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Gregory E. Smoak. *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. 302 pp. $44.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-24658-4.

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Prophetic Identity

Gregory E. Smoak argues that the Newe (Western Shoshone) peoples' utilization of Ghost Dances during the late nineteenth century reflects not only the practice of prophetic religion, but also the manifestation of ethnic and racial identity. Smoak contextualizes his analysis of ghost dances within a larger framework of prophetic religion, engaging both the historical past of American Indian prophets, and late-nineteenth-century Euro-American prophetic religiosity, specifically Mormonism. Finding continuity between the ghost dances of the 1870s and the 1890s, Smoak states that the dances were "not two discrete movements but rather two periods of intense excitement in a continuing pattern of religious practice" (p. 173). He then evaluates these periods in relation to identity formation, examining how ghost dances created both unifying and polarizing identities. Simply put, Smoak views ghost dances as far more than a reaction to colonialism and non-native intrusions of the late nineteenth century. Rather, they were part of a larger American Indian and Euro-American religiosity essential for the formation of identity.

By the 1850s, momentous changes wrought by access to material goods (guns, horses, etc.) and the decline of the buffalo herds made it increasingly difficult for Newe peoples to maintain their traditional lifestyles, spurring the formation of new identities. Newe peoples rationalized their changing circumstances through Euro-American religious traditions and indigenous practices of Shamanism and prophecy, specifically ghost dances. "Shamanism and prophecy were indigenous concepts that created a flexible religious milieu open to the incorporation of new elements and doctrines" (p. 80). As "Euro-Americans struggled to define the political and ideological boundaries of nationhood, prophetic religion provided a common language for ... the marginalized. American Indians [who] took part in this process and utilized the shared discourse of prophecy to mark Indian difference" (p. 197). Ghost dances allowed Newe peoples to both adapt to changing circumstances and to protect certain traditions. Bannock and Shoshone tribal identities grew out of Newe peoples' struggle "to maintain their territorial and cultural integrity" (p. 84).

Smoak examines ghost dances as both representations of a common Indian identity and as reflections of ethnic and tribal differences. As white reformers attempted to "civilize" the Indians at the Fort Hall Reservation, they met resistance from shamans who had spoken out against the boarding schools and convinced many Indian families to withdraw their children. Smoak states that "their principal tool of resistance was the 'dance' and that it was often seen by reformers as a statement of tribal identity" (p. 188). However, because reservation life influenced both the Bannock and Shoshone peoples differently, they often practiced the ghost dance in relation to their tribal experiences, expressing different cultural and ethnic identities. For example, the Bannocks suffered more from the restrictions of reservation life as they had been traditionally more mobile and dependent on the buffalo herds. On the other hand the Shoshone had traditionally been more confined and thus saw reservation life as less limiting. Both utilized ghost dances, but while the dances represented resistance for the repressed Bannock, they signified "measured accommodation" for the numerically superior Shoshone, challenging traditional historical interpretations of the Ghost Dance (p. 188). Smoak concludes, however, that by the late 1890s a collective Indian identity superceded ethnic ones, especially as the U.S. government increasingly intervened in reservation affairs. He states that "the broader message of the newcomers' aggressive assimilation programs was that in a racialized nation all American Indian peoples shared a larger identity as 'Indians"' (p. 84).

Smoak demonstrates successfully the importance that ghost dances serve as markers of prophetic religion and identity, as well as their importance and placement within a larger religious context. He connects the ghost

dances of the 1870s with those of the 1890s, while also discussing the importance Mormon prophetic traditions had upon Bannock and Shoshone religiosity. Stating bluntly that "the Ghost Dances were not a 'new' religion for the Shoshone and Bannock people," Smoak places the formation of identity within a much larger religious context, that of prophetic religious traditions. This is important because prophetic religiosity served an important role in both native and non-native cultures during the nineteenth century. Therefore, while identifying new ethnic identities within Indian communities and framing a nascent American Indian identity, Smoak also identifies religious continuities that unite both Native and non-Native narratives.

It is Smoak's skillful use of sources that enables him to connect both Native and non-Native narratives, and reveal the ways in which ghost dances reflected shifting identities, but it also allows him to write a Native history with source material that is primarily non-Native in nature. Superintendency papers, newspapers, Indian census rolls, and U.S. Department of the Interior records do contain information concerning the history of the Bannock and Shoshone peoples, but they often lack information necessary to attain the Indians' point of view. However, sources that contain explicit Native voices are not always necessary for writing Indian history and Smoak demonstrates that while Native voices may be absent from the sources, one can still write a Native history by framing historical analysis around native cultural traditions. There are portions of the monograph that lack Native voice in areas where it would have strengthened his argument, specifically his analysis concerning the ways in which the Bannock and Shoshone Indian communities utilized the ghost dance. But this does not detract from his accomplishment in teasing out Native voices in sources that many historians fear because of their ethnocentric nature.

Lastly, Smoak's initial contextualization of prophetic religion and the formation of an American Indian identity remains incomplete. He frames prophetic religion by discussing the importance of men like Tecumseh's brother Tenskwatawa (the Prophet), but neglects the importance that R. David Edmunds and Gregory Dowd place on the formation of pan-Indianism and a collective Indian identity. Smoak must address this especially since he concludes that prophetic religion, specifically ghost dances, marked the growth of an American Indian identity. It is not that Smoak failed to address the arguments of Edmunds or Dowd, but that he did not address their critiques of a collective American Indian identity and its formation in the first decade of the nineteenth century. If we apply the same logic in Smoak's argument to the circumstances in the Ohio Valley in the early 1800s, then it is very possible that a collective American Indian identity existed in both Tecumseh's time and that of the 1870s and 1890s. Is it possible, then, that a racialized American Indian identity waxes and wanes depending on historical circumstances, and thus, it is important to question if it re-emerged in the ghost dances of the late nineteenth century. Analysis on this point would only add to an already thorough and deftly researched assessment of prophetic religion, its roots, and its representation of both Indian and tribal identities.

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