
Rani-Henrik Andersson, *A Whirlwind Passed through Our Country: Lakota Voices of the Ghost Dance* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018), 432 pp, \$39.95.

<https://www.oupres.com/books/14988100/a-whirlwind-passed-through-our-country>

Benjamin R. Kracht, *Religious Revitalization among the Kiowas: The Ghost Dance, Peyote, and Christianity* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 354 pp, \$75.00.

<https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/nebraska/9781496204585/>

Accounts vary as to when Wovoka, the Paiute prophet, experienced his vision and under what circumstances. James Mooney sets it as early as 1887, while he was chopping wood. Andersson in *A Whirlwind Passed through Our Country* states it was in 1888 (he does not discuss the circumstances). Other sources say it was on January 1, 1889, when he fell into a trance during a solar eclipse. While almost all agree that while unconscious he met with the Christian God, Andersson says the “Great Spirit.”

A date earlier than 1889 seems unlikely because there is general agreement that the vision quickly spread beyond Wovoka’s Paiute community. For Indians confined to reservations, it was a message of hope. It preached a new religion and a dance (in form a Ute round dance). If performed in accordance with the teachings, it would usher in an Indian world *status quo ante*. White control over them would end. The earth would renew itself. Game, including buffalo, would again be plentiful. Most importantly, all the ancestors who had died since the coming Whites would be “raised up.” Vittorio Lanternari calls revitalization movements such as these “religions of the oppressed.”

The movement spread like wildfire in the West. Rapid transmission was facilitated, ironically (as Gerald Vizenor has pointed out), through the use of English. As did other revitalization movements, the Ghost Dance of 1889-1890 underwent local variations as it spread, being interpreted according to the values of particular tribal communities.

On the Plains, the locale for both Andersson’s book and Kracht’s *Religious Revitalization among the Kiowa*, a key change was the addition of the Ghost dance shirt, a regular buckskin shirt upon which mystical symbols (thunderbirds, crosses, crescent moons) had been painted. The garment was said to render its wearer impervious to harm by bullets. This addition would lead to a misunderstanding with tragic consequences.

Wovoka’s vision was a pacifistic one. Be ethical, treat Whites well, do the dance until the inversion came. Some Whites feared the Ghost Dance as a unifying force among Indians and wondered why a pacifist religion would need shirts to protect them against bullets. The agent on the Pine Ridge panicked and requested the military. The army sent the 7th Cavalry, still stinging from Custer’s defeat fourteen years earlier. It triggered events that resulted in the Wounded Knee Massacre in December 1890.

Andersson provides a compact introduction. Despite the minor deviations noted above, the biggest omission in his book is any mention of the 1889-1890 movement's antecedent. It treats Wovoka's vision as though it were *sui generis*.

"Raising up" movements, as I call them, are common enough in the Indigenous world, the salient feature that ancestors will be resurrected. Wovoka's movement, however, was virtually identical to one twenty years earlier, the prophet Wodziwob's Ghost Dance of 1870. The similarity is more than coincidental. One of Wodziwob's chief lieutenants was Tavibo, commonly accepted as Wovoka's father. It is a lapse not shared by Kracht.

Andersson's introduction aside, the bulk of the book is a compilation of contemporary accounts of the Ghost Dance among the Lakota. Some of these have been previously published. Others appear for the first time in print. Even in those published before, Andersson's fresh, modern translations here restore not only readability but nuance. In the process, it provides much needed context to the movement that has often been ignored by scholars.

In his brief, but excellent foreword, anthropologist Raymond DeMallie, best known for books on the Lakota, including *The Sixth Grandfather*, his restoration of Neihardt's interviews with Black Elk, writes that, despite the gallons of ink spilled in publications about the Ghost Dance, most scholarship has assumed there was a singular Lakota point of view. He states this neglects "the obvious fact that the Lakotas, like any other group of people, had differing opinions based, for example, on social, religious, and economic factors." Andersson's translations demonstrate that, even about something of extreme import—like the Ghost Dance—there was no single view from a homogenous group. (p. ix)

Kracht examines the particularities of the Ghost Dance within one tribal nation, the Kiowas. Although he does so, his book is much broader than that. He also discusses another important syncretic religious movement the Native American Church, which uses peyote as a sacrament. Peyote is a mild hallucinogen native to Mexico. Under its influence, adherents have visions of Jesus.

Unlike the Ghost Dance, which was suppressed after Wounded Knee, peyotism and the Native American Church were tolerated by Whites because it was seen as a quietistic response to reservation life. James Mooney, however, the earliest scholar to study Wovoka's Ghost Dance, was fired from his longstanding position with the federal government in the Bureau of American Ethnology because of his support for the Native American Church.

Members of the Native American Church disagree among themselves as to whether it is a Christian denomination. Kracht, however, also examines Kiowa participation in mainstream Christianity, especially the Indian Missionary Conference of the United Methodist Church, and how they have made it their own. In that regard, his book contributes to the spate of scholarship in the past several decades on Native American Christianity (a subject too often overlooked), including Mark Clatterbuck's *Crow Jesus* and the late historian Homer Noley's *First White Frost*.

Of these two books, Kracht's is the more seamless. Andersson's book, however, with its modern look at Lakota texts on the Ghost Dance of 1889-1890, is an important corrective. Despite any failings, both books contribute to the understanding of American Indian religious traditions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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