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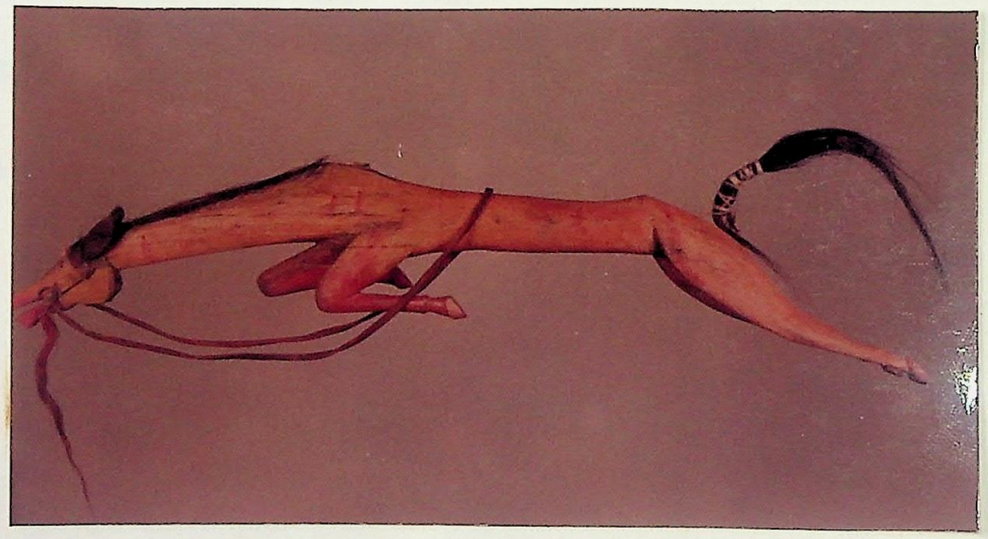
NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN ART



THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN ART

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO:

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Chapter I

North American Indian Art?

There is no word in American Indian languages for art as an independent concept, separable from the rest of daily life. One cannot separate, for instance, Indian clothing from wearing, sewing, ceremony or medicine power. The following description by the artist George Catlin is of a Blackfoot chief:

"The dress for instance of the chief ... whose portrait I have just painted, consists of a shirt or tunic, made of two deer skins finely dressed, and so placed together with the necks of the skins downwards and the skins of the hind legs stitched together, the seams running down on each arm, from the neck to the knuckles of the hand; this seam is covered with a band of two inches in width, of very beautiful embroidery of porcupine quills, and suspended from the shoulders to the hands, is a fringe of the locks of black hair, which he has taken from the heads of victims slain by his own hand in battle. The leggings are made also of the same material..... And over all, his robe, made of the skin of a young bufallo bull with the hair remaining on, and on the inner or flesh side, beautifully garnished with porcupine quills, and the battles of his life ingeniously, though rudely portrayed in pictorial representations. In his hands he holds a very beautiful pipe, the stem of which is four or five feet long and two inches wide, curiously wound with braids of the porcupine quills of various colours, and the bowl of the pipe ingeniously carved by himself from a piece of red streatite ..."[1]

The Indian tradition of spiritual harmony with the environment permeates every aspect of life. It manifests itself by what, for lack of a better word, we may call 'presence'. Here 'presence' becomes an artistic counterpart. "The presence of Indian Art is contained in its ability to project psychic intent or idea through design impact," writes Ralph Coe in Sacred Circles.[2] Indians, he continues, knew much about strongly optical devices and symbolic equivalents - the smallest design upon a bracelet, earring or mocassin does not lack its specific impact. "Presence involves not

only the marks that strike us as symbolic but also the arrangement of patterns into signs that demonstrate a high level of affinity with nature,"[2] for example the representation in beadwork of water, leaves, wild flowers and sky.

Indian works are usually restricted to what can be held in the hand or worn, a nomadic lifestyle necessitated transportable posessions; occassionally though it might be as big as a tree, as in the sculptures of the Northwest Coast where the people were relatively sedentary, In general though, the Indian could encompass a great deal on a small scale: "a whole thunderstorm might be reduced by the artist to a small Pawnee drum where a thunderbird with lightening streaks projecting from enveloping wings scatters swallows into the ominous rush of the wind ... An unassuming peyote kit becomes a microcosm of prayer, song and deep contemplation far beyond the confines of its box container."[2]

Symbolising the relationship between man, myth and natural phenomenon involved ritual and drama. This can be seen in the transformation masks of the NorthWest Coast ... by the pulling of a string (at the appropriate moment in the dance) the outer animal carving revealed the inner human mask. In the Indian world it was possible to become closer to animal spirits by wearing their hides or incorporating their images into designs. Charms, fetishes and shamans' dolls are also used to the same end. The shaman[3] with his arts helped to induce visions and spirits. Magic and the occult played an important part. Presence made art a lever between what exists and what might exist.

"By subtly altering, decorating, formalising and packaging materials the perception of the quality and role of plant or animal life as man's spiritual accompaniment is enhanced ... Indian art evokes a living treasure: nature. The Indian use of natural fibres, tendons, quills, furry parts and hides is highly aesthetic. These materials are expertly manipulated, selected, tanned, softened, or even toughened. A falcon enfolded in brightly painted cloth becomes a source of mystic power."

Ralph Coe, "Sacred Circles"[2]

I hope to show that the art of the North American Indians is an integral part, not only of their culture, but of their everyday life. While many art-forms are inextricably linked with religious be beliefs and activities, others have developed primarily for socio-economic or practical purposes. For instance a pattern or motif may serve to re-enforce the identity of a particular tribe, as do many puberty rituals when the initiate learns the legends, the history, the beliefs and laws of his tribe, and how he shall be expected to behave as a fully fledged member, all the while he is undergoing tortuous ordeals. The experience of initiation reminds him of and intensifies allegiance to the tribe, and so do the visual marks he carries or wears, and they also remind anyone outside the tribe.

In the Northern Woodlands and Sub-Arctic regions, totems[4] serve a similar purpose, they define marriage relationships. Totems always deal in dualities, for example the Penobscot (of the North-East Woodlands) owed allegiance to aquatic animals, and these were divided into saltwater animals and freshwater ones. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss,[5] the anthropologist, the purpose is to prevent incest. In a composite tribe such as the Penobscot, blood relationships were often forgotten. So, if a man and a woman owed allegiance to the same totem they were considered related, and were not allowed to marry

Prestige and status (as elsewhere) are indicated often by clothing or ornamentation. Among most Plains tribes a feather war bonnet represents an heroic deed for each feather. Woodland Indians aimed to achieve prestige and dignity through costume, and much thought went into the decoration of garments, even those clothes adapted from the Whites became unmistakably Indian. In Oklahoma a buckskin beaded dress in the Cheyenne style has become a prestige symbol among women (from all tribes) because of rarity and high cost.

The disciplined Sioux had a complex system of honours and rewards. "The beautiful pipes and pipe bags, the horse-hair and scalp fringed war shirts, the society bundle wrappers and medicine hoops were all symbols of authority and supernatural power .... To the Indian they were evidence of fragile relationships with space, the creator, and with their disciplined world." [2]

There are over 300 aboriginal tribes in North America, and each of them is different. Anthropologists tend to divide up the area into "culture regions" (seen in the maps), but there is much diversity even within each region.

Different tribes were at different stages of civilisation. In the South-West, a sophisticated town-dwelling people known as Pueblo Indians have a culture which has changed little in 1,000 years. They still plant the same crops of corn and squash as their ancestors did, and they devoutly cling to their religion, steeped in ritual. Beside them live Navajo and Apache tribes who are characteristically nomadic hunter/gatherers, and quite war-like. They are thought to have migrated from the North some time before the historic period. Both cultures co-exist quite happily (in spite of raids on pueblos by Navajos in the past) and the Navajo have borrowed many cultural elements from the town dwellers, most notably the arts of sand painting, and weaving which they developed to a much higher standard.

The Navajo and Apache might be thought to have more in common with the Plains tribes. The Plains culture did not emmerge until the arrival of the horse, which was its catalyst. Formerly impoverised bands from all directions who migrated onto the Plains acquired a new identity when they adopted the horse and the rifle. Their culture was dependent upon the bison, and on the fleetness, bravery and endurance of those hunters. Their art reflected their needs, in praise of movement, in honour of heroic deeds. They were war-like, but they were no match for the United States army. Soon after their brief triumph over Custer in 1876, the Plains Indians were methodically cleared from their lands and the "horse culture" came to an end after only a hundred years of existence.

More successfully tenacious were the Iroquois of the North East Woodlands, who had formed themselves into a confederacy of six tribes by 1722. Sedentary agriculturalists, they have been called "The Greeks of America". Their success however would seem to be due largely to their unremitting ferocity. The fiercest were the Mohawk (the name means cannibals) who lived just west of the Hudson River in New York State. To this day these Indians speak their own language, and conduct intriguing "False Face" rituals.

Neighbouring Algonquin tribes lived in peril of the Iroquois, in the Great Lakes region. The forests were abundant, and they practised a combination of agriculture, hunting, fishing and gathering. Their religion was the Grand Medicine Society. Arts were refined, although trade influences were quickly adopted, a weakness perhaps indicitive of their iminint downfall.

These tribes will be discussed in the following three chapters. Regrettably, I have had to draw the line somewhere, and among the aboriginal Americans I have ommited are those who came from the North-West coast, for some of the finest wooden sculpture originates there; and the Eskimos who, because they live in such a harsh environment, have been relatively unintefered with; there are many others. The tribes that are included are, perhaps, the ones that I feel the most sympathy for, particularly the Sioux, and the Navajo. Their art has a harmony, a natural elegance that seems to come from an affinity with the materials, and an element of the unknown.

Chapter II

THE WOODLANDS:

THE GREAT LAKES AND THE NORTH-EAST

It is the Woodland Indian, rather than his counterpart in the Plains who can be taken to represent the most distinctive type of aboriginal of North America. Unlike the Indians of South and Central America who amassed substantial material riches, developed elaborate monarchial societies, and left plenty of remains including the ruins of their vast temples and cities, the Woodland Indians worked in perishable materials such as leather, birchbark and feathers, and their social organisation was flexible. Significantly, the Aztecs and the Incas collapsed, almost at their first contact with Whites, whereas the Woodland Indians fought stubbornly well into the eighteenth century.

The Northern Woodlands (stretching across the interior of Canada from Alaska to the Atlantic Coast) can be roughly divided into two peoples: Athabascans to the West, and Algonkian speaking to the east. This chapter is about the Algonkians. The Woodland people were so fully dispossessed of their lands, when not exterminated outright as most of the New England and coastal Virginia tribes were - that it is easy to forget the richness of the lives they led in scattered freedom. Their downfall occurred in the period after the French and Indian war (1754 - 59) which was the culmination in the struggle between the French and the English for posession of North America. Deaths were due not only to fighting, but to epidemics and whiskey as well. In 1787 Indians were ensured

land in the North-West territory, but in the wake of the revolution, settlers poured into these lands along the Ohio river, and demanded protection from the Indians.

The major life forces were represented by supernatural beings alive in the flowers, animals, birds, and the sky and the stars. The animals became clan symbols, totems. The otter and the muskrat were emblems of the first degree of "lodge"[6] of the Ojibway Grand Medicine Lodge ritual society, and medicine bags were made from their pelts. During rituals offerings of tobacco from these pouches were made, to protect initiates or later to strengthen prayers. Humans and animals and the supernatural are closely linked in myth. Penobscot tribes who had aquatic animals for totems explained their association by an origin myth: a giant frog swallowed all the waters of the earth, causing universal drought, but a mythical hero slew it and thus released the waters. Some of the people were so thirsty that they foolishly rushed into the water, where they were transformed into the various aquatic animals. Relatives who escaped the transformation then assumed the names of these animals became the founders of the various Penobscot families. As time passed, the descendants gradually assumed the characteristics of the animal whose name it bore.

The underwater panther or "great lynx" was a terrifying spirit known for drowning people. But, because of his power and cunning he was greatly sought after for his curative powers. Fortunately the evil side could be warded off with thunder, so protection could be sought from the thunderbird. Symbols for both creatures appear in designs, more usually the thunderbird symbol is used especially on clothing, conferring

Quilled pouch, Mesquakie.
The bottom portion is the skin of a mallard duck

success in war on the wearer while protecting him from the revenge of the mythical panther.

The Great Lakes Culture

Lake Michigan was at the centre of the Great Lakes area. The abundance of water, game and hard wood forests shaped the living pattern of the people. As well as seasonal hunting and gathering, corn farming was practised, wild rice gathered, and fish and small game were caught. So people were relatively sedentary, building large villages, and sometimes a separate village for winter.

The Grand Medicine Society was the dominant religion. Initiates purchased entry into the different degrees by gifts and feasts. Picture writing was used as a memory aid to recall songs and ritual sequences. All the Great Lake tribes kept a variety of medicine bundles, which could be the property of the clan, or of an individual who made his own according to a dream-vision. Some simply contained relics of important chiefs, some held ancient treasures. They were powerful in warding off disease, bringing luck in love and success in war. Bundles are still owned by many Indians in the area and the Grand Medicine Society is still active in a few places. In some tribes it has been replaced by the Drum religion, in others by Peyote (Native American Church) or Christianity.

Quilled birchbark box, Micmac, 10½ X 8"
Man's patchwork shirt and skirt, Seminole, Length 56"

Arts

A complex religious system fostered refined arts. Bark was commonly used for containers, canoes and for covering conical or dome shaped wig-wams. Snow-shoes and toboggans were used, plaited baskets and twined bags were made. There was fine carving in wooden bowls, spoons, war-clubs and dolls for use in medicine bundles.

Porcupine quill embroidery of this area is outstanding. Native dyes were used giving bright long-lasting colours. The dyed quills were usually sewn onto leather smoked a rich brown or dyed a brown black, the better to show the colours. The Mic Mac of Nova Scotia excelled at quilled decoration of birch-bark. They used a wide variety of circles, diamonds, scrolls, squared circles, concentric motifs, and sometimes outlining of designs to expand the optical effect.

Working with birch-bark is a specialised craft of this region. The bark when peeled has a soft pliability, and is fawn while the inner layer is pink. It can be stitched, rolled, bent or engraved and pictures drawn on it. Midewiwin scrolls[7] are made from birchbark, softly incised with little figures engrossed in ceremony.

Silk ribbons in assorted widths and colours were traded or given as gifts, as were glass beads. The technique of ribbon applique was introduced by the French after 1750, and this was used as a trimming on the edges of garments and bags. Wide bands of overlapping ribbons were applied to womens skirts and blankets.

Woodland Indians always sought to achieve dignity and prestige through costume. With trade and the greater variety of cloth, beads and silk ribbons came a sort of fashion-conscience. Commercial clothes were adopted. Dark blue or black was favoured for decoration with glass beads. The Ojibway specialised in floral style beadwork on black velvet. Even British military uniforms were adapted. A dress uniform coat, originally given by an army officer to an Osage chief in the 1850s, was then worn by his daughter when she married, conforming with a custom of allowing children to parade their father's war honours, and subsequently such coats were worn at weddings for almost 100 years. Shoulder bags, adapted from military pouches were carried as prestige objects, as many as twelve at a time (but usually only one or two).

Some metalwork ornaments were produced in imitation of trade pieces. Hammered coins were used, and after the 1860s, flat sheets of nickel silver. The most common ornament was a perforated woman's brooch.

Wood-carving, metalwork, quill embroidery and skin tanning are no longer viable crafts, but a few Great Lakes crafts are still practised by women who make yarn sashes and twined bags, good ribbon applique, patchwork and bead decoration.

Cross cultural influences affected the Great Lakes and neighbouring areas. Ojibway influenced Plains Ojibway and Cree in the production of natural floral design. Many Great Lakes groups were pushed out onto the Prairies, such as the

Nebraska Winnebago, Iowa Prairie Potwatami and Santee Sioux who all shared both Woodlands and Plains traits.

Warfare was a highly respected activity among Woodland tribes, the Iroquois were the most notoriously blood thirsty (and are discussed overleaf). The Kickapoo violently resisted the French, English, and Americans in turn, and even today there is a Kickapoo band in Northern Mexico who remain in hostile opposition to any attempt at acculturisation or outside inteference. Other Algonquin tribes concentrated on hunting, fishing, trapping and garden-farming. All, even the hostile Iroquois with their emphasis on independence, maintained seasonal thanksgiving ceremonies: the mid-winter festival, the strawberry festival, the green corn festival and the harvest festival. These rituals were to thank the spirit beings for past benefits to the community and to hope for continued providence.

The North-East: Iroquois

The Iroquois still occupy much the same territory as they did prior to the arrival of the Whites. Today they live on scattered reservations in New York State and Canada, but they have maintained a surprising amount of their culture. They still speak their own language and follow the religious teachings of their prophet, Handsome Lake, participate in False Face ceremonies, and maintain some old arts.

Traditionally the Iroquois village was built on flat land alongside a stream or lake, surrounded by a fortification of logs. Around it, forest was cleared to plant gardens and to encourage deer which browsed on fresh growth. In the village each family occupied a rectangular longhouse. Descent was reckoned through the mother (matrilineal) and one family would have included the grandmother, all her daughters and their husbands and children, as well as her unmarried sons.

The Iroquois were politically organised into a confederacy of six (originally five) tribes, a league which was supposedly the model for the constitution of the United States. Each tribe had its own sachems, but these were limited in power: they dealt with the tribe's relations with other tribes, and not with clan matters. The hereditary sachem titles were controlled by the head-woman of the lineage. Although they had a constitution, the League could not levy taxes or police its members. Nonetheless the League was a powerful military force, and alliance was sought by the Dutch, English, and later the United States.

Pine Tree Warriors

The title of "Pine Tree", unlike the inherited sachem titles, had to be earned by courage and success in war, and there were no shortage of opportunities. The Iroquois were surrounded by traditional Indian enemies and later fought White settlers. The Pine Tree upstarts presented a problem to the Council of Sachems, which was really concerned with peace.

Iroquois war parties carried bows and arrows, but these were only used for ambushes; they preferred closed in fighting with the club the Algonkians called a tomahawk. The Iroquois warrior also carried a shield and wore a sort of armour made of sticks laced together with buckskin. The object of warfare was both to kill and to obtain captives. Some captives were adopted to replace lost husbands or children, most of the others though were reserved for orgies of torture which would last as long as the victim could be kept alive.

In "Man's Rise to Civilisation"[8], Peter Farb puts forward this explanation:

"A tribe is by its nature a fragile organisation; it lacks institutions that promote unity within the tribe. For a tribe to survive it must find some way to achieve internal unity - and that way is usually through external strife". The tribe's social economy could not support and advanced type of warfare ... "Nor could male labour be constantly be diverted from the needs of clearing fields and building houses. Acquiring new land was of no benefit for the Iroquois lacked both the political machinery and the manpower to administer it. The emphasis was not on building a mighty war machine but on becoming expert in psychological warfare. Rather than face to face combat, the Iroquois and their neighbours fought a war of nerves whose weapons were torture, ambush, ruthless massacre and even the howl of the night. The Iroquois did improve on the warfare practised by most tribes. They adopted some of the conquered peoples to replace their own losses. More than half of the Iroquois tribes - particularly in the seventeenth century when warfare had increased - consisted of adopted

Hurons and Algonkians who had been trained to equal in ferocity any native born Iroquois."

Religion: False Faces

There seem to have been three classes of supernatural phenomena: the gods, spirits and ghosts of the dead. A person's ghost still maintained interest in the tribe after death, and ghosts were thought to participate, unseen, in special wintertime feasts, and also to accompany raiding parties, if only to watch.

Religious rituals were organised in shamanistic groups. Members of the False Face societies participated in curing ceremonies with the aid of large wooden masks. There are various types of mask: crooked mouth, straight lipped, spoon lipped, hanging mouth, tongue protruding, smiling, whistling, long-nosed, horned, pig, and blind. They are usually painted red or black, or sometimes a combination of both. More recent examples have white as well. Other trimmings include circular metal eyes, horse hair, and corn husks.

Each dancer carved his own False Face from the trunk of a living tree, according to a vision he had had. During the ceremony, the spirit revealed itself to the maker, and having cut the mask free, he then finished carving the features and painted the mask. Small packets of tobacco were sometimes tied to the hair of the mask. When not in use they are wrapped in clean white cotton and put away face down.

The false faces should not really be regarded as masks, since they were not intended to hide anything. The Iroquois regarded them as portraits into which the supernatural has made itself manifest. The wearer behaved as if he were the supernatural being who whom he incoporated. A group of members would perform curing ceremonies in the house of a sick person; they humped, lurched, crawled and trotted through the house, grunting, howling and singing as they went. They danced around the sick person, sprinkled him with ashes, shook their huge rattles made from the carpices of turtles, and sang out their incantations.

Surprisingly enough, the Iroquois of West New York still conduct these rituals, although the dancers now drive cars to go to the aid of the sick.

Arts

There is a good tradition of wood carving; as well as the False Face masks, the Iroquois made beautiful effigy pipes which display some humour, as in a pipe bowl seemingly grasped by a little bear, whose elongated tail forms the stem, and another human head bowl with the pipe stem in its mouth.

Beaded wampum belts served as gifts, and also were binding symbols of agreement among the North East Indians. Several wampum belts can be associated with W.Penn's founding of Pensylvania. Trade beads influenced the Indians colour sense, previous to 1700 the taste was for autumnal colours with brown, russet, cream and blue predominating, nineteenth century colours were much brighter, less natural reds, yellows, greens ...

Designs included double curve, the scroll, and geometric. Some show cross patterns, others "folded" symetry. Huron and Abeneki sent votive belts with Latin inscriptions to the Cathedral of Chartres to attest their allegiance to the Virgin Mary in 1678 and 1699.

At Lorette (near present day Quebec) in the late seventeenth century, nuns instructed Huron women in the art of chain stitching and embroidery, and like beading, fine cotton embroidery became a naturalised Indian craft. Some of the floral motifs though seem to come from some more ancient tradition. The typical Woodland double curve motif resembles native ferns, and Frank G Speck noted a slight tendency to connect these disigns to medicinal plants, but also stated that the double curve "could represent the bonds uniting the different members of the chief's family, the sub-divisions of the tribe, or the officers of the council. This symbolism has however, been almost totally forgotten except by a few of the older people".[9] Ralph Coe suggests that the design (as seen in a Penobscot collar illustrated here) closely resembles the design on Shang and Chou bronze ritual vessels. Given the Asiatic origin of American peoples, the design may very well have survived in this way.

Chapter III

THE PLAINS

The Plains was the culture which produced the Indians most popular in fiction and cinema. It was a short lived culture a hundred years at the most, paradoxically its emergence was due to two things which the Indians owed to White adversaries: the horse and the rifle. The Indian tribes who learned to use them created a highly mobile and brilliantly colourful society. In order to hold it together its members were forced to invent rituals and ceremonies which gave a positive assertive identity to the groups, and which defined the place and responsibilities of every member. The artefacts discussed here are nearly all connected with this aspect of the lives of the people who made them.

The Plains area comprises from the Rocky mountains to the Misissippi Valley, and from Texas and Oklahoma north into Canada. The earliest Plains dwellers were scattered semi-sedentary groups, who managed to survive by planting corn, beans, melons, squash and some tobacco in rather poor soil, in addition to seasonal bison hunting on foot. As early as the 1540s, Coronado observed that bison could provide most of the Indian's needs:

"With the skin they build their houses, with the skins they clothe and show themselves, from the skins they make ropes and also obtain wool. With the sinews they make threads with

which they sew their clothes and also their tents. From the bones they shape awls. The dung they use for firewood since there is no other fuel in that land. The bladders they use as jugs and drinking containers."[10]

With the arrival of the horse, however, hunting bison gained precedence over agriculture; farmers were either driven off their lands or became hunters themselves. The Indians first obtained horses from the Spaniards settled in New Mexico, who introduced them around 1720-30. Horses were bartered or stolen from group to group, and the animals spread northward - as well as the knowledge of how to break and train them. In addition some horses (mestanos, or mustangs) had gone wild and roamed the Plains in herds.

The whole of the Plains became peopled by groups of great diversity, from all directions. There were Athabascans from the North (Kiowa and Apache), Algonquins (Cree, Cheyenne, Blackfoot) and Siouans (Mandan, Crow, Dakota) from the East, Caddoans (Pawnee, Arikara) from the South, Uto-Aztecans (Comanche, Ute) from the West . Most of these imigrants had previously had a poor, depressed existence and it was not until they were forced out onto the Plains and adopted the horse culture that they discovered their own identity. By about 1800, the major differences in culture had disappeared. (A sign language developed which helped overcome the problems of inter-tribal communication). The Sun Dance ceremony, for instance, was eventually observed by virtually every tribe.

Posession of the horse led to new discipline in hunting bison.

The herds could now be pursued on horseback, and the choicest animals killed. New wealth was acquired. Permanent villages disappeared, and with them rules for marriage and residence, customs and crafts. Millitancy was heightened and skill in horsemanship became a new test of physical prowess and bravery. For example, the Comanchees of the Southern Plains developed the finest light cavalry in the world (with the Sioux in second place) and spurned activity of any kind on foot.

The acquisition of rifles in the mid eighteenth century increased warfare. For nearly fifty years an armaments race ensued, as successive groups became supreme in supplies of guns and horses, and the powerful allies they could muster; when threatened by the Whites it was difficult to overcome inter-tribal emnities. The United States Army were able to exploit this situation by employing scouts from one tribe to aid in the defeat of their rivals.

Associations

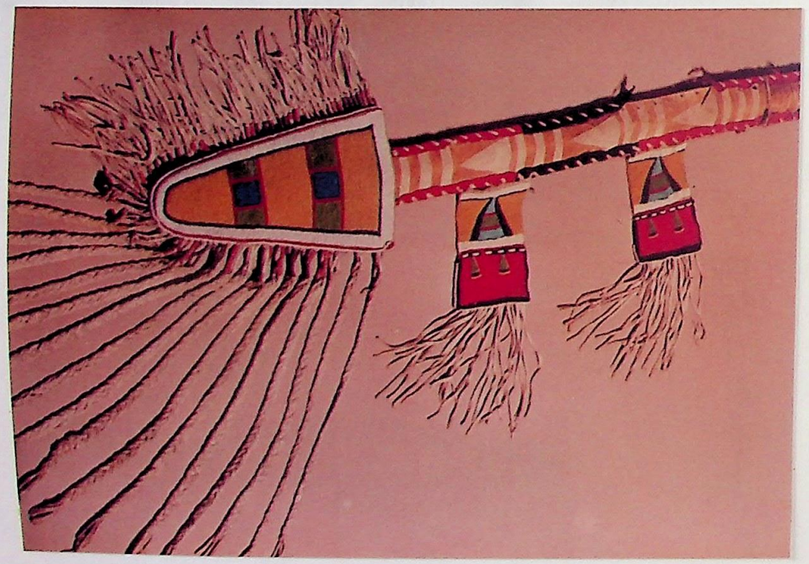
The Plains Indian developed a society known as the composite tribe. During most of the year the bison lived scattered in sm small herds, but during the late summer rutting season, they came together in huge herds. The Indians came to have a similar social cycle, spending most of the year living in small family bands, uniting only at the time of the summer encampment with other bands for tribal ceremonies and a communal hunt. Owing to feuds, band membership tended to change quite often.

The primary way in which identity was achieved was not through

clans but through non-kinship sodalities (associations that bind people around a single interest, like college fraternities, or secret societies ..). There were dance societies and feasting societies, and societies based on a common super-natural experience. Some were only for women, like craft guilds, others were open to both sexes, like the Crow Tobacco societies, which centred on the growing of certain tobaccos for ceremonial uses.

The Cheyenne had six military societies. A youth could join any one of them, but usually he joined the one his father belonged to. These societies served not only as the tribes military forch, but also as police. Each society had a particular area of responsibility, such as protecting the movement of encampment from one place to another, or enforcing the rules against individual hunting that might scare away the bison. Only the bravest of brave warriors could belong to the elite military society known as the Contraries. They said yes when they meant no, went away when called, came near when told to go away, called left, right, and sat shivering on the hottest day.

The Mandan, Hidatsa, Arapaho and Blackfoot had a special hierarchy of societies based on age, so that a warrior society existed for every male from the youngest to the oldest, with the exception of the effeminate male, known as the berdache. No scorn was attached to his position. He was regarded with a certain degree of sacred awe for being the subject of a condition that was not of his own doing. The berdache permanently adopted woman's role and woman's clothing, he became skilled at female tasks of beadwork and skin tanning



Girls dress, Sioux, c.1900
Lance case, Crow, incised buffalo skin and beads.

and was eligible to join women's societies. Meanwhile, a member of a warrior society purchased his way up the ladder of age grades until he reached the topmost and was entitled to wear the feathered war bonnet. At each step he selected a seller from the next oldest brotherhood, and then purchased his rights. Often, a buyer had to relinquish his wife.

Non kin sodalities were vital to the people of the Plains in the absence of a clan structure. Without the sodalities, their complex rules and regulations that often seem ridiculous to us today, the tribes would have been reduced to mere collections of bands. The sodalities brought unity to one of the most diverse peoples on earth.

Arts

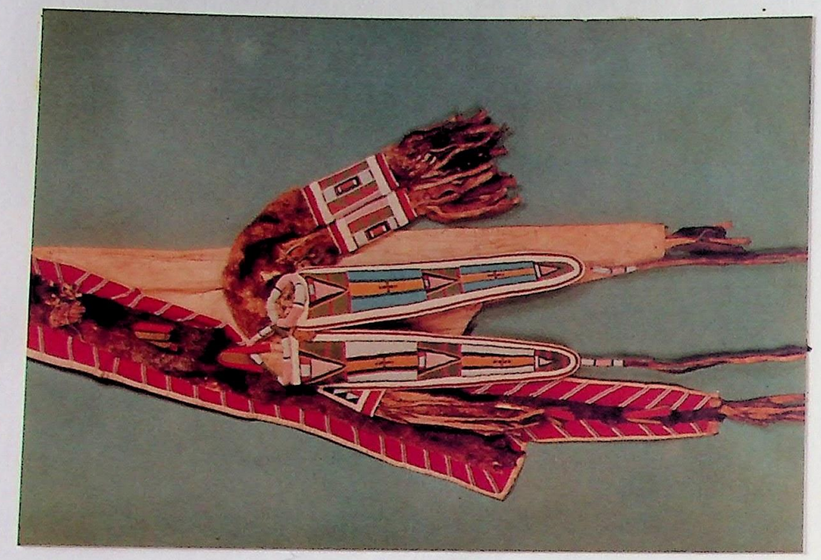
Eastern Sioux costume and wood-carving were quasi Great Lakes in style. Early 19th century Plains quillwork was influenced by the closely spaced and refined Woodlands patterns, but became more bold and visually oriented. From harmony in cream, orange, brown and black, the colour scheme grew to include red, green, blue, and finally multi-coloured in the Reservation period at the close of the century.

"... ceremonial objects had to be activated to convey their symbolic associations. A fragile bird-skin, or deer toe rattle withdrawn from the concealment of a medicine bundle had the power to invoke the spirits and space and that which is beyond"[11]

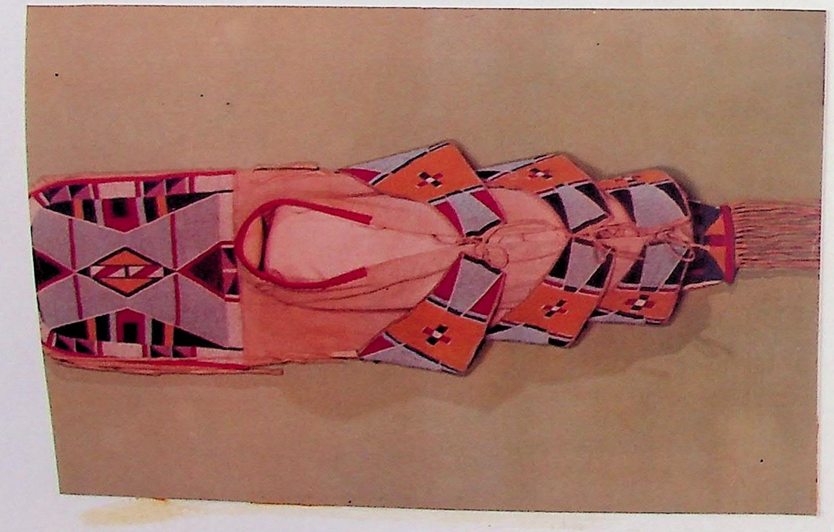
The lightest objects were favoured ... roaches and hair ornaments were light enough, horsehair and elk-horn were used for heavy duty. Streamers of eagle feathers, and dyed horse tails attached to feather bonnets, clothes with flaps and fringes, became animated in dance and movement. Everyday transportable posessions were embellished: eagle feathers, crow feathers, trailing green and red felt, in movement gave flamboyance to saddles, horse trappings, moccassins, and tobacco pouches were made in praise of movement, significant as emblems of tribal responsibility or ceremonial dignity. Pipe bowls with stems that were like projectiles, often with feather fans attached.

The most sacred objects of all were the medicine bundles. In Crow society an Indian who had received several visions which entitled him to make bundles, would still purchase another bundle from some great medicine man. "Sometimes too the power of a purchased bundle was overshadowed by a later vision, adding still another bundle to the owner's posessions. In such cases the original bundles were usually abandoned but they were seldom destroyed. So some Indians posess a variety of bundles, each different from the others in content, and often also in the purpose for which it was used."[11]

A beautifully quilled bundle wrapper from the Teton Sioux Elk Dreamers society depicts an Elk head with exagerated antlers. It was an erotic symbol for the Indians who were guardians of sexual prowess within the society. The cult reflected the Sioux concept of sexual passion "Supernatural power lay behind manifestations of sexual desire;



Quiver & bow case
Nez Perce, c. 1880, Length 60"



Beaded Cradle Board, Crow, c. 1900, 40½" X 11"

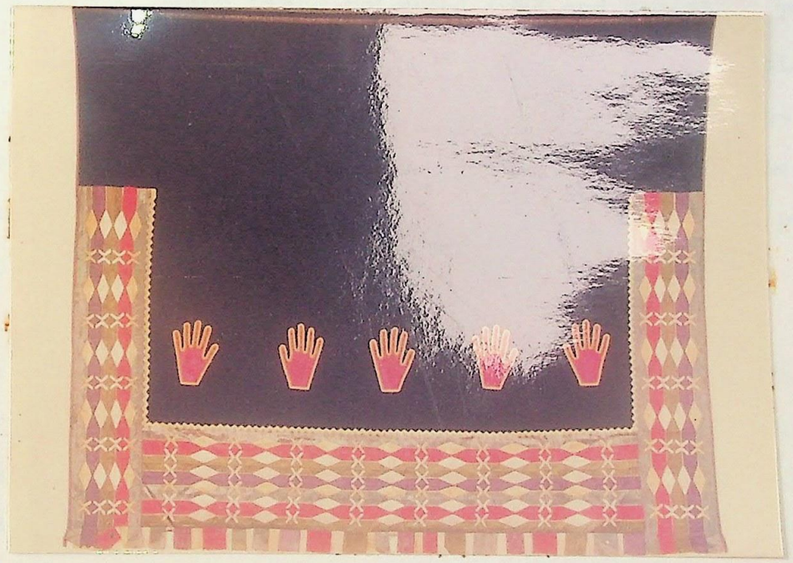
consequently numerous mythical creatures were thought to control such power, and of these the bull elk was thought the most important," wrote Helen Blish[12]
The last Elk Dreamers official meeting was in 1885.

Clothing, Beadwork and Painting

Most Plains tribes produced skin garments and rawhide trappings elaborately decorated with bead or porcupine quill embroidery, but each tribe used distinct designs and techniques. The Western Sioux developed the widely spaced designs of abstract triangles, boxes and stepped lines against fields of blue or white beads. Further west, the agressive Blackfoot developed their war shirts with bold chequer-board designs during the 1860s and 70s. During the reservation period some of the finest work was done by Crow and Blackfoot, often on cloth rather than skin, entirely covered with beadwork. The Blackfoot specialised in dresses and capes which featured strongly contrasting bands, carried from shoulder to shoulder. While the Crow decorated their horse trappings with white beaded lines against bright blue, yellow and green hour glass and triangular figures.

Painted bufallo hides were made by all tribes. In general pictographic designs were the work of men boasting about their exploits, but also tribal aspirations and lore. Quilled or painted abstract designs were usually done by women. In the Central Plains and Upper Missouri the standard designs were a sunburst of concentric circles made up of feather-lik elements ("black bonnet designs") which seem to have been worn by men, while women wore a box and border design; however

Painted hide, Sioux. Lent by the Linden Museum, Stuttgart



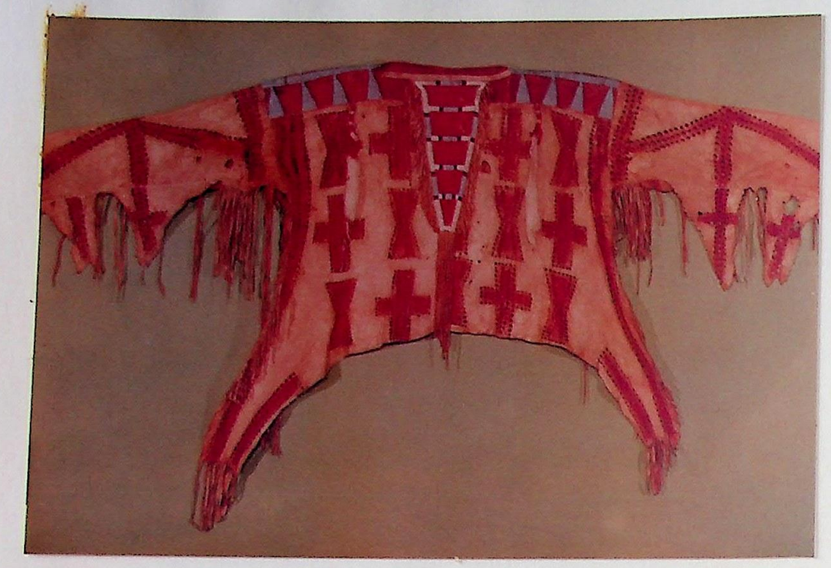
Painted Hide, Box and Border Design, Sioux
Ribbon Applique Shawl, Osage, 55½ X67½"

both styles were painted only by women. Bufallo robes, tipis, and tipi linings were decorated with depictions of war exploits in in the pictographic style. This was an individualistic style, the artists might vary more. In general, the older hides show both human and animal as "stick" figures, with straight lines for limbs, and dashes or hooks for feet and hooves. Later a more naturalistic style was formed. In general Northern Plains examples tend to use solidly coloured silhouette forms without internal detail, while Central Plains use outline drawings with alot of internal detail.

After the reservations were set up and Indians moved to them much of this type of painting was done in European notebooks a and ledgers, using trade coloured inks and pencils. They were usually made for Indian use. However a small commercial development took place. Paintings on small deer hides or elkskins, and miniature tipi covers were made for sale. At least one Shoshone man produced paintings which were probably done with the aid of stencils.

The design of a painted shield was usually due to a vision. The form was cut from the thick neckskin of bison, and shrunk so as to become convex. Sometimes this was painted, but usually a soft outer buckskin cover was fitted over the rawhide. Occassionally a third protective layer was added. A special type of Cheyenne shield had cross-hatched lacing taking the place of heavy rawhide; it was considered a form of magical protection; it could not stop arrows.

The parfleche is common allover the Plains region. It is a simple painted rawhide container. Designs vary from tribe to

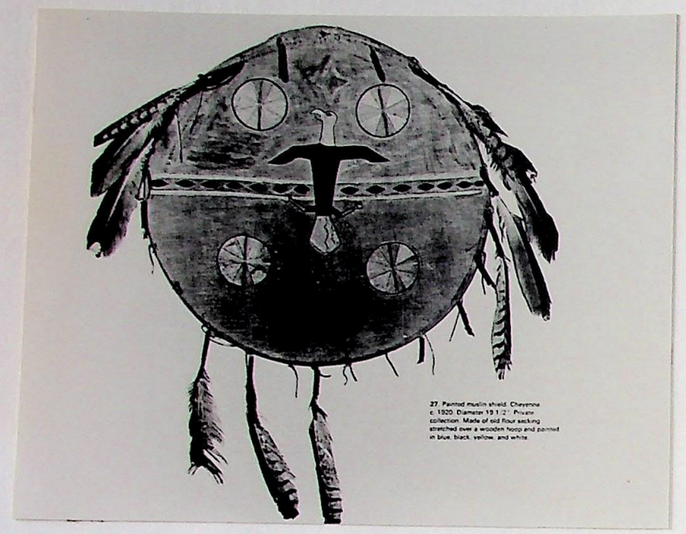


Painted and perforated man's shirt, Blackfeet c.1900
Painted shield, Sioux, c.1850

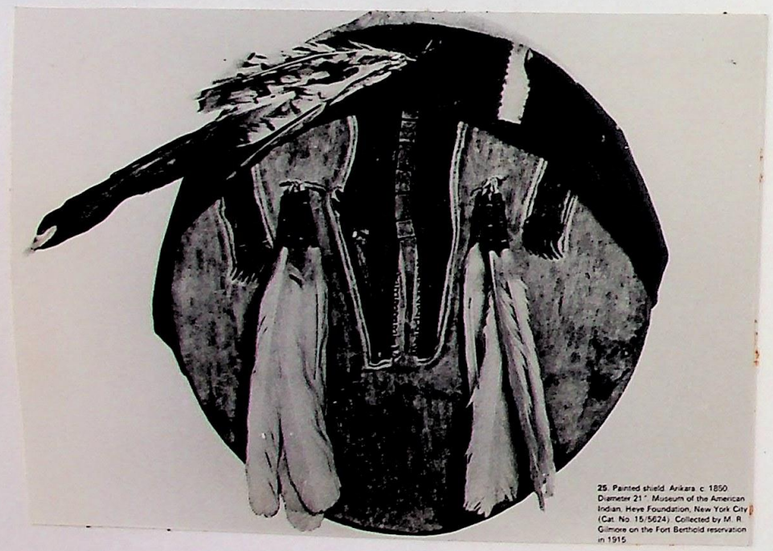
tribe in details of pattern and lacing, but are almost always simple and geometric. Some tribes occasionally use curved elements. Rarely, a naturalistic design is used on a parfleche intended to contain religious equipment. The designs are laid out on the stretched hide with the aid of a willow stick ruler.

Featherwork was an importan craft among most of the Plains tribes. Feathers were used in making a variety of head ornaments, the most famous being the feather war bonnet. Warbonnets had a highly symbolic meaning. Traditionally, each feather represented a brave exploit, not necessarily of the wearer, but of the tribe itself. A warbonnet may also represent the council of fire, each feather signifying a member of council with the horsehair tips being the scalplocks of each warrior. The central plumes represent the wearer. Usually the side drops are ermine, the front band is of seed beads on hide. Feathers also served as decorations on shields, pipe stems, shirts, leggings, coup sticks and banners. They were used in a type of dance ornament known as a bustle or "crow belt". Some Cheyenne and Arapaho bustles are very aesthetic with their refined use of cut leather, painted designs and added trim in the form of beadwork or quillwork, metal bells, fringes, dyed feathers and ribbons.

The most significant form of sculpture in the Plains are carved pipes. Usually made from red pipestone (catlinite), they are found in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Where catlinite was not available, shales, soapstone, calcite, chlorite and limestone were used. In the historic period of the Plains



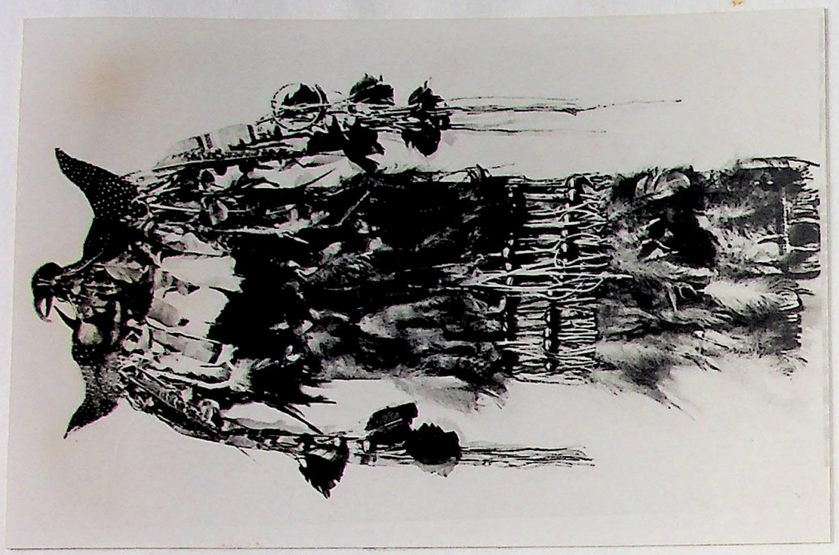
27. Painted muslin shield. Cheyenne c.1920. Diameter 19 1/2". Private collection. Made of old flour sacking stretched over a wooden hoop and painted in blue, black, yellow, and white



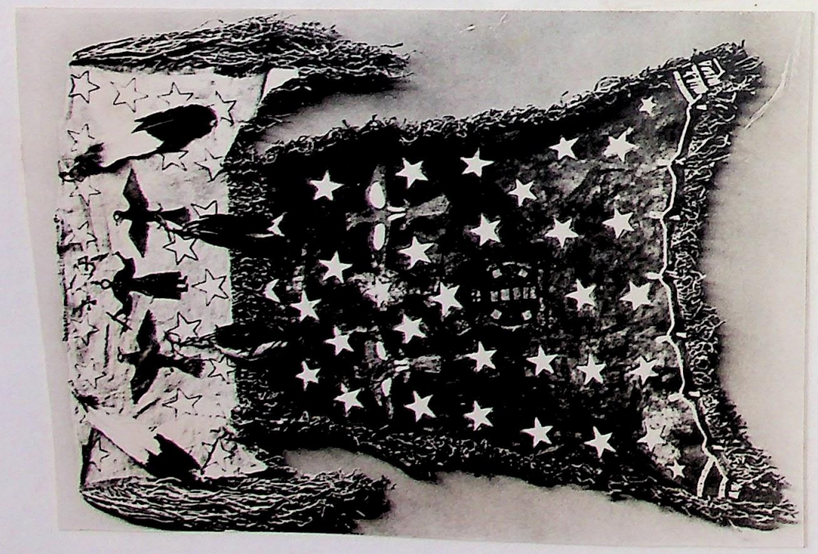
25. Painted shield. Arikara c. 1850. Diameter 21". Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York City (Cat. No. 15/5624). Collected by M. R. Gilmore on the Fort Berthold reservation in 1915.

the Iowa and Ute Missouri produced some of the finest effigy pipes. The Sioux and the Chippewa, living near the Minesota pipestone quarries, still produce well carved pipes; though they are for sale to tourists and collectors, they closely resemble those made in the 1830s. A standard modern version has a T shaped bowl, and a carved bison standing on the stem. Pipe stems carved of green ash wood are also often elaborately decorated. The stems were usually wrapped in a form of quill plaiting and decorated with woodpecker beads, mallard duck necks, horsehair, ribbon and feathers. Others are decorated with animal forms carved into the wood portion. The Teton Sioux specialise in shallow relief carvings of deer, turtles, sheep, elk, and dragon flies.

A limited amount of woodwork was done in parts of the Plains area (compared to the Woodlands). Individualistic "love flutes", Grass Dance whistles (sometimes carved in the form of a bird), some bowls in the Eastern Plains and various ornaments such as mirror frames and Horse Dance sticks, were carved for use in certain dances. Some Eastern Plains groups often added carved decoration to their cradle boards, such as the Osage, Pawnee, and some Eastern Sioux. Wooden doll like fetishes are found in many parts of the Plains. Santee Tree Dweller dolls and Prairie Potawotomi in Eastern areas were due to an extension of the Woodland tradition. However dolls are found in Crow Indian medicine bundles and also Arapaho bundles.



Feather Bustle, Arapaho



Ghost Dance Dress, Arapaho

The End of The Plains Culture

After the Civil War White settlers streamed westwards. Treaties were made and broken, but the policy of restricting the Indians to valueless lands soon changed to a war of extermination. Tensions between Whites and Plains Indians increased during the 1870s, at the same time the buffalo were fast disappearing, many of them slaughtered by professional buffalo hunters, whether for commercial reasons or to attack the Indians' food supply, by 1880 the herds were dangerously thinned. By 1885 they had disappeared.

On July 5th, 1876, the elite Seventh Cavalry, led by Lieut. Colonel Custer was defeated at the Battle of Little Big Horn, by a combined force of Sioux and Cheyenne led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. But it was only a temporary victory, from that time on United States troops pursued the Plains Indians from one waterhole to the next, encampments were burned, the inhabitants slaughtered. The survivors were herded onto reservations where starvation, disease, and alcohol took their toll.

About 1890, the prophet Wovoka revived the Ghost Dance religion. It was most enthusiastically adopted by Plains Indian tribes. Ghost dancing, it was believed, would bring back the ancestral dead, and the herds of bison, and cause the disappearence of the Whites. The Indians would be immune to White bullets by wearing "ghost shirts" - dance shirts decorated with mystic

designs of arrows, stars, birds and so on. The United States Army sent out cavalry to suppress the Ghost Dance. The Sioux rebelled. Sitting Bull was killed (accidentally, while being placed under arrest) at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota. Some three hundred Sioux, most of them women and children waiting to surrender, were massacred by trigger happy troops.

Ritual and Visions

Ritual and Warfare

Almost all the sodalities were concerned with war as well as religion. Most tribes had engaged in warfare before they migrated onto the plains, but with the development of Plains culture, warfare became as ritualised as medieval knighthood. The reasons for inter tribal war were usually the capture of horses and guns - and also because, like the Iroquois, the composite tribe needed a common enemy as a rationale for its existence, external strife promoted unity within the tribe. Another reason was to gain status.

Exploits were graded according to the danger involved, the exploit itself was known as a "coup" (from the French word for "blow", a coup stick was used to strike an enemy's body, it was often striped like a barber's pole). Later, counting coups referred to a recital by a brave of all his deeds. As he proclaimed each one, he hit his axe axe against a pole. Every time a brave acquired a new honour, he performed this ritual. However if he lied or exagerated, he would be immediately challenged by someone who had been on the same war party.

These heroic deeds were recorded in picture writing on tipis and on bison robes. They gave the warrior the right to hold public office. Among many tribes, each coup earned an eagles feather, thus many coups are indicated by the elaborate head-dresses of some Plains war leaders.

Scalps were taken from dead and wounded enemies as trophies, but were insignificant compared to coups. It is unlikely that scalp taking was an aboriginal practice, probably it was learned from the White settlers who offered to pay bounties for Indian scalps.[13] Whatever the origin, the custom of scalp taking quickly spread allover North America. Scalps are sometimes found among the contents of sacred bundles, presumably a scalp might be thought to contain the power of its original owner. Scalp locks may also be used to decorate clothing.

Visions

Indians elsewhere believed in the reality of visions, but none were so extravagant in ritual and insignia as the Plains warrior societies. Other Indians tortured captives, but none evoked so much pain in themselves. Occasionally a spirit might come of its own accord in a vision, just to befriend a mortal, but more usually the Plains Indian had to go in active pursuit of a vision. He did this by isolating himself, fasting and thirsting and practising self-torture, at the same time imploring the spirits to take pity on his suffering. Among the Crow it was the custom to cut off a finger from the left hand. Cheyenne youths undergoing puberty rites, thrust skewers of wood under the skin in the breast. The skewers were attached to ropes which were tied to a pole. All day the youth leaned his full weight away from the pole, tugging at his own flesh while imploring the spirits to give him a vision.

Religions everywhere have been obsessed by mortification of the

flesh, as a means of transcending earthly limitations to reach for the level of the gods; for example, many ascetic orders of Christian monks, the whirling Dervishes of Islam, and the hermits of Buddhism.

At last (suffering considerably) the Plains Indian youth received supernatural guidance, which would support him for the rest of his life. During his vision, the youth usually learned what items he should collect for his sacred bundle ... such as feathers, a stone pipe, a piece of skin, maize kernels ... and put in a small pouch. Occasionally, the youth might also receive a song, which would in future serve as a call for supernatural aid. This guidance would be of particular help in dangerous undertakings wwhere individual skill was not enough - such as riding among stampeding bison - or entering an enemy camp, so it was considered well worth the ordeal.

Among some Indians the desire for visions led directly to shamanism. Shamans are not only profound visionaries, but spiritual leaders and guardians of the individual's and the tribe's physical and mental health, and often judges and politicians as well. All are technicians of the sacred, in contact with the spirit world.

Chapter IV

THE SOUTH WEST:
PUEBLO AND NAVAJO

The Pueblo Indians developed a sophisticated town dwelling society based on agriculture. They have occupied this area for over a thousand years, and are perhaps the most conservative and resistant to change of any group in the United States, in spite of almost continuous White contact for over four hundred years. They were certainly influenced by the early Spannish settlers, but have managed to retain their aboriginal culture to a surprising degree.

The South West comprises New Mexico and Arizona. The land varies considerably, mountainous regions with pine and juniper blending into arid desert with cactus and sparse vegetation. There are three distinct types of culture, the Pueblo; the Navajo and Apache who are nomadic hunters; and The Papago, Pima and Yuma had a primitive farming and gathering existence.

Thanks to the preservative qualities of the dry climate, a good deal is known about the prehistory of the region. The "Anasazi" (from a Navajo word meaning the old ones) were the earliest known plateau people, inhabiting the areas around the San Juan, Rio Grande, Upper Gila and Salt Rivers, a large part of Utah and a corner of eastern Nevada. During Basketmaker I (100-400AD) and Basketmaker II (400-700AD) periods, they

rituals in its own cycle of ceremonies, and each is dedicated to the worship of a particular set of supernatural beings. It is difficult for outsiders to realise how complex the ceremonials of these cults are. Every colour and every piece of material in the dance costume, every step, and every gesture are full of significance. Each of the six Kiva groups dances at least three times a year. Membership in a kiva is not hereditary, but rather each youth is sponsored by a ceremonial father whose kiva he joins.

The most vigorous cult at Zuni, and the one most Whites have heard of is devoted to Kachinas, the nearly two hundred happy spirits who live beneath the surface of the waters. The Zuni believe that the Kachinas visit the village each year, at which time they are impersonated by Zuni men wearing costumes and large masks. The masks are treated with great reverence, for once the dancer puts one on, it is believed that he becomes temporarily transformed into the Kachina itself. The owner prizes his mask above all else, and it is usually burnt at his death. (The Kachina dolls have no spiritual significance at all, contrary to the usual belief. They are devices to educate the young in the identification of the numerous kinds of kachinas.

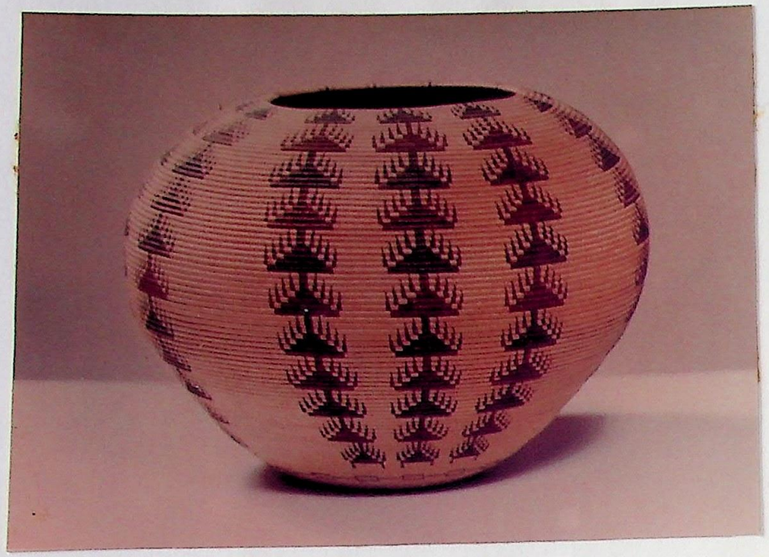
Pueblo Art

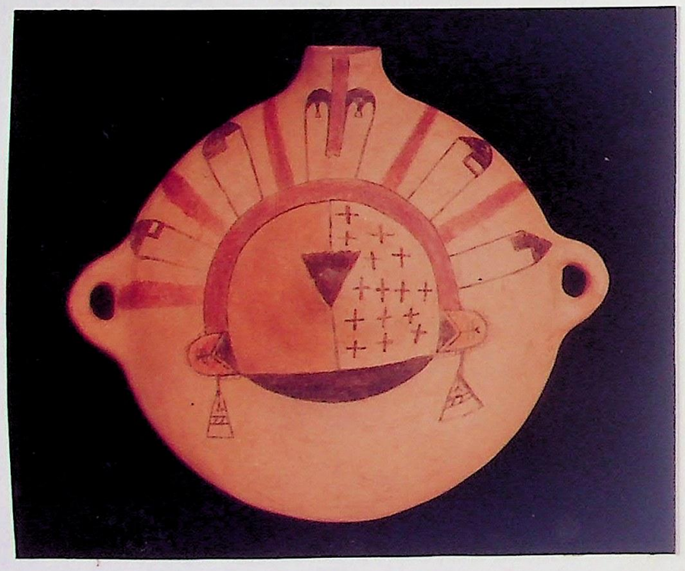
Pottery

Prehistoric Hopi pottery underwent a slow deterioration until the late 19th century. A Tewa potter named Namphego from Hano first studied the old pottery and sparked a revival of fine quality ware which has continued to the present day. It is a distinctive ware usually identifiable by the character of the clay. The unslipped ware fires from an orange to a cream in an uneven mottling (caused by oxidisation in the firing), sometimes the pottery is slipped in red. Designs are painted in red, black and sometimes white. The forms are usually conventionalisations of human and natural forms.

Zuni, Acoma, Laguna, Santa Ana, Zia and Isleta, to the east of the Hopi, all make a related type of pottery with a white slip and painted designs in red and black. At Zuni pottery is usually decorated with a design laid out in equally divided sections, renging from two to four. Designs include rosettes and animals with arrows drawn from their mouths to their hearts. The thinnest pottery is produced at Acoma. It is painted in black and various shades of red orange and tends towards allover patterns of geometric units, or a style (probably borrowed from Zia) of birds and flowers.

Lucy Lewis, a famous potter from Acoma has developed a new style based on prehistoric wares in black and white. Probably more pottery is produced at Acoma than any other pueblo.





Basket by Datlalee, 1917/18, Washo, Nevada
Canteen, Sikyatki, Arizona

produced a profusion of baskets (hence this name) and sandals and the beginnings of pottery, and pit houses, precursors of kivas (underground ceremonial chambers). These are still the secret centres of pueblo ritual, prayer and purification.

During Pueblo I (700-900AD) the villages were made up of rectangular living chambers in true masonry, these developed into multi-roomed houses with kivas during the next period (900-1100AD); communal dwellings of several storeys and several hundred rooms were constructed in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico shortly after 1,000 AD. Pottery was made of finer paste, with black designs on a white background or slip. This painted pottery developed during Pueblo III (1100-1300AD), and so did cliff houses and towns in large caves which were were dwelling complexes for richer and larger communities such as Canyon de Chelly and Mesa Verde. These pueblos were abandoned for some unknown reasons about 1270. Period IV was (1300-1700AD) was famous for its kiva murals and Sikyatki pottery. This pottery was distinguished for its free-hand design and spatter technique. Houses of the period were built into cliffs and then on top of mesas, which led to the pueblos constructed around courts or plazas which are lived in today. The Historic period or Pueblo V extends from about 1700 to the present.

The parallel ancient Hohokam culture (300AD to the present) was located in the desert valleys of the Salt and Gila Rivers below modern Phoeinix, Arizona. They were the ancestors of the Pima and Papgos. Their accomplishments included the development of irrigation farming and the decorative form of etching shells

with fermented juices from the cactus, during the Sedentary period (900-1200AD). The Hohokam were the first people to use a true etching process. Mosaic jewellery which has survived into the present was flourishing in Classic times (1100-1300AD), influenced by the Mixtec Indians of Mexico. The historic and modern basket weavers of the Pima and Papago tribes are descendants of the Hohokam.

The Pueblo Indians include the Hopi and the Zuni and the Eastern Pueblo (such as Taos, San Ilfedonso and Isleta). Although only about thirty "pueblos" (the word is Spannish for village) survive, it is amazing that so much of their culture is still intact. Influences which have filtered through include Catholicism (which seems to co-exist with the old religion), Spanish and Western clothing, and most tribes speak Spanish and English as well as their native language.

One reason for the survival of Pueblo culture is the strong social organisation and centrality of government. All of the Pueblo Indians are organised as tribes, which are based on the family, and on equality of members. The tribe is composed of a number of groups or social institutions, among them clans, secret clubs and specialised societies that carry on warfare or perform cermonials. Clans stress the common ancestry of the group - even where exact relations had been forgotten, the fiction of kinship was perpetuated to promote solidarity within the tribe.

Zuni Clans

The Zuni kinship system is matrilineal and matrilocal. The husband goes to live with his wife's family, who may add on an extra room for its daughter's new family. The constant addition of rooms is one of the reasons a Zuni village looks like a jumble of houses. A wife can divorce her husband at any time simply by leaving his belongings outside the door.

Clan membership though is not based on residence but on who one's parents were. Rather than emphasise territoriality, this emphasises common ancestry. The most important ways it does this are by special insignia and ceremonies, the use of the same name, and shared mythology and clan history. No distinction is drawn between a close relative and one who is not a blood relative. Clans emphasise the alliance of various families, and in that way they reinforce the solidarity of the tribe. Each clan posesses an assortment of secret paraphanaelia - costumes, fetishes, and sacred altars. There may be esoteric insignia such as face decoration, and clothing designs and even symbolic patterns painted on houses. Each clan has its own rituals and great secrecy is maintained. Punishment for a disclosure to an outsider is severe, often flogging or even death.

Clans also control agricultural fields, maintain burial fields, and preserve peace among members. Various clans hold the right to certain offices. For example the Priesthood of the North is always a member of the Dagwood clan and the Priest hood of the South is always a member of the Badger clan, and the head of the Kachinas comes from the Deer clan.

Zuni Religion

Because of their dependance on agriculture in an arid region, the Pueblo people have developed a complex religious life centred around rainmaking and crop fertility. The average Hopi or Zuni man spends almost half his life participating in dances or cermonies, or in preparing for them; a great deal of time and energy is spent making ceremonial clothing and fetishes and learning songs in preparation for the actual performance of the dances. This is men's work, so it is the Pueblo men who make the masks, prayer sticks and Kachina dolls. A good Kachina carver is judged not for individual style, but by how he interprets the given elements. A mudhead or squash kachina always looks the same.

In Hamilton A. Tyler's study of Pueblo religion, she says "That local underworld is not only the place from which the race emmerged and the place to which its individuals return, but it is as well the storehouse of all life-giving crops which are in season drawn up to nourish the living".[14]

Sacred Circles: "Not only men and animals, but plants, stones mountains and storms, astral bodies, clouds, sky and underground have spirits which may be evil or benificient to human beings"[15]

The Zuni is the most devoutly religious. There are six specialised religious cults: the Sun, the Uwanami (rain-makers), Kachinas, the Priests of the Kachinas, the War Gods and the Beast Gods. Each cult posesses its own priesthood, its own fetishes, its own kiva. Each devotes itself to particular

Basketry

Basketry is practised in many of the Pueblos but is usually very simple undecorated work. Painted yuca leaves were used for mats and winnowing trays at several villages, but are only made at Jemez, and the Hopi towns today. On the Third Mesa the women specialise in wicker baskets made on frameworks of summac. These take the form of round trays with colourful designs worked into them. The patterns, done in native dyes usually represent kachinas while birds and whirlwind patterns are also common. On the Second Mesa the speciality is a type of coiled basket made of yucca leaves around a grass core. While the technique is completely different the designs and colours are very similar to those used on the Third Mesa.

Weaving

Weaving is an old Pueblo craft. In early times the principal material, a type of native cotton was grown to be spun. After the introduction of sheep by the Spanish, wool was used for decoration, often as embroidery on a cotton garment. Throughout the Pueblo area, weaving was the man's work. Kilts, belts and sashes had to be woven for use in ceremonial dances. Among the Hopi, men used also make the costume for their brides. The woven designs, mainly consisting of transverse stripes are usually quite simple. Twills in diamond and herringbone could also be produced. A special type of white belt, known as a "rain sash" is done by braiding, the strands becoming alternately the weft and the warp. Except in Hopi villages, the women do all the embroidery.

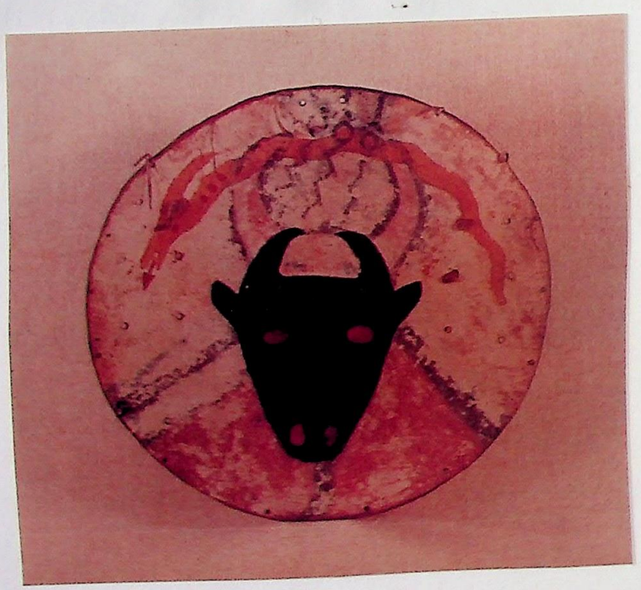
Kachina masks

Masked ritual was most highly developed in the Western Pueblos, especially at Hopi and Zuni. These tribes sometimes allow non-Indians to witness masked dances (the other pueblos prohibit spectators altogether). The masks are usually made of heavy leather or rawhide in a variety of basic shapes. Some cover only the face, some, inverted cylinders, the entire head. The masks are re-painted with appropriate designs before each dance, and appendages such as ears, mouth and nose are made from feathers and fur (or evergreen) ruffs. Often the same basic mask can be used to represent several kachinas, by a change of ornaments and painted designs. In former years these masks, along with other ceremonial equipment, were jealously guarded in the kivas. Now a few which have never been ceremoniously used are being made strictly for sale. The breakdown in religious restrictions is a result of several factors. Inter-marriage between tribes has weakened adherence to the rules, and also some of the material being offered for sale is from reservations.

Old Hopi Kachina dolls are quite flat with little detail of hands or feet. This style has continued in a type of doll given to ingants. However there has been a tendency towards realism, and natural bodily proportions with even muscles depicted. The material most often used today is the soft root wood of the cotton-wood tree. Zuni dolls can be distinguished from Hopi dolls by two features: they have movable arms and they are dressed in cloth rather than painted clothing.

Fetishes

Stone or wood fetishes are carved for a variety of religious usages by most Pueblo groups. Often they are used as shrine



Painted and beaded Elkskin Robe, Taos Pueblo, 48 X 60"
Shield, Tesuque Pueblo, Diameter 20"

figures or offerings in the Kivas (sacred underground chambers), or in holy places that are situated away from the village proper. The wooden War Gods at Zuni are still made each year. Equally impressive are the war god images of the Acoma and Laguna, and the wooden shrine figures carved for altars in Hopi and Zuni kivas. But the highest form of stone carving is to be seen in the animal fetishes made from hard-stone, which are only excelled by some of the stone carvings produced in the North West Coast area.

Jewellery

Stone and shell were commonly used for jewellery. Turquoise was locally mined and prized for its decorative value everywhere among the Pueblo people. Shells, on the other hand, had to be imported from Mexico or California, and because they were are and associated with water, they also were valued ornaments. Some silverwork was probably done by Pueblo smiths from the 19th century onwards, but it so much resembles Navajo work that it is not usually recognised. Recently, however the Hopi have developed their own style, with the recessed part of the design blackened out. At Zuni in recent years the work is characterised by the use of small turquoise sets or by elaborate inlays of blue turquoise, black jet, and red spiny oyster shell.

Painting

Painting has always been a Pueblo art since prehistoric times when artists worked on pottery and kiva walls. Some groups such as the Hopi make dry sand paintings for some kiva ceremonies, and elaborate designs on Butterfly Dance tablitas.

101. Mask
New York (

100. Mask. Navaho. Brooklyn Museum, New York (Cat. No. 03.164). For use in the Yei-be-chai Dance.

Navajo Masks

Navajo and Apache

The Navajo and Apache groups both speak related languages of the Athabascan linguistic family, and it is generally believed that these two groups migrated from the North at some date before the historic period. The Navajo are today the largest tribe in the United States (over 75,000) and own the largest reservation.

Formerly, the Navajo people were semi-nomadic, practising some agriculture learned from the Pueblos, but also hunting small game and utilizing the variety of natural vegetable foods. They were generally quite war-like, and often raided the Pueblo villages for their crops when they were ripe, or the Spanish settlements for horses and other booty. After the introduction of domestic animals, the Navajo became sheep herders; at present many families depend upon sheep as their main source of food, supplemented by packaged foodstuffs, purchased at local trading posts.

The Navajo prefer to live in close proximity to their Pueblo neighbours, and have borrowed many cultural elements from Hopi and Zuni. The famous dry san paintings, made by the Navajo as part of important healing ceremonies, probably derived from an earlier Hopi style. However the Navajo have a tendency, even when borrowing to adapt and elaborate other forms to their own cultural styles , so they are distinctly Navajo in feeling. This is equally true of their textiles. The techniques were borrowed from the Pueblo, but the finished work was usually more elaborate and far superior to the simpler Pueblo work.

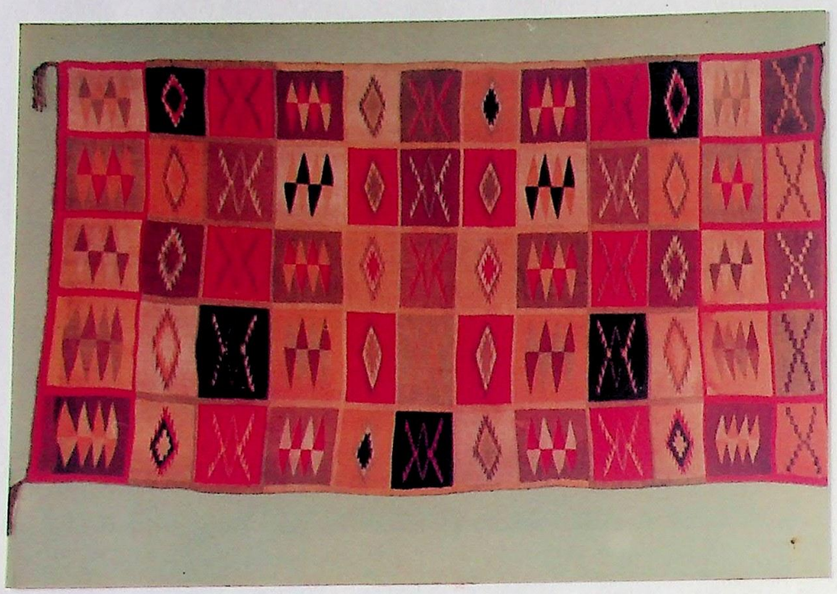
Sand paintings

Sand paintings are made on dry sand with natural earth colours, ground shell, charcoal, and pollen. They are usually completed in one day and then destroyed in the ritual process of transferring the magic potency of the painting to the patient being cured. Although they are figurative, the drawings are geometric, angular, slender. Extraordinarily beautiful, their very transience makes them more precious.

Several efforts have been made to preserve them, nonetheless. either in the form of watercolours, by weaving the designs into rugs or by various techniques of glueing the sand on board backing. The older religious taboo about making a sand painting for commercial use has weakened, due to a combination of a breakdown in the religion and a desire for monetary gain. This has gone so far that in recent years a popular craft form involves using the paintings preserved on boards as framed pictures, or even setting these paintings into table tops.

Weaving

The Navajo learned weaved some 200 years ago from the Hopi and Zuni, and the styles of the textiles have changed continually since then. At first the Navajo copied the simple banded designs of their neighbours when they wove blankets or dresses for the women. Later designs became more complex and better yarns were introduced. A host of local styles developed; later still revivals of some older forms were urged by the traders. Contemporary patterns of stripes, bars, diamond and triangle like elements are reminescent of the actual landscape, with



Germantown yarn rug, Navajo, c. 1885-90
Apache Mountain Spirit Dancers

its mesas in parallel horizontal lines, canyons and plateaux forming stepped volumes. About 1890 the handspun wool warp threads were replaced by cotton yarns and brightly coloured aniline dyes were introduced. Recent weavers however have revived the use of natural vegetable dyes. The same attention to balance in design that was paid by the Pueblo potters is applied to Navajo weaving designs. The stripes in a chief's blanket are laid out with exactitude so that the progression from the centre is equal on either side.

Apache

The war-like Apache absorbed influences from all directions, the different Pueblo tribes, Navajo, and Plains to the north. The Apache Gans Masks, are adaptations of the Pueblo masks. With open-work tablita-like structures attached to soft skin or sacking headcovers. Originally the "Gans" were sent as delegates of the Supreme Being (the giver of life) to reveal to the Apache the good ways of life, i.e. to govern, cure, plant and harvest, to hunt, and to be disciplined. They returned to their caves disappointed with the Apache corruption of their teachings. Four dancers and a clown (Mountain Spirit Dancers) impersonate the Gans at a girl's puberty rite; they descend from a Mountain Cave to enact the creation myth. (Burden baskets used at this rite were painted with black and red wave like designs around the middle and decorated with Plains-like buckskin. Whereas Apache tray baskets with spacious pin-wheel or lily-like designs are an influence from West California.)

Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS

For most aboriginal tribes, religion plays a foremost role in the shaping of a culture. As a language, art has served religion in societies everywhere. A tribes spiritual beliefs are formed by the tribes needs and what the environment has to offer. At the level of the hunting band, it is the shaman who is responsible for its spiritual well being. The shaman, a mystical, priestly and political figure, guardian of the tribal "conscience", exists in a dual world: the ordinary world and a shadow world inhabited by spirits. Spirits exist in any object, being or phenomenon.

By virtue of his ability to enter the spirit world, usually in a trance state, the shaman acts as a communicator. When healing, he usually puts the patient into a trance as well. In an article on Haitian voodoo (reprinted in Science and E.S.P.) Francis Huxley suggests that ecstatic and trance states ..
"allow buried intentions to act themselves out and become conscious, first to other people, and then to oneself, finally in full consciousness. As he progresses the initiate gains command of his own person ... "
Many comtemporary performance artists strive, through pain / endurance to become acquainted with that unconscious self. In modern Western society the role of the contemporary artist tends to be regarded with similar mixed feelings of awe, mysticism and suspicion (occasionally contempt) as was accorded the Indian shaman, although not always deservedly.

The sedentary lineal tribe has more time for leisure, to engage in cermonies, to pursue refined arts. Religion is an activity for everybody. Superior gods control more than a specific area or territory, they control ideas, each one reigns over an activity and thereby protects people who engage in it. Among the Zuni the water serpent Kolowski is the guardian of springs wherever they exist; Chakwena woman aids in rabbit hunts, each of the medical societies has its own beast god which assists it in its specialities be it curing colds or removing bullets.

Cultural revivalistic movements spring up in the face of oppression. The reviv al of the Irish language here to oppose English rule is one example. Disilllusionment, hopelessness and apathy among the defeated Indians prepared the way for revivalistic and messianic movements that promised the return of the good old days. Most groups identified with the Jews and early Christians. The roots of many nativistic movements - the Maori of New Zealand, Kikuyu of Kenya, Bantu of South Africa, and Ghost Dancers of North America - can all be found in the appeal that the story of the jews had for these people. Some primitive peoples have claimed descent from one of the ten lost tribes of Israel. The climax of the many revivalistic movements in America was the Ghost Dance.

But one group of people it made no impression on was the Navajo. They totally rejected it. The most significant element in the Ghost Dance was the promised return of the dead Indians. One aspect of Navajo religion that clearly separates it from that of the Pueblos is the Navojos' fear of ghosts. What to

other indians was welcome news - the return of their ancestors - fukked tge Bavajo with dread.

In 1799 a Senaca prophet, Handsome Lake preached his "New Religion" to the Iroquois. The Quaker influence was evident, he renounced witchcraft and instead emphasised introspection, compassion for those who were suffering, and good deeds even in thought. He believed in silent prayer and the confession of sins and he recommended the bible as a good guide for any Iroquois to follow - however he rejected the New Testament, and Jesus played no role in the new religion, for that would have been to adopt the beliefs of the oppressors. Wherever the two pieces could be fitted together traditional Iroquois festivals and beliefs were combined with Christian rituals. For example, the Iroquois had a feast resembling the Eucharist to mark the New Year, at which time a white dog was sacrifinced to the great spirit.

The most vigorous religion today, Peyotism seeks spiritual independence. Peyotism teaches accommodation to a white world, and even more, it gives the Indian a method of cultural emancipation without violence. Peyote is a small cactus, without any spines, whose rounded top is cut off and eaten. It contains stimulants related to strychnine and sedatives related to morphine. But since ther is no proof that it is addictive, it cannot be classified as a narcotic. Hallucinations are usually in the form of colour visions, sound sensations are less frequent.

The ritual use of peyote has been incorporated into the Native American Church. It is a pan-Indian movement. Definitely Christian in orientation, the indian feels that eating peyote is his exclusive way of partaking of the holy spirit.

Messianic movements are capable of reviving cultures that have suffered military defeat, epidemic and acculturation, and are on the verge of breakdown.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Chapter 1, Introduction

P.1, no word for Indian Art, description Blackfoot chief's costume - "presence" - arrangement of patterns.

p.2, Small in scale, transportable - big scale Northwest Coast sculpture - micorcosm - symbolism, ritual & drama - transformation masks - magic & the occult - presence.

p.3, Art an integral part of daily life - socio-economic reasons - identity and allegiance reinforced by design as well as ritual

Totems define marriage relationships - prestige and status indicated by costume -
Symbols of supernatural power.

p.4, 300 tribes - Three areas to be discussed: NorthEast Woodlands, Plains, and SouthWest.

Chapter 2, The Woodlands

P.5, Woodlands Indian distinctive aboriginal - fought stubbornly Athabascans and Algonkians - the downfall.

p.6 Supernatural beings - totems - myths - the great Lynx

p.7 The Great Lakes Culture
Sedentary people - villages - Grand Medicine Society - medicine bundles - contemporary religion.

p.8 The Arts
Bark - carving - quillwork - birchbark - ribbon applique

p.9 Costume - fashion - uniforms adapted - metalwork -influences.

p.10 Warfare: Kickapoo - festivals

P.11 Iroquois
Reservations - maintained culture - village - matrilineal
League of Six - sachems.

p.12 Pine Tree Warriors - war parties - captives, torture - unity within the tribe.

p.13 False Faces
Three types of supernatural being - False Face societies - description of mask, how it is made.

p.14 Curing ceremonies

Arts
Effigy pipes - wampum belts - embroidery - the double curve.

P.16 Chapter 3, The Plains

Fiction - the area - early Plains bison hunters

p.17 The horse - diversity of the peoples

p.18 Speed, wealth - millitancy, Comanche light cavalry rifles - armaments race - U.S. exploit this.
Associations
Composite tribe - social cycle imitate bison

p.19 Sodalities - Cheyenne military societies, the Contraries Age societies - the berdache.

p.20 Sodalities brought unity to diverse peoples.

Arts
Quasi Great Lakes in style - ceremonial objects

p.21 Lightness, in praise of movement. - medicine bundles - Teton Sioux Elk Dreamers.

p.22 Beadwork on skin, on cloth, dresses & capes, horse trappings - Painted buffalo hides - pictographic by men, abstract by women - pictographic tipis and linings.

p.23 Stick figures: silhouette painted by north, outline with interior detail by Central Plains - painted shields, visions, form, Cheyenne cross hatch - parfleche

p.24 Featherwork: head ornaments, war bonnet - decorations on shields, feather bustles -
Carved pipes - effigy pipes.

p.25 limited woodwork: love flutes, Grass Dance whistles, horse dance sticks.

p.26 The End of the Plains Culture
American Civil War - Treaties with Indians - extermination buffalo disappear. Little Big Horn - pursued - reservations. Wovoka: the Ghost Dance - Wounded Knee

p.28 Rituals and Visions

Ritual and warfare - medieval knighthood - inter tribal war - coups - pictographic record - eagles feathers

p.29 Scalping and scalp lock .

Visions

Self torture - Cheyenne youth's puberty ritual - religious everywhere -

p.30 Vision - guidance - dangerous undertakings - Shamanism.

P.31 Chapter 4, The SouthWest

Town dwelling Pueblo Indian - 1,000 year old culture - Spanish influence - area, land varies - distinct cultures. Pre-history: Anasazi - Basketmaker I and II: baskets, sandals, pottery, pit houses.

p.32 Pueblo I: villages of masonry, multi roomed houses - Pueblo II: several storeys - black & white pottery - III Cliff houses and towns in caves, later abandoned IV Kiva murals, Sikyatki pottery.
Hohokan culture 300ad on - ancestors of Pima and Papago - etching shells - mosaic jewellery

p.33 Pueblo Indians: Hopi, Zuni and Eastern pueblos - influences absorbed: religion, clothing, language
Strong social organisation - clans stress common ancestry, promote solidarity.

p.34 Zuni Clans : matrilineal - adding on rooms -
Clan membership based on parents - common ancestry emphasised by special insignia and ceremonies.- secrecy.
Clans control fields, preserve peace - Priesthoods.

p.35 Zuni Religion : rainmaking - men prepare for ceremonies - "underworld" - Zuni devotion, six special cults with separate ceremonies - membership not hereditary.

p.36 Kachinas - happy spirits - masks - impersonation/transformation dolls, teaching aids.

p.37 Pueblo Art

(Pottery: Hopi, revival of old style - Zuni pottery - Lucy Lewis revives prehistoric designs.

p.38 Basketry: simple - Jemez, yuca mats - 3rd Mesa wicker, patterns done in native dyes represent kachinas - 2nd Mesa, coiled baskets, yucca leaves, grass core

Weaving: old native cotton - sheep's wool embroidery - weaving man's work ; "rain sash" - women do embroidery.

p.39 Kachina masks: Hopi & Zuni masked rituals - made of leather - re-painted designs - breakdown in religious restrictions - Kachina dolls - stone or wood fetishes.

p.40 Jewellery: Turquoise and Shells - late silverwork.
Painting : sand paintings, elaborate Butterfly Tablitas.

p.41 Navajo & Apache

Athabascan speaking - Navajo formerly semi-nomad - warlike - raids. Sheep herders.
Close proximity to Pueblos - borrowed cultural elements

p.42 Sand paintings - curing - transient - efforts to preserve taboos weakened.
Weaving: banded designs - reminiscent of landscape - balance in design.

p.43 Apache: influences from all direvtions - Mountain Spirit Dancers - Basketry.

FOOTNOTES

1. George Catlin, Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of North American Indians New York, Dover Publications, 1973, p.30 (written during eight years travel, 1832-1839)

2 Ralph T. Coe, Sacred Circles, London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977, p.p. 15 & 16. A catalogue of a major Indian artefact exhibition, held in the Hayward Gallery in 1977.

3. Shaman: mystic or spiritual leader. Although shamans are usually associated with the geographies of northern and central Asia, they can be found in Africa, Oceania, Australia, the Americas, and northern and eastern Europe, wherever hunting-gathering peoples still exist.

4. Totems: Animal (or plant) taken by a tribe to be the emblem of their mysterious relationship with it.

5 Claude Levi Strauss, A World on the Wane, New York Criterion Books, 1961, Totemism, Boston, Beacon Press, 1963.

6 Lodge: rank of Grand Medicine Society.

7 Midewiwin scroll: record of cermony performed.

8 Peter Farb, Man's Rise to Civilisation, London, Paladin, 1971, p.106.

9 Frank G. Speck, "The Double Curve Motif in North Eastern Algonquin Art," Canada Department of Mines, Geological Survey, Memoir 42, No. 1 Anthropological Series, Ottawa, Government Printing Bureau, 1914, p.2.

10 John Bakeless, Coronado, Eyes of Discovery, New York, Dover, 1961, p.p. 92, 93

11 Sacred Circles, p. 164

13 Scalping: White settlers early offered to pay bounties on dead Indians and scalps were actual proof of the deed. By liberal payment of scalps, the Dutch virtually cleared New York, before the English supplanted them.

Among Plains tribes apparently only Sioux and Cree placed any value upon scalps. Both tribes were late emigrants from the East, where they probably learned the custom from the Whites.

12 Helen H. Blish, A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1967, p.199

14. Hamilton A. Tyler: Pueblo Gods and Myths, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1964, p.3

15 Sacred Circles, p.196

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