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**Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century.** By Gregory E. Smoak. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. 304 pages. $44.95 cloth.

Scholars of American Indian history have waited with anticipation for publication of this important book by Gregory Smoak. The volume is a revision of his widely read doctoral dissertation completed in 1999 at the University of Utah under the supervision of Richard White. During his years as a doctoral student the author also worked at the University of Utah's highly esteemed American West Center, which provided opportunities to rub shoulders with other notable scholars such as Floyd O'Neil, Pat Albers, and Dan McCool. Exceptional credentials coupled with the wide recognition garnered by his dissertation led to the high expectations for this new study on Indian identity. In *Ghost Dances and Identity*, Smoak meets these expectations by delivering an important new interpretation of this religious movement as a key element in the formation of a racially conscious Indian self-identity in the nineteenth century.

The experience of the Shoshone-Bannocks, or the Newe peoples who were removed to Fort Hall and other reservations in Idaho, Nevada, and Oregon during this era, provided Smoak with a window "into the interplay of ethnic and tribal identity and race as separate but interrelated levels of social identity" (7). The people of Fort Hall claim vast areas of the Great Basin, Snake River Plateau, and the Northern Plains as ancestral subsistence territories, although the center of life for most was along the Snake River and its tributaries. In these regions, small kin groups gathered, hunted, and fished for centuries prior to contact with Europeans. As material conditions changed, largely as a result of external influences associated with Euro-American expansion, the Newe and other Northwest Native peoples made culturally informed responses. The Ghost Dances, in Smoak's view, represented one of the more important of these responses especially in the way it interlaced with emerging ethnic and racial identities.

Smoak opens his study with a discussion of the popular association of the Ghost Dance religion with the infamous massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. That tragedy influenced scholars and other writers over time to understand the Ghost Dance within the context of a mythical or romanticized American expansion narrative. In that view, the religious movement represented a last desperate and delusional gasp of a vanishing people vainly attempting to restore a primitive—and, to many commentators, a noble—way of life. As such it served for true believers in a prophetic American destiny, as well as for scholars and critics of this view, as a powerful national symbol of the end of the Indian Wars and a triumph for Jeffersonian democracy and capitalism. One of Smoak's purposes in this study is to demonstrate the problems in the desperate/delusional approach. It fails to recognize that the Ghost Dance, an old religious tradition, continued to influence Native spirituality for years after the massacre. Moreover, Indians survived and redefined their cultural identity in the new reservation setting. Finally, and most critically for this revision of the history of the movement, the Ghost Dance played an important

role in the formation of ethnic and racial identities. Rather than representing an ending, Smoak convincingly suggests that the Ghost Dances should be seen as a beginning.

In framing his analysis, Smoak cites evidence that, early in the nineteenth century, Northwestern Native prophets and the Ghost Dance informed the choices and understandings of Newe peoples as they confronted an increasing Euro-American presence in their homelands, came to identify themselves in ethnic terms as Bannocks and Shoshones, and later faced confinement and assimilation pressures on the reservations.

The people placed at Fort Hall became Ghost Dance missionaries and helped to spread the religion to other reservation communities across the West. Thus, the Ghost Dances connected Shoshones and Bannocks to other tribal groups, formed "the basis of two pan-Indian movements" (in the 1870s and 1890s), and represented "a powerful statement of a shared American Indian racial identity" (3). This new context for the Ghost Dances raised questions that motivated Smoak's investigation. Why did the religion survive at Fort Hall for decades when it appeared short-lived elsewhere? Why did Bannocks take a more active role in the movement given that they were closely connected by kinship and history to the Shoshones with whom they also shared Fort Hall Reservation? What did it mean to be Shoshone and Bannock—and to be Indian? Ultimately, Smoak seeks to understand ways in which these identities emerged and how they connected to the Ghost Dances.

Smoak divides his study into two parts. In the first, he treats Shoshone and Bannock ethnic origins as both developed prior to and during the early contact period of the nineteenth century. Smoak relies on the work of Frederik Barth, Alexandra Harmon, and Joane Nagel to define ethnicity and establish a key frame of reference for his analysis: the constructed nature of ethnicity and race and the ways groups maintain boundaries. In this view, ethnic continuity depends on the maintenance of boundaries among groups more than on the mere existence of inventories of cultural elements. Ethnicity is defined as a named human population that shares a sense of solidarity. It is, Smoak relates, a presumed identity in that it is not based on kinship or concrete social interaction but on a shared name and memory of a mythic or common ancestry and past; a link to a homeland; and common cultural elements such as language, religion, kinship, and value system. In this context, Smoak focuses on key Newe developments such as the advent of an equestrian way of life for those groups that chose it; new technologies and ideas from Europe gained through trade with other cultural groups in direct contact with traders; the spread of virgin soil epidemics that came through such trade networks and as a result of equestrian mobility; and, by the 1830s, the growing presence of Euro-Americans in the Newe homeland. These innovative and self-directed responses to change contributed to the evolution of differentiated social structures as equestrians formed larger and more cohesive bands, while the pedestrians maintained smaller kin groups.

These differences became the foundation for new ethnic identities: Shoshone and Bannock. Cultural redefinitions were understood in part through a religious tradition rooted in shamanism and prophesy, but this too underwent

change in the form of a dialogue that developed through trade with other Native peoples from the east who brought with them diverse ideas including elements of Christianity. By the 1850s, these processes led to the emergence of Native prophets in the Far West who taught a syncretic religion and promoted a "shared Indian identity to rally resistance to colonization" (80).

In part two, Smoak examines the Newe experience in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period that saw the increasing power of non-Indians in the region and a corresponding decline of Shoshone and Bannock autonomy. The pressures of treaty negotiations, an assimilation campaign, and the overcrowded conditions at an underfunded Fort Hall Reservation that forced Shoshone-Bannocks to confront each other in an unfamiliar context turned the social and economic distinctions of emerging ethnic band identities into hardened political divisions. At the same time that they appeared to divide into discreet ethnic/political units with particular outlooks and economic orientations, the common experience of also confronting a racialized American society confirmed the similarities that they shared with other Native Americans. This sense of an "Indian" identity began to transcend ethnic and cultural boundaries. Here, Smoak defines race as a "cultural construct that hides behind assertions of objective physical difference" (6). Euro-Americans imposed this racialized identity as part of a racial hierarchy—informed in part by a prophetic view of America's manifest destiny—that assigned moral and intellectual qualities to peoples based on inherent differences in human blood and bodies. Shoshones and Bannocks engaged in a defensive dialogue with Euro-Americans through participation in the Ghost Dance movement in which they tied their assertions of an Indian racial identity, one they shared with other tribal groups, to a Native prophetic tradition.

Smoak's conclusion places these developments within the larger context of an increasingly nationalistic and racialized American culture and society. In a contentious struggle to define a national identity and culture, prophetic traditions, shared by both Natives and Euro-Americans, provided a common language that allowed the dominant and marginalized to work out their places in an emerging multiracial society. Most Euro-Americans expected that the process would result in the disappearance of Native Americans, yet a century of struggle, removal to reservations, declining population, and assimilation pressures resulted instead in the "emergence" of Indians "as a self-identified racial group" (10).

*Ghost Dances and Identity* makes a significant contribution to the field of American Indian history. It will provoke much discussion and attract wide attention as a convincing revision of the history of this religious movement. Although sophisticated and scholarly in tone and style, the book is so well written that it is accessible to a wider audience. It is essential reading for all students of Native American history. Those interested in the complexities of identity formation during the nineteenth century will find this book instructive.

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