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Rani-Henrik Andersson

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The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890

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The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890

Rani-Henrik Andersson

University of Nebraska Press Lincoln & London

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The man had died and yet he had not died,
And he had talked with God, and all the dead
Were coming with the whirlwind at their head,
And there would be new earth and heaven!

JOHN G. NEIHARDT,
"The Song of the Messiah," in *A Cycle of the West*

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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations . . . . . *viii*
Preface . . . . . *ix*
Acknowledgments . . . . . *xix*

Introduction *1*
1. Wanáği Wachípi kį *31*
2. The Indian Agents and the Lakota Ghost Dance *100*
3. "To Protect and Suppress Trouble": The Army Responds *128*
4. Missionary Views on the Lakota Ghost Dance *162*
5. "In an Atmosphere Pregnant with Mysteries": Press Coverage of the Ghost Dance *192*
6. The U.S. Congress and the Ghost Dance *251*
Conclusion: Toward "a Great Story" of the Lakota Ghost Dance *271*

Appendix 1. A Chronology of Events During the Lakota Ghost Dance Period . . *301*
Appendix 2. Phonetic Key to the Lakota Language *305*
Appendix 3. The Messiah Letters *306*
Appendix 4. Kicking Bear's Speech, October 9, 1890 . . . . . *309*
Appendix 5. Short Bull's Speech, October 31, 1890 . . . . . *312*
Notes *315*
Bibliography *405*
Index *423*

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ILLUSTRATIONS

1. The area covered by the ghost dance *26*
2. The Lakota reservations 1890 . . . . . *33*
3. Lakota leaders at Pine Ridge *42*
4. *The Capture and Killing of Sitting Bull* *87*
5. Holy Cross Episcopal Church *95*
6. "Grand Council" *126*
7. The U.S. Army on the Lakota reservations . . *136*
8. The Wounded Knee battlefield *154*
9. "Gen. Miles and Staff" *157*
10. "Bloody Pocket" *188*
11. An Indian scout *234*
12. Soldiers digging trenches *241*

TABLE

The Number of Lakota Ghost Dancers *76*

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PREFACE

There were at least one hundred and fifty tepees forming almost a complete circle within which the Indians had gathered to the number of six hundred[,] a part to engage in the exercises and a part to look on. At a given spot a young tree was planted on which was placed the American flag, around it gathered the priests who sat down on the ground and remained silent for some time. Around this tree about equally distant therefrom men, women, to the number of near four hundred formed a circle and assumed at first a sitting position. The men were arrayed in their war paint, consisting of red, black and yellow, feathers in their hair, leggings on their lower limbs, blankets wrapped round their bodies and moccasins on their feet. The women were clad in dresses of variegated colors, some were beaded in the most artistic style and their faces painted profusely.

The Indians forming the outer circle sat down on their feet and remained quiet for some time, when they broke out in a sort of plaintive cry, which is pretty well calculated to affect the ear of the sympathetic. Then some one passes around with a vessel in his hand containing some kind of roots . . . after this is partaken of, at a given command the Indians rise to their feet [and] join hands thus forming a complete circle. Having occupied this position for a moment they begin to chant their opening hymn . . . and commence a slow measured movement from right to left, increasing the pace as they go[,] and it is not long until all[,] old and young[,] are singing and becoming excited. This is

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> kept up for a half hour when many being overcome with the exercises and excitement connected therewith, fall where they were standing in the ranks or leap wildly from the circle into the open space, fall flat on their faces upon the ground, strike the ground furiously with their hands as though they were endeavoring to dig a hole therein, leap up wildly again, rush from one side of the circle to the other throwing out their arms and finally fall exhausted and apparently lifeless. When a certain number had thus exhausted themselves the dancing stopped and all sat down again. As the exhausted ones revived they gathered into a group in the center of the space and the proclaimers received an account of their experiences while in this state and then proclaimed it to the Indians. . . . A young woman said when she fell an eagle hovered over her and picked her up[,] carrying her to a house, the door being open the eagle went in first and she followed, and saw Christ who shook hand[s] with her three times and said He was glad to see her as she had been there before. Another [said] that the dead would all soon come back and meet them and that buffalo and other game would be plentiful.

In the late 1880s a revitalization movement known as the ghost dance swept across the North American plains and galvanized tens of thousands of Indians from more than thirty tribes. The epigraph is a description of the ghost dance ceremony among the Lakota Indians, the western branch of the Sioux people, as reported by U.S. Special Indian Agent Elisha B. Reynolds in September 1890. He was perhaps the first white observer ever to witness and describe the ceremony as it was performed by the Lakotas.[1]

The ghost dance was a religious movement that took many forms as it passed from one tribe to another, yet its core message of return to the old ways and a future of peace and happiness remained the same. The ghost dance was the physical expression of a religious movement that advocated peace. The most important instructions of the prophet of the religion, a Paiute Indian called Wovoka, were these, later published in "The Messiah Letters" (see appendix 3): "You must not . . . do harm to anyone. You must not fight. Do right always." According to Wovoka, the white people were

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going to disappear in a great earthquake, and only those Indians who believed in his message would survive. Then they would live forever in a world of happiness where there would be no hunger or disease. To make this happen, the Indians need only dance a certain sacred dance. Thus no hostilities were required to bring about the new Indian paradise.[2]

In the late 1880s most Indians in the United States lived on reservations, where they were fed and clothed as wards of the government. They had little hope for the future. They had been forced to surrender their lands and abandon their traditional ways of living. Even their religious ceremonies were forbidden. The ghost dance offered them hope and returned religious ceremonies to a central place in their daily lives. Throughout the western United States Indians started to dance and pray as Wovoka taught. Unfortunately, among the Lakotas the dance produced tragic consequences. The U.S. military, under orders to put a stop to what many whites thought was a war dance, opened fire on a group of Lakotas in December 1890, resulting in what would become known as the Wounded Knee massacre.[3]

For my doctoral thesis, "*Wanáği Wachípi kį*: The Ghost Dance among the Lakota Indians in 1890—A Multidimensional Interpretation," I studied the ghost dance among the Lakotas and its significance in their culture. As I studied the events leading to the Wounded Knee tragedy, I discovered that many mixed feelings about the ghost dance prevailed and that different interest groups perceived the events in different ways.

The Lakota ghost dance has been the subject of wide scholarly and public interest from the late nineteenth century throughout the twentieth century. The first publications about the dance that used historical documents as source material were published as early as 1891. James P. Boyd's *Recent Indian Wars: Under the Lead of Sitting Bull and Other Chiefs; With Full Account of the Messiah Craze and Ghost Dances* and Willis Fletcher Johnson's *The Red Record of the Sioux: Life of Sitting Bull and History of the Indian War of 1890–1891* were among the very first to set the tone in studying the Lakota ghost dance. Articles in various journals and magazines soon followed.

The first and foremost study of the ghost dance is *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* by the early anthropologist James Mooney. His book resulted from several years of investigating the ghost dance among var-

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ious Indian tribes. Mooney's work is still essential and invaluable, but also somewhat problematic and includes some statements that time has proved to be erroneous. For example, Mooney was not able to get any information from the Lakotas. The Lakotas simply refused to talk to him: "The dance was our religion . . . we will not talk any more about it," was their reply to his requests. For this reason his study, although the first attempt to understand the ghost dance as a religious movement, lacks information from the Lakotas themselves. Even the Lakota ghost dance songs he published he obtained from a local schoolteacher, Emma C. Sickels, who in turn got them in written form from George Sword, a literate Lakota who was captain of the Indian police at Pine Ridge Agency. Mooney constructed his story of the Lakota ghost dance and the "outbreak," as he calls it, from primary government documents and newspapers, but not with the help of Lakota participants, as he was able to do among several other tribes.[4]

From the very beginning the Lakota ghost dance was studied mainly from the perspectives of white Americans, and the Lakotas' views were only briefly incorporated into this main narrative. Those earliest accounts created a tradition of treating the Lakota ghost dance as a military, political, or religious-political movement. This approach is characterized by phrases such as the "Sioux outbreak," the "Messiah Craze," and the "ghost dance war," which are so often used even in the titles of those works. This tradition continued into the late twentieth century, when alternative interpretations began to emerge. While some of these accounts do incorporate the Lakotas' point of view as a legitimate part of the story, most fail to put the ghost dance in a wider cultural and social context. Often these accounts are written to convey a particular perspective or narrow focus on some specific aspects of the Lakota ghost dance. All too often the story of the Lakota ghost dance, even in some of the most recent accounts, is based on the published literature or on one-sided interpretations of primary documents. However, critical analysis of primary sources is essential, since they do not simply reveal "facts" but must be interpreted in the context of the late nineteenth century.

Mooney's work, however, has been the cornerstone on which scholars throughout the twentieth century have based their interpretations of the Lakota ghost dance. It has become a tradition to treat Mooney's study almost

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as a primary source on the Lakota ghost dance; his interpretations have survived in the works of several historians and anthropologists. Some of these include Robert H. Lowie's *Indians of the Plains* (1954), George E. Hyde's *A Sioux Chronicle* (1956), Robert M. Utley's *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (1963), and Rex Alan Smith's *Moon of the Popping Trees* (1975).

Thus a standard tradition of writing the history of the Lakota ghost dance emerged. Only more recently have different interpretations been proposed. One of these was written by the anthropologist Raymond J. DeMallie. In his brief but insightful article, "The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account" (1982), DeMallie looks at the Lakota ghost dance from the point of view of the Lakota people. Another recent attempt, by the historian William S. E. Coleman, seeks to move beyond the traditional mainstream interpretation of the Lakota ghost dance. In *Voices of Wounded Knee* (2000), Coleman presents several documents relating to the Lakota ghost dance and the Wounded Knee massacre. In *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (2004), the historian Jeffrey Ostler places the Lakota ghost dance in the context of U.S. expansionist politics. In her recently published book, *Hostiles? The Lakota Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (2006), Sam A. Maddra analyzes the Lakota ghost dance using several documents that present the ghost dancers' point of view. In a new introduction to a reprint of his *Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (2004), Robert Utley expresses a changed opinion about his earlier assessment of the ghost dance among the Lakotas. He addresses some of the problematic issues and acknowledges the need for more nuanced interpretation of the Indian side of the story. All these recent works are interesting and valuable, but there is still need for additional reevaluation.[5]

In the present work I consider the Lakota ghost dance from a larger perspective. I have drawn on the growing number of studies that stress multicultural approaches, that is, include a multidimensional interpretation.[6] One example of this approach that I have found valuable is Patricia N. Limerick's *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (1987), in which she considers the American West as a meeting ground of several groups who compete over economic, cultural, and political control of the area.[7] Recent theoretical work by Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. that emphasizes the importance

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of identifying conflicting "voices," including gender, ethnicity, race, and class, suggest new approaches to writing history.[8]

Berkhofer suggests that by presenting different voices of events, historians can develop a more comprehensive picture of the past. When conflicting voices are accepted as legitimate "sub-stories" of the same (hi)story, and when the "various viewpoints of evidentiary sources, others' stories, other scholars' texts, and the historian's own text are incorporated into one interpretive system," a multidimensional interpretation of the past can ultimately be achieved. Berkhofer refers to this synthesis as "the Great Story." The more comprehensive the selection of voices and viewpoints is, the fuller the final historical analysis, "the Great Story," is. However, the historian's task, Berkhofer argues, is not only "to reclaim voices, but also to contextualize them, to reconstruct the discursive world, which the subjects inhabited and were shaped by."[9]

In this study Berkhofer's ideas serve as the basis for constructing "a Great Story" of the Lakota ghost dance. Each of the chapters presents a story of the Lakota ghost dance viewed from a certain perspective, thereby presenting the voice of that particular group of historical actors. In the conclusion, "Toward 'a Great Story,'" the historian's interpretation is achieved by combining the different voices into a single interpretive account of the Lakota ghost dance.

In my study, the voices of six different groups of actors are presented: the Lakotas, the Indian agents, the U.S. Army, the missionaries, the press, and the U.S. Congress. My basic questions are these: Did misunderstandings exist about the ghost dance, and, if so, how were they compounded, leading eventually to the tragic end at Wounded Knee? My study seeks to demonstrate that the multidimensional method I have chosen can provide a more realistic and historically sound reconstruction of the Lakota ghost dance than any other now available. I attempt to go beyond a mere collection of conflicting viewpoints and seek to explore and analyze the political, cultural, and economic linkages among them in order to gain a fuller understanding of what the ghost dance represented.

This study is arranged so that the voice of each of the six groups of actors is analyzed in a separate chapter. Because the Lakotas were living at several

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different agencies and events took place simultaneously at each one, strict chronology is necessary to avoid confusion. News of the ghost dance spread from west to east, so I have arranged the chapters in a similar—natural—order; the Lakota voice is dealt with first, followed by the voices of the agents, the army, the missionaries, the press, and, finally, the Congress.

Limerick argues that events that took place in the West have usually been portrayed from the perspective of the East. In this sense the East is the center, representing white civilization, while the West represents the uncivilized frontier that merely reacts to decisions and actions originating in the East. In this study the actual center of events is indeed in the West, but my approach allows us to look at several centers that reacted to one another and created a complex structure of conflicting but equally important viewpoints. These viewpoints, as the anthropologist Raymond J. DeMallie has noted, "may contradict one another not because one is right and one is wrong, but because they are composed for different purposes and are based on different cultural premises."[10]

The method used in this study proves especially valuable in understanding the relationships among these various groups, how they acted and reacted to events during the ghost dance period, and how they affected one another by setting events in motion that had multiple culmination points, including the arrival of the military on the Lakota reservations, Sitting Bull's death, and the Wounded Knee massacre. By studying these different voices it is possible not only to identify these culmination points, but also to understand how and why they came about.

This study demonstrates how the different groups developed their respective views about the Lakota ghost dance. For example, how the Lakota agents' views of the ghost dance developed and changed during the period from April 1890 to January 1891 has not previously been examined in detail. The facts surrounding Agent Daniel F. Royer's and Agent James McLaughlin's actions are well documented, but their—and especially the other Lakota agents'—actual views of the ghost dance have not been thoroughly studied. More important, how their views affected those of the army, the press, and Congress, and vice versa, has not been previously explored. It is, in fact, this interaction and these linkages among the different groups that ultimately

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constitute "a Great Story" of the Lakota ghost dance. Therefore, this study presents the ghost dance as a whole, as a phenomenon in which many interests collided and many misunderstandings prevailed on both collective and individual levels. The method used shows the linkages and interactions among several groups of people, and has also been used whenever possible to explore the critical points, relationships, and interactions within those groups. Revealing the connections among these voices is, in fact, one of the major contributions of this method.

The voices presented here represent different viewpoints on the Lakota ghost dance, but none of them alone provides a satisfactory interpretation of what the Lakota ghost dance was about. Together, these voices help us to understand not only the events, but also the ideologies behind the actions of each group. This study allows us to look at the collective viewpoints of these groups and also to consider the viewpoints of some important individuals within the groups. Thus, the method chosen for this study demonstrates how an approach that takes multiple perspectives into consideration can further our understanding of the past. This methodology provides us with a fuller understanding of the Lakota ghost dance than has been achieved before. It is, however, not yet the fullest account possible; for example, the voices of various groups of Indian and white women would provide further insight. Moreover, the six voices presented here could be further broken down. For example, in addition to the army officers' voices, the viewpoints of the soldiers themselves could be investigated. The Lakota voice could be further studied by looking in detail at the various reservations, bands, and interest groups. The perspective of the mixed bloods could constitute an additional voice. The lack of source material left by any of these groups, however, greatly restricts what is possible in this respect.

Each of the chapters in this study presents different kinds of challenges. To understand the Lakota voice, I have put the Lakota ghost dance in a larger cultural perspective. As DeMallie notes: "To attempt an understanding of the Sioux [Lakota] past it is essential to come to an understanding of Sioux [Lakota] culture, which provides the context."[11] For this reason, the history and culture of the Lakota people is briefly reviewed in the beginning of this study and further discussed whenever necessary. To achieve an un-

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derstanding of the Lakota ghost dance from the Lakota perspective, I have found that the traditional historical approach is not sufficient to answer all the questions raised in this study. To gain a fuller understanding I have incorporated methodology derived from ethnohistory and anthropology that enables me to deal with problems that arise from studying a culture so different from Western culture. I have, for example, used oral history as source material, and I have portrayed the Lakota ghost dance in terms that derive from Lakota culture and that were familiar to the Lakotas. In this, knowledge of Lakota language has been invaluable.[12]

The chapters on the army, the missionaries, the agents, and Congress presented fewer methodological challenges, but it was enough of a challenge simply to decipher the handwritten historical documents. These chapters required extensive reading on various topics: Congress, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian agents, missionary work among the Lakotas, and U.S. Indian policy in general. Becoming familiar with the U.S. military and its relations with Indians throughout the nineteenth century was essential for the writing of the voice of the army. The voice of the press presented yet another challenge: how to deal with material that was not only voluminous, but also contradictory and inconsistent. To study the voice of the press, I selected the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to represent the eastern newspapers for the simple reason that they were widely read and very likely influenced eastern decision makers. The *Chicago Tribune* was important since the army headquarters for the 1890–91 campaign was located in that city. Furthermore, the *Chicago Tribune* was geographically located between the Lakota reservations and Washington. The *Omaha Daily Bee* represents the local western newspapers. Its importance lies in the fact that it was the most widely quoted newspaper during the ghost dance "trouble." The *Yankton Press and Dakotan* from Yankton, South Dakota, was chosen to give additional depth to the local newspapers' reporting. *Harper's Weekly* magazine here represents national magazines and was chosen mainly because of its long tradition of writing about Indian-related issues.

To aid in a fuller understanding of the ghost dance, a brief survey of revitalization movements as well as some main features of official U.S. Indian policy are presented. The Lakota ghost dance has to be understood in these

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broader contexts, although the emphasis of this work is on the events of the year 1890.

In this study, some Lakota names and words are used to give authenticity to the Lakota voice. Generally, English names are used, but when a name appears for the first time the Lakota name is provided in parentheses, for example, Red Cloud (Maȟpíya Lúta). In writing Lakota words I have chosen the orthography introduced by Allan R. Taylor and David S. Rood, which is, as the anthropologist and linguist Douglas R. Parks put it, by far the best orthography for the Lakota language currently available.[13] A brief phonological key is provided in appendix 2.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the result of years of hard work and dedication, but it is also the result of a lifelong interest in Native American cultures. The fact that I am a Finn, living far away from the Indians and far away from the primary sources, has made this project challenging. To some people it has even seemed rather strange. Why did I not heed the advice of those who urged me to choose a more familiar and easy topic? Once you are interested in something, however, you have to pursue that ambition; otherwise, inaction might lead to a lifelong questioning of *what if?* Now I do not have to ask myself that question; I have traveled this journey and the result is this book.

Still, there has been great understanding toward my work here in Finland. It would have been impossible to complete this study without this support. When I look back, I can see that I always met exactly the right people at the right moment. Because I am a historian, I feel that it is only natural that these people should be mentioned here in the order in which they appeared in my life.

My academic life began at the History Department of the University of Tampere in 1988. During my first years as a student I pushed aside my interest in Native Americans; there was simply too much other work to do. When I finally had to decide on a topic for my master's thesis, I naturally thought of Indians. But I was afraid of taking the first step. I knew that there would be no return from that path; it would be a life-altering decision. At a critical moment my good friend Riitta Savola said: "If you don't do it, you will regret it all your life." I would like to thank her for those encouraging words.

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In 1992, I visited my former middle school teacher Dr. Rainer Smedman, who laughed at me when learning about my interest in Indians. His amusement was not malicious; on the contrary, he was working on his PhD dissertation, focusing on the history of the Lakota people. From that moment he has helped and guided me; he has been a good friend, and he has read and commented on many versions of my manuscript. Without his help this work would not have been possible. I owe him my deepest gratitude. During the early period Professors Seikko Eskola, Olli Vehviläinen, and Marjatta Hietala supported my doctoral work and helped me to receive funding for several years. When I was starting my dissertation, I met again with Professor Markku Henriksson, who had introduced me to the field of American studies years earlier. He encouraged me to continue my work and has helped and supported me ever since. In 1998 he grabbed me by the arm and threw me into an office; there I met, for the first time, with Professor Robert E. Bieder. I spent several hours with Professor Bieder talking about my project and listening to him sing Iroquois songs. Afterward I was convinced that I did not make a good impression because I was thrown in front of him totally unprepared. Now I have to thank Markku Henriksson for his wise action; despite my fears, Professor Bieder took me under his wing and has been a constant supporter and a friend ever since. He has tirelessly read, commented on, and corrected my text. His help has been of utmost value, and he deserves my warmest thanks.

Professor Bieder also introduced me to Professor Raymond J. DeMallie, who has taught me more about the Lakota people than anyone else. His advice has been worth more than I can put into words. He also guided me to archives and manuscripts that might have eluded me and generously gave me access to his personal collections. At the American Indian Studies Research Institute (at Indiana University) I was allowed to study the Lakota language under Professor Douglas R. Parks. The fact that he put up with me, and with my pronunciation of the Lakota *z*, says a lot about his attitude toward me. I am glad to express my gratitude to these two men, and I am delighted that we were able to establish a good professional relationship but also a friendship that I hope will last for years to come. I also want to express my thanks to the people at the American Indian Studies Research Institute,

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Finally, I want to thank Siiri and Martti Tikka, who have always welcomed me to their home and who have helped me in so many ways. Martti, Ville Smedman, and Toni Lassila have helped with countless computer problems. My sister, Aretta, and her friend Susanna allowed me to establish a base in their home. My sister always found the best, not the cheapest, but the most flexible airplane connections. I know it was not always an easy task. My parents, Auli and Mauno, have always been there for me and believed that I would be able to carry out this project. They deserve very special thanks. Then there is Marianne, who has put up with me for the past years; she even followed me across the Atlantic Ocean and spent two years with me in the United States. Although she never said that she would like to see this project finished as soon as possible, I am certain that she finds it a welcome change in our lives. Even if this project has been fun and exciting, I believe that when this book is finally published, she will find it as rewarding as I do.

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Introduction

Isolation and Assimilation

Early contact between Europeans and Native Americans made it clear that these different peoples could not coexist without conflict. As early as 1763, by a royal proclamation of King George III of England, a boundary line was drawn along the Appalachian Mountains, leaving the area to the west for the Indians. Separation became U.S. national policy during the early nineteenth century.[1] In this way conflicts with Indians could be avoided, and as Indians gradually became civilized they would need less land. The whites could then inhabit the surplus land. The policy of separation culminated in the reservation policy, which still exists.[2]

To understand the ghost dance and its impact not only on the Indian people of the United States, but also on the white population, it is essential to understand the ideologies behind the relations between whites and Indians.

The reservation policy can be roughly separated into two phases. The first phase was adopted as official Indian policy in the 1820s, although similar ideas had been presented even earlier. The aim of this policy was to create an Indian territory in the western United States. In the second phase, which started officially in the 1850s, Indians were removed tribe by tribe to individual reservations that were established for them.[3] Indian removal was considered necessary to prevent the total extinction of the Indians, but also to free more land for white settlers. Indians could not remain a hindrance to

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the expanding nation as it fulfilled its destiny of exploring and conquering new lands. This idea of western expansion became known in the United States as Manifest Destiny.[4]

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the U.S. population was divided into citizens and noncitizens. Indians, as well as African Americans and later also Asians, were excluded from citizenship, whereas European immigrants were taken in as full members of society. After the Civil War the situation changed as slavery was abolished and as the number of immigrants increased. The nonwhite minorities were given second-class membership in the nation—a membership that allowed them to serve the white upper class but at the same time "feel at home."[5] Indian policy after the Civil War, initiated by President Ulysses S. Grant, was known as the Peace Policy. Its basic idea was to locate the Indians on tribal reservations where they could be civilized and gradually absorbed into the social and economic system of the United States. This task was given to the Indian Office, which at first was situated within the War Department. In 1849, however, when the Interior Department was created, the Indian Office was taken out of the War Department and relocated into the new department and renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Under the Peace Policy the Interior Department handed actual control of the reservations to different church groups.[6]

Despite the Peace Policy, many famous Indian wars were fought during the 1860s and 1870s. By the 1880s Indian resistance was basically over, and the tribes were confined to reservations. Confinement brought with it the need for change in official Indian policy. The Peace Policy was considered a failure, and the struggle over the control of Indian affairs continued between the Interior and War Departments and among the different religious denominations, which were "fighting over souls."[7]

By the 1880s dissatisfaction with Indian policy was growing in the U.S. Congress. The Peace Policy was considered to be partly responsible for the disturbances that had occurred on several reservations.[8] Both the Democrats and the Republicans were tired of the fact that money invested in Indian affairs had no lasting effects. A well-known Peace Policy supporter, Henry L. Dawes, the Republican senator from Massachusetts, even claimed that 2.7 million dollars had been appropriated to solve what he called "the big Indian

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question." According to Senator Dawes, "We have made no advance toward it; we have not even touched it; but we have aggravated it."[9]

The basic question was whether or not the reservation system should be continued. The reservations helped Indians to maintain their tribal autonomy and protected them from white encroachment. Indian education was another problem—not whether Indians should be educated, but who would educate them.[10]

Behind these basic issues was the question of whether the Indians should be considered an exceptional minority, to be protected and civilized separately, as had been the case during the Peace Policy. Already by the end of the 1860s powerful groups had formed to find solutions for these difficult problems. The so-called Friends of the Indians were religious and humanitarian leaders who thought that their duty was to help the Indians to become civilized. Their aim was to benefit the Indians, but because their work was based on their own values and not on those of the Indians, the results were—despite their sincere efforts—devastating for the Indians. However, Friends of the Indians was a powerful group, and the government could not ignore their suggestions for the reorganization of official Indian policy.[11]

Before the 1880s the argument for Indian "exceptionalism" was based on the issue of land, that is, the question of whether the Indians owned their lands in common as tribes or as individual persons. After the 1880s almost all Indian land was confined to reservations, so such reasoning was no longer relevant. Because there were so few Indians left on the continent, and because rather than inhabit the land they "roamed on it as the game they hunted," policy makers believed they were justified in confiscating the remainder of their land. Demands to dismantle the whole reservation system arose during the 1880s. The reservations were seen as "islands surrounded by civilization," where barbarism could continue to exist. Many whites also thought that the reservations denied Indians the benefits open to others.[12]

Fundamental to Indian policy was the idea of the superiority of the white race, although it was generally believed that Indians had the potential to develop from savagery to civilization. Some of the most notable American ethnologists, such as Lewis Henry Morgan and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, believed that converting to Christianity would gradually civilize the Indians.

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Others, such as Samuel G. Morton, believed that the Indians could not progress at all and would eventually die out as a race. Those ideologies provided a scientific basis for the Indians' inferior position as well as for the taking of their lands.[13] The fact that white society offered Indians the road to civilization justified their treatment. Becoming civilized and ultimately achieving U.S. citizenship was believed to be sufficient compensation for the Indians' loss of their land and culture.[14]

The question of Indian exceptionalism was discussed in Congress for several years, especially in the 1880s. At times the Indians were believed to have a kind of treaty right for exceptional treatment, and at other times they were considered to be in a position no different from that of other landowners. At the same time it was thought peculiar that Indian illiteracy remained high despite the large amount of money that was spent on Indian education. Senator Dawes demanded that the United States spend as much money on Indian education as it had spent in vain trying to kill off the Indians. Many Indians, in fact, understood how important education was for their future; reading especially was considered a valuable skill.[15]

Despite the debate, the idea of exceptionalism stayed strong: many reservations were divided or reduced, but they remained. One solution to the Indian question was sought in the General Allotment Act of 1887 (also known as the Dawes Act), which provided the mechanism for dividing the ownership of reservation lands among individual Indians.[16] This was a satisfactory solution for many whites for whom an independent Indian engaged in farming had long been the goal. Farming was thought to be the highest form of civilization and a God-given duty. Moreover, those supporters of exceptionalism saw the General Allotment Act as the last chance to protect Indians from land-hungry settlers, who were growing in number and power. The allotment of Indian lands would at least allow individual Indians to keep some of the land they previously had owned communally. The General Allotment Act signaled a change in Indian policy from isolation to assimilation.[17]

The General Allotment Act meant in practice that the Indians who took up allotments could no longer maintain tribal ownership of the reservations and the tribes would no longer be considered independent nations. The land was to be divided among individuals and the surplus lands were to be sold

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to white settlers.[18] The act meant also that Indians had to learn to work like white men. As Senator Dawes put it, "The Indian will be an Indian as long as he lives unless he is taught to work." And working he could learn only through education. Thus Indian education and the allotment of the Indian lands were inseparable goals.[19] However, it remained the duty of the government to protect the individual Indian in his efforts toward civilization and eventual citizenship.[20]

Even if the General Allotment Act was an answer to many problems, and it seemed to satisfy all the white interest groups that were involved, it also produced many more problems, especially in the 1890s, as surplus Indian land was diminishing. Indian education continued to cause problems as well.[21]

Whereas Indian policy in the 1860s and 1870s had separated whites from Indians, in the 1880s, especially toward the end of the decade, the policy tried to protect the Indians from the whites; now reservations became areas of refuge. Reservations were a way to protect a conquered race; on reservations the Indian could become the "beginning of a man."[22] During the 1880s, especially among the so-called Friends of the Indians, the goal was no longer to destroy Indians, but to raise them up to civilization. As Senator Dawes expressed it, white men had a duty to "take him [the Indian] by the hand and set him upon his feet, and teach him to stand alone first, then to walk, then to dig, then to plant, then to hoe, then to gather and then to *keep*."[23] Whether these efforts benefited the Indians is a totally different question.

Thíthųwą: Dwellers on the Plains

Until the beginning of eighteenth century, the Lakotas were living between the Minnesota and Missouri Rivers on the prairies of today's Minnesota and the Dakotas. By the mid-eighteenth century pressure from Ojibwas and eastern Santee Dakotas forced the Lakotas to move westward. As they acquired horses they crossed the Missouri River in small groups and pushed west, reaching the Black Hills sometime during the second half of the century. The Great Plains, with their tremendous herds of bison, drew the Lakotas west. The plains offered everything that was needed, not only in daily life but also in the expanding trade with the white man.[24]

The Lakotas were a part of the people known as the Sioux or Dakotas.[25]

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The Sioux were divided into seven groups, also known as the seven council fires (*ochéthi šakówį*), the mythological origin of the Dakota people.[26] Despite having different dialects, the seven groups spoke the same language and were fully capable of understanding each other. The easternmost groups living in Minnesota were called the Santees. Together with the Yanktons and Yanktonais, the Santees formed the branches of the nation that called themselves Dakhóta. Although scholars frequently refer to the Yanktons and Yanktonais as "Nakotas," the term Nakhóta is the self-designation of Assiniboine Indians, who were close relatives of the Sioux.[27] The Lakotas (Lakhóta) formed the western branch of the seven council fires. They are also known by the name Teton, a name deriving from the Lakota word *thíthuŋwą* ("dwellers on the plains"). The Lakotas, the subjects of this study, are further divided into seven tribes: Oglalas (Oglála), Hunkpapas (Hų́kpaphaya), Minneconjous (Mnikhówožu), Brulés (Sichą́ǧu), Two Kettles (O'óhenupa), Sans Arcs (Itázipcho), and Blackfeet (Sihásapa).[28]

The Lakotas arrived on the plains in small, independent groups. They were able to drive away some of the other tribes already living there, partly due to the diseases that took their toll on the Plains Indian population, and partly due to the numerical strength of the Lakota people. The Lakotas adapted quickly to life on the plains, and by the late eighteenth century had become a dominant Plains Indian tribe. On their way farther west, the Lakotas pushed aside the Kiowa, Arikara, and Crow tribes. Alongside the Cheyennes and Arapahos, the Lakotas became the masters of the North-Central Plains. By 1825, they occupied an area stretching from the Missouri River to the Black Hills.[29]

Hunting buffalo provided the Lakotas with their primary means of living. The acquisition of horses allowed them to hunt more efficiently, which immediately resulted in a higher living standard and a rise in population. Diseases caused havoc among the Lakotas also, but because they lived in small groups constantly on the move, they were less vulnerable to epidemics than were the tribes living in larger, permanent villages. While other plains tribes were struggling, the Lakotas were prospering. Their population growth was rapid: in 1804 whites estimated that there were approximately 8,000 Sioux, perhaps 3,000 Lakotas among them, but in 1850 the numbers

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were 24,000 Sioux and 13,000 to 14,000 Lakotas. In the early nineteenth century the whites were not yet their enemies but important trade partners who provided the Lakotas with guns, ammunition, and utensils that helped support their daily life.[30]

Warfare was an essential part of Lakota life—not constant, full-scale war, but periodic skirmishing. Their main enemies were the Pawnee, Shoshone, Crow, and Arikara Indians. The goal was not to destroy the enemy but to show individual courage or to steal horses. Counting coup, that is, touching the enemy, was considered the highest form of bravery, one of the most highly respected virtues in a Lakota man.[31]

Indian wars were fought mainly during the summer; war was put aside for the winter. Summer in general was a time of great activity. It was the time for communal buffalo hunts and for the most important religious ceremonies, such as the sun dance (*wiwą́yąg wachípi*). For this ceremony the Lakotas gathered into a great summer camp. Afterward, the people dispersed for the coming winter into small individual groups called *thiyóšpaye*.[32]

The basic unit of society was the *thiyóšpaye*, the extended family or lodge group. Every *thiyóšpaye* had its own headman or chief (*ithánchą*). The *ithánchą* was a man who possessed the virtues that made him respected among the people. He was a person to be trusted and followed, although his authority was limited; every man could basically decide for himself, for example, where to live, when to hunt, and how to behave toward whites. The next higher level in Lakota society was the band, which consisted of several *thiyóšpaye*. The bands then formed the various *oyáte*, best translated in English as "tribes." Thus a Lakota could, for example, belong to the band of Itéšica (Bad Face) of the Oglala tribe, as did the famous Red Cloud (Maȟpíya Lúta). Traditionally and ideally the Lakotas constructed their society following their sacred number, seven, reflected in the seven council fires. Still, the structure was very flexible, and the number seven seldom was actually the exact number of the bands.[33]

The Lakotas, however, consisted of the seven tribes mentioned above: Hunkpapas, Oglalas, Brulés, Blackfeet, Two Kettles, Sans Arcs, and Minneconjous.[34] During larger gatherings each of these tribes had its own position in the camp circle, which was of extreme importance to the Lakotas.

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Everything inside was Lakota (*ólakhota*, alliance); outside was the hostile world. Indians not belonging to the Lakota people were potential enemies (*thóka*); they shared with the Lakotas the designation "common men" (*ikcéwichaša*) and were "related as enemies" (*thókakičhiyapi*). Sometimes, however, a peace was made with other Indians, who then became a part of the Lakota alliance (*lakhólkičhiyapi*). This was the case, for example, with the Cheyennes and Arapahos. The whites were not considered enemies; they were called *wašícu*, a term referring to guardian spirits, particularly those related to war. The whites acquired this name because of their mysterious powers, especially those associated with their powerful guns.[35]

The camp circle, *hóčhoka*, symbolized this unity of the Lakota people. Within the circle the sacred hoop (*čhągléška wakhą́*) was unbroken. In the middle of the circle was a large lodge (*thíyothipi*) where important meetings were held. The Hunkpapas camped at the edges of the circle, close to the opening (*hų́kpa*), which always faced east. From there, each tribe put up its tipis in the accustomed position. Even within tribal camp circles, the bands camped in a certain order, so that the most important band or family was closest to the back of the circle, opposite the opening. Here too the flexibility of the society can be seen, as the rise in status of a band or family allowed it to move to a more respected place in the camp circle. Thus, as the structure of society was constantly changing, there were changes in the daily lives of the Lakotas. Although there were different rules for large camp circles in which different tribes were present, the basic form of the circle was present in the camp of the smallest *thiyóšpaye*.[36]

The camp circle also affected the power structure in the society. At different times and in different situations the power structure shifted from the chief of the *thiyóšpaye* to the warrior societies (*akíchita*) or to a war leader, *blotáhų́ka*, during times of war. In larger camp circles, power was held by the chiefs' council (*načá omníciye*), which consisted of elderly men who were no longer active hunters and warriors. The chiefs' council selected men to perform different duties in the camp and during hunting and war. The council appointed men called "deciders" (*wakíchų́za*), whose task was to mediate between the chiefs and the people and to direct the camp's movements. Other important leaders selected by the council were the "shirt wearers" (*wicháša*

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yatápika), prominent younger men known for their bravery and success in war . All these different leaders were known as the *wicháša ithánchą*, "leader men." So, among the Lakotas, there was never a single chief who could make decisions on behalf of all the people. Power was distributed; individuals belonged to certain groups and associations depending on their kin relationship and on their own actions.[37]

The whites never really understood this system, in which the leading warriors were more visible than the actual chiefs, who acted in the background. In fact, not even the chiefs were able to act on behalf of the people unless all the chiefs and the chiefs' council approved their decisions. This caused many misunderstandings in the negotiations between the whites and the Lakotas. There were times when the whites announced that they had an agreement with all Lakotas when, in fact, they had an agreement only with a representative of a village or a band. The whites mistook such famous men as Red Cloud and Crazy Horse (Thašų́ke Witkó) as head chiefs who could decide for the whole tribe, whereas they were leading warriors, not chiefs at all. Partly because the whites deemed Red Cloud the primary chief, he achieved such a powerful position that even the Oglalas themselves started to consider him their head chief.[38]

Until the 1840s, the Lakotas had relatively little contact with whites. By then, however, immigrants traveling to California and Oregon started to arrive in Lakota country. Most immigrants traveled along the Oregon Trail, which followed the Platte River. The Oglalas and Brulés living in the Platte River valley gradually became dependent on the white man's trade goods. Alcohol had been introduced to the Lakotas around the 1820s, but when contacts with immigrants became more frequent the availability of alcohol increased. This brought problems to the Lakotas, and drunken brawls became common. Under the influence of alcohol, small disputes were resolved with violence more often than before. For example, in 1841 a dispute between two Oglala chiefs resulted in the death of one of them, and eventually in a division within the Oglala tribe.[39]

As the number of immigrants traveling west increased, the U.S. government considered it necessary to protect the travelers. In 1845 soldiers entered the Platte River valley for the first time. Four years later a military base was

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established on Lakota lands. This base, Fort Laramie, was the scene of the first major negotiations between the U.S. government and the Plains Indian tribes in 1851. The government sought to establish safe passage for the immigrants; to this end, the primary goal of the U.S. negotiators was to end hostilities among the warring Indian tribes. Even though the Indians seldom attacked travelers, Indians fighting each other caused instability in the region, making traveling unsafe. Another goal was to define boundaries for the various Indian tribes. These were not actual reservations but areas where each tribe was supposed to be able to live and hunt without interference from other tribes. Almost 10,000 Indians attended the negotiations at Horse Creek, near Fort Laramie.[40]

The Indians agreed to let the government build forts on their lands, promised to let the immigrants travel freely, and promised to end all hostilities among themselves. The boundaries for each tribe were explained. But intertribal peace on the plains did not last long. Peace with the whites, however, did last for a short while. This was partly due to the annual appropriations the government gave to the Indians in compensation for peace.[41]

In 1854 that peace ended. The cause of the hostilities was a cow. A Minneconjou shot a cow belonging to Mormon immigrants, and even though the Indians offered to pay compensation for the cow, Lt. John L. Grattan set out to arrest the Indian responsible. In the ensuing battle Lieutenant Grattan and all thirty of his men were killed. The Lakotas did not understand that they were now at war with the United States; they saw no reason to sustain hostilities after inflicting what they considered a major blow to the U.S. Army. The U.S. government, however, was of a different opinion: in September 1855 the army destroyed a Brulé village in retaliation. In 1856 the Lakotas again made peace with the United States, giving away the Platte River valley.[42]

After this, the Lakotas called together a council, which may have been attended by as many as 7,500 Lakotas. They unanimously decided to oppose the white man's further encroachment on their lands. Instead of taking action, however, the Lakotas dispersed into their traditional winter camps. They compensated themselves for the lost Platte River valley by taking the Powder River country from the Crow Indians and expanded their territory

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farther west to the Big Horn Mountains. The Treaty of 1851 thus caused the Lakotas to expand their influence at the cost of other Indian tribes. Before the 1851 treaty, U.S. and Lakota interests were not necessarily in conflict, but now these two expanding peoples were competing over the same land base.[43]

During the early part of the 1860s, the Lakotas tried to avoid hostilities with the whites. War arrived on the Northern Plains from the East, where the Santee Sioux were thrown into a war against the U.S. Army in 1862. The army defeated the Indians, and some of the Santees sought refuge among their relatives living on the plains. The army followed the refugees, drawing the Lakotas into the war.[44] Most of the Lakotas did not want to fight against the U.S. Army, but at the same time they were prepared to defend their country against white encroachment. Some of the people were convinced that the best way to survive was to stay at peace with the whites. Thus, already by the 1860s, the Lakotas were divided in their basic approach toward the white man. The whites used this division to differentiate between the so-called friendly and hostile Lakotas. Those who preferred to "walk the white man's road," that is, those who maintained a friendly attitude toward the whites, were called "progressives." Those who preferred to defend their lands and their way of life were called "nonprogressives." In times of war these respective groups were referred to as "friendlies" and "hostiles."[45]

During the summer of 1864 the Oglalas and Brulés were at war with the whites, and even gained some victories, but in the fall they stopped fighting, as they always did in traditional warfare. Spotted Tail (Šįté Glešká), the most powerful leader among the Brulés, was in favor of peace, but Col. John M. Chivington's brutal attack against a Cheyenne village in November 1864 doomed his efforts. The massacre of Indian women and children caused the Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Lakotas to unite against the common threat.[46] The war continued throughout the winter of 1864 and summer of 1865. Red Cloud's status was rising among the warring Indians; Spotted Tail still sought peace, however, and to prove his intention not to fight he finally led some Oglalas and Brulés close to Fort Laramie.[47]

The fighting in the summer of 1865 was remarkable for the havoc the Indians caused, almost humiliating the U.S. Army. The summer was very successful for the Indians, but by fall they again dispersed to hunt buffalo in

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preparation for the winter. They could not wage war indefinitely; they had to take care of their families.[48]

In 1866 the government again called the Lakotas to Fort Laramie for negotiations. Spotted Tail arrived early with his followers, but Red Cloud, now a leader of the warring faction, stayed in the Black Hills and the Powder River country, as did Sitting Bull (Thathą́ka Íyotake), who led the other major Lakota group living in the area. Red Cloud's presence at the negotiations was considered essential, and when he finally arrived the government officials were jubilant. A permanent peace was now thought possible.[49]

The whites obviously thought that Red Cloud, although most likely only a war leader (*blotáhuŋka*), had the power to decide tribal matters on his own.[50] During the negotiations the government tried to convince the Lakotas of the benefits of peace. More important, they wanted to get the Indians' permission to open roads through Lakota lands and to build forts alongside the roads to protect travelers. During the negotiations, however, the Indians learned that there was already a military detachment on the way to build forts along the already existing Bozeman Trail, which ran through the Lakota country to the gold fields in Montana.[51]

This news enraged most of the Lakotas, who, led by Red Cloud, marched away from the conference. The final result of the negotiations of 1866 was that only a few of the most progressive headmen signed the treaty. The most notable of these was Spotted Tail, who was the first Indian to sign. When the treaty was finally concluded, the government representative officially declared that a satisfactory result had been achieved and that the Indians had participated in great numbers. He did not mention Red Cloud's leaving the conference or that the majority of Lakotas did not sign at all. Whether or not the negotiators' intention was to deceive the government is not known; at least, their report was not completely truthful. Thus the government in Washington thought that the problems with the Lakotas were solved when, in fact, the United States was at war with Red Cloud's Lakotas.[52]

The war, known as Red Cloud's war, lasted for two years, during which the Indians fought very successfully. Their military tactics resulted in some of the most famous Indian victories, and the U.S. government was eventually forced to give in to the Lakotas and their allies. The forts along the

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Bozeman Trail were abandoned, and Red Cloud could declare a victory over the army.[53] But the victory was not due solely to the Indians' ability to wage war; the government's new Indian policy also played a role. The new Peace Policy sought to put an end to the hostilities. Furthermore, the war against the Lakotas turned out to be extremely expensive. It was cheaper to feed the Indians than to fight them.[54]

The war officially ended in 1868, when a new treaty was signed that established a reservation for the Lakotas, which included the sacred Black Hills and a large area north of the Platte River. White men were not allowed to enter this Great Sioux Reservation without permission. In addition, the Indians were allowed to continue to hunt to the north and west in an area designated as unceded Indian territory.[55]

According to the treaty, any future land cession would require the signatures of 75 percent of all adult male Lakotas. This, Article 12, was to serve as a guarantee for the Lakotas that they would have control over their lands in the future. The Indians promised to maintain peace, and as a reward for this the government agreed to give them annual provisions. The provisions, however, were to be distributed far away from the Lakota homelands at new Indian agencies on the Missouri River. The goal was to force the Lakotas to move eastward and to live permanently within the borders of the Great Sioux Reservation. This particular article of the treaty was apparently not properly explained to the Lakotas before 1870, when Spotted Tail and Red Cloud visited Washington.[56]

The 1868 treaty resulted in a division within the Lakota people. Red Cloud and Spotted Tail, with their respective followers, decided to live within the Great Sioux Reservation, but thousands of Lakotas who did not want to have anything to do with the treaty remained off the reservation, living in the unceded territory. The whites soon referred to these Lakotas as the "wild" Indians. Several Indian agencies were established within the reservation. Red Cloud and Spotted Tail were given agencies that carried their names. In addition to these, the Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, and Lower Brulé Agencies were later established. The old Upper Missouri Agency, on the east side of the Missouri, became the new Crow Creek Agency.[57]

At first, life on the reservation was not particularly restricted. The Lakotas

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were still able to go on hunting trips, visit their relatives on and off the reservation, and live far away from the Indian agencies. Some of the Lakotas returned to the agencies only on the days when rations were issued.[58] Despite this flexible arrangement, life on the reservation was constantly balanced between war and peace. The regular visits by the "wild" Lakotas also kept tensions alive. Furthermore, the government moved the Lakotas from one place to another, hoping that they would eventually settle down and take up farming. The Lakotas strongly opposed this idea. The Friends of the Indians, who were now directing the government's Indian policy, were convinced that in only a few years the Lakotas would be self-supporting farmers. The reality was that by 1873 no farms, or even gardens, were established by full-blood Lakotas at either the Red Cloud or the Spotted Tail Agency.[59]

The government spent large sums of money to support the Lakotas, and there were many whites who wanted to take their share of this money. Inexperienced and often dishonest Indian agents cheated the Indians as well as the government. At times the Lakotas were able to run things as they pleased; weak agents were no match for strong leaders like Spotted Tail and Red Cloud. By 1874 military forts were established near the Spotted Tail and Red Cloud Agencies. The policy of civilizing the Indians by means of Christianity seemed not to be working for the Lakotas; order was to be maintained by force if need be.[60]

In 1874 gold was discovered in the Black Hills and white fortune seekers rushed to the Lakota lands. The U.S. Army was ordered to stop and arrest the white men entering the Black Hills, but the few men who were arrested were quickly released, and consequently many returned to the gold fields. The threat of war was imminent already in 1875, when the government invited the Lakotas to listen to a new proposal. To avoid war, the government proposed to buy the Black Hills, reasoning that, since the Indians were not able to feed themselves but were supported by the government, the land the Indians did not use belonged to the government. The government offered the Lakotas six million dollars for the land, far less than its true value. The Lakotas refused to sell. The government did not want to use force to stop the white gold miners, so their rush to the Black Hills continued.[61]

Because the Lakotas refused to sell the Black Hills, all Lakotas, including

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those who lived outside the reservation, were ordered to move to within the reservation boundaries by January 1, 1876. Those who failed to do so would be considered hostiles. This was an ultimatum and practically a declaration of war. Most Lakotas had no chance of reaching the agencies by the date they were given; traveling in the middle of the winter was difficult and slow. Furthermore, some of the Indians learned about the ultimatum only after the deadline had passed. The date given by the government actually meant little to the Lakotas anyway; unlike the whites, they were not used to strict time schedules. They could wait until the following spring.[62]

Because the Lakotas failed to meet the deadline, the army marched into Lakota country during the winter and spring of 1876. From the beginning of the war it was clear that the government had underestimated the Lakota forces. Crazy Horse, Gall (Phiží), and Sitting Bull, among others, were leading a fighting force of united Lakotas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos. During the summer of 1876 many of the most famous battles between the Lakotas and the U.S. Army were fought, in which the Indians were able to defeat the army. The culmination of the fighting took place on the Little Big Horn River on June 25, when the Indians completely destroyed the troops of the 7th Cavalry led by Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer. After the battle, however, the Indians again dispersed; some even returned to the agencies, expecting to get provisions and the same kind of treatment as before.[63]

Following Custer's death more troops were sent to force the Lakotas onto the reservation. Small groups gradually came to the agencies, but the army was not capable of destroying all the hostile Lakotas. Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, for example, decided to continue the war. The government could not pressure those Indians who were living outside the reservation the same way it could pressure those on the reservation, for example, with food rationing; as a result, the peaceful Indians living on the reservation were made to suffer. By the fall of 1876 they no longer received the provisions that the government had promised them. They were threatened with starvation, and unless they gave up the Black Hills, the government threatened to remove them by force.[64]

With the war still going on, it was highly unlikely that 75 percent of adult male Lakotas would surrender the Black Hills, as the 1868 treaty required. It is

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of interest to note that, starting in 1871, the U.S. government ceased to make treaties with Indians as sovereign nations. Instead, the government signed agreements with Indian tribes, which became law only when passed as acts of Congress.[65] Under tremendous pressure, even Red Cloud and Spotted Tail, who had not joined the fighting Indians, signed a new agreement by which the Lakotas gave away the Black Hills and their rights to the unceded Indian territory that had been reserved for their use by the 1868 treaty.[66]

The army under Gen. George Crook and Col. Nelson A. Miles followed the Indians led by Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull all through the winter of 1877. In the spring even Crazy Horse surrendered, and Sitting Bull led his people to Canada. After Crazy Horse's surrender, life at the Indian agencies was restless. Almost 10,000 Lakotas were starting a difficult journey of adaptation to reservation life. Crazy Horse's presence, and rumors of his plans to escape and resume hostilities, kept tensions alive. Only after he was killed at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, in September 1877 did the tensions subside.[67]

At this time, the Lakotas were forced to move east to the Missouri River, where a new agency was established. The government refused to distribute provisions elsewhere. Because there were no longer any buffalo in the vicinity of the Lakota agencies and the army prohibited the Lakotas from following the buffalo off the reservation, the Lakotas had no other option but to move east. The next summer, however, Red Cloud and Spotted Tail were allowed to take their people to locations of their own choosing. After many problems, Red Cloud settled the Oglalas on Pine Ridge, and Spotted Tail with his Brulés chose a location along the Rosebud River for their new agency.[68]

The whites considered Spotted Tail and Red Cloud the most powerful Lakota leaders on the reservation in the late 1870s. Because of this, their influence among the Lakotas grew in proportions never seen before. After Spotted Tail's death in 1881, the government considered Red Cloud alone head chief of the Lakotas, even though there were other chiefs who were more entitled to such a position. The government's policy, in fact, was to try to undermine the power of the chiefs. The idea was to dissolve the traditional structure of Indian societies by emphasizing individualism. The government thought that by breaking up the band structure of the Lakotas,

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they could transform the Indians into individual farmers. The chiefs were seen as obstacles to individual initiative and civilization. Indians were considered to be under their chiefs' tyrannical rule. In daily life ordinary Lakotas still turned to their chiefs; they could not function individually as the whites hoped. The chiefs, like Red Cloud and Spotted Tail, who visited Washington several times, understood the white men better than other Indians, so their influence grew even as the government tried to minimize it. In fact, whenever there was major trouble on the reservation, government agents had to turn to the chiefs. The chiefs were leading the Lakotas' struggle for survival on the reservations.[69]

In 1881 Sitting Bull returned from Canada and surrendered. These last "wild" Lakotas eventually settled around Standing Rock Agency. After Sitting Bull's return all the Lakotas were settled on the Great Sioux Reservation. The Lakotas' era as independent hunters on the plains was over. Their culture had changed dramatically in a very short time. They had resisted white encroachment as well and as long as they could, but now they faced a new kind of challenge: life on the reservation.[70]

U.S. Indian Policy in the 1880s and the Lakotas

The goal of the U.S. government was to make all Indians—including the Lakotas—self-supporting through farming. For most of the Lakotas the concept of work as the whites knew it was totally unfamiliar. For them, hunting was the only natural means of living. In the 1880s the Lakotas also believed that the government owed them support in compensation for lost lands.[71] Moreover, the lands and the climate prevented the Lakotas from adopting farming. The Indian agent at Pine Ridge Reservation, Valentine T. McGillicuddy, described the situation, saying that if 7,000 white settlers were located on the same land and given all that they needed for one year, they would starve to death if they had to live on the products of their own farms.[72]

The government emphasized farming, built schools, and created the Indian police system in a deliberate effort to break down the traditional structure of Lakota society. In 1878 a law was passed creating an Indian police force on all Indian reservations. Among the Lakotas, the creation of the police force was difficult, since they saw the police as rivals to traditional men's so-

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cieties.[73] Gradually the Lakotas' attitudes toward the police changed as they realized that, if they did not allow the police to keep order on the reservation, that duty would be left to the U.S. Army. In the end the police system was not so strange to the Lakotas. In traditional society the "camp police" (*akíčhita*) kept order; the Indian police system basically replicated this structure and gradually replaced it to some extent. Eventually the Indian police forces became very loyal to the white agents.[74]

Schools were also dividing the Lakota people. The people whom the whites called progressives were willing to send their children to school. They saw the schools as a chance to learn the ways of the white man, which would eventually benefit all the Lakota people. The nonprogressives resisted education in all possible ways. For them, school was a hateful place where the boys' hair was cut off and they were forced to wear white man's clothes.[75]

Reservation life for the Lakotas in the 1880s was a constant struggle over power. This struggle was fought both between the agents and the chiefs and among the chiefs themselves. The most bitter struggle was between Red Cloud and Agent McGillicuddy. This struggle for control of Pine Ridge Reservation lasted for seven years and can be said to have ended in Red Cloud's favor when the agent was removed from duty in 1886.[76]

According to some scholars, one sign of the success of the government's policy to undermine the power of the chiefs was the explosive increase in the number of chiefs, even though many of those who wanted to be referred to as chief lacked the achievements that were traditionally needed for that position. For example, in 1878 the Lakotas had twelve chiefs, but at the beginning of the 1880s there were sixty-three men who called themselves chief. The number of sub-bands also rose dramatically. The historians George E. Hyde and Robert M. Utley claim that this lessened the power of the traditional hereditary chiefs, but it also made possible the tremendous rise in authority of Red Cloud and Spotted Tail.[77]

There is some indication that the structure of Lakota society was not as badly broken in the late 1880s as scholars have suggested. The fact that the number of chiefs and sub-bands increased does not necessarily indicate the breakdown of traditional society. It may reflect the traditionally very flexible structure of Lakota society. As noted earlier, Lakota society could adapt

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to the needs of the time; in reservation life, the traditional band structure was gradually replaced by a district structure, according to where each band lived. Despite this, basic elements of traditional Lakota society remained; people moved to these districts in traditional *thiyóšpaye*s, where the strong bonds of kinship remained as a unifying force. For example, the Lakotas acted in the councils held with the so-called Sioux commissions in the late 1880s as they had traditionally acted in councils. This suggests that the structure of society had suffered a blow, but that blow was not as dramatic as is generally believed.[78]

In 1882 the government planned to reduce the size of the Great Sioux Reservation. Threatening and cheating, the government representatives tried to make the Lakotas cede almost half of the area of their reservation. The Lakotas, however, were once more able to unite, and with the help of some eastern white friends, were able to keep their lands. Despite all the restrictions there was still plenty of room on the Great Sioux Reservation to escape the white man's influence. As long as this was possible, there was no way of making the Lakotas into farmers. But the government did not give up. By reducing the size of the reservation, the government sought to force the Lakotas to be bound to the land. Since the Lakotas did not cultivate their land, they would still have unused land even if they gave away half of it. The government's plan culminated in 1887 when the General Allotment Act was passed. This act decided the fate of Lakota lands.[79]

In 1876 the Great Sioux Reservation had been divided into six separate Indian agencies, but this division was only for administrative purposes. In 1887 these agencies served as the basis for the planned reduction of the Great Sioux Reservation. The government sent delegations to negotiate with the Lakotas over the reduction of their lands. The first attempt, in 1888, was a failure. The Lakotas confronted the commissioners, refusing almost unanimously to surrender their lands. The next year another commission was sent. This time, one of the members was a famous Indian fighter, Gen. George Crook, who knew the ways of the Indians. This commission acted differently from the previous one: by trying to persuade individual Indians behind the scenes, the commission sought to break the strong opposition of the previous year. Indeed, this strategy proved to be successful. By means of threats

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and promises, the commission was able to obtain enough names to legally carry out the reduction of the Great Sioux Reservation. The agreement was then ratified in the Sioux Act of 1889. During the negotiations the Lakotas' strong unified opposition gradually broke down. This would prove a major blow to the Lakota people. The split within the Lakotas deepened dramatically, and seeds of the troubles of 1890 were planted as those who opposed the reduction started to draw away from those who signed the act.[80]

Thus, after tremendous pressure from the government, in 1889 the Lakotas were finally forced to give away land that the whites considered surplus. The Great Sioux Reservation was divided into smaller reservations based on the former administrative areas. The Hunkpapas, Minneconjous, Sans Arcs, Two Kettles, and Blackfeet settled on two adjoining reservations, Standing Rock and Cheyenne River. Pine Ridge Reservation became the home of the Oglalas, the Brulés settled on Rosebud Reservation, and the Lower Brulés were established at Lower Brulé Reservation, across the Missouri River from Crow Creek Reservation.[81]

After 1881, the Lakotas living on the Great Sioux Reservation—and later on the smaller reservations—were in different phases in their assimilation to white culture. The Loafers were so called because they had been living with the whites since the 1850s. Some of the Lakotas settled on the reservation in the 1860s, some in the 1870s, and the last group as late as the 1880s. Thus a very rough division was recognized: those who had lived for a longer time on the reservation formed the group that the whites called progressives, while the newcomers were considered nonprogressives. This, however, is too simplistic a picture, because there were many nonprogressives among those who had lived on the reservation since the 1860s, and there were also progressives among those who had moved onto the reservation in the 1880s. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to say definitely who was really progressive and who was not.

This artificial division existed throughout the 1880s and, although a white invention, started to affect the daily lives of the Lakotas. Despite the efforts and partial success of white officials to break down the unity of the Lakotas as a people, it was clear by the end of the 1880s that an Indian could not live outside the tribal community without his chief or headman. Individualism,

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as the whites understood and wanted it, had not yet taken root in Lakota society. Despite all the efforts to break down the tribal structure and the power of the chiefs, even Agent James McLaughlin at Standing Rock Reservation said that it was much easier to deal with the Indians through their chiefs than to try to deal with them as individuals.[82]

An understanding of the division into progressives and nonprogressives is somewhat easier if we look at the most notable chiefs. This division occurred on all Lakota reservations, where the people followed the example of their chiefs, as they had always done. More important, the whites considered the people who followed a progressive chief to be progressives, and the same with nonprogressives. Thus the whites automatically considered an Indian living, for example, in Sitting Bull's village to be a nonprogressive, like Sitting Bull himself. Sitting Bull, although also a medicine man, was the leading nonprogressive chief on Standing Rock, while Gall and John Grass (Pheží) were the leading progressive chiefs. On Pine Ridge, Red Cloud and Big Road (Čhąkú Thą́ka) were leaders of the nonprogressives, while, for example, Young Man Afraid of His Horse (Thášų́ke Khókiphapi), Little Wound (Thaópi Cík'ala), and American Horse (Wašícų́ Thašų́ke) led the progressives. Hump (Cą́káhu) and Big Foot (Sí Thą́ka) were the leading nonprogressives on Cheyenne River Reservation. On Rosebud, Two Strike (Nų́pa Aphápi) and Crow Dog (Khą́ǧí Šų́ka) were the leading nonprogressives. After Spotted Tail's death in 1881, the leadership among the progressives on Rosebud was unclear. Those men were, of course, only the most notable leaders at the time, but this allows us to some extent to track the division within the Lakota people.[83]

In 1883 traditional Lakota religious ceremonies were forbidden by the Office of Indian Affairs. The last sun dances of the nineteenth century were held on Pine Ridge in 1882 and on Rosebud a year later. This was a very great blow to Lakota society, since religion and religious ceremonies had always been a part of their daily life. When these ceremonies were forbidden, the culture lost an essential foundation. The Lakotas tried to continue their traditional practices secretly, but the time for large public religious ceremonies, such as the sun dance, was over. In this impossible situation many Lakotas turned to Christianity, preached by missionaries for decades but previous-

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ly ignored or rejected by many Lakotas. The reality, however, was that for many, the Christian God was only one godlike being among others. So, by the end of the 1880s, the Lakotas were also divided into different religious groups; there were Christians, those who tried to find a balance between Christianity and traditional beliefs, and those who tried to perpetuate the old system of belief.[84]

On the reservations the life of the Lakotas changed rapidly. Nonetheless, by the end of the 1880s they had not yet assimilated as much as the whites had expected. The nonprogressives kept tensions constantly alive, among the Lakotas as well as between the Indians and their white agents. In the late 1880s the Lakotas faced a serious famine. There was no more game left to hunt, the crops failed year after year, and the government added to the Lakotas' distress by reducing the annual appropriation and delaying the delivery of food and supplies. In 1890 the government justified the cut in rations partly by blaming lack of funds and partly by pointing to the decrease in the Lakota population. If the 1890 census was accurate, the decrease was probably the result of famine and disease, but that was not taken into account when the decision to reduce the rations was made. The cut was included in the Sioux Act of 1889, which reduced not only the Great Sioux Reservation to almost half of its size, but also the annual beef allowance. The cut in rations was part of a government policy that sought to use the gradual reduction of rations, and subsequent hunger, to make the Lakotas realize that labor was the only way to survive and achieve self-sufficiency. As late as December 1890 Senator Henry L. Dawes noted that hunger was the only way to make an Indian work.[85]

The famine brought with it devastating epidemics; measles, the grippe (influenza), and whooping cough spread among the desperate Lakotas. Furthermore, the planned reduction of the Great Sioux Reservation caused great anxiety. The Sioux Commission of 1889 made many promises to the Lakotas in order to acquire enough signatures to reach the 75 percent requirement, but the government carried out the partitioning of the Great Sioux Reservation without fulfilling practically any of the Commission's promises. When the division of the Great Sioux Reservation was accomplished in 1890, many Lakotas saw it as the final evidence of the white man's untrustworthiness.[86]

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In 1888–89, when life for the Lakotas seemed hopeless, a rumor reached them: somewhere in the west a messiah was preaching a better future for the Indians. Thousands of Indians were reportedly listening to him, and the Lakotas decided to learn more about the wonderful things he was promising.

Revitalization Movements: Hope for Suppressed People

The ghost dance that spread among the many North American Indian tribes in the late 1880s was not a peculiarity of the history of the American Indians. Similar phenomena have occurred all over the world when indigenous peoples have come face-to-face with European expansion and colonialism. The roots of the North American ghost dance can be found in this collision between Native American and Euro-American cultures and in the devastation this contact gradually brought to Indian cultures.[87]

Europeans and, in the case of North America, Euro-Americans tried to replace all aspects of native cultures with the achievements of their own culture. Among the native peoples this caused strong resistance, resulting in cultural conflict and warfare. This conflict eventually led to cultural assimilation, as the weaker culture had to yield to the demands of the stronger.[88]

When Europeans and Euro-Americans succeeded in suppressing the political, military, economic, and religious resistance of the natives, they sometimes encountered another, often unexpected form of resistance. When the structure of a certain society had been crushed, or when that society no longer had the power to continue traditional forms of resistance, new possibilities arose through a religious prophet. These prophetic leaders combined aspects deriving from the new, dominant culture with their own traditional cultures.[89]

These "religious-prophetic" mass movements have occurred all over the world. Among American Indians similar movements occurred among the Pueblos in the late seventeenth century and among the Iroquois and the Shawnees in the early nineteenth century. All of these movements were typically born as a result of tremendous cultural change and in the midst of cultural crisis.[90]

Such movements mainly aimed at getting rid of the dominant culture and

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restoring traditional ways of living. Through religion and religious ceremonies and with the help of a religious prophet, the object was to bring about a new world without the conquerors. Typically, the destruction of the world was prophesied; it would then be replaced by a new paradise promised by the prophet or messiah. These movements are also called eschatological or messianic movements. A messianic doctrine is usually a doctrine of peace; the believers need only pray, perform certain ceremonies, and wait. The fact that, in the Native Americans' case, the whites are excluded from the new world does not necessarily reflect hatred toward whites. Very often it simply symbolizes the fulfillment of the expected return of the old ways of life. The birth of these movements is often preceded by a deep feeling of spiritual, physical, and social deprivation, as well as social disintegration. The attraction of a messianic movement is that it includes all those things that previously brought pleasure to life. When those things are lost, the result is the prevalent destitute state of society.[91]

Because the object of these movements is to create a more satisfactory culture by reviving the old way of life, they are also called revitalization movements. As defined by the anthropologist Anthony Wallace, a revitalization movement can be at the same time nativistic, messianic, millenarian, and revivalist. Thus the term "revitalization movement" can be used as a general designation for these various religious movements.[92]

The ghost dance of 1890, the object of this study, was in a way a typical revitalization movement; it was born in the midst of cultural change, it included aspects that allow us to designate it by all the names mentioned above; it was nativistic, eschatological, religious-political, and messianic; its object was to create a new kind of world; and it was born at a time when the military resistance of North American Indians had been crushed—a time when most Indian cultures were in deep crisis and the Indians were forced to live on reservations set aside for them by the U.S. government.

The prophet of the ghost dance of 1890, Wovoka, was a Paiute Indian born about 1858 in Mason Valley, Nevada. Not much is known about his early life, but his father, Tavivo, was a well-known shaman and medicine man. Through him Wovoka learned the secrets of the spirit world and religion. As a young

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man Wovoka was famous for his ability to hear voices and see visions.[93] During his younger years, the Paiutes were forced to give up their old ways of living as well as their lands. Like many Paiutes, Wovoka went to work on a farm owned by a white man, David Wilson, where he became known by the name Jack Wilson. There he also learned about Christianity.[94]

In 1887 Wovoka taught his people a new dance, which was basically his transformation of the traditional Paiute circle dance. The dance did not cause great excitement among the Paiutes, although they danced for a while as Wovoka instructed.[95] His real religious revelation came on January 1, 1889, when he was sick and lying in his cabin. On that day there was an eclipse of the sun, and as the sun "died" Wovoka also "died." He traveled to heaven, where, he reported, he saw God and people who had died a long time ago. These people were happy and young forever. God gave Wovoka a new dance and new instructions for life, which he was supposed to teach to his people. He also received power to control the weather. When Wovoka came back from heaven, he began to preach as he had been instructed. After this incident, his influence as a shaman and mediator between God and human beings was guaranteed among the Paiute Indians. His influence grew when he made some correct predictions about the weather; he also performed many miracles.[96]

Wovoka's message appealed to Indians. The news of his message, and the hope of his predictions about a new world that was about to appear in the near future, spread across Indian reservations throughout the West. During the years 1888–90 several Indian tribes sent representatives to Mason Valley to hear his message.[97]

The roots of Wovoka's doctrine can be found in several earlier revitalization movements among North American Indians.[98] In most of these movements Christianity played an important role. The idea of loving your neighbor as yourself was adopted into the new doctrine, although it was generally thought to apply only to Indians. Typical of these movements was also the idea of resurrection after death and the arrival of a paradise on earth. The followers made it clear that Indian customs were respected; only things and ideas that were not harmful to Indians were taken from white culture. For example, the use of alcohol was rejected. These movements were usually

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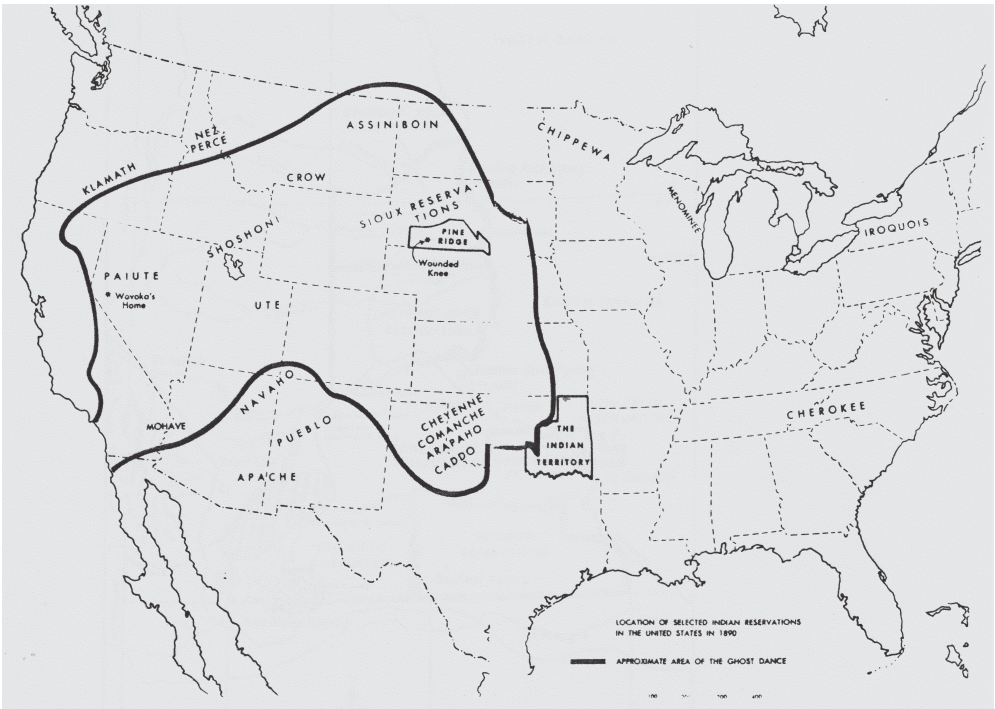

FIGURE 1. The area covered by the ghost dance. From James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, 14th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 1892–1893, Washington DC 1893 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

peaceful in their basic nature, but violence was often present in one way or another.[99]

The movement that most affected Wovoka originated in 1869 in western Nevada; it was led by a Northern Paiute shaman named Wodziwob. He taught new prayers, songs, and a certain dance for his people, the Northern Paiutes. The aim was to bring back to life all the dead Indians and to restore the old ways of life. This movement, known as the ghost dance of 1870, spread widely among the Indians in the Great Basin area. As Wodziwob's promises were not fulfilled, however, the religion died out in a relatively short time.[100] Wovoka was well acquainted with Wodziwob's religion, since his own father was one of Wodziwob's followers.[101]

The 1870 ghost dance appealed not only to Indians, but also to the Mormons,

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who saw it as an answer to the expectations of their own religion. They too expected a messiah to arrive in the near future. How much Mormons actually affected or participated in the 1870 ghost dance, and later in the 1890 ghost dance, remains unclear.[102]

The second movement that is generally believed to have affected Wovoka was the Dreamer movement, founded in the Northwest by the prophet Smohalla in the 1870s.[103] The Shaker movement that was founded in 1881 by John Slocum (known also as Squasachtun) and Mary Slocum was the third movement that is believed to have affected Wovoka.[104]

Wovoka's doctrine is similar to all these movements and includes aspects of each as well as aspects from Christian, and specifically Mormon, beliefs. His doctrine was probably most strongly affected by Christianity and Wodziwob's teachings.

The basic idea of the ghost dance was that there would be a time when all the Indians, the living and the dead, would live happily forever in a world where no death, sickness, or misery would exist. There was no room for white people in the new world; only the Indians were to survive the great transformation, whether an earthquake or some other kind of natural phenomenon, that would bring about the new world. This was supposed to happen through supernatural power, without the help of humans and without their interference. Humans were expected only to dance, pray, and believe. Wovoka left the day of the great transformation open, but generally it was expected to take place in the spring, when nature was recovering from winter. Wovoka himself spoke of several different years, but his followers generally believed that the spring of 1891 was the time of the expected transformation.[105]

Even though Wovoka's doctrine left the white race destroyed in the trembling of the earth, the doctrine was not directed against the whites. According to Wovoka, there was no need to fight the whites; there would simply be a natural transformation into the new world, where no whites would exist. Wovoka's religion was a religion of peace. He told his people to do right always; he prohibited telling lies as well as harming other people. Above all, he forbade fighting.[106]

Wovoka gave precise instructions concerning how the Indians should

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act in order to survive the great earthquake unharmed. He ordered them to dance for four consecutive nights, and on the fifth night dancing should continue until morning. After the dance, everyone had to take a bath in a river. The dances were to be held every sixth week, and during the dancing great festivities were to be arranged. Wovoka introduced two sacred things that should be worn when dancing. One was a feather, which would transform into a wing that would lift the wearer up in the air when the earth was trembling. The other was red paint, which was supposed to ward off illness until the new world appeared. There was nothing else the Indians were expected to do but to live according to these instructions and wait.[107]

Wovoka's religion was very simple and clear, but as it spread from one tribe to another it changed. Each tribe understood his message in its own way and explained it according to its own cultural traditions. The lack of a common language among the different tribes led to transformations and misrepresentations of the original message. Thus the earthquake was replaced by flooding among some tribes, and others wanted to give even the whites a place in the new world. Wovoka, however, forbade anyone from telling the white people anything about what was going to happen. The ghost dance was meant to benefit only the Indians.[108]

Whereas the 1870 ghost dance spread mainly toward the west, Wovoka's religion attracted followers from all directions. By the fall of 1890 it covered an area reaching from Canada to Texas and from California to the Missouri River. More than thirty tribes and tens of thousands of Indians were following the teachings of the Paiute medicine man.[109] Ironically, the inventions of the whites were helping to spread Wovoka's religion. Educated Indians spread the news by letter and telegram, and the railroads helped Indians to travel long distances to meet Wovoka. Furthermore, the Indians were able to read newspapers; thus the English language, as well as the traditional Indian sign language, became primary means of communication between different tribes.[110]

Many tribes sent delegations to Mason Valley to meet with Wovoka. When those delegations returned home, they told their people of the wonderful things they had seen and heard. Wovoka performed many miracles and convinced the Indians of his powers.[111] As noted above, the doctrine changed

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as it traveled through the country, and so did the name of the dance. Some tribes called it "the dance in a circle" or "the dance with clasped hands." On the Great Plains the Lakotas called it wanáği wachípi kį, best translated as "the spirit dance," the word *wanáği* referring to the spirits of the dead. Frightened whites, however, gave it the name it became known by all over the world: the ghost dance.[112]

Wovoka's religion was a mixture of traditional Indian beliefs and customs added to teachings from Christianity. Dancing and feasting had always been vital parts of religious ceremonies among the Indians; seeing visions and believing in their message was also natural for them. Those aspects that were taken directly from Christianity were probably less familiar, but it has to be taken into account that by the late 1880s thousands of Indians were members of Christian churches. How much the Mormons affected the ghost dance is not clear, but perhaps Wovoka got the idea of a returning messiah from them, since the Mormons were awaiting their own revelation in 1890. Thus many of the ideas that Wovoka gave to the Indians were not strange to them at all, but old familiar concepts put in a slightly new package. Whites looked upon the ghost dancers with suspicion throughout the western United States, but only among the Lakotas did the ghost dance have tragic consequences.

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