconda Spring and sanitarium in 1965, looking northwest.*
Photo courtesy U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.



FIG. 5. *Ground view of Waconda Spring from the southwest, showing broadly domed mound profile.* Photo courtesy U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

According to Rev. Isaac McCoy, the Wacanda Spring was named by the Kansa Indians *Ne-Wohkon daga*, which signifies "spirit water." The same Indians gave to the Solomon River the name *Nepaholla*, "water on a hill," referring to the spring located on top of a low hill or mound. As Schoewe has observed, the spring "was held in great reverence and esteem by the various Indian tribes who, even in late years, when passing by threw into its waters various small articles of value. Many relics, in cleaning out the spring, have been fished from its waters, including bows and arrows, rifles, arrowheads, colored stones, beads, and medals, one of which bore the stamp of 'The Fur Company of 1844' and the figure of a white man and Indian making friends over the pipe of peace."³³

Paksuktu' (*Head with Soft Down Feathers*). There is no specific information for this site. Dorsey mentions it as one of four animal lodges recognized by the Skiris, and translates the name as "mountain covered with eagle down." Murie and Lesser note that it was one of the seven animal lodges that received a smoke offering in the Medicine Lodge ceremonies. Murie simply says in a footnote that it is somewhere in western Nebraska. Thus, its location could not be determined.³⁴

Pa:hu:'a (*Swimming Mound*). This animal lodge figured prominently as a sacred site among the Kitkahahki. Grinnell recorded a Kitkahahki story that accounts for the origin of that band's doctors' ceremony (what Murie has called the White Beaver Ceremony). In it a young man was first taken into the animal lodge at Mound on the Water, but the leaders there decided to send him to Swimming Mound to let the animals in that lodge help him. (The animals at Swimming Mound, in turn, sent him to the animal lodge at Lone Tree, or Dark Island; and those at Dark Island, recognizing the animals at Mound on the Water as rulers, sent him back to Mound on the Water, where he was finally taught many mysteries.) In this story Swimming Mound is described as a spring, and

to get to the animal lodge in it the young man had to dive into the spring.³⁵

Dorsey published a story that relates the origin of the Lightning Medicine ceremony, reputedly an old medicine ceremony among the Kitkahahki. In this myth one of the heavenly gods came to a man while he was asleep and instructed him to go to Swimming Mound, an animal lodge on an island in the Republican River. There, the man was told, he would receive mysterious powers from the heavenly god through the medium of the animals on earth. The man did as he was bid and entered the animal lodge through a hole cut out on the bank of the Republican by a lightning bolt. (This incident, it might be noted, apparently occurred while the Kitkahahki were on a communal hunt, since they are described as living in tipis when the man went to Swimming Mound.)³⁶

There are no recorded stories for the Skiris or other Pawnee groups in which Swimming Mound occurs, but this animal lodge is one of those that received a smoke offering in the Chawi Medicine Lodge. Hence it was clearly recognized as an important site by the other groups as well.³⁷

The location of Swimming Mound is problematic, since the evidence for it is scanty and even contradictory. Murie says only that it "was supposed to be a floating hill somewhere in the western part of Kansas." Grinnell writes that Spring Mound is sometimes known as Swimming Mound. Murie's description of it, as well as its being a separate animal lodge receiving a smoke offering in the Chawi Medicine Lodge, clearly suggests that it was not simply an alternative name for Spring Mound but rather was another location. The two Kitkahahki traditions, which do not agree in their descriptions of it, only partly indicate that it was a distinct animal lodge. In the story recorded by Grinnell it is said to be a spring, while in the myth given by Dorsey it is an island in the Republican River. The latter description of the site as an island, as well as Murie's brief description, is supported by the etymology of the name, which means "hill swimming on water."³⁸

Murie says the site is somewhere in western

Kansas. In the story presented by Dorsey it is said to be on the Republican River, which flows south into Kansas from Superior, Nebraska, at a point that is slightly east of the central part of Kansas. The south fork of the Republican does, however, cut across the northwest corner of the state.

Lesser's notes further confuse the identification of its general location since they indicate that in the smoke offering of the Chawi Medicine Lodge this animal lodge was symbolically associated with the *southeast*, suggesting, of course, that its location relative to the area of the Pawnee villages on the Platte was in a southeastern direction rather than the southwestern direction that Murie's and Grinnell's statements indicate.

Ahka'iwa:waktiku (Talking River Bank). Only two sources, Murie and Lesser, document this animal lodge. Murie gives it as one of the lodges to receive smoke in the Medicine Lodge, and in a footnote he locates it simply as being "near the Platte River in Nebraska." Lesser also lists it as the recipient of a smoke offering, with a northwestern symbolism. Given the general east-west and southwestern course of the Platte where the Pawnee villages clustered, the northwest directional symbolism offers no concrete possibilities for even remotely locating the lodge, unless it were somewhere in far western Nebraska.³⁹

Kutawikucu' ra:ka:wa:wi (Hawks' Nests). Like the preceding lodge, this one is known only through its inclusion in the smoke offering of the doctors. Murie gives no location whatsoever for it. Lesser says smoke for it was offered to the southwest; hence there is the suggestion that it was in southwestern Nebraska or perhaps northwestern Kansas.

Ahkawita:ka (White River Bank). This lodge is reported by Grinnell, Murie, and Lesser, but it is not mentioned in any recorded myths. Murie gives no location; Lesser indicates that in the smoke offering its symbolic direction was

the northwest. Grinnell, however, gives a fairly definite location, placing it "on the Loup Fork opposite the mouth of the Cedar River, and under a high, white cut bank," just as its name suggests.⁴⁰

Although we did not get onto the south bank of the Loup at the point specified, topographic maps indicate a generally low-lying terrain in that locality. The only "high white cut bank" we were able to locate was on the south (right) bank of Cedar River, north or northwest of Fullerton (fig. 6).⁴¹ (It is in Sec. 10, R6W, T16N, Nance County, Nebraska.) The site is clearly visible, and indeed conspicuous, from State Highway 14 one to three miles to the northeast. The white color derives from a thick layer of loess, which is underlain by a darker reddish loess-like material. The bluff rises about 150 feet (45 m) above the Cedar River bottoms, and is heavily wooded with mostly hardwoods and a few cedars.

Today this bluff is known locally as Lovers' Leap, a name that reputedly derives from Indian legend.

Dark Island (also Lone Tree). This lodge is reported only in two stories published by Grinnell, who refers to it also as Lone Tree. In one myth, a Kitkahahki story mentioned earlier, the animals in Mound on the Water sent a young man to Swimming Mound; the animals there sent him to Lone Tree, which is described as an island in the Platte, under the center of which was the lodge. In the other story a young Skiri man was similarly sent from one lodge to another by the animals, until, after the fourth one, he finally returned to Mound on the Water to receive the powers the animals there imparted to him. No description of the lodge at Lone Tree is given in this story—only that it, too, is an underwater lodge like the others and is upstream on the Platte from Mound on the Water.⁴²

Grinnell states that the animal lodge was under an island in the Platte near or opposite the site of present Central City, Nebraska. Nothing more definite is given, so that it is impossible to locate it today.⁴³



FIG. 6. Ahkawita:ka, *White River Bank*, a loess bluff on Cedar Creek near its junction with the Loup River. Identification is tentative. Photo by Waldo R. Wedel, August 1982.

Pa:hu:ru' (*Hill That Points the Way*). Only Grinnell mentions this site as one at which there was an animal lodge. The site is mentioned in the Skiri story that also mentions Dark Island. Hill That Points the Way was the last of the four lodges visited by the young man before he returned to Mound on the Water. No characterization of the site is given in the story, but Grinnell does identify it as Guide Rock, a well-known landmark near the present town of Guide Rock near the Kansas border in south central Nebraska.

Described by Grinnell as a hard, smooth, flinty rock, sticking up out of the ground, and with a great hole in its side in which the animals held councils, this feature has been greatly altered by highway and canal construction at its base. Although the geology of this district does not suggest the presence of a "hard, smooth flinty rock," an old photograph in the collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society does indicate a rather strikingly shaped

upward-pointing form in 1904, no trace of which is now visible (figs. 7 and 8). The Guide Rock now so labeled is a bluff on the south bank of the Republican River, about four miles east (downstream) of the Hill Pawnee site (25WT1), rising perhaps 75 feet (23 m) above the river level. As seen today, there is little or nothing to distinguish it from scores of other Republican River bluffs, up- and downriver, and there is no confirmation that there was ever a "great hole in its side."

Curaspa:ku (*Girl Hill*). This site is mentioned only by Gilmore in a story recorded from White Eagle in 1914. The story, White Eagle's version of the account of Mound on the Water (see above), has the familiar Pawnee mythological theme in which a poor young man is sent from one animal lodge to another, until he returns to the first one (here Mound on the Water), where the animals finally reach the decision to give him their powers. In this story the third lodge



FIG. 7. Pa:ku:ru', *Hill That Points the Way*, opposite *Guide Rock*, Nebraska, on the south side of the *Republican River*, October 1904. Photo courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society.



FIG. 8. *Hill That Points the Way*, August 1982. Photo by Waldo R. Wedel.

he visited was Girl Hill, a hill on the south side of the Platte River opposite the east end of Grand Island. White Eagle describes it as "shaped like an earth lodge even to the form of the entrance. It was called *tsuras-pako* [*curaspa:ku*] because when the people made the buffalo surround all the young girls stayed on this hill."⁴⁴

This hill, we suggest, is a semidetached butte or erosion remnant in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 25, T14N, R5W, Hamilton County, Nebraska. As seen from the northwest, particularly, the resemblance to an earth lodge with vestibule is strong, as a number of photos we took clearly show (fig. 9). Airline, this feature is 2.75 miles (4.4 km) southwest of the Clarks Pawnee site (25PK1), from which it might have been visible in the nineteenth century when there were fewer or no trees intervening during the Indian occupation. It is roughly the same distance northeast of the Hordville site (25HM1). From the road we were following from the Hordville to the Clarks site, at roughly 1,660 feet elevation, the Girl Hill rises to approximately 1,730 feet.

Nakiskat (*White Bone*). The only reference to this lodge is in White Eagle's story recorded by Gilmore. The animals in Mound on the Water sent the young man first to this lodge, which was said to be a hill west of Mound on the Water "marked by a white bone or some such object" (from which its name is derived) and had a creek running by it. There is nothing more definite to suggest its identification.⁴⁵

Other lodges. Lesser lists two other animal lodge sites. One is *pa ra:ka:u* (Elk Home) that was directionally south of the Pawnee villages. The other was named *asa:takitaruc* (Horse Chips on the Hill) and was in the west. Unfortunately he gave only the names of these sites, which he cited as "extras"; they did not figure in the smoke offerings to the animal lodges in the Medicine Lodge. On the basis of their names, it appears that each of these lodges may have been the home of one species of animal, the elk and the horse, respectively, and thus may have differed from all of the preceding lodges, which housed councils composed of a large variety of birds and animals.



FIG. 9. *Curaspa:ku*, *Girl Hill*, on the right bank of the Platte River near Central City, Nebraska. Identification is tentative. Photo by Waldo R. Wedel, August 1982.

Finally Dorsey cites a lodge named Great-Cave-of-the-Bears, which was apparently also species specific. No location is given for it.⁴⁶

PAWNEE DOCTORS' CEREMONIES

The doctors of each of the Pawnee bands had their own organization, the Medicine Lodge, for carrying out two annual dances and a fall performance.⁴⁷ Within each band there were two leading doctors, each of whom owned one of the two primary doctor bundles that determined the content and character of all the doctors' ceremonies. Physically and functionally similar to the sacred bundle of the priest, a doctor's bundle was a collection of objects associated with its origin and teachings—a vision story, songs, dances, manners of curing and performing magic, manners of costuming, and the procedure for its rituals, as well as objects of ceremonial sanctity used in the performance of the bundle's ceremony. The two leading doctors and their bundles controlled the forms and internal structure of the ceremonies of their band; and because each bundle, and by extension its ceremonies, had a separate origin, each leading doctor's ceremonies differed in detail from those of all other leading doctors. Nevertheless the overall structure of the ceremonies was similar if not identical.

The doctors' dances and the autumn performance were two different types of ceremonies. The two dances, one held in the spring and the other in the summer, focused on song and dance. Each doctor sang songs recalling the origin of his medicine—the place of the original vision and the animal or source of power—and he danced, dramatizing events in the vision experience and imitating the characteristic movements of the animal or other source of power in the vision. The underlying conception of the dance performances was that they relived the moments of communion between the doctor and his source of power; and since the dominating theme was one of ceremonial piety, the songs and dances, if successfully executed, promoted the physical health and well-being of the people.

The fall ceremony, although it too consisted of song and dance, was more particularly a performance. In it the dominant feature was the performance of magical feats in which the participating doctors renewed and demonstrated their powers. The songs they sang were different in that they tell that what the doctor does or performs was taught him by the power in his vision. The feats they then performed enabled them to draw power from their visionary sources and to exercise that power before the other doctors and the people at large. They were, in a sense, advertisements of the doctor's powers that gave people definite notions of the actual kind and amount of power a doctor possessed and how efficacious his doctoring would be.

The fall performances of the doctors among the Pawnees had ceased by 1878, two years after the tribe had removed from their native Nebraska to a new reservation in the Indian Territory, but the doctors' dances survived into the early decades of the twentieth century, keeping alive some of the old ritualism and the progressively attenuating hope that it might yet have some efficacy.

A Chawi renewal rite. In 1911 James R. Murie minutely recorded one of these surviving rituals, the spring dance of the leading Chawi doctor *Raruhwa:ku* (His Mountain).⁴⁸ Although the few remaining doctors of all the Pawnee bands participated in it—in contrast to the dances of former times, when the doctors took part in the dances of their own band only—the forms of the dance were those of the teachings of *Raruhwa:ku*'s bundle. His bundle had a white beaver skin, the animal from which its teachings and power derived and which formed the altar for its ceremonies.

The spring dance actually had two purposes: the one noted above and a renewal function tied to a culturally more general notion of the cycle of life. In Pawnee belief all life, indeed the entire world, goes to sleep or hibernates in the fall and remains dormant throughout the winter until the first thunders of spring announce the reawakening of the world. When

they sound, the whole earth begins another life cycle, starting with new growth in the spring and developing gradually to maturation in the fall. Pawnee ceremonial activity mirrored this natural cycle. At the sound of the first thunder, the priests, doctors, and leaders of the men's societies separately inaugurated a new ceremonial year with the performance of renewal rituals for their sacred articles, either bundles and their contents or lances. Ritualistic life for each of these groups then proceeded through summer and fall, only to cease at the outset of winter and await resuscitation again in the spring.

Because the doctor dance of *Raruhwa:ku* recorded by Murie was a spring renewal ceremony as well as a dance, its structure included a set of renewal rites specific to this performance as well as the dance that was common to the summer performance. The renewal rites, which occurred during the first day, consisted of purification and life-infusing acts and a variety of offerings.

The first day's activities began with a tobacco offering intended to gain the notice of various deities important to the doctors. The water animals (such as the beaver, otter, and mink), who had been hibernating and whose breath has now broken the ice, were asked to breathe their power into the doctors and the beaver (skin) at the altar. The birds in the sky were asked to bring the winds that drive away disease; the star in the east, to let the animals give power to the doctors; the sun, to watch that the doctors execute their ceremonies correctly; the moon, to give fertility to women; and the North Star, to give the doctors the power to cure. Finally Tirawahat was given tobacco so that he would enable the stars, animals, and birds to watch over the doctors and would ensure the growth of medicinal roots and herbs.

After this tobacco offering, seven sticks were placed on the fire in the central fireplace, each aligned with a cardinal or semicardinal direction, to be used later in lighting the pipes in the smoke offerings to the seven animal lodges. Although Murie is not explicit in his description, it appears that these sticks represented the

animal lodges. This done, the beaver skin at the altar was ritually cleansed, as was the otter skin from the bundle of George Beaver, the other leading doctor who assisted *Raruhwa:ku*. Then the two drums and the two leaders' pipes were likewise cleansed.

Next, all of the doctors present went up to the altar one by one to blow their breath into the drums, thereby imbuing them with the animal power that the doctors themselves already possessed and giving new life to the drums. At the same time the doctors received new power from the drums, since the animals that had just emerged from hibernation had already sent their breath and powers into the lodge. Thus there was the mutual exchange of old and new power.

Three sets of offerings followed: smoke, corn, and meat, the offerings common to all Pawnee ceremonies. The first, and most elaborate, were the smoke offerings. The initial smoke offering, in contrast to those that followed, was actually a renewal rite like the preceding ceremonies. Through this offering, which was made to the beaver at the altar, new life was breathed into the beaver and power also passed from the beaver to the offerer, *Raruhwa:ku*. Once the beaver received new life, the doctors came up to it, offered presents, and prayed for its blessings.

What followed was not the usual single smoke offering of all other ceremonies but rather a sequence of seven individual, intricate offerings, one for each of the seven primary animal lodges important to the doctors. Each lodge was associated with a semicardinal direction and the west, a directional symbolism that ostensibly reflected the geographical orientation of the lodges relative to the Pawnee villages when the Pawnees lived in Nebraska. (The lodges and their directional orientations are given in fig. 10.) Among the doctors present, a representative was chosen for each lodge; four doctors seated on the north side of the lodge in which the ceremony was held represented the one western and three northern animal lodges, while three doctors seated on the south side represented the southern ones.

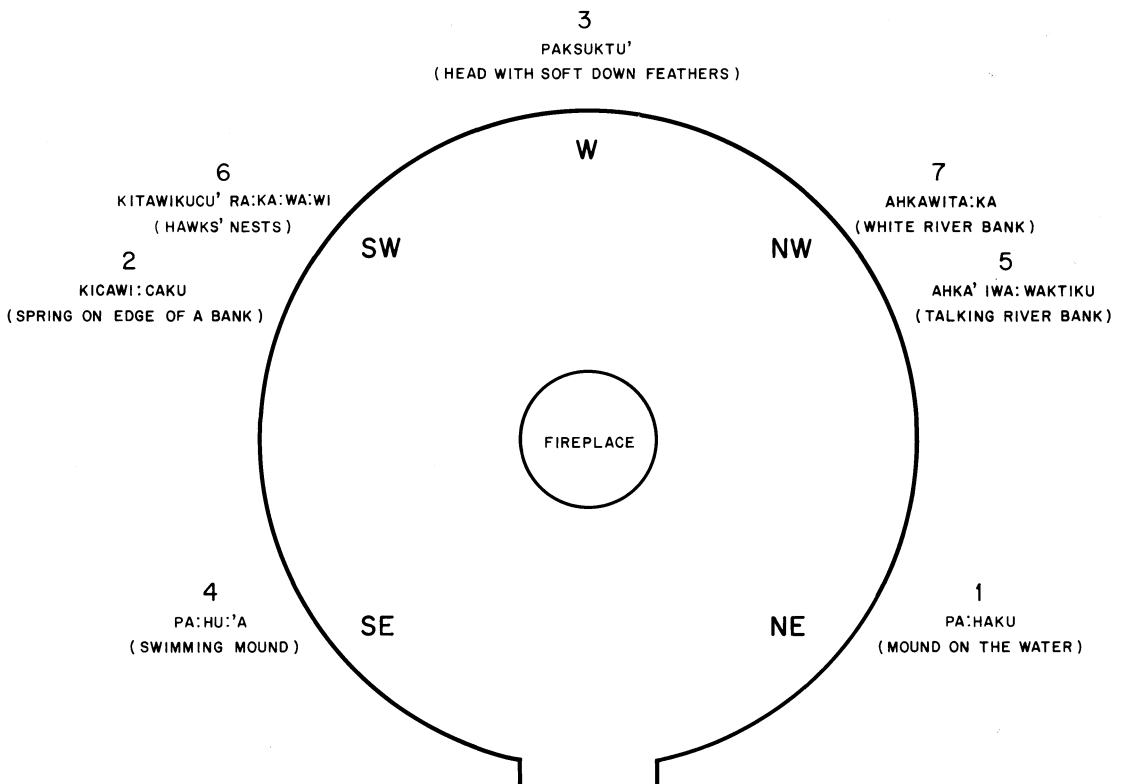


FIG. 10. *The Doctors' Lodge, with the directional symbolism of the animal lodges.*

Each smoke offering to an individual animal lodge and to the heavenly deities who watch over them consisted first of a series of tobacco offerings to five points followed by a series of smoke offerings to ten points that overlapped with the tobacco offertory points. The latter ten recipients included the Black Star (who gives animals their powers), Tirawahat, the beaver on the altar, the deceased doctors, and seven directional points on the rim of the fireplace. The latter seven points seem to represent the seven animal lodges, but their symbolism is not made explicit by Murie.

After the sequence of smoke offerings to the animal lodges came the corn offering and then the meat offering. In each, kernels of cooked corn and small pieces of meat were offered at the same ten offertory points as in the preceding smoke offerings. After each offering, the cooked food was distributed in a formalized

manner and then eaten by the doctors who were present. *Raruhwa:ku* delivered a concluding speech and therewith the renewal rites ended.

Smoke offerings among the Pawnees. In Pawnee ceremonialism all ritual events were marked by certain distinguishing acts.⁴⁹ The most notable of these were incensing objects, making offerings of various kinds, and singing songs that were structurally distinct from secular ones. At least three forms of offerings occurred in all rituals: smoke, frequently in conjunction with tobacco; corn; and meat. But beyond these general features that partly defined a ritual event, there were fundamental differences in both form and detail that distinguished the rituals of the doctors from those of the priests, differences that derive from the classical distinction between the two traditions, shamanism

and religion. Thus the rituals of Pawnee priests, religious in nature, consisted of long liturgies, fixed in form and emphasizing careful attention to details that were conceptually immutable. Forms and detail were equally important to the doctors, but their tradition was shamanistic, which by its very nature promoted individual variation.

This contrast between fixed form and individual variability, as well as between deities invoked, is clearly illustrated in Pawnee smoke offerings. In all Skiri religious rituals—those sanctioned by the tribal and village sacred bundles—there were sixteen deities who received smoke, always in the same form and order. All but Mother Earth were celestial beings; all but Sun and Moon were stars—a reflection of the cosmogonic traditions and celestial concerns of Skiri priests. The only deviation from this set of recipients was the optional addition of some animal or other objects of veneration specific to a particular ceremony.

The smoke offerings in the doctors' dances, although all structurally similar, differed from ceremony to ceremony and apparently from band to band. Each leading doctor in a band owned a bundle that sanctioned the dances or performances conducted by its owner and had its origin in a vision that dictated the individual forms of its rituals. Since there were two leading doctors for the Medicine Lodge of each band as well as leaders of independent shamanistic societies (such as the Deer Doctors, Buffalo Doctors, and Bear Doctors), there was ample opportunity for variation regarding the deities who were offered smoke, as well as differences in the procedures.

One example, observed and recorded by Lesser in 1930, is in the Skiri doctors' performance, called by the doctors *kura:rahka:wira:riksis*, "True Doctor Meeting," and by the people *tawaru:kucu*, "Big Performance." In this ceremony, a revival of the fall Medicine Lodge but without the sleight-of-hand, the smoke offering was preceded by a tobacco offering to three deities: Tirawahat, Mother Earth, and Morning Star. Immediately after the tobacco offering, four puffs of smoke were offered in turn to

each of three recipients, Tirawahat, Mother Earth, and the animal skin at the altar; then two puffs of smoke were given to each of ten stars. All of the deities in this ceremony, except for Mother Earth and the animal at the altar, were celestial beings. But both the total inventory of stars and the order in which they received smoke differed from the standard smoke offering in religious rituals and from other doctors' ceremonies such as the White Beaver Dance described above. The Buffalo Dance described by Murie provides still another contrast. In it there was first a tobacco offering to seven celestial recipients, Mother Earth *not* included. In the smoke offering that followed there were nine recipients: Tirawahat, Mother Earth, five stars, and Sun and Moon.

Animal lodges were important to all the doctors' dances (the Medicine Lodges) since those dances, and many of the participants' powers as well, derived from one or more of them. In spite of their importance, however, the lodges did not always figure into the smoke offerings. To take still another example: in 1930 Henry Shooter owned the bundle for the *kura:pi:ra'u*, "Baby Doctor Dance," one of the two forms of the doctor dance of the Kitkahahki band. This dance came from the animal lodge at Spring on the Bank (*kicawi:caku*). A baby received the blessing of the animals there (but how we do not know); hence its name. Nevertheless, neither Tirawahat nor the animal lodges received smoke during its offering ritual because, as one Pawnee explained to Lesser, the baby knew nothing of them.

Raruhwa:ku's dance, a leading one for the Chawis, was different from Shooter's in that it incorporated all of the major animal lodges into an elaborate smoke offering that was, in fact, longer than any in the other extant descriptions of doctors' dances surviving into the twentieth century. In those descriptions, moreover, there is no other mention of a smoke offering in which all of the primary animal lodges figured, although Lesser recorded that in one version of the Skiri doctors' dance the smoke offered to the four semicardinal directions was for the animal lodges.⁵⁰ Thus it would appear that, as a

set of symbols, the incorporation of all the primary animal lodges into the ritual of *Raruhwa:ku*'s bundle was a relatively recent development.

That animal lodge symbolism was an innovation in the doctors' ceremonies is suggested by the preponderant star symbolism in the priests' rituals as well as in most doctors' rituals, indeed even in *Raruhwa:ku*'s tobacco offering. Murie and his anthropological collaborator Clark Wissler concluded that the ritualism of the Skiri doctors was, "in last analysis, nothing but the overgrown ceremonies of a special bundle, as is the case with the Morning Star Ceremony."⁵¹ If this was indeed true, then the animal lodge symbolism in *Raruhwa:ku*'s ceremony, not found in other Pawnee ceremonies or in any ceremony of the closely related Arikara or Wichita tribes, suggests that its use illustrates an incipient development of a new, distinctive symbolism of the doctors, contrasting with and paralleling the star symbolism of the priests.

OTHER PLAINS INDIAN HOLY SITES: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The ethnographic and historical literature of the plains region contains only sporadic, frequently vague, references to geographical sites considered sacred to Indian groups. Whether the lack of specific discussion represents fortuitous omission by recorders of Indian culture or whether it suggests that for many tribes there simply were few sites that were so perceived is not entirely clear. But the number of references to sacred places scattered throughout the literature is sufficient to attest to their undoubted existence for all tribes and to suggest their fundamental importance as well. By surveying these references it is possible to determine the nature and physical range of such landmarks, gaining thereby a comparative perspective that places the Pawnee animal lodges in a broader context.

Hidatsa and Mandan holy sites. Some of the most extensive data on holy sites of other Plains tribes are references to sacred places of the Hidatsas, most of which occur in Alfred W.

Bowers's rich descriptions of this tribe's ceremonialism. In his account of different ceremonies, Bowers refers to geographical sites associated with the origins of rites or mythological incidents and their continuing importance to those rites and to Hidatsa beliefs about the supernatural powers residing in the landmarks, which could be tapped for general social welfare as well as for individual good fortune.⁵²

In a symbolic sense the most developed scheme of sacred sites for the Hidatsas occurs in the set of rites associated with the Earthnaming bundle, the most important village sacred bundle. These rites, which exceeded all other tribal rituals in complexity, had in recent historical times integrated into a related complex most of the formerly separate buffalo-calling rites, ceremonies intended to draw the buffalo close to the Hidatsa villages when the herds were not near and hunger had beset the people.

Bowers identified at least twelve buttes in central and western North Dakota that were important to the Earthnaming bundle. Certain spirits resided deep inside each one—for example, Owl in one butte, Swallow and Hawk in another, and Buffalo spirits in others—and each spirit had its own sacred myth, ritual, and songs.

Periodically these spirits met at Singer Butte in the Killdeer Mountains, where they performed rites under the direction of Owl. Although the precise beliefs associated with many of these buttes were no longer known when Bowers worked among the Hidatsas in 1932-33, in theory each butte had independent rites that collectively comprised the Earthnaming ceremony. Nevertheless, the origin myth for the Earthnaming bundle accounted for all the rites in one narrative. In it a young man named Raven Necklace, who had rescued thirty Hidatsa women stolen by Assiniboines, was en route home with them when Owl came to him in a dream, directed him to build a buffalo corral, and gave him the Earthnaming ceremony. Later, when Raven Necklace performed its rites as he had been instructed, the spirits of the other buttes came to him in dreams and gave him the songs and medicines to use.

The Hidatsas did not customarily perform village rites when they went out on their summer hunts, but whenever they came to any of the Earthnaming buttes, they placed offerings near them to ensure success on the hunt. Within the set of twelve buttes, those situated on the farthest periphery constituted the Hidatsa conception of their territorial limits. Thus the butte functioned as a religiously sanctioned map, demarcating the boundaries of the Hidatsas' world.

A separate Hidatsa buffalo-calling rite, the Buffalo Neckbone Ceremony, had its origin in a vision in which a man and a woman came to a young man who was out hunting on a terrace above a bend in the Missouri River. The couple asked him for two sets of clothing, one for a man and the other for a woman, to be hung on two poles at the site where they were. The young man went home to get the clothing; and after he returned with it, the buffalo came to the Hidatsa winter camp to save the people from starvation. Subsequently, Hidatsas regularly put offerings on poles at this site. Many years later the Hidatsa chief Four Bears decided that, since the holy people had visited the place, it was endowed with good fortune and consequently would be a good location for what would be the last Hidatsa village, Like-A-Fishhook, which was built at the location of the shrine.

In Hidatsa belief most bodies of water were conceived to be inhabited by a snake that maintained their water level. In each of the Missouri, Little Missouri, and Short Missouri rivers lived a giant snake that, by means of its supernatural powers, could provide good fortune in hunting or warfare, or precipitation for abundant gardens. It was thus customary for men who traveled across the rivers to make offerings to the resident snakes, and women regularly placed offerings on the bank of the Missouri River to ensure moisture for their gardens. Many streams and springs were also believed to have spirits residing in them, and men frequently fasted beside them in an effort to gain knowledge and power from the spirit. Such knowledge often became part of Hidatsa sacred lore.

According to tribal tradition the Hidatsas formerly lived in the region of Devil's Lake, known to them as *mirixubaa*, "sacred water," in central North Dakota before coming to the Missouri River area. One of the oldest of the Thunder ceremonies reputedly had its origin there on the bank of the lake; later, whenever the owner of the Thunder bundle went to that region with war parties, he stopped on the banks of Devil's Lake to perform prescribed rites and to make offerings to his sacred bundle. The Hidatsas claimed that on evenings when the wind was not blowing and there were no clouds in the sky, one could hear the giant snake breathing in the lake.

Numerous stone effigies of animals are located in North and South Dakota within the historic and late prehistoric hunting range of the Hidatsas and Mandans. On the north bank of the Missouri River near Williston, for example, there is a turtle effigy, and west of the former town of Independence there was a large snake effigy formed of glacial boulders. Bowers, who recorded the statement of one Hidatsa that the stones of the turtle effigy had been arranged by the gods—for no one in living memory had seen it made—identified five effigies that were associated with three Hidatsa tribal sacred bundles. The Hidatsas performed hunting rites and made offerings at each of these sites, asking the spirits associated with them for rain or good fortune.

Illustrating yet another type of sacred site for both the Hidatsas and Mandans are certain hills that were inhabited by spirits destined eventually to become human beings. Bowers recorded three of these hills—one near the mouth of the Knife River, one on the Heart River, and another southwest of the present city of Dickinson—each believed to be an earth lodge in which babies lived, cared for by an old man. Childless women who wanted children would put toys at the foot of the hills; U.S. Army surgeon Washington Matthews stated further that men who wanted a son fasted at the hills.⁵³ Children who desired to leave their hill home and be born had to crawl on an ash pole across a ditch within their earth lodge. If successful in

reaching the opposite side without falling into the ditch, the child was born into the tribe soon afterward.

Both the Mandans and the Hitadsas held sacred a large rock that represents still another kind of landmark endowed with supernatural power. Lewis and Clark and other early explorers tell how an individual or a group of men, seeking to determine their future success in hunting or war, would make ceremonial offerings to the rock, retire to the adjoining woods to spend the night, and then return to it to learn their destiny by reading marks made on the rock by the spirit residing within it.⁵⁴

Sacred sites of the Yankton Sioux. In 1966–67 the ethnographer James Howard and the native Sioux linguist Ella Deloria interviewed elderly Yanktons to compile an inventory of traditional place names of landmarks known to these people in order to determine what specific economic or social uses the Yanktons had for certain areas of their former territory in what is now South Dakota. Out of a total of sixty-one landmarks and village sites that they recorded, six of the locations had religious significance.⁵⁵

Three of these sites are hills or knolls. One is Medicine Knoll, a prominent eminence two miles southwest of present Blunt, South Dakota. This site and another Medicine Knoll across the Missouri River near Reliance were favorite spots for Yankton men who wished to undertake the vision quest rite and seek a spirit helper. The third one, which apparently had two names, Mud Turtle Hill and Sacred Hill, Howard identifies as the present Capitol Hill northeast of Redfield and notes that early white settlers in the vicinity told of its importance to the Indians, who continued to come to make offerings at the hill even after white settlers had filled the area. Why these hills were considered sacred, however, is not stated.

Two of the other Yankton sites are lakes. One, identified with what today is named Lake Madison, was called “sacred lake appearing” by the Yanktons because of a phosphorescent light, probably from decaying vegetation, which appeared at night around the edge of the lake.

The other is Spirit Lake, or Medicine Lake, north of DeSmet in Kingsbury County. It was a favorite spot for digging calamus, an important medicinal root. The water in the lake is so highly saturated with mineral salts that a person can easily remain afloat on the water, going under water only with difficulty.

The remaining Yankton landmark is an oracle stone, a large boulder located near the mouth of the Turtle River. Like the Mandan rock described above, it communicated knowledge of the future, in this case to those who could interpret its movements.

Holy places of other Northern Plains groups. Mountains, buttes, and other prominent eminences were customary sites for fasting and vision seeking among most tribes. Frequently a particular spot was important only to an occasional individual who had had success there, but certain landmarks became more generally noted for the power resident in them or that they attracted. Bear Butte, a tall, solitary upthrust north of the Black Hills, became *the* sacred mountain for the Cheyennes after the legendary figure Sweet Medicine and his wife entered the mountain behind a spring on the east side and received from the spirit in its interior the four sacred arrows and their ritual, which became the focus of Cheyenne religion. When the Teton Sioux moved west into and beyond the Black Hills region, Bear Butte became the pre-eminent holy site for them, too, no doubt because of the influence of the Cheyennes. And so over the past century—and even today—Sioux and Cheyenne vision seekers have regularly gone there.⁵⁶

Another tall, lone butte, Devil’s Tower, rises dramatically from the Wyoming plains northwest of the Black Hills. Because of its symmetry, geological uniqueness, and prominence—it can be seen for nearly a hundred miles in some directions—it was a source of awe to Indian residents and early white explorers alike, and in 1906 became the first national monument in the United States. Devil’s Tower was a sacred site for a host of tribes on the northern plains—Sioux, Cheyennes, Crows, Arikaras—and early

in this century it was still remembered in tradition by the Kiowas, who sometime before 1800 moved to the southern plains from their homeland in and west of the Black Hills. The Kiowa myth about Devil's Tower is one of many similar variants told by other tribes. In this story some children were playing; when one girl took her turn imitating a bear, she actually turned into the animal and killed all her playmates except for her sister, whom she enslaved. The girl's brothers, who had been out hunting, returned home and helped to free their sister, mortally wounding the bear. The brothers and sister fled, but the bear revived and chased them until they were finally saved when they stood upon a rock that rose higher and higher until the seven reached the sky and became the Pleiades. The rock became Devil's Tower. This revered landmark was known as Bear Lodge Butte to the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Crow men who went to its base to fast and pray.⁵⁷

Each tribe also had its mountains or buttes that were sacred only to that tribe. In his autobiography the Crow warrior Two Leggings recalled fasting for a vision on Long Mountain, where the spirits had their chief tipi.⁵⁸ Many other mountaintops that provided awesome panoramic views of their territory were customary sites for Crow vision seekers, but published sources unfortunately do not tell whether the mountains themselves were specifically considered sacred.⁵⁹ Certainly, high summits were favored by the Blackfeet. Chief Mountain in the Rockies, ten thousand feet high and wall-faced, had every appearance of being a chief in a procession of peaks encroaching upon the plains. The Blackfeet regarded it as sacred, and their youths frequently climbed to its top, there to fast and pray.⁶⁰

Bull Lodge, the great nineteenth-century warrior and medicine man of the Gros Ventres, obtained many of his supernatural powers in a series of seven dreams that he had on seven buttes in north central Montana. Although these buttes had not become traditionally sacred to the Gros Ventre because of the relative recency of Bull Lodge's experiences, they were sacred spots for Bull Lodge himself, who

later made offerings at the buttes; and because of Bull Lodge's status within his tribe, they might very well have assumed a tribally prominent legendary role had traditional Gros Ventre life continued uninterrupted by white settlement for several more generations.⁶¹

Bodies of water—lakes, falls, artesian springs, and geysers—were just as frequently believed to be the dwelling places of supernatural powers. For the Eastern Shoshonis, Bull Lake was sacred, figuring in a number of legends and noted for imparting supernatural powers. Thus Shoshonis who wished to become medicine men stayed overnight on its shores. The hot springs at Thermopolis and Washakie Hot Springs were the abodes of dark powers, as were the geysers in Yellowstone Park. Naturally enough, the geysers aroused strong feelings of trepidation and fear among Shoshonis and perhaps other tribes. According to Father DeSmet, sacrifices or at least pipe offerings were made to the spirits in the geysers. Although the Shoshonis feared them, they also saw the spirits there as sources of power that could be utilized positively. Shoshoni warriors believed, for example, that the spray from the geysers in the Yellowstone area would make them invisible to enemies and that bathing in the steaming water of the hot springs at Thermopolis would endow them with valor in battle.⁶² The Crows, too, revered the hot springs at Thermopolis and sought supernatural power through fasting there.⁶³

Dakota belief, like that of many Plains tribes, held that all deep waters and especially great waterfalls were inhabited by water monsters said to resemble an ox of immense proportions. One of these supernatural beings dwelled in a gigantic den constructed of iron under the St. Anthony Falls in Minnesota. When the explorers Louis Hennepin and Daniel Graysolon, *Sieur Du Luth*, first saw the falls, they reported that buffalo robes were hanging there as sacrifices to the water monster of the place. The early Dakota missionary Stephen R. Riggs wrote that the Dakotas prayed to lakes and rivers in general, and fellow missionary Gideon H. Pond stated that bubbling springs of water

are called the "breathing places of the wakan [holy]." ⁶⁴

Like mountains and other eminences, rocks were frequently conceived to be sacred. Grinnell described three that were holy to the Blackfeet. One is a huge reddish sandstone boulder, high up on a steep hill on the north bank of the Marias River. It was formerly on top of the bluff, but rain and wind washing away the soil around it has caused it to move downhill. The Blackfeet considered the rock to be alive and used to make offerings to it. On the Milk River, east of the Sweet Grass Hills, is a rock shaped somewhat like a man's body that appears to be sitting on top of the bluff. Whenever Blackfeet passed by it, they gave it presents. Another rock, revered by other neighboring tribes as well as the Blackfeet, was in the big bend of the Milk River, opposite the eastern end of the Little Rocky Mountains. It is a large gray boulder shaped like a buffalo. ⁶⁵

The Sioux revered the spirit *inyan*, the oldest of their deities, who existed in the form of stones and rocks. Large boulders that were selected for rituals were painted red and covered with swan's down. Individuals then prayed to the spirit of the rock and offered it sacrifices. Although any rock might be used on these ritual occasions, with its sacredness terminating at the conclusion of the rites, some boulders became shrines to which individuals and parties traveled and sacrificed over a period of many generations. One example is the Red Rock of the Mdewakantonwan Sioux, a boulder five feet long and three feet thick, on the bank of the Mississippi below St. Paul, Minnesota. Before starting out on a hunting trip, the Kaposias, a division of the Mdewakantonwans, made offerings to Red Rock and twice annually gathered there to paint it and perform certain rituals. ⁶⁶

Stone monuments or effigies were also sacred. One of the best known is the so-called medicine wheel in the Big Horn Range in northern Wyoming, the construction of which predated the historic tribes in the area. The Crows in particular viewed it as the Sun's lodge, a shrine where men of the tribe often fasted to seek a visionary spirit helper. ⁶⁷

Petroglyphs, or figures and symbols incised or pecked on rocks, exemplify still another type of sacred site, but one that was apparently important only to some tribes. The Sioux and Cheyennes recognized at least two sites—one at Cave Hills, South Dakota, and the other, known as Deer Medicine Rocks, located in Rosebud County, Montana, just above the Northern Cheyenne reservation. It was believed that events that were to happen during the coming year would be pictured on the face of the bluff at these sites. Black Elk, the Oglala shaman, related the Indian claim that the outcome of the Custer battle was foretold on the Deer Medicine Rocks. The Cheyenne warrior Wooden Leg, recounting the Battle of the Little Big Horn, mentioned the Deer Medicine Rocks, too. He stated that Cheyenne hunters gathered around them before setting out after game to pray for success. ⁶⁸

The red catlinite quarries at what is now Pipestone National Monument in southwestern Minnesota were sacred to the Sioux, according to the early trader James W. Lynd, because of the animal and human figures and other incomprehensible forms carved into a granite rock there. In the Yanktonai and Teton origin myth for these petroglyphs that Lynd recorded, a giant seated himself upon the boulder during a violent thunderstorm. After the peals of thunder and flashes of lightning subsided, the giant disappeared, and in the morning the figures were on the rock where he had sat. From that time on the quarry area was regarded as sacred. ⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

Common to all Plains tribes was the belief that certain geographical features had one or more spirits residing within them or were landmarks where spirits came to earth. Some of these sites manifest inexplicable cultural phenomena. Petroglyphs, effigies, and tipi rings—the products of previous inhabitants of the area—became sources of wonderment for later dwellers, who attributed their existence to the work of spirits. Most sacred sites, however, were geomorphologically unusual features: an eminence on an

otherwise flat plane (a mountain, butte, bluff, island, or large rock), an uncommon body or source of water (deep lakes and rivers, springs, or geysers), or a natural cavity (a cave or cavern). These were features of the landscape that evoked in people feelings of awe; in the minds of the Plains Indians, such extraordinary natural scenes frequently became associated with, or were considered the source of, supernatural power, where individuals who were seeking spiritual compassion went to fast and dream.

The physical characteristics of Pawnee animal lodge sites conform to this typical Plains pattern of the geomorphologically unusual. Most of the important sites were located by water, in every instance a river, where there was a bluff or rise above the river or, as at Waconda Spring, a natural artesian spring with a fluctuating water level. Only three sites cannot be definitely placed by a body of water. Two of these, Head Covered with Down and Hawks' Nests, cannot be located at all because of insufficient information. The names themselves suggest prominent rises on the landscape, but there is no hint that they were (or were not) situated beside water. The other site, Girl Hill, was not in sight of the Platte River, the nearest watercourse. If our identification is correct, it was a solitary rise of unusual shape on a level plain. Thus there is only one positive exception to the otherwise common theme of an underwater location for the animal lodge below a prominent overlook.

Although many dream sites were significant only to an occasional individual who successfully obtained personal power there, other sites gained an importance that transcended the individual in that they were a frequent or constant source of supernatural power that benefitted many individuals or the larger social group and over time assumed legendary significance. That the Pawnee animal lodges had achieved mythic status is readily apparent, since they permeate Pawnee mythology as important components of stories and, indeed, were freely manipulated motifs in oral traditions. As several of the myths cited above demonstrate, various

lodges, frequently occurring in sets of four, appear in the common scenario in which a young man who has been taken into one lodge is sent on to another and then another until he has visited all of the lodges and finally returns to the first one, where he is blessed by the animals. The animal lodge concept was unique to the mythology of the Pawnees. Among no other tribe, not even the related Arikaras and Wichitas, was there the prevailing notion that an individual might be taken into a lodge where he would be empowered by all the animals. Nor do we find anywhere else in the folklore of the region a similar use of dream sites as mythological elements occurring frequently in varying combinations.

Because the lodges were mythologized, the locations of many of them cannot be identified today with geographical features, and they probably could not have been determined unambiguously at the end of the last century. Certainly some, like Mound on the Water and Waconda Spring, were readily identifiable—one because of its paramount and continuing importance, the other because of its geographical prominence, not only to the Pawnees but to other tribes as well. Other lodges, however, like Swimming Mound and Dark Island, do not seem to have been geographical features that remained sufficiently distinctive over time. Islands in the Platte River, for example, have been constantly changing, old ones disappearing and new ones appearing. Moreover, after a particular lodge became important for one Pawnee band, other bands apparently learned and retold the stories about it, incorporating the lodge into their own traditions and in the process recreating its identity. Hence it is not at all surprising that mythic descriptions of the locations of some lodges are different or contradictory.

Not only was the form and mythological role of these typical Pawnee dreams of supernatural encounters unique, but the function of the animal lodge dream also took a specialized turn. Unlike the powers or good fortune bestowed upon individuals of other Plains tribes at their sacred sites, the powers given in the Pawnee animal lodges were almost exclusively

for curing and healing. Rarely were hunting and war powers given there. Nor were the lodges sources of power to provide rainfall or game. The latter—the concerns for food and a more fruitful world—were among the Pawnees the concerns of priests and the bands' religious hierarchies, which were separate from their shamanistic organizations.

The animal lodge concept, then, served to give more definition to the conceptual distinctness of the religious and shamanistic domains in Pawnee culture. Within the religious, the supernatural beings were celestial: stars and other heavenly bodies that composed a highly elaborated ritual symbolism. Animals did not figure into the priests' conception of the origin of the world or how natural events might be influenced. They were the deities of the doctors, or more precisely they were the media through which certain stars ultimately controlling health operated. The animals were for the Pawnee doctors what the stars were for the priests. In the animal lodges and their symbolism in the Medicine Lodge smoke offering, there seems to have been a gradually developing symbolic system that was unifying into a more integrated complex what had formerly been among shamans a more individually oriented perspective and approach to curing.

Thus Pawnee sacred geography did not consist simply of a collection of disparate landmarks scattered over the landscape but was rather composed of a set of physically similar sites located almost entirely within Pawnee village territory. Only one site is definitely known to have been farther away, but it was still within the range of Pawnee hunting territory. More important, the close physical proximity of the animal lodge sites was matched by a profoundly intimate relationship between cultural concepts of the sacred, of nonhuman powers and their mysterious interplay with humans, and the Pawnees' earthly environment—a relationship in which these features of the physical environment permeated the Pawnees' cognitive world and found expression in various aspects of their culture, most notably in mythology and ritualism. The animal lodges

possessed profound cultural importance: they played a pervasive role in Pawnee myths—the story of an animal lodge explains the existence of the Medicine Lodge and serves to underpin the entire Pawnee shamanistic complex—and they functioned to differentiate Pawnee shamanistic and religious organization. As sacred symbols they defined the intimate relationship between the Pawnee and the earth, the source of life and the dwelling place of the animals from whom the people derived the sacred knowledge that enabled them to survive the physical and mental ills that have afflicted mankind throughout human history.

NOTES

1. The primary source on Pawnee religion is James R. Murie, *Ceremonies of the Pawnee*, 2 vols., Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, no. 27 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981). Important also is James R. Murie, *Pawnee Indian Societies*, Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. 11, no. 7 (New York, 1914). Von Del Chamberlain's *When Stars Came Down to Earth: Cosmology of the Skidi Pawnee Indians of North America* (Los Altos, Calif., and College Park, Md.: Ballena Press/Center for Archaeoastronomy Cooperative Publication, 1982) is an attempt by an astronomer to consolidate the scattered material on Skiri star lore and organize it into a coherent description of the celestial phenomena recognized by the Skiri. See also George Bird Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk Tales* (New York: Forest and Stream, 1889), pp. 374–88.

2. See, for example, George A. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*, Publications of the American Folk-Lore Society (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), pp. xix–xx; Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*, pp. 358–59; George Bird Grinnell, "Pawnee Mythology," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 6 (1893): 114–19; George A. Dorsey and James R. Murie, "The Pawnee: Society and Religion of the Skidi Pawnee," unpublished manuscript (1907), Department of Anthropology, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, pp. 132–33, 179.

3. Ruth Fulton Benedict, "The Vision in

Plains Culture," *American Anthropologist* 24, no. 1 (1922): 1-23.

4. Melvin R. Gilmore, "Transcript of notes made from interviews with White Eagle of the Skidi tribe of the Pawnee nation" (August 1914) and "The Legend of Pahuk," unpublished manuscripts, Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

5. Mark Everts to Robert Ellison, 25 May 1937 and 7 June 1937, Wm. Hammond Mathers Museum, Indiana University, Bloomington.

6. Grinnell, "Pawnee Mythology," p. 117; Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*, p. 359; Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*, pp. xix-xx; Gilmore, "The Legend of Pahuk"; Murie, *Ceremonies*, pp. 210-13; Alexander Lesser, unpublished field notes (1929-31), in possession of Douglas R. Parks.

7. The members of the party on this tour were the authors; Gayle Carlson, archaeologist, Nebraska State Historical Society; Mildred M. Wedel; and Professor Raymond J. DeMallie. The party systematically visited most known Pawnee archaeological sites as well as landmarks described as animal lodge locations.

8. For historical and archaeological discussion of Pawnee village sites, see Waldo Rudolph Wedel, *An Introduction to Pawnee Archeology*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin no. 112 (Washington, D.C., 1936); Roger T. Grange, Jr., "An Archeological View of Pawnee Origins," *Nebraska History* 60 (1979): 134-60; and Douglas R. Parks, "Bands and Villages of the Arikara and Pawnee," *Nebraska History* 60 (1979): 214-39.

9. William Duncan Strong, *An Introduction to Nebraska Archeology*, Smithsonian Institution, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections no. 93, pt. 10 (Washington, D.C., 1935): 55ff.; Marion Lucile Dunlevy, "A Comparison of the Cultural Manifestations of the Burkett (Nance County) and the Gray-Wolfe (Colfax County) Sites," in *Chapters in Nebraska Archeology*, no. 2 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1936), pp. 147-247.

10. Roger T. Grange, Jr., *Pawnee and Lower Loup Pottery*, Nebraska State Historical Society, Publications in Anthropology no. 3 (1968); Waldo R. Wedel, "Some Reflections on Plains Caddoan Origins," *Nebraska History* 60 (1979): 272-93.

11. *Service Historique de la Marine*, map

69-20, Chateau Vincennes, Paris; the map is reproduced in W. Raymond Wood, *An Atlas of Early Maps of the American Midwest*, Illinois State Museum Scientific Papers, no. 18 (1983), plate 1; Marcel Giraud, "Etienne Veniard de Bourgmont's 'Exact Description of Louisiana,'" *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* 15 (1958): 3-19.

12. Elliott Coues, ed., *History of the Expedition under the Command of Lewis and Clark . . .*, 4 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1893), 1:55-56; Donald Jackson, ed., *The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike with Letters and Related Documents*, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 1:325-27.

13. "Extracts from the Diary of Major Sibley," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 5, no. 2 (June 1927): 200-203.

14. Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Performed in the Years 1819 and '20 . . . under the Command of Stephen H. Long*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: H. C. Carey and I. Lea, Chestnut St., 1823), 1:354, 435, 440, 446.

15. John Treat Irving, Jr., *Indian Sketches Taken During an Expedition to the Pawnee Tribes, 1823*, John Francis McDermott, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), pp. 130, 150, 176, 179.

16. John Dunbar and Samuel Allis, "Letters Concerning the Presbyterian Mission in the Pawnee Country, Near Bellevue, Nebraska, 1831-1849," *Kansas Historical Collections* 14 (1918): 570-741; the original Dunbar sketch map (fig. 2) was enclosed in a letter to Major Joseph Hamilton, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Council Bluffs Agency, document number 1839-P662, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. (Microfilm publication M234, roll 215, frame 244); the map, with commentary by Michael K. Trimble, was first published in Wood, *An Atlas of Early Maps*, plate 21.

17. Wedel, *Introduction to Pawnee Archeology*, p. 20; Lieutenant J. Henry Carleton, *The Prairie Logbooks: Dragoon Campaigns to the Pawnee Villages in 1844, and to the Rocky Mountains in 1845*, ed. Louis Pelzer (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1943), pp. 92-93.

18. The census is printed in "Letters Concerning the Presbyterian Mission in the Pawnee

Country near Bellvue, Nebraska, 1831-1849," in *Kansas Historical Collections* 14 (1915-18): 641; the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1845, U.S. Congressional Serial Set no. 470, p. 459, gives the Pawnee population as 12,500.

19. Wedel, *Introduction to Pawnee Archeology*, pp. 22-23; three Jackson photographs are reproduced in Wedel, "Some Reflections on Plains Caddoan Origins."

20. Murie, *Ceremonies*, p. 205.

21. Dorsey and Murie, "The Pawnee," pp. 144-47; Murie, *Ceremonies*, pp. 167-73; Murie, *Pawnee Indian Societies*, pp. 600-601.

22. Murie, *Pawnee Indian Societies*, pp. 601-3; Murie, *Ceremonies*, pp. 170-76.

23. Murie, *Ceremonies*, p. 174.

24. Single examples of similar animal lodge stories are found, for example, among the Miamis, in C. C. Trowbridge, *Meearmear Traditions*, ed. Vernon Kinietz, Occasional Contributions from the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan, no. 7 (Ann Arbor, 1938), pp. 77-87; and among the Santees, in Alanson B. Skinner, "Medicine Ceremony of the Menomimi, Iowa, and Wahpeton Dakota . . .," *Indian Notes and Monographs*, vol. 4 (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1920), pp. 273-78. Examples may occur among other tribes in North America as well, but nowhere do they seem to permeate a tribe's mythology as they do among the Pawnees.

25. See, for example, Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*; Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*; George A. Dorsey, *The Pawnee: Mythology* (Part I) (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1906).

26. Melvin R. Gilmore, *Prairie Smoke* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), p. 17.

27. James R. Murie, "Doctor Dance," unpublished manuscript (1907), Department of Anthropology, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. See also Murie, *Ceremonies*, pp. 266-68.

28. Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*, p. 358.

29. Douglas R. Parks, "Pawnee Texts," unpublished manuscript (1974).

30. *Ibid.*

31. Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*, p. 359.

32. Murie, *Ceremonies*, p. 297; Grinnell, "Pawnee Mythology," p. 117; Gilmore, "Legend of Pahuk," p. 3.

33. Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions . . .* (Washington, D.C.: W. M. Morrison, 1840), p. 411; Walter H. Schoewe, "The Geography of Kansas, Part III-concluded, Hydrogeography," *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science*, vol. 56, no. 2 (June 1953): 138-39.

34. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*, p. xix; Murie, *Ceremonies*, p. 212; Lesser, unpublished field notes.

35. Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*, pp. 98-120; Murie, *Ceremonies*, pp. 201, 319.

36. Dorsey, *The Pawnee*, pp. 261-79.

37. Murie, *Ceremonies*, p. 212.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 461; Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*, p. 358.

39. Murie, *Ceremonies*, pp. 213, 461; Lesser, unpublished field notes.

40. Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*, p. 358.

41. The location of this site was noted previously by George Metcalf, Field Notes, Brown Site, N8 [25NC8], 22 May 1940, p. 2, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln. John Ludwickson of the NSHS kindly drew it to our attention.

42. Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories*, pp. 161-70.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 358; Grinnell, "Pawnee Mythology," p. 117.

44. Gilmore, "Legend of Pahuk," p. 3.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*, pp. xix-xx.

47. Murie, "Pawnee Indian Societies," pp. 600-623; Murie, *Ceremonies*, pp. 167-75; Lesser, unpublished field notes.

48. Murie, *Ceremonies*, pp. 201-318.

49. *Ibid.*; Dorsey and Murie, "The Pawnee," pp. 110-222; Lesser, unpublished field notes.

50. "Skiri doctor dance," a typescript set of notes based on information provided by Mark Everts. Lesser, unpublished field notes.

51. Murie, *Ceremonies*, p. 168.

52. The following discussion of Hidatsa sacred sites comes from descriptions in Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin no. 194 (Washington, D.C., 1965).

53. Washington Matthews, *Ethnography and Philology of the Hidatsa Indians*, Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological and

Geographical Survey, Miscellaneous Publications, no. 7 (1877), p. 51.

54. J. Owen Dorsey, *A Study of Siouan Cults*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Annual Report no. 11 (1894), pp. 438-39.

55. James H. Howard, "Notes on the Ethnogeography of the Yankton Dakota," *Plains Anthropologist* 17, no. 58, pt. 1 (November 1972): 281-307.

56. George Bird Grinnell, "Some Early Cheyenne Tales," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 21, no. 82 (October-December 1908): 271-81; George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Ways of Life*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), 2:367ff.; George Bird Grinnell, *By Cheyenne Campfires* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), pp. 274ff.; George A. Dorsey, *The Cheyenne: Ceremonial Organization*, Field Columbian Museum Publication no. 99, Anthropological Series 9, no. 1 (March 1905), pp. 1-4, 41-46; Thomas E. Odell, *Mato Paha: The Story of Bear Butte* (Spearfish, S.D., 1942); Dorsey, *Siouan Cults*, pp. 448-49.

57. John P. Harrington, "Kiowa Memories of the Northland," in *So Live the Works of Men*, ed. by Donald D. Brand and Fred E. Harvey (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1939), pp. 162-76; Richard Stone, unpublished typescript of Cheyenne, Crow, and Sioux legends of Devil's Tower (1934), microfilm copy included on reel "History of Devil's Tower, 1804-1934," Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, Cheyenne (copy kindly provided by Mary Alice Gunderson).

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64. Dorsey, *Siouan Cults*, pp. 438-42; G. H. Pond, "Dakota Superstitions," *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society* 2, pt. 3 (1867): 36-62.

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