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# Diverse Struggles to Preserve Tribal Identity on the Plains: Religion as Survival Strategy in the Late Nineteenth Century among the Lakota and Osage

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Chief Spotted Tail, a Sicangu Lakota and uncle of Crazy Horse<sup>1</sup>, once sarcastically asked, “Why does not the Great Father put his red children on wheels, so he can move them as he will?”<sup>2</sup> The frustration of inevitable subordination to Euro-American culture was a cataclysmic experience shared by all indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere. Following the initial contact period of relatively benign coastal trading, an unrelenting onslaught of European migration ushered in the oppressive age of colonialism and still later, an even more invasive period of westward expansion. For American Indians, these successive eras increasingly required more adaptation, but rarely assimilation, as groups attempted to survive physically and also retain tribal or at least native identity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph M. Marshall III, *The Lakota Way: Stories and Lessons for Living* (New York: Viking Compass, 2001), 105.

<sup>2</sup> Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 252. Richter conveys this idea well when he wrote, “...as White Americans wrote their nation’s past, their greatest erasure of all was of memories

The struggle to maintain cultural identity for Indian peoples was sometimes fought overtly, however; covert strategies were often more successful. Writing in the 1830s, Tocqueville tapped into the essence of problem when he cautioned his European readers,

Don’t go and believe that he [Indians] admires their [White Americans] works or envies their lot. In the nearly three hundred years that the American savage has struggled against the civilization which thrusts and envelops him, he has not yet learned to know and to esteem his enemy. The generations succeed each other in vain with the two races. Like two parallel rivers they have for three hundred years been flowing toward a common abyss. A narrow space separates them, but they do not mingle their floods.<sup>4</sup>

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of Indians who neither uncompromisingly resisted like the King Philip of their imagination nor wholeheartedly assimilated like the Pocahontas of their fantasies. Native people who instead struggled to find ways to incorporate European people, objects, and ideas into Indian country on Indian terms—who adapted and changed in accordance with their own histories and traditions rather than in accordance with Euro-American scripts—could find no place in the mythology of a nation marching triumphantly westward across the continent.”

<sup>4</sup> George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938), 273. Tocqueville did not foresee any positive outcomes for the Indians and while he scorned the inhumanity of their plight at the hands of western Christians, he nevertheless saw the demise of their way of life as “the triumphant march of civilization.” See Lewis Perry, *Boats Against the Current: American Culture Between Revolution and*

Another French contemporary of Tocqueville, Louis Cortambert, related a story about an Osage Indian and a white Trader which affirmed the idea of how while a narrow space does indeed separate the societies, co-mingling the cultures usually had negative consequences for the Natives. The story was retold by Cortambert as “a joke” to illustrate the problem of “unfamiliar customs” and how they allowed the English and French to “encroach” on the Indians,

An Osage demanded from a French trader of my [Louis Cortambert's] acquaintance a payment that he had already received. “My uncle, I have paid you,” said the trader, (With the Indians, one uses the name father, son, brother, uncle, nephew, according to [the degree of] affection, goodwill and respect one wishes mutually to show.)—“No, my nephew,”—“Try to remember. I gave you a blanket, four ells of printed calico and two rolls of tobacco more than our bargain.”—“Yes, my nephew; but I also sold you some skins for a large kettle and some earrings; you don't have them in your store.”—“My uncle here is the book of the Master of Life,” said the trader, holding out an almanac. “You see this man (an image representing the influence of the twelve signs of the zodiac on the human body): the Master of Life sent all these animals to him, and they destroyed him, because he had lied. We are going to swear on this book; and whichever of us has taken a false oath will be destroyed by these animals.” And the trader swore that he had paid the Indian. “Now your turn, my uncle.”—“No, no, no, my nephew, your book frightens me too much! You have paid me.”<sup>5</sup>

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*Modernity, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 101.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Cortambert, “Journey to the Land of the Osages, 1835-1836,” trans. Mrs. Max W. Myer, *The Bulletin-Missouri Historical Society* 19 no. 3, (1963): 222.

Louis Cortambert found this account to be a humorous, but it graphically demonstrates several significant points this paper will address. The Osage were very aggressive in their dealings with the whites (including traders) as long as they were in a leveraged position, even to the point of using manipulation in an attempt to undermine the trade monopoly held by the powerful Chouteau family.<sup>6</sup>

Later, as they saw their sphere of influence diminish, survival strategies were employed to continue as a people while retaining as much dignity as possible. Another issue Cortambert's story raised was the struggle over non-homogeneous religious belief systems. This study will examine how the Osage and Lakota (erroneously, but commonly called Sioux<sup>7</sup>), in varied, yet similar ways both accommodated the dominate society and yet persisted in their desire to hold distinct religious beliefs even at the most vulnerable stages in their histories. Specifically, a brief overview of the progressively negative impact Euro-American contact had on survival identity concerns for these tribes. This will be followed by a pointed analysis comparing the Lakota experience with

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<sup>6</sup> James R. Christianson, “The Early Osage—‘The Ishmaelites of the Savages,’” *Kansas History* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 11. For more on the Chouteau family and the Osage see, Dorothy Brandt Marra, et. al., *Cher Oncle, Cher Papa: The Letters of Francois and Berenice Chouteau* (Kansas City, MO: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, 2001) and Douglas A. Hurt, “Brothers of Influence: Auguste and Pierre Chouteau and the Osages before 1804,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 78, no. 3 (2004): 260-273.

<sup>7</sup> The term Sioux is outdated (and incorrect), this study, therefore, will use the Lakota unless quoted otherwise. Donna Hightower-Langston, *The Native American World* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003) 211.

the Ghost Dance religious movement and the Osage with Big Moon Peyotism.

These two tribes are being compared precisely for their involvement in these two distinct religious movements in the same time period. A shared geographic proximity as the two most powerful “Plains Indians” tribes and yet having little contact with each other (warring or trading) makes them an ideal “double-blind” case study. In other words, neither tribe made decisions based on the influence of what the other did.

Both tribes shared a semi-nomadic existence and functioned within and ultimately dealt with the decline of the “buffalo economy.” The Lakota and Osage histories parallel in many ways and yet, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when faced with a similar crisis of sustainable tribal identity each turned to religious movements which, as we will see, were very different.

### **Background on the Lakota and Osage: The Impact of Contact**

Both the Lakota in the North and the Osage further South have been categorized as “Plains Indian” tribes. As such they shared a dependence on hunting buffalo to produce clothing, food and housing. Both migrated early to the Plains from other locations, the Lakota from the upper Mississippi Valley<sup>8</sup> and the Osage probably further east via the Ohio Valley.<sup>9</sup> A major difference in

these two tribes was their preferences in Euro-American alliances. The Lakota considered the French an enemy<sup>10</sup> while the Osage considered them the lesser of evils. Neither tribe was fond of the Americans.

The Lakota were related to the Nakota and Dakota to their east. The western Lakota subgroup, the Teton, had seven subdivisions. They included the Hunkpapa, Itazipco, Mineconjou, Oglala, O’ohenonpa, Sicangu, and Sihapsa. Lakota is a western dialect of the Siouan language group. The Lakota are structured through the Patrilineal descent system.”<sup>11</sup>

The Osage belonged to the central Siouan (Dhegiha) linguistic family which also included; the Omaha, Quapaw, Ponca and Kaw (Kansas) tribes.<sup>12</sup> By the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Osage tribe was comprised of three different bands. The Great Osage, who lived near the Osage River, the Little Osage resided only about six miles away and lastly, the Arkansas Osage that lived along the Arkansas River. Together they numbered around 6,300 and controlled a vast amount of territory from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2001), 406-407.

<sup>9</sup> Garrick A. Bailey ed., *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, 407. “In 1736, the Lakota took revenge by ambushing and exterminating a party of twenty-one French who worked for V’erendrye. As a message of contempt for the French and their fur trade, the Lakota decapitated the dead, wrapped each head in a beaver skin, and left the parcels conspicuously beside the waterway for V’erendrye to find. One of the those heads had belonged to his son Jean-Baptiste. For the French, the Lakota became the western equivalent of the Iroquois (and the northern counterpart of the Chickasaw): formidable enemies.” (418).

<sup>11</sup> Donna Hightower-Langston, 211.

<sup>12</sup> Hurt, 260-261.

<sup>13</sup> Jeff Means, “‘Deconstructing Dependency’: Osage Subsistence and the United States Indian Policy, 1800-

In 1763, English Lieutenant Phillip Pittman wrote the Lakota were “a very numerous itinerant nation of Indians” who bartered with, “but in *general*” disliked “the Europeans, and have little inclination to be much acquainted with them.”<sup>14</sup> Forty years later, French military engineer, Nicolas de Finiels, wrote,

...the Sioux are intractable and ferocious. They have always appeared to welcome friendships with Europeans, but it is to be feared that close contact with whites will rapidly change the primitive goodness that once characterized most of the Indian tribes who had no contact with them.<sup>15</sup>

The Osage were considered very intelligent by the French Canadian fur traders who dealt with them throughout most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were “potent middle-men-monopolists” who blocked trade with Europeans by other competing tribes. This meant the Osage held the upper-hand in weaponry, horses and metal tools over their neighboring Indian contenders. They would occasionally trade in this period with the English, but unlike the Lakota, the Osage were military allies to the French.<sup>16</sup>

The Louisiana Purchase changed everything for the Americans and the Indians living west of the Mississippi River. President Thomas Jefferson specifically referred to the Osage as “the

great nation South of the Missouri [just] as the Sioux are the great [nation] North of that river.”<sup>17</sup> It is said that when the Osage were told France had sold the Louisiana territory to the Americans they burned the message as they found it too difficult to face the reality of the transfer to a hostile power.<sup>18</sup>

An example of radical change in this period which demonstrated a marked status of decline in power for the Osage was a significant re-ordering in tribal gender alignment. Like the Lakota, the Osage’s familial structure was patrilineal.<sup>19</sup> Because of insistent warring with other tribes (allied with the Spanish and later Americans) in the early 1800s, the Osage shifted to a materilocal residence pattern. This protected them strategically from the possibility of all their warriors being killed in a single battle.<sup>20</sup>

By 1817, the concept of exchanging land with eastern tribes for land in what would later principally become the States of; Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and especially Oklahoma was beginning to gain momentum. The election to the United States presidency of long time “Indian fighter,” Old Hickory, in 1824 solidified the expansionistic Jacksonian Era. A prime objective for these Jackson Democrats was the removal of all Indian tribes then residing in the east to be relocated west of the Mississippi River. There was no concern, however, with the

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1830.” *Heritage of the Great Plains* 35, Issue 1 (2002): 25. In comparison, however, in this same time period, the Lakota numbered 25,000. See Taylor, 407.

<sup>14</sup> Phillip Pittman, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1973 rept. of 1770 ed.), 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolas de Finiels, *An Account of Upper Louisiana*, Carl J. Ekberg and William E. Foley ed., (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 97.

<sup>16</sup>J. Frederick Fausz, “The Osage Indians: First Gateway to the West,” *Journal of the West* 43, no 3 (2004): 33-34

<sup>17</sup> As quoted in, Fausz (2004): 37.

<sup>18</sup> Hurt, 270.

<sup>19</sup> Willard Hughes Rollings “Prairie Hegemony: An Ethnohistorical Study of the Osage, From Early Times to 1840” (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1983), 46.

<sup>20</sup> Hurt, 268.

advocates of this policy if, in the process, Indian populations were reduced.<sup>21</sup> Others like Whig Congressman, Edward Everett, of Massachusetts, did not oppose the idea of Indians moving west of the Mississippi River, but only if it was done without duress being placed on the tribes and they were fairly compensated.<sup>22</sup> One way or another, the tribes were going to move.

By 1825, the Americans had political control over the southern plains, but as Jeff Means noted,

...trade dependency upon the United State did not by itself end Osage regional hegemony. The eventual subjugation of the Osage tribe occurred because of the mass migration of Indians and whites into Osage territory, which eventually destroyed their tribal economy.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, president Andrew Jackson and his supporters did not concern himself with the possible impact relocating the Five Civilized Tribes and other Indian Nations east of the Mississippi River would have on existing Native Americans (such as the Osage) who previously lived there.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This entire period is dealt with candidly, but somewhat apologetically on behalf of Jackson by Robert V. Remini. See Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (NY: Penguin Books, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Edward Everett, *Speech of Mr. Everett, of Massachusetts on the Bill For Removing the Indians From The East To The West Side Of The Mississippi, Delivered In The House of Representatives On The 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1830* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1830), 32. in possession of author. Senator, Daniel Webster, a close ally of Edward Everett's, voted with the majority in an earlier vote than the House to approve the Indian Removal Act. As his biographer, Robert V. Remini put it, "The problem of the Indians did not particularly concern him, like so many Americans." Robert V. Remini, *Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 334-225

<sup>23</sup> Means, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Remini (2001), 252-253. According to Remini, approximately 45,690 Indians were relocated west of the Mississippi during Jackson's term in office (277). This

Writing from a French perspective in the mid 1830s, Louis Cortambert, felt both the Americans and French had a negative influence on the Osage. He criticized the Americans for introducing alcohol to the tribe and the French for teaching the Osage to disrespect women. In defense of the latter point, Cortambert, referred to the occasional practice of polygamy and the burdens imposed discharging "the most laborious duties of ordinary life" on married women in support of such activities as the hunt, wood gathering and crop harvesting.<sup>25</sup>

According to Louis Cortambert,

The Osage detest the Americans, whom they call *Manhitanga* (Big Knives). They like the French, to whom they give the name of *Ichetarin*, that is to say Hair on the Eyes, because we let our eyebrows grow... What have they gained from the proximity of the whites? Three or four maladies, the same number of vices, the loss of the finest part of their territory, the extinction of half of their race...<sup>26</sup>

Insightfully, Cortambert, observed, "American Republicanism is not the triumph of humanity; it is the triumph of race."<sup>27</sup> The French and Spanish were interested in trade with the Osage, the Americans wanted their land. The Osage may have disliked the Americans in favor of the French, but ironically were the only Indian Nation removed that had never warred against them.<sup>28</sup>

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compares to an overall total of 81,282 that were displaced from 1789 to 1838 (278).

<sup>25</sup> Cortambert, 217

<sup>26</sup> Cortambert, 217

<sup>27</sup> Cortambert, 225

<sup>28</sup> J. Frederick Fausz, "'Becoming a Nation of Quakers': The Removal of the Osage Indians from Missouri,"

*Gateway Heritage* 21, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 28-29.

The Lakota, on the other hand, had not only fought against the United States Army in battle, but achieved several victories. Most notable, of course, was the 1876 battle of Little Big Horn. The Lakota were also the victims of several massacres in the mid-1860s.<sup>29</sup> A decade before, however, there was another much smaller engagement that would have a major impact on a young man that would grow to be a very notable Lakota leader.

A Mormon traveling along the trail in 1854 lost or turned loose a cow. It was a pitiful animal, from all reports, nothing but a walking bag of bones. The cow wandered into a Sicangu Lakota camp and was shortly dispatched and butchered by a visiting Mniconju Lakota. Unfortunately, the Mormon wanted his cow back. The headman of the village, a wise old man named Conquering Bear, spoke his regrets and offered a horse in trade. The Mormon wanted nothing but his cow, so Conquering Bear increased his peace offering to several horses. All to no avail. Negotiations broke down at that point and a young Army lieutenant named Grattan was sent to the camp to straighten out the matter. His idea of settling the issue was to bring a mountain howitzer with thirty soldiers and open fire. He and twenty-nine of his soldiers were killed in a brief but savage skirmish. Among the casualties on the Lakota side was the beloved headman Conquering Bear. A boy of fourteen happened to be visiting relatives in the camp and he witnessed how the Army had tried to handle the situation. That one incident would stay with him the rest of his life. The boy's name was Curly or Lighthaired Boy. As a young man he was given the name Crazy Horse.<sup>30</sup>

Crazy Horse and his generation gleaned a strong lesson from experiences like this to mistrust the Americans and that resistance to further white expansion and cultural influence was not only justified, but necessary for their survival.

As the decades passed, American mandated removals of other Indians to what had once been the exclusive territory of Plains tribes like the Lakota and Osage and an ever increasingly incursion of white settlers produced progressively more apprehension. By 1860, nearly a million and a half whites populated the West compared to 350,000 Indians and only about 75,000 of those were on the Plains.<sup>31</sup> In order to survive the backlash of the so-called "Dakota Uprising of 1862," a number of survivors opted out of their Native culture altogether, moved to Wisconsin and took on white identities.<sup>32</sup>

The Osage decided in the late 1860s to concede and sell their Kansas reservation lands in order to relocate to Oklahoma (on their own terms instead of waiting to be forced). Unlike many other removed tribes, the Osage purchased the area they wanted to live in.<sup>33</sup> The Osage deliberately selected this particular land because it was not tillable and, therefore, they felt secure they would not be pushed further west as the land would not be desirable to the "Heavy

<sup>29</sup> Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (New York: HarperPerennial edition, 1999), 520.

<sup>30</sup> Marshall III, 213-214. Marshall, however, earlier mentions the "Harney" attack a year later as the basis for Crazy Horse's mistrust of the whites. 104-105. also, Jake Page, *In the Hands of the Great Spirit: The 20,000-Year History of American Indians* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), 285, mentions the Grattan attack, but with significantly less passion, stating the reason they opened

fire was Conquering Bear did not immediately respond to Grattan's demand for restitution.

<sup>31</sup> Page, 286.

<sup>32</sup> Biloine Whiting Young, *River of Conflict, River of Dreams: Three Hundred Years on the Upper Mississippi* (Pogo Press, 2004), 29.

<sup>33</sup> Ironically, it was land that was once part of the Osage's vast holdings, but had earlier been ceded to the Cherokee.

Eyebrows” for farming.<sup>34</sup> A calculated, yet desperate, tactic to preserve tribal identity, avoid assimilation and reduce contact with white culture.

Their quest to survive culturally the enduring impact of Euro-American contact continued into the early part of the twentieth century in the Osage’s struggles during the Dawes Commission allotment period. The Osage had seen the results of the 1906 Cherokee allotment program which resulted in many mixed-blood, Freedmen, and non-Indians obtaining land within the former reservation boundaries. The Osage did not want the same thing to happen to them. Particularly contentious was the internal struggle between the mix-blood and full-blood Osage tribal members.<sup>35</sup> That issue aside though, it had been a long held dream of many to see the formation of an Indian state in Oklahoma.<sup>36</sup> The purpose of the government continued to be the deconstruction of what it was to be an Indian. Instead of granting an independent State to the Indians, the United States government moved to dismantle the Tribal Nation status of the reservations and divided up the land into individual parcels for each tribal member to privately own. The concept of individual land ownership was counter-

intuitive to the Indians, forcing them to farm and generally live as the white population. It also sub-divided the former reservation land so it could be sold to non-Indians over time, and thereby further erode Indian cultural values.

Controlling the Indian’s society in attempt to “civilize” them went beyond reformulating their views of land ownership and farming in opposition to hunting. To fully dominate the Indians required transforming their religious belief system to Christianity. Changing societal practices might have been the end goal, but saving their souls was thought to be the best strategy to accomplish the mission.

An example of the impact white missionaries and Government Agents had in this area was the use of sacred bundles. Both the Osage and Lakota kept bundles; the Osage’s use of bundles will be discussed below, but the spiritual beliefs of the Lakota were gravely affected when their use of the bundle was prohibited in 1888. The Oglala Lakota traditionally kept sacred bundles and used them to keep a lock of hair from a departed friend or relative.

This ritual kept the spirit of the deceased in their presence for a year; thereupon a ceremonial giving away of possessions was conducted in the decease’s honor whereby their soul was released. In an act of overt oppression, and means of seizing religious control of the Lakota people, this practice was criminalized. Withholding the ritual from them, “was a final horror: not even in death was there escape from the white man’s restrictions.” A decade later,

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<sup>34</sup> Matthews, 706.

<sup>35</sup> Anna Webb-Storey, “Culture Clash: A Case Study of Three Osage Native American Families” (Ph.D. diss., Oklahoma State University, July 1998), 43-44.

<sup>36</sup> Louis F. Burns, “Lu tsa ka Le Ah ke ho ‘Can’t Go Beyond’: Allotting the Osage Reservation, 1906-1909,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 72, no. 2 (1994): 202-203. see also, William E. Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 126,153.

appeals were still being made to allow the Lakota to re-instate the practice because it was causing “the spirits of our dead to be ashamed.”<sup>37</sup>

The form of ritual was important only as long as they were controlled by the believers. It was one thing to borrow from Christian doctrine and adapt it to native concepts, but when strict orthodoxy was imposed, resistance in the form of adopting more radical alternative belief systems became a viable survival strategy to preserve identity.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Ghost Dance and Peyote Religion**

Survival options for both the Lakota and Osage were steadily diminishing by the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their once powerful North and South Plains hegemony faded as the Americans displaced competing European rivals and asserted spatial control of territories that had been previously dominated by these tribes.

By the early 1890s, the Lakota tribes, Robert M. Utley, contends “verged perilously on cultural breakdown.” Utley continued,

That the Sioux could not help giving up the old, that they could not help sampling or even embracing some of the new, that the ordeal fractured them into “progressive” and

“nonprogressive” only deepened the malaise.<sup>39</sup>

This was the era that launched the “Ghost Dance” phenomenon and spread its influence among many diverse American Indian tribal people. Not all Lakota groups, however, participated in this newest wave of spiritual renewal<sup>40</sup> and some, such as Sitting Bull did not embrace at first.<sup>41</sup> The Syncretism of the Ghost Dance was a blending of Christian (Catholic, Mormon and Protestant) missionary ideas with pre-contact Indian beliefs.<sup>42</sup> In the far West, the Ghost Dance originated in Paiute country. It was first called the “Round Dance” and was often a shared experience performed by Indians and whites alike. When the Lakota and other Plains Indians took up the religion, whites were not included in the ceremonial dance.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Robert M. Utley, *The Lance and The Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993) 281.

<sup>40</sup> James Mooney, “The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890” *14<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, J.W. Powell, Director, part 2, 1892-93: 816. According to Mooney, “from official documents in the Indian Office and from other obtainable information that the Ghost dance and the doctrine, if known at all, were never accepted by...the Sioux of Devils lake in North Dakota, Lake Traverse (Sisseton agency) and Flandreau in South Dakota, and Santee or eastern division of the tribe, and have long been under civilizing influences. According to official statements the dance was not taken up by any of the Sioux of Crow Creek or Yankton agencies in South Dakota, but they were certainly more or less affected by it and are in constant communication with the wilder bands of Sioux which were concerned in the outbreak.”

<sup>41</sup> Utley, 285. Utley stated that Sitting Bull’s personal belief in the doctrines of the Ghost Dance were unclear, but he did support the movement.

<sup>42</sup> Hilda Neihardt and R. Todd Wise, “Black Elk and John G. Neihardt,” Clyde Holler ed., *The Black Elk Reader* (NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000) 92. Demallie, Jr., 188. The Mormon connection to the Ghost Dancers sacred shirts was first proposed by Mooney. See Mooney, 790, 792-793.

<sup>43</sup> Page, 326.

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<sup>37</sup> Raymond J. Demallie, Jr., “The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account,” Roger L. Nichols ed., *The American Indian: Past and Present* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1999), 189.

<sup>38</sup> An interesting comparison can be made in the use of unintelligible words in sacred songs sung by the Lakota and Osage illustrating that religious experience is more important to them than dogma, see for example, for Osage see Bailey, 82-82 and for the Lakota, Stephen A. Marini, *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 26.



Under the direction of the Lakota the dance also took on a decidedly apocalyptic tone. The dancers were to be peaceful, but their white oppressors would be punished in God's millennial triumph that would sweep them away and replace them with a new earth replete with masses of buffalo and reanimated Indian ancestors. As one historian noted, "The Ghost dance was a manifestation of difference, of resistance to 'civilization,' a refusal by the newly powerless to be dominated and reshaped."<sup>44</sup>

In his book, *The Lakota Way*, modern tribe member, Joseph M. Marshall III, stated that with the death of Sitting Bull in 1890 went "the last possibility of a strong, organized resistance to white encroachment." Marshall continued,

Therefore, when resistance ceased to be an option, surviving within the parameters of white control on the reservations was the only choice. There was no other option but to reach deep inside and persevere day in and day out, year in and year out, from one generation to the next.

Preserving in these circumstances meant ensuring that our language, our traditions, customs, values—the essence of what we are as Lakota—survive as long as possible. The first generation of Lakota to cope with life on the reservation could no longer defend themselves on the field of battle, so they fought with the only weapon at their disposal: spiritual strength. That spiritual strength, that willingness to persevere in the face of forced change has enabled my generation to stand not only on our own as Lakota, but also on the shoulders of those who went before—those who faced the giant and showed us how to persevere.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ronald Niezen, *Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 136.

<sup>45</sup> Marshall, 32.

The pattern of passive and occasional forceful resistance the Lakota exercised in their contact encounters was consistent and sustained until nearly the end of the nineteenth century (with a brief resurgence in the 1973 at Wounded Knee<sup>46</sup>). This is why the Ghost Dance was so attractive to this people and other like minded tribes.

It is said the great Lakota Chief Sitting Bull visited the Osage and taught them the Ghost Dance, but they soon lost interest.<sup>47</sup> The Osage had no fear soldiers would attack them for performing the ritual as, in the end, the Lakota did.<sup>48</sup>

Daniel C. Swan highlighted the evolution of religious ideas that various Osage tribal members experienced in this turbulent era,

The Osage people employed a variety of strategies in the late nineteenth century in an attempt to reconcile a number of contradictions that arose between the ideological superstructure of their society and the changing material conditions precipitated by the colonial experience. The method employed in this endeavor included modification and reinterpretation of the ceremonies of the Osage Tribal Religion, the adoption of the Grass Dance, isolated

<sup>46</sup> Hightower-Langston, 432-433.

<sup>47</sup> Mooney, 902. While Mooney claimed since the Osage were much better off materially than the other tribes they did not need to be redeemed, it does not explain why they would shortly thereafter embrace another distinctly native based pseudo-Christian religion, Peyotism.

<sup>48</sup> John Joseph Matthews, *The Osage: Children of the Middle Waters* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961, 1982), 742-743. Garrick Bailey clarifies this assertion by identifying this Sitting Bull as an Arapaho and as coming to the Big Hill band of Osage with the Ghost Dance in 1891 (a year after Lakota Sitting Bull was killed). Bailey, 18. Considering Matthews' work is ethno-historic, it is significant the perception was that the Sitting Bull remembered in the account was the famous Lakota and not someone else.

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conversion to Little Moon Peyotism and Christianity, exposure to and trial of the Ghost Dance, and the adoption of Big Moon Peyotism.<sup>49</sup>

While the Osage were not enthusiastic for the Ghost Dance religion, another new movement came to them shortly afterwards which did attract many converts. A Caddo-Delaware-French blooded former Ghost Dance leader named John Wilson<sup>50</sup> (later nicknamed Moonhead) developed a new form of Peyotism and introduced it to the Osage.<sup>51</sup> There are two different versions of the Peyote religion. The Half-Moon is older and more traditional than John Wilson's Big-Moon variation. It was the former, however, that was embraced overwhelmingly by the Osage. Big-Moon ceremonies also incorporate Catholic-Christian doctrines and influences from other religious sources as well.<sup>52</sup> The Osage's long association with Catholicism may have made this a more attractive option.<sup>53</sup> Writing of the Osage in the 1880s, however, James D. White concluded,

...it is obvious to a sympathetic observer that most Osage, after forty years of baptisms,

were far from being absorbed into the Catholic community of believers, They may have been in a religious crisis, with their tribal life and vision passing out of existence, but Christianity had not yet proved to be the answer they were seeking.<sup>54</sup>

John Joseph Matthews may have the profoundest comment on Peyote religion when he identified it as the "compromise between the Neolithic gods and the concept upon which European civilization had been built."<sup>55</sup>

The Osage embraced Peyotism quickly. They put away older traditional religious forms such as the keeping of medicine bundles thereby ushering in their new social structure.<sup>56</sup> As with John Wilson, the Caddo-Delaware peyote leader who brought the religion to the Osage, when John Rave introduced Peyotism to the Winnebago he likewise preached the abandonment of other ceremonies and "advocated the destruction of sacred war-bundles and the medicine bags." This was not, however, unique to Peyotism. A hundred years before, Ojibwa followers of the revolutionary Shawnee Prophet Tenskwatawa (Tecumseh's brother), were also told to put away their sacred medicine bags.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Daniel C. Swan, "Early Osage Peyotism," *Plains Anthropologist* 43, no. 163 (1998): 67. Swan also argued that Osage secular and religious leaders used Peyotism to restructure their society as a means to adapt away from the "cooperative production, consumption, and exchange, focused on the integration of labor for large-scale procurement of buffalo (65)."

<sup>50</sup> Daniel Charles Swan, "West Moon – East Moon: An Ethnohistory of the Peyote Religion Among the Osage Indians, 1898-1930" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Oklahoma, 1990), 142.

<sup>51</sup> Swan (1990), 234.

<sup>52</sup> Hirschfelder, 218.

<sup>53</sup> Marty, 10. Martin Marty argues that Catholic clergy were somewhat more tolerant of Indian customs and rituals than evangelical protestants. Both the Lakota and Osage were more heavily influenced by the Catholic Church than Protestant missionaries.

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<sup>54</sup> James D. White, "The Osage Plea for Freedom Revisited," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 73, no. 2. (1995): 220. When this article was published, James D. White, was historian of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tulsa, Oklahoma. He wrote this in response to Ray Miles, "'Give us Our Catholic Priests': the Osage Plea for Freedom of Religion," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 66, no. 1 (1988): 52-62. Neither article addressed the widespread acceptance of Peyotism among the Osage.

<sup>55</sup> Matthews, 756.

<sup>56</sup> Swan (1998), 63-64. Bailey, 19.

<sup>57</sup> Robert L. Hall, *An Archaeology of the Soul: North American Indian Belief and Ritual* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 69

Peyotism shifted the group orientated traditional belief system to one that was more affirming of individualism. Participation in peyote ceremonies the first time was an initiatory act consistent in a comparative way with other religions that initiate their members. As Mircea Eliade explained,

The term initiation in the most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a radical modification of the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to an ontological mutation of the existential condition. The novice emerges from his ordeal a totally different being: he has become *another*.<sup>58</sup>

It would, therefore, be expected that new converts would be expected to rapidly discard ties to former beliefs in favor of the new religion. In another sense, however, the idea of always moving forward was a consistent in Osage tradition. As Garrick Bailey pointed out, both the ancient Osage priests and contemporary tribal leaders are “future oriented.”<sup>59</sup> The juxtaposition of the Osage’s widespread acceptance of Peyotism that de-emphasized their traditional religion in comparison to the Lakota’s apoplectic hope of supernatural intervention to restore things as they were, has been evident throughout this study. Likewise, has been each tribe’s struggle for religious autonomy from their common Euro-American nemesis.

After considering the effects extended impact contract had on the Lakota and the Osage, the focus was

turned to an examination of late nineteenth century religiosity within these two tribes. Without question the Lakota and Osage were both negatively affected by extreme external forces that placed major stress on their respective traditional belief systems. The new alternatives they each adopted, however, reflect back on the dynamics of how they historically responded to Euro-American societal encroachment and is critical to understanding the choice in religions they made.

The Lakota, with a more openly defiant militant history of resistance (towards Euro-Americans and other tribes), and an ardent desire to be separate from white culture, were attracted by the apocalyptic message of the Ghost Dance Religion to find hope in their darkest hour of despair. The Lakota took the western non-segregated peaceful version of the Ghost Dance and modified it to suit their long held exclusionary views noted by the first whites with whom they had contact. Raymond J. Demallie, Jr., was correct in his contention “the Ghost Dance was not an isolated phenomenon,” that should be dismissed as not being a valid religious movement among the Lakota.<sup>60</sup> As it was adapted, it fit well with earlier Lakota religious principles such as their logic of “cause and effect” view of ecology, “If the buffalo had been driven back into the earth by the white man, they could be released again by the Messiah.”<sup>61</sup> Demallie, succinctly concluded, “From the 1850s through the

<sup>58</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 112  
<sup>59</sup> Bailey, 6.

<sup>60</sup> Demallie, 181.  
<sup>61</sup> Demallie, 183.

1870s the Lakota tried to get rid of the whites by war; in 1890 they tried ritual dancing and prayer.”<sup>62</sup>

Conversely, the Osage, while historically aggressively hostile to other tribes, were not prone to open warfare against the Euro-Americans. For example, at an earlier time they often encouraged Osage women to intermarry French traders. Not surprisingly, the Ghost Dance’s promise of redemption from white culture was not as attractive to the Osage. Later, as they ceded more territory to the Americans, their influence shrank and the buffalo economy disappeared, the Osage continued to abstain from directly fighting the Americans, but they did desire to be left alone in peaceful isolation. While the Osage did ultimately embrace the generally intertribal Peyote religion, the form of Peyotism they practice was a distinct minority variant.

Both the Ghost Dance and Peyotism represent individual expression that transcended tribal identity. The Lakota did modify the Ghost Dance to meet their need for exclusiveness from whites and the Osage embraced a form of Peyotism less acceptable to other tribes, but both religions were a part of broader Indian movements. And while both religions are adaptive of Christianity, they very much reflect native identity in their resistance to acculturation to white society. The Lakota and Osage’s determination to survive and preserve tribal, or at least native, identity in the 1890s was a direct

result of their flexibility to adapt their religious affiliations.

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<sup>62</sup> Demallie, 183.

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