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Author

Hittman, Michael

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The 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada

MICHAEL HITTMAN

INTRODUCTION

The 1890 Ghost Dance originated among the Tovusidokado, a food-named band or multifamily group of Northern Paiute (Numu) living in Smith and Mason valleys, Nevada.¹ James Mooney wrote the monumental study of this religious movement.² Privileged to interview its prophet, Jack Wilson, or Wovoka ("The Wood Cutter"), Mooney nonetheless focused on the spread of the 1890 Ghost Dance to the Plains and its relation to the Wounded Knee massacre. In the century that has passed, *Ghost Dance* has joined *totem pole*, *potlatch*, *tipi*, *counting coup*, and *powwow* in our common fund of recognizable Native American cultural terms. Yet Wovoka's religious innovation typically is viewed through the form and meaning it assumed on the Plains, when on theoretical grounds alone—diffusion—this short-lived phenomenon should have been expected to differ "on the road." And still no reconstruction of the 1890 Ghost Dance in its homeland exists. This paper attempts to redress that situation. In reconstructing the *sitz im leben* of the 1890 Ghost Dance, I argue that, following a series of visions, its Numu prophet achieved initial local fame as a weather-control shaman during a regional drought; that Wovoka's doctrine was not only otherworldly and pacific but Presbyterian-influenced; that he demonstrated additional culturally compatible "powers" at Round Dance-like social gatherings we call the 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada, and might as well have been attempting to emulate Protestant camp-revival type meetings; and, finally, that 1890

Michael Hittman is a professor of anthropology and chairman of the Sociology-Anthropology Department at Long Island University, Brooklyn, New York.

Ghost Dance ceremonies might have altered following the arrival of Lakota, Cheyenne, and others, soon after Wovoka's Great Revelation, a process aborted by Wounded Knee.

* * *

Any discussion of this important religious movement rightfully begins with Mooney. The "Indian Man" interrupted his Kiowa studies for the Bureau of American Ethnology in late December of 1891 to investigate the so-called Messiah craze sweeping the Plains; his investigation culminated with that historic 1 January 1892 interview of Wovoka in the prophet's East Walker (Mason Valley) home.³ Thirteen months earlier, however, United States Army Indian scout Arthur I. Chapman had preceded Mooney there, dispatched from San Francisco by General John Gibbon of the Pacific Military Department. On 4 December 1890, in the tiny hamlet of Wellington, Smith Valley, Chapman conducted what, in many ways, was the more remarkable interview. Chapman's Report was not only read and praised by Mooney but remains a second indispensable primary source on the 1890 Ghost Dance.⁴ Yet another is the Edward A. Dyer Manuscript.⁵ Dyer was the bilingual grocer who accompanied Mooney, subsequently becoming Wovoka's amanuensis and business partner. Penned at 86, Dyer's memoir, despite its brevity, contains invaluable information about the life and times of the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet. Paul Bailey's biography, for all its errors and essentially jaundiced view, merits distinction as a fourth primary source, if only because the Western writer conducted fieldwork among Wovoka's descendants in Smith and Mason valleys in the 1950s.⁶

But this reconstruction would not have been possible without the aid of new and intriguing information—the Wier Notes (WN) and the Dangberg Composition Notebook (DCN), for example.⁷ Jeanne Elizabeth Wier was a professor of political science at the University of Nevada (Reno) and founder of the Nevada Historical Society. In circa 1910, she interviewed members of the David Wilson family, pioneering settlers on whose Mason Valley ranch Wovoka lived, worked, and derived his *Taiwo*, or white, surname, and the WN is nothing short of a treasure trove of new information about him. Grace Dangberg (1896–1985) was the granddaughter of a German settler of Carson Valley, Nevada; she studied anthropology at Columbia University, founded the Carson Valley Historical Society, and, in circa 1920, did fieldwork in Smith and Mason valleys which resulted in two studies of Wovoka: A mono-

graph consisting of letters written to the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet by Plains Indians and an annotated biographical sketch.⁸ Since not everything in the DCN reached the published page, it, too, can legitimately be called a new primary source. Yet another is Margaret M. Wheat's tape-recorded interview with Wovoka's son-in-law, Andy Vidovich.⁹ Sentimental and no doubt exaggerated, this Death Valley Shoshone's reminiscences from the late 1950s or early 1960s can also be culled for useful information. The final references are the field notes collected by this author in 1968–1972 among Wovoka's descendants and, more recently, in 1986–1989 while directing the Wovoka Centennial Project for the Yerington Paiute tribe.¹⁰ These, joined with the *Lyon County Times* (LCT) and information gained from other historical sources, are the very cornerstones of the ethnohistorical method vital for any understanding of Native Americans since first contact.

Let us, then, begin with a synthesized account of Wovoka's Great Revelation, as drawn from Chapman and Mooney, whose independent versions largely substantiate each other.¹¹

THE GREAT REVELATION

Wovoka said that he "died" and went to Heaven. There he saw all the old (deceased) people; they were young again, well-fed, dancing, and blissfully happy. "God" then gave him power—*booha*—over the weather; specifically, he was given five songs: The first was for mist, the second created snow, the third was for showers, the fourth brought storms, and the fifth and final supernatural power (song) was the all-clear signal. God also instructed him to tell his "people" (Tovusidokado only? Numu in general? All Native Americans?) not to lie or to steal and not to fight with each other or with *Taivos*. Wage labor, moreover, was mandated, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet urging the Numu to follow his personal example and work for whites. Wovoka also revealed a significant political status that he had received: "President of the West"; i. e., he, Jack Wilson, Numu, was destined to share the American presidency with Benjamin Harrison. As for the ceremonial core of the new religion, adherents were admonished to perform the Numu Circle or Round Dance—three nights in succession according to Chapman, five according to Mooney. (Chapman alone reported a maintenance rule of repetition within three months.) Salvation, finally, meant rejuvenated youth in the next life, or so

the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet foretold.

According to Chapman, the Great Revelation was coincidental with a "loud noise" that occurred while Wovoka was employed as a wood cutter in the Pine Grove Mountains, some twenty-three miles south of Yerington, Mason Valley's hub. Although Mooney makes no mention of it, he did date the Great Revelation—1 January 1889—causally linking it with both a solar eclipse and the prophet's high fever, possibly scarlet fever. Because Wovoka stated that his religion had begun in 1888, Mooney further speculated that there might have been "different revelations . . . from time to time," dating the religion's genesis to "early in January" 1889, on the nearby Walker River Reservation.¹² Yet James O. Gregory, the reservation's farmer-agent, earlier told Chapman that Wovoka was "preaching for the last two or three years," i. e., 1887 or 1888. When the army Indian scout directly questioned Wovoka about this—"When did you commence to preach to the Indians?"—Wovoka replied, "About three years ago," i. e., 1887. Dangberg, on the other hand, curiously proposed 1879 as the year of the Great Revelation, dating the inaugural 1890 Ghost Dance ceremony to 1886.¹³ Can local newspapers help to resolve this apparent confusion?

"The Mason Valley Piutes [*sic*] are having big dances every night now," we read on 22 December 1888 in the *LCT*. Too late for the annual Fall Pine Nut Festival—the ritual or ceremony that promoted solidarity among these dispersed foragers¹⁴—these celebrations also could not have been Roman Catholic-sponsored Christmas parties at the Yerington Indian Colony in Mason Valley, founded in 1917; nor were they the September and May gatherings for departing and returning Numu students from the federal boarding school in Carson City (Stewart Institute); or the August gatherings to fete adults about to depart for the hop fields of Sonoma and Mendocino counties, California.¹⁵ In lieu of another viable candidate, the *LCT*'s 22 December 1888 "big dances [being held] . . . every night now," then, might well demarcate the very first 1890 Ghost Dance ceremony.

Unfortunately, Chapman's account of James Josephus's conversion cannot be dated. It obviously occurred before his historic 4 December 1890 audience with Wovoka. Josephus's emphasis on regional drought, in any case, seems critical. Sensing that "there was going to be great suffering amongst the people," the Walker River Reservation Numu police captain stated how he traveled to the new prophet's home in Smith or Mason Valley to request that

Wovoka make good on advertised claims of weather-control power. Invited to spend the night, Captain Josephus was sent home in the morning with the promise or specific prophecy of rain in three days' time. Three days, I emphasize, not the Numu sacred numbers of four and five. "I am [now] a strong believer in the unnatural powers of the new Christ," James Josephus thus proudly told Chapman. Why? Because Wovoka's prophecy came true!

The local newspapers have much to say about that Western drought of a century ago. On 1 September 1888, for example, the *LCT*, which began publication in 1874, reported, "There is not a particle [of water] in the lower end of Mason Valley, and ranchers there have to dig wells to obtain water for stock." A light amount of snow fell that winter; still, the *LCT* would report on 23 February 1889 that "much more snow is needed in the mountains to insure sufficient water next summer to run our milch and irrigate our ranches." Seven months later, however, we read that Mason Valley farmers and ranchers had occasion to rejoice: "The late storm has been of incalculable value to this State. Nearly every portion of the country has received a thorough soaking, and the amount of snow that has fallen in the mountains is sufficient for a good supply of water in the rivers until next fall" (11 May 1889). "There is plenty of water in Mason Valley since the storm," an early August edition from that same year similarly reported. One week later, though, on 10 August, Smith Valley's correspondent would write that D. C. Simpson of the Desert Creek Ranch (Smith Valley) was calling 1889 "the driest season ever known in Nevada." What no doubt were microenvironmental differences between these two Great Basin valleys is further indicated in an *LCT* report from the following month: "And still there are no signs of rain." By 23 November 1889, the "terrible drought" in Smith Valley was said to have finally ended.

Now Josephus told Chapman that, without rain, his people "would have no crops of any kind," and Edward C. Johnson, former Walker River Reservation tribal chairman, has written that, at the time of the 1890 Ghost Dance, "crops of alfalfa [there] were harvested and a good deal of farming was going on."¹⁶ Quoting the farmer-agent's report to the commissioner of Indian affairs in 1890, Johnson notes "'1,868 (more or less) acres under cultivation [then] which is divided into 54 ranches and farmed by 63 persons . . . [while] Indians have about 120 moderately good work horses."¹⁷ That rainfall was vital to Agaidokado, or "Fish-Eaters," living on those 300,000 acres set aside in 1859 in Walker

Lake Valley for “Indian purposes” but not put into trust status until the Executive Order of 1874, is obvious enough. Wovoka’s successful prophecy of rain in three days’ time, in other words, would have been just the sort of legitimizing “sign” or “wonder” that Max Weber has argued is characteristic of sociocultural change involving charismatic types of leadership.¹⁸ But the five hundred or so Numu in adjoining Smith and Mason valleys were day-laborers; they, in fact, neither owned nor cultivated their own lands until the middle 1930s.¹⁹ So what might Wovoka’s Great Revelation of 1 January 1889 and subsequent oracular triumph have meant to Tovusidokado? How did their famed prophet defeat conventional wisdom by gaining honor at home?

SMITH AND MASON VALLEY NUMU ACCULTURATION (1850–1890)

Like other Great Basin peoples, the Tovusidokado became acculturated rapidly.²⁰ Initial hostilities notwithstanding, they proved to be of inestimable value as day-laborers to the *Taiwo* usurpers of their land, such as Timothy Smith, who settled the valley named for him in the early 1860s and praised them accordingly:

In justice to the Piute [*sic*] Indians it must be said that during the first years we were among them, though we would gladly have seen them leave the country because of the anxiety and annoyance they caused us, yet a few years later I do not see how we would have managed without their assistance.²¹

Smith and Mason Valley Numu readily attached themselves to *Taiwo* ranches and farms, the men working as cowboys, driving cattle to and from summer pasture; in the main, they performed the full range of labor-intensive jobs associated with wheat, barley, and alfalfa cultivation, which, along with livestock and mining, comprised Walker River’s late nineteenth-century regional economic complex; Numu women working as cooks and as dish and clothing washers on those same farms and ranches, as well as in the hotels at Wellington in Smith Valley, at Mason, Yerington, and Wabuska in Mason Valley, and in Pine Grove, the mining town of one thousand people in the Pine Grove Mountains where Wovoka experienced his Great Revelation.²² Population schedules from the tenth census indicate just how complete their socioeco-

conomic transformation was by 1880: Among the fifty-seven listed family units, the men's job duties were given as farmhand, chopping wood, and "chores"; laundry, keeping house, and "chores" were given for Numu women. "Indians off reservations [i. e., Smith and Mason valleys] . . . maintain themselves and their families by working at odd jobs, such as cutting wood, hunting stock, and by general chores." The *XI Census* reported at the time of the 1890 Ghost Dance, "[W]omen wash, iron, scrub, and do general kitchen work and house cleaning . . ." ²³ According to the *LCT*, Numu men then earned \$1.25 a day plus board during harvest season and \$1.50 a day for stacking hay; *Taivos*, by contrast, earned \$40 a month and \$60 a month for the same jobs (31 May 1890). Since regional drought in the late 1880s meant real or potential loss of the jobs on which these acculturated wage-earners depended, one can only speculate whether any (many?) *Tovusidokado* saw in *Wovoka*'s weather-control power the venue for control over a *Taivo*-dominated economy.

Informants, unfortunately, could recall neither the Great Revelation nor its linkage with the solar eclipse and *Wovoka*'s sickness. But the DCN amply documents the latter. Genevieve Chapin, for example, granddaughter of David (1829–1915) and Abigail Jane Wilson née Butler (1826–1912), told Dangberg that "when Jack was a young man he had a terrible illness, a fever. He was in a coma and near death for days, and he believed he talked with God."²⁴ We also read that "Jack was not well. Men were chanting over him. Mr. Plummer [Mason Valley early settler] stayed a while. Soon after Indians said he died and came back" (DCN).²⁵ Indeed, on 10 February 1887, a *LCT* reporter stated that scarlet fever was then raging in Reno, Nevada. Johnson Sides, *Wovoka*'s Numu opponent, was quoted in this source (9 June 1887) as stating that not since 1864 had smallpox and measles killed so many of his people. Scarlet and typhoid fever were also said to be "going around" on 29 October 1887 (*LCT*). In the following year, scarlet fever reportedly wreaked its toll on the Numu living in the Dayton to Reno area: "There is hardly a buck, a squaw or papoose that is not afflicted with the malady [grippe] (18 April 1888/*LCT*). On 2 March 1889 (*LCT*), smallpox was said to have reached epidemic proportions in Carson City.

According to the *LCT* (5 January 1889), the 1 January 1889 solar eclipse began at twenty minutes past noon on a Tuesday morning and was over by 3:11 p.m.: "The thermometer lowered from seven to eight degrees, and it was very cold. The darkness was so great

that chickens sought their roost, and several stars were plainly visible." Wovoka, in contrast to other prophets (the Shawnee Prophet), never boasted the power to predict eclipses.²⁶ Mooney, as Johnson has suggested,²⁷ might stereotype the Numu people's reaction to it (cf. "On this occasion the Paiutes were frantic with excitement and the air was filled with the noise of shouts and wailings and the firing of guns, for the purpose of frightening off the monster that threatened the life of their god"),²⁸ but the solar eclipse and the regional drought of the late 1880s were not the only unusual environmental conditions at the time of the 1890 Ghost Dance.

Chapman, recall, correlated Wovoka's Great Revelation with a "loud noise," and we do frequently read of "rumbling noises" in Smith and Mason valleys. On 24 March 1888 (*LCT*), for example, Hinds Hot Springs in Smith Valley reportedly was sent ten to fifteen feet in the air by what must have been an earth tremor, a geological event characteristic of Mammoth to Mono Lakes, California, an active volcanic zone, for two thousand years.²⁹ Ervin Webster, *Taiwo* settler of the East Walker River area of Mason Valley, described an earlier earthquake in 1874.³⁰ Recalling six or eight shocks on some summer days, Webster stated that one or more of them occurred daily and that they caused his cattle to jump to their feet and run helter-skelter, while his horses stopped on the trail and spread their legs to prevent themselves from falling. On 16 June 1888, we also read of forty-mile-per-hour winds most days, which killed Smith Valley's entire local fruit crop. And a lunar eclipse that began at 11:30 p.m. of the preceding Sunday was reported on 23 July 1888. On 18 August 1888, the *LCT* speaks of a "slight" (afternoon) earth tremor in Smith Valley, while "thick fog," the likes of which had never before been experienced, was said to have occurred in September.³¹ Did these extraordinary geological and climatological events combine with regional drought and the 1 January 1889 solar eclipse to create an environmental, if not eschatological, crisis for the Smith and Mason Valley Numu? Were they what preconditioned and ultimately led to Wovoka's acceptance as "weather-control doctor" by Tovusidokado?

The Numu, of course, belong to the Uto-Aztecan language family,³² and we know, from King Montezuma II's famous "broodings" on the return of Quetzlcoatl during the Aztec year One Reed,³³ that environmental anomalies contributed to Cortes's conquest. Furthermore, Leslie Spier defined the "Prophet Dance," a Basin-Plateau cycle in which individuals from time to time

“died’ and returned to life with renewed assurances of the truth of the doctrine [of world renewal]; cataclysms of nature occurred which were taken as portents of the end.”³⁴ A recent statement by Sven Liljeblad to the effect that Great Basin peoples traditionally were more concerned with how the world will end than how it began can also be used to buttress this argument.³⁵

Among the Smith and Mason Valley Numu, belief in “ordinary,” i. e., nonpowerful, individuals impacting upon nature is still expressed. While gathering pine nuts, for example, women might “call” or whistle for the wind at the end of the day, i. e., when they wish to winnow ripe seeds in their harvest baskets. “You don’t wanna make fun of the wind (or rain or snow, etc.),” one frequently hears among them. A Numu would no more complain about the weather than openly disparage the size of a hunted animal.³⁶ Consider, then, the opportunity that existed for individuals who were believed to possess supernatural weather-control power.

Willard Z. Park, for example, wrote that while weather control was “not usually exercised for the good of the community,” its practitioners might, all the same, “cause the clear sky to become cloudy, the wind to blow or rain to fall . . . simply by waving a feather or by singing. . . .”³⁷ After describing how these individuals “can also stop wind and rain or banish the clouds that they have brought,” Park also noted, “Although the predominant motive in weather-control is this exhibition of power, shamans have been known in the past to manipulate the weather for the benefit of the community.”³⁸ “The Indian doctors know the wind, clouds, and rain,” Smith and Mason valley legendary Numu shaman Tom Mitchell told him. “A shaman talks to them. They are just like people, and they come. Anyone who makes fun of the thunder will be killed.”³⁹ According to Corbett Mack, my primary informant, a friend’s father once prayed for rain during a forest fire in the Sweetwater Mountains of California: “I wish you would put the fire out.” Mack, who had witnessed the extensive damage left in the fire’s wake, remarked that the torrential downpour caused by this “weather-control doctor” eventually extinguished the forest fire. Another anecdote involving this individual concerns a solar eclipse. Asked in Sweetwater Valley to intercede on behalf of “freezing and crying Numus,” Corbett Mack’s friend’s father borrowed a gun before he “spoke” (prayed) accordingly to the Sun, a principal Numu deity:⁴⁰ “I think I can turn you over!” Whereupon this “weather-control doctor” fired, and the eclipse

ended. "That's why he's a very smart [powerful] man," Mack commented, adding, incidentally, that his friend's father had even greater power than the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet.

To Mooney's description of Wovoka's weather-control powers,⁴¹ the prophet's own statement to Chapman ought to be added:

"This country was all dry early last spring; there was nothing growing, and the prospects for the future were very discouraging to both the Indians and the whites, and they came to me and asked for rain to make their crops grow. I caused a small cloud to appear in the heavens, which gave rain for all, and they were satisfied."⁴²

And forty years later, Wovoka's supernatural power was still known among his descendants:

One [power] was a straight high cloud. This was for snow. The other cloud was dark and close to the ground. It was for rain. Wovoka could see a man's arm sticking out of the white cloud. One time the arm would be pointing north. Another time it would be pointing south, east or west.⁴³

Indeed, the local newspapers invariably characterized him as the "Rain Maker" and "Great Weather Prophet." For example, under the heading "Rain Dance," the *LCT* reported on 20 April 1889, "The Piutes [*sic*] of Mason Valley had a big rain dance last week. Their big man who formerly brought rain when they desired it, died last summer, and therefore they have taken it upon themselves to pray for rain in their peculiar manner." And on 3 August 1889, we similarly read, "The great weather prophet is said to be a fine looking man, much resembling the late Henry Ward Beecher." The *Walker Lake Bulletin*, a source of information about Walker River Reservation Numu living conditions, also wrote on 12 November 1890,

This so-called Messiah first gained notoriety at the Walker Lake Reservation early last winter. The Indians wanted rain, and they assembled in conclave, and the Messiah appeared, and they asked for water—not fire water. The result was that the most severe storms of that stormy winter followed. After about a month of incessant rain and snow the Indians had enough, and again they sought the Messiah and asked him to let up. And lo and behold, the clouds rolled by, and soon the papers began blowing about the fine climate.

Our new sources on the 1890 Ghost Dance confirm these claims. Maurice Snyder, Mason Valley rancher, told Wier that Wovoka "could make it rain, etc.," while Geraldine Webster, of the East Walker River Ranch, told Dangberg,⁴⁴

Dan Simpson [Desert Creek Ranch founder, Smith Valley] believed in Jack. One year during a drought (1887–1889), Jack went to Mr. Simpson and promised to make it rain if Mr. Simpson would give him three beeves. Mr. Simpson refused but later when his cattle began to die, he promised Jack one beef if he would make it rain. The storm came; even after this Mr. Simpson kept Jack in beef.

Furthermore, we read in the DCN that "for five years [Wovoka] never missed a prophecy concerning weather and sun dogs ('86–'90)." According to Mrs. Webster, who authored that statement, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet surprisingly appeared at her door in the midst of spring cleaning. "This [was] May of '91 or '92," she recalled. "'Thursday, Frid[ay] and S[aturday] and S[unday] [Wovoka warned] would storm [so] have the washing done.' [Well, so that] storm came [and Wovoka said], 'Look n.e.-sky. Jack [Wilson] make everybody know today he's God.'" To this, Dangberg's informant added, "Mr. W[ebster] said he would use him for [his] weather vane." Dangberg herself then generalized, "Jack [Wilson] accurately prophesied all storms. It is generally conceded by residents of Mason valley that Wovoka correctly prophesied the 'hard winter' of 1889–1890; some claimed that he accurately foretold all storms occurring between 1886 and 1891 or 1892."⁴⁵

J. I. Wilson (1859–1954), who, along with J. W. (1857–1930) and G. W. Wilson (1863–1927), was Wovoka's boyhood playmate on the Wilson Ranch, lends additional support for this argument that weather-control power explains his initial acceptance not only on the Walker River Reservation but in Smith and Mason valleys as well. Discussing the letters written to Wovoka by Plains Indians, the middle Wilson son recalled for Dangberg,

The letters to Jack were from Indians who were always asking Jack to make it rain more and to cure their people who were ill with diseases in imaginary diseases (?). Therefore, when Jack wrote a letter to the patient he would always insist that his own letter close with the statement that, "We have lots of

rain here and my people are all very well and happy."⁴⁶

Dangberg also quoted a letter from James Long of Oswego, Montana, in which Wovoka was said to have "'sent his correspondents red paint with which to decorate themselves before a rain, and instructed them to stand out in the rain and let the drops wash it off.'"⁴⁷

Official (federal) correspondences in this regard can also be cited. A letter to Pyramid Lake Reservation's Indian agent, S. S. Sears, for example, not only mentions the performance of an 1890 Ghost Dance on the Walker River Reservation in 1889 but imputes the same pecuniary motives to its prophet that originally were ascribed by Chapman:

[Y]ou will doubtless be amazed at the letter you will have received from Jack Wilson the prophet when this reaches you he has got the indians all wild at his wonderful command of the elements he claims that he alone is responsible for the storms of this season and they all firmly believe it. The letter he has written as he supposes to Washington is for the purpose of finding out if the government believes in him as a prophet. There was at least 200 Indians to say nothing of the squaws and papooses turned out yesterday in the face of a driving snow storm to see and hear him they took up quite a collection for his benefit fully \$25 and they talk of nothing but Jack Wilson and the miracles he performs he would like to be allowed to come onto the Reservation to farm and guarantees the Indians that if the Government gives him permission to come he will cause lots of rain to fall and they will never lose a crop again. They are expecting a reply to his letter and if you see fit to answer as in your judgement would be proper.⁴⁸

On 12 December 1890, C. C. Warner replaced Sears, whose supercilious remark about the "Messiah craze" provoked that famous intemperate remark by Mooney.⁴⁹ Warner wrote,

Wovoka had obtained his notoriety by telling the Indians that he would invoke the Great Spirit and bring rain (after there had been a drought of two years) . . . and it so happened that his promised invocation was in the commencement of our severe winter of 1889 and 1890, during which time it stormed incessantly from October to April.⁵⁰

Finally, the Smith and Mason Valley Numu also spoke of

Wovoka's weather-control powers. In one frequently told tale, men (*Taivos* in a variant form) were said to be playing baseball (or pitching hay) on a hot summer day. But when Wovoka walked past and one of them foolishly teased him—"Hey, Jack. Let's see you make rain!"—the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet had to be begged to call off his power because of a storm cloud that immediately appeared in that otherwise clear blue Nevada sky. Again, during an unexpected thunderstorm that erupted while he was planting a tree for a Smith Valley employer, Wovoka, remarkably, continued his outdoor labors, unafraid and without getting wet. Irene Thompson (b. 1911), lifelong resident of Smith Valley, recalled for me in 1986 something her mother (Sadie Brown) used to say about Jack Wilson: that he had the ability to "start up" the wind simply by blowing on a hot charcoal in his hand, which, incidentally, did not burn. Wovoka also was believed able to light his pipe by the sun and form icicles in his hand. According to Corbett Mack, the Walker River went dry one year, and Smith and Mason Valley Numu were suffering, prompting the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet miraculously to fill a willow basket with water.⁵¹ He also was said to have unleashed a torrential rainstorm after his only son was killed in a horse and wagon mishap in circa 1896. Because Numu homes were then threatened with washouts, either the shaman Tom Mitchell or his assistant Blind Bob Roberts was asked to beg the grieving prophet/father to call off his *booha*.⁵²

One other example will suffice. Andy Vidovich, who was married to the prophet's youngest daughter, Alice, told Peg Wheat that torrential rains during the annual pine nut harvest in Pine Grove one year caused their tents to leak, soaking their firewood through and through. Once again, a delegation of concerned Numu had to petition the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet to employ his much-vaunted weather-control powers on their behalf. In this instance, Wovoka first ordered them to pile up their wet wood; then he requested an eagle feather:

He was a big man tall in that wind and rain and everything [related Vidovich]. He put that eagle plume up there as high as he could reach . . . [and] took . . . [his hand down] . . . and that eagle plume stayed up there. Then he knelt down and waited a little while and then, maybe he hit two rocks together, I don't know what he did, anyway, a spark came and that wood began to burn. All that wet wood and everything.⁵³

Everything, that is, except the borrowed eagle feather, which

Vidovich said turned "the most beautiful color you ever could see." And, quoting his famed father-in-law, Andy Vidovich said, "'Take from this fire to your tent, your tepee, build your fires. The rain will go on but your food will get dry and your tents will be dry, your tepees will be dry, and everything will be alright.'"

If Jay Miller is correct about the centrality of *booha*, or power, to Great Basin religions and its close association with water, this case for Wovoka's initial acceptance by Walker River Reservation Numu farmers in terms of the regional drought in the late 1880s and his successful prophecy/demonstration of weather-control powers (rain for Numu farmers) can be closed.⁵⁴ Acceptance by wage-laboring Smith and Mason Valley Numu, on the other hand, will be seen not only as their culturally stamped interpretation of those "unusual" environmental conditions, culminating with the solar eclipse of 1 January 1889, but in terms of three other supernatural powers demonstrated by the prophet at ceremonial gatherings we call the 1890 Ghost Dance, only one of which directly had anything to do with his weather-control powers.

THE PROPHECY/MIRACLE OF ICE FROM THE SUMMER SKY

"Regarding the ice episode," Ed Dyer recalled,

I can speak as an eye witness. My brother, Bob Dyer, who was also completely bilingual in Pahute and I, became aware that some activity was going to take place which somehow concerned Jack Wilson. Upon learning the time and place we unobtrusively showed up to see what was afoot. The meeting took place along the river bank on a hot July day. A hundred or more Indians were present but there was no great excitement among them. Wilson was holding a sort of informal court at the side of a blanket spread upon the ground under a large cottonwood tree. Groups of Indians came up to talk to him and move away. Other small groups just milled around. We talked to some. They were distinctly not talkative to a white but we gathered that they expected Wilson to perform some miracle. *Doo-mur-eye* (accented on second syllable) they called it which means an act of wizardry. Suddenly a great outcry came from the group around Wilson. Every one rushed over to see what had happened. There in the center of the blanket lay a big block of ice some 25 or 30 pounds in weight.

Wilson had caused it to come from the sky and the Indians explained to those who had their eyes turned the wrong way to see it for themselves.

The Smith and Mason Valley Numu “accepted the miracle in full faith,” Dyer wrote, noting also “the solemnity of the occasion” and that they “ceremoniously” drank the melted water afterwards, “like sacramental wine,” he analogized. Whereupon, “at Jack’s order, the whole bunch stripped and plunged into the river . . . I was willing to believe it had fallen alright.” Wovoka’s close friend nonetheless expressed dubiety. And Bailey, who interviewed Ed Dyer, agreed that a “prank” had indeed been played upon this unsuspecting Numu, probably by one or more of the Wilson boys.⁵⁵ Genevieve Chapin, on the other hand, told Wier that Jack Wilson was the culprit. He “probably got his ideas from them,” J. I. Wilson’s daughter suggested, learning “to play practical jokes by playing with the Wilson boys” (WN). To Dangberg, Mrs. Chapin stated,

[Uncle] Billy was full of fun and played jokes on people all his life and Jack [Wovoka] was smart and had a keen sense of humor and he played jokes on Billy and I firmly believe that in later life when Jack played some of the tricks on the Indians that the white people make so much of, trying to say that Jack was a fake, [they] were done with no intent to deceive or advance his greatness as a Messiah but because he had a sense of humor and did it for fun. He loved a joke and had a great wit.⁵⁶

“[I] wouldn’t want to go on record as saying that [Wovoka was an] . . . awful fake but” Dangberg (DCN) elsewhere quotes a Wilson family member. Indeed, the Wilson Ranch founder himself emphatically stated that “Jack is not capable of telling them things which are credited” (WN), while this comment by David Wilson’s son-in-law, George Plummer, is even more besmirching: “Jack Wilson told Mrs. D[avid]. Wilson one day: ‘I know there’s nothing in it, but keep still. I get money from Indians’” (WN).

On the other hand, Smith and Mason Valley Numu voiced strong opposition: “Sure we believe in Jack Wilson. If he said he was going to do it, then by God, why not! Besides, why couldn’t he? That was his *booha*, wasn’t it?” Another stated, “*Taivos* made fun of Jack Wilson because he said he was going to put ice in the river, but I predict that with his power he did!” Thus the 1890

Ghost Dance prophet's descendants reasoned that Wovoka could have produced that block of ice from the summer sky (Heaven?) easily enough as a result of his supernatural gift of weather-control *booha*. And if the anonymous *Taivo* author of a manuscript found in the Lyon County Library, Yerington, Nevada, has rendered this prophecy/miracle's Fourth of July date accurately, we might justifiably see it as the attempt by a charismatic leader to establish a rival ceremonial calendar, i. e., commensurate with Wovoka's divine selection as "President of the West."⁵⁷

TRANCES

"He went into trances in which he remained for as long as two days and, when he awakened, announced that he had been to the Indian Heaven and was able to give a thorough-going description," Ed Dyer wrote. His brother Bob, who lived with a Numu woman and fathered her children, similarly told Dangberg (DCN) that Wovoka "used to go into [a] trance He went to Heaven through the Dipper or the Milky Way . . . wrapped in a blanket and when [he] came to [he] had ice in his hand." George Plummer related much the same: "Indians believed him to be in a trance. Only about one dozen [of] them then" (WN). "Jack's trances [were] not in connection with dance," Plummer interestingly related, to which his wife added,

[The 1890 Ghost Dance] started about a half mile west of here. Jack [w]as not well. Men chanting over him. Mr. Plummer stayed awhile. Soon after Indians said he died and came back. All Indians believe that some Indians hold powers over others. Spirit power (WN).

Yet another account of Wovoka's use of trance is given by "M. [David?] Wilson," who connects it with both the prophet's weather-control power and his invulnerability:

During dance [Wovoka] went into 3 day trance. All Paiutes came. 2nd dance prophesied big wind and storm for three days. (Wind then storm) Plus shirt stunt. Prophesied trance then "came back" and told what he had seen. Even now in high repute [in] his own trib [sic].

Now Mooney argued that Smohallaism and Shakerism, nine-

teenth-century Native American syncretic religions, were the probable sources of Wovoka's trances.⁵⁸ Yet in contrast to the Wanapam prophet, Wovoka neither predicted eclipses nor designated sabbaths for ceremonies. Nor did his Great Revelation even hint at opposition to reservations, farming, and allotment of lands. Indeed, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet not only espoused a Protestant-type work ethic, but twice sought allotted land on the Walker River Reservation between 1910 and 1920, while complaining once to its Indian agent (in 1915) that he had been deprived of a deeded portion of the late David Wilson's ranch.⁵⁹ As for those Presbyterian-inspired Pacific Northwest Shakers who Mooney felt certain were the proximate source of Wovoka's trances,⁶⁰ Chapman wrote that Wovoka never left his "own country,"⁶¹ and Angus McCloud, Mason Valley settler, echoed that view: [Wovoka] "never went to Oregon [and was] scarcely out of [the] valley" (WN). Direct contact, of course, need not have occurred in order for Wovoka's trances to derive from Shakerism. And while one might be tempted to see Shakerism's "strictest morality, sobriety, and honesty" in Wovoka's 1890 Ghost Dance,⁶² nowhere in the Great Revelation is there comparable rejection of whiskey, gambling, and horse racing; no ritualistic handshaking in the 1890 Ghost Dance of Nevada; no blowing or brushing away of sin; no use of the Cross; no ceremonial headdresses of blue, white, and yellow lit candles; no bells to diagnose illness; no prophesied destruction of the world on Independence Day; and no comparable dance step.⁶³ Until more than circumstantial evidence can be put forth, the roots of Wovoka's trances must be sought elsewhere. But where? In the 1870 Ghost Dance, which originated on the Walker River Reservation and whose ceremonies a teenaged Jack Wilson/Wovoka possibly witnessed and undoubtedly had heard of?⁶⁴ In the "Prophet Dance," which Spier so persuasively argued underlies both the 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dances? Since these data also are lacking, I argue Tovusidokado culture instead as the provenance of Wovoka's trances.

Stewart, for example, reported the universality of trances in all twenty-one Numu bands,⁶⁵ and Park wrote that "only the best and strongest [Numu] doctors have this power."⁶⁶ Numu shamans might enter trance-states to retrieve patients' souls, we learn from the ethnographic literature.⁶⁷ Thus Park would describe a Reno shaman, who, "after going into a trance in which his body was stiff as a board . . . went to a place where the dead are . . ." ⁶⁸ Elsewhere I argue that the 1870 Ghost Dance prophet Wodziwob, or Fish

Lake Joe, restored a comatose Numu girl around the turn of the century.⁶⁹ Moreover, Numu shamans could inherit their powers: "There seems to be a general feeling that at least one child of a shaman will inherit powers."⁷⁰ Since Wovoka's father Numuraivo, or Northern Paiute-White Man, was a shaman, he might have possessed the ability to enter trance-states, in which case the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet could have inherited it from him. Let us, in any case, return to the Dyer Manuscript, where additional information about Wovoka's trances can be found.

"Jack Wilson's trances were, at least to Indians, very impressive productions," Ed Dyer recalled,

I can speak only as a layman in such matters but it is my belief that they were truly self-induced hypnotic trances of a rather deep nature. He wasn't shamming. His body was as rigid as a board. His mouth could not be pried open and he showed no reaction to pain-inducing experiments. At first his friends, thinking he was dying, made repeated and futile efforts to wake him up by physical manipulation and the administration of stimulation by mouth. He revived in his own good time.

So "impressive" were they, in fact, that Bob Dyer reported "some [followers consequently] committed suicide." Once again, the Dyer Manuscript can be consulted for information:

I personally witnessed the demise of one deluded victim and can attest that it was a long drawn out and agonizing death. Eating of wild parsnip to commit suicide was not an uncommon method among the Indians. In this case and several other, the victim was not only in a hurry to visit Heaven but also was assured that he could return again as Jack had done, to find earth a much improved place, for better days were coming for the red men.

This was a tragic death, commented Ed Dyer, resulting because the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet had "painted such an enticing picture [of the afterlife]."

Although trances were part and parcel of this religion which diffused to the Plains, Mooney noted Wovoka's insistence that "followers"—Tovusidokado? Numu? Visiting Lakota?—were discouraged from emulating him.⁷¹ In addition, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet's trances took place in broad daylight, when Numu

shamanic orthodoxy stipulated night—Night—as ritually appropriate.⁷² An even broader-based authority than was ordinarily claimed by Numu shamans is thereby implied, i. e., consonant with seeming universal characteristics of religious movements, such as “status reversals” and “liminality,” hence warranting our designation of Wovoka as prophet as well as shaman.⁷³

INVULNERABILITY

“He announced well in advance that he couldn’t be killed by a gun,” Ed Dyer said, describing what appears to have been yet a third “sign” or supernatural power demonstrated at 1890 Ghost Dance ceremonies in Smith and Mason valleys, Nevada:

He simply was able to render his body impervious to lead. Moreover he could create powder and shot out of dust and sand. He then proceeded to back up his claims with a demonstration that left no doubt in the minds of a very large and interested audience.

...

The demonstration came off in grand style. Jack, wrapped in a heavy blanket robe, produced a muzzle loading shot gun for everyone’s inspection. Then he reached down at his feet, got a pinch of dust which he dropped down the barrel. Powder he explained and reached for a handful of sand. That as far as any one could tell also went down the barrel in lieu of shot. A bit of paper wadding pushed down by the ramrod completed the charge and the gun was then handed to Jack’s brother who was delegated as shooter.

Jack strode majestically to a spot previously selected, some distance from the rest of the crowd but well within gun range. He removed his blanket, placed it flat on the ground, took his stance in the center of the blanket, faced his brother standing in the midst of the crowd and ordered him to fire. The brother took careful aim at the man on the blanket and pulled the trigger. A very real and authentic shot gun blast rend the air. Jack was seen to shake himself vigorously and then heard to bid one and all to come forward to him. The Indians came up to see a man standing on a blanket, absolutely unhurt but wearing a shirt riddled with shot holes. On the blanket at his feet lay the shot.

Yet when queried by Chapman—“Did you tell them that you were

bullet-proof, and to prove it you spread a blanket on the ground and stood upon it, with nothing on you except a calico shirt, and had your brother to shoot at you at a distance of 10 feet, and the ball struck your breast and dropped to the blanket?"—the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet enigmatically replied, "That was only a joke."⁷⁴ Was Wovoka merely being politic? Did he demonstrate invulnerability only for the Numu, or was this power grafted onto his ceremonial plan after Plains Indians began arriving in Smith and Mason valleys in large numbers? One Wilson family member who told Dangberg (DCN) that Wovoka used to "let himself be shot at with buckshot [and] therefore seemed invulnerable" related how he "used to aggravate the prophet—by asking to let him shoot at him. 'Ah, no,' said Jack," was the putative reply. And in reply to Chapman's other question—"Did you tell the Indians if they got into trouble with whites that they must not be afraid, that you would protect them against being hurt?" Wovoka vehemently stated, "That was my dream. It has not come to pass yet."⁷⁵ Lieutenant Nat Phister, who conducted a third early, independent investigation of the 1890 Ghost Dance in its homeland, wrote the following: "The prophet had said that he was invulnerable and if anyone tried to kill him, the soldier will be killed. If cut into pieces the soldier will be without bones and collapse."

Mooney compared Wovoka's invulnerability (and those notorious Plains "ghost shirts" it might have inspired) with Millerite "ascension robes" of the 1840s, before implying their connection with Mormon "endowment robes."⁷⁶ But Garold Barney, who so impressively examined this subject, concluded that Mormonism could not have been the source of Wovoka's invulnerability.⁷⁷ So, once again, in lieu of these comparisons, our discussion of the roots of Wovoka's invulnerability ought to be brought "home," i. e., Tovusidokado culture.

Thus, Major John Wesley Powell would report in the 1870s that the Numu believed in "arrowproof" power.⁷⁸ "Shamans with the strongest powers were thought to be invulnerable against arrows and later bullets," Park similarly wrote.⁷⁹ Characterizing invulnerability as a form of supernatural power "sought on a mountain near Wabuska," the ethnographer noted how its acquisition "protects a man against bullets. It makes him a great warrior. When a man gets power at this place he must run down the side of the mountain without breathing."⁸⁰ And Cora Du Bois would note in her exhaustive study of the 1870 Ghost Dance that Pongi, or Frank Spencer, its apostle Paul, "was supposed to be invulnerable when

fired upon with a gun."⁸¹ Although Stewart reported the absence of this cultural trait among Smith and Mason Valley Numu,⁸² Corbett Mack's narration of the extraordinary exploits of a quartet of Numu heroes during the 1860 Pyramid Lake War suggests that invulnerability might, indeed, have belonged to their aboriginal cultural kit:

Soldiers, they got horses, but those other guys—Tom Wakeen, Tovusigetyu [Cyperus-eater], Winnemucca Natsee [Young Winnemucca] and Poogoogatyu [Horseman, Mack's maternal grandfather]—don't need 'em. 'Cause you see why? They can go just as fast as any horse! Yes, sir! 'N', stay right up there with 'em, too! Winnemucca Natsee, he says, "Their guns too slow. We can dive right in there. 'Cause we got a hatchet, go left 'n' right. 'N', [so] they die. Gone like a bird. So those soldiers, they don't get up no more!"⁸³

Moreover, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet told Mooney that his own father was bulletproof,⁸⁴ a claim reiterated by David Wilson (WN). "Yeah, I'd say Jack Wilson was bulletproof," stated Andy Dick, my oldest Smith and Mason Valley Numu informant in 1968. Dick (b. 1885?), after relating that "some of them people [with *booha*] are like that, you know [i. e., invulnerable]," recalled how as a small boy he witnessed Wovoka's designation of a fellow Numu to shoot at him. Noting that the potential assassin's finger froze on the trigger, Andy Dick bemusedly described how the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet subsequently took hold of the weapon and freely fired. Wovoka also was believed able to shoot jackrabbit with a pinch of alkali (or sand) instead of gunpowder. He "could make powder and ammunition from dirt," Bob Dyer told Dangberg (DCN). The Dyer Manuscript again offers a fuller accounting:

When out on a rabbit drive, they said Jack was in the habit of dropping a pinch of snow or sand into the muzzle of his gun and forthwith bringing down a jackrabbit. He didn't need orthodox powder and shot. They knew this to be true as they had seen it with their own eyes.

Note here the context, the fall rabbit drive.⁸⁵ During one communal hunt held in Mason Valley, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet reportedly was shot. Yet, according to Andy Dick, shells merely "bounced off Jack's head!" Although the following reminiscence by Frank Quinn (b. 1902) is interesting in itself, I argue that the

annual rabbit drive is crucial for any understanding of the 1890 Ghost Dance in Smith and Mason valleys, if not in Walker River area Numu in general:

Jack used to go all over to rabbit drives. [So] I guess somebody didn't like him, and somebody just shot at him, intending to kill him. I saw this because I was with the gang. I was just a little boy, bringing the team of horses for them. Anyway, when he got shot he was hollering at everybody and moving his hands up. He was standing there and he said, "Boys, I've been shot." Another thing he asked for was a handkerchief. You know, the old time blue and white kind men used to wear around their neck in those days. And when he stood up, there was an ant hill. Black ants. So he stood up there and put the handkerchief on the ground. When he unbuckled his belt and pulled out his shirt, his shirt was full of holes. And then when he done that, he took off his shoes and laid them right there. Shook himself off. He shook off all the shells and he stood and he said, "Boys, you see all these bullets were intended to kill me." Then he picked up the bullets and wrapped them up and passed them around for the men to see. When he pulled off his shirt, you could see where the bullets hit. There were lots of red spots on his body. That's the kind of man he was."⁸⁶

Indeed, Smith and Mason Valley Numu aver that, before he was even a shaman, Wovoka used to doctor individuals shot during rabbit drives.⁸⁷ In one instance, he spread a canvas on the ground and caused shells to alight miraculously from the body of his brother Pat merely by "tappings" with an eagle feather. During another rabbit drive, Pat Wilson reportedly shot a fellow hunter: "He [the victim] was running behind him and fell, Pat accidentally shot him in the head." Once again, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet successfully doctored a fellow Numu at a collective gathering. And as was true with trances, Wovoka demonstrated this supernatural power in heterodox manner—in broad daylight rather than at night. Therefore, another hypothesis about the 1890 Ghost Dance can be proposed: that in addition to his successful demonstration of weather-control powers during what we can call the "environmental crisis of the late 1880s," Wovoka solidified his emergent status as prophet in the Walker River area by doctoring Numu accidentally shot with firearms in the annual fall rabbit drive, i. e., when sagebrush beaters converged upon family-owned nets strung across the valley floor.

1890 GHOST DANCE CEREMONIES IN NEVADA

The 1890 Ghost Dance involved “dancers, men and women, [who] formed a circle, with their fingers interlocked. They progressed by taking small steps to the left, in a kind of shuffling movement. The dancers were surrounded by round structures of willow branches. The dancing which went on for four consecutive nights and a morning was accompanied by singing.”⁸⁸ Although neither Mooney nor Chapman saw any of the dances, David Wilson significantly related the following:

Messiahship—Big Dance—Indians from V[irginia] City, Bodie, Walker Lake—held in this [southern] end of [Mason] Valley. On Wilson Ranch. Biannual dances. All Indians lived in this end of Valley. Fall and Spring dances. Had a dance. Jack conceived the idea of being a prophet. Old fellows gathered in a circle and smoke a pipe—talk a little. Meanwhile others merry-making. Jack gave a big talk to whole trib [sic]. Proclaimed himself. Addressed whole trib [sic]. Unusual proceedings. Prophecied [sic] some things which came true. This is Spring dance. By Fall dance men came from Oklahoma. Didn't talk much. Less said the better for him. Big dance advertised for Fall. J[ack] going into trance for the occasion. Many delegations.

Wovoka, as we have already seen, went into a three-day trance during these dances, after which the Wilson Ranch founder said he prophesied “a big wind and storm for three days. Wind then storm [came]. Plus shirt stunt. Prophecied [sic] trance then ‘came back’ and told what he had seen.” Bob Dyer said that “Indians from east come to learn dance, etc., stack money—in front of him and gifts” (DCN). The Dyer Manuscript (again) offers what perhaps is the fuller accounting:

I witnessed, sometimes in company with my brother, a number of those dances in which delegations of eastern Indians were present. They were generally preceded [sic] by a solemn exchange of gifts. Jack Wilson would be seated on one side of a blanket and the chief visitors on the other. A gift would be placed upon the blanket with appropriate remarks in his own tongue by the visiting donor. A translation would follow, through one or more interpreters, with English resorted to as a language bridge in case of necessity. After a dignified acceptance by Wilson it was the next donor's turn.

The blanket would be heaping with rich gifts before the end. The visitors usually received red ocher and other face paints together with magpie tail feathers in return.

Yet another tantalizing piece of new information was given by Alice Guild of Yerington to Basil Davidson in the 1950s:

In the middle of the circle of dancers was a central bonfire which gave off a great deal of heat and light. Around the circle moved the Indians hand in hand in a sort of shuffling side step. They kept chanting something to the beat of skin drums. Some members would fall out of the circle onto the ground in a trance-like state, and some, upon falling, kept wiggling.⁸⁹

The only Tovusidokado who provided a reasonably serviceable account of Wovoka's 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada was Corbett Mack. Mack (b. 1892) recalled that in circa 1896 or 1897, the prophet "put up" dances in Smith Valley for a visiting delegation of Bannocks:

Jack Wilson's gonna show those Bannocks our dance, 'n' they can show theirs. 'Cause Bannocks, you see, they got a bow 'n' arrow. 'N', so, those Taivos [observers], they gotta back up when we dance. 'Cause you see why? They [Bannocks] can point [bows] at anybody, you see. So, white people, they're afraid: afraid they're gonna turn that loose [shoot them]. But they don't. Just make believe, that's all.

'N', you know how they do that [dance]? Dodge around, lay down. Just like that's a war. Yes, sir! 'Cause that's what they're doin'. Showin' these Indians here how they can do it [dance] when they go to war.⁹⁰

An analytic distinction might be suggested, then, between the 1890 Ghost Dance ceremonies originally "put up" for Walker River area Numu by Wovoka, in which his weather-control powers, trance-states and displays of invulnerability were demonstrated, and "secondary" ceremonies accompanying the arrival of Plains Indians in Smith and Mason valleys and at the Walker River Reservation soon after the Great Revelation.⁹¹ What those differences were in that multilingual, multicultural environment can only be surmised: gift-giving or pantribal trade? But formal similarities between Wovoka's 1890 Ghost Dance and the Numu Circle or Round Dance can be drawn more readily.

THE 1890 GHOST DANCE AS ROUND DANCE?

Calling it "the most popular dance among the Paviotso [Numu]," Park described Round Dances as the very "backbone of the [ritual] complex."⁹² "Religious beliefs and activities are associated only with . . . [it]," he wrote.⁹³ From his study of this important Numu ceremony, these essential features can be enumerated: (1) Round Dance ceremonies were held in late spring, or before the annual fish run, and in early fall, before the pine nut harvest; (2) Round Dances had an ecological function, i. e., as "increase" ritual; (3) Pyramid Lake and Walker Lake fisheries were two important food-gathering, hence Round Dance, locales, yet their residents did not necessarily host the ceremony, responsibility being shared by any and all Numu electing to appear; (4) the Round Dance ordinarily lasted five nights; (5) temporary brush shelters were positioned around a cleared space reserved for dancing; (6) fires were fueled on the periphery of the dance circle(s); (7) a pole lacking symbolic or cosmological meaning was erected within the center of each dance ground; according to the Numu, it served only to orient dancers; (8) preparation for the ceremony involved painting of bars and dots with red and white mineral pigments on participants' faces and lower body parts; (9) men and women locked hands and would dance around the pole in a clockwise direction all night long; (10) no instruments were used in the Round Dance; singing provided the only music; (11) singers positioned themselves on the inside of each dance circle, ceremonial leaders on the outside; (12) Round Dance leaders, who were not necessarily shamans, "talked" or prayed all night long, or until sunrise.⁹⁴

Interestingly, Park wrote elsewhere that weather control was occasionally "practiced at the social round dances While the dancers are moving in a circle a headman, not necessarily one with supernatural power, walks around praying for rain in order to insure abundant wild products."⁹⁵ "It is just like praying. He talks about the weather. He asks for rain so the people will have plenty of roots and seeds. He wishes for pine nuts and other foods for the coming year. He talks to some kind of spirit."⁹⁶ In quoting one informant, Park additionally stated, "It is the big dance; it is to pray for good crops and to ask for game. The dance is for a good time, for many seeds and pine nuts; it lasts five nights."⁹⁷ Round Dances, furthermore, bore "the double function of bringing people together for a thorough going good time and for an appeal to

vaguely conceived supernatural powers that are thought to control human health and supplies of wild seeds and game.”

Like his ceremonial counterpart, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet also was not (yet) a shaman; Wovoka, too, “talked” or prayed (prophesied) for rain, while Numu (later Plains Indians) danced clockwise around him; and even the Numu division of ritual labor between Round Dance “talker” and singer appears to have been observed in 1890 Ghost Dance ceremonies in Nevada, as evidenced by Andy Dick, who spoke of the time the prophet handed a “bone” to Potato Sam at a ceremony at the Walker River Reservation, thereby allowing Wovoka’s assistant to “sing all night long without tiring.”⁹⁸

Park’s description of Round Dance ceremonial grounds, moreover, is identical with what Chapman in 1890 and Mooney in 1892 saw. Round Dances were “held on a flat cleared space 200 to 300 yards in diameter,” he wrote.⁹⁹ Indian scout Chapman had this to say about “three of their dance grounds” in either Smith Valley or Mason Valley:

They had been cleared of sagebrush and grass and made perfectly level, around the outer edge of which the willow sticks were still standing, over which they spread their tenting for shelter during these ceremonies. The cleared ground must have been from 200 to 300 feet in diameter, and only about four places left open to enter the grounds.¹⁰⁰

Mooney would write,

When I visited the Messiah in January, 1892, deep snow was on the ground, which had caused the temporary suspension of dancing, so that I had no opportunity of seeing the performance there for myself. I saw, however, the place cleared for the dance ground—the same spot where the large delegation from Oklahoma had attended the dance the preceding summer—at the upper end of Mason valley. A large circular space had been cleared of sagebrush and leveled over, and around the circumference were the remains of the low round structures of willow branches which had sheltered those in attendance. At one side, within the circle, was a large structure of branches, where the messiah gave audience to the delegates from distant tribes, and according to their statements, showed them the glories of the spirit world through the medium of hypnotic trances.¹⁰¹

Indeed, the very term *Ghost Dance*, as the shrewd government ethnologist so long ago noted, was not even used by the Smith and Mason Valley Numu for Wovoka's ceremony; they simply called it *nuga*, "Circle" or "Round Dance."¹⁰² But similarities between the two should not obscure what seems to be their more essential differences.

For example, the 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada was not simply an increase ritual, wage-labor having long since supplanted the traditional subsistence cycle.¹⁰³ Nor was there any center pole or "cosmic pillar," as Hultkrantz calls it, in the ceremony inspired by Wovoka's Great Revelation.¹⁰⁴ "Never saw a pole in the center," George Plummer told Dangberg. "Painted [themselves] but just to look pretty. This man [Wovoka] sits on the ground in the center and talks; then another man [talks]" (DCN). And Angus McCloud (DCN), who lived at the northern, or opposite, end of Mason Valley from the Wilsons, told Wier of a "Ghost dance near here [of] 1000 people" before similarly recalling that he "never saw a pole in the center" (WN). If anything upheld that "cosmic vault of heaven" during 1890 Ghost Dance performances in Nevada, it was its charismatic prophet, Jack Wilson/Wovoka, who adapted a traditional dance to his divinely inspired mission for reasons that might well have been entirely his own.

IDEOLOGY OF THE NEVADA 1890 GHOST DANCE

"It was the most beautiful country you could imagine, nice and level and green all the time; there were no rocks or mountains there, but all kinds of game and fish," Captain James Josephus of the Walker River Reservation described Wovoka's paradisiacal fantasy.¹⁰⁵ The 1890 Ghost Dance prophet himself told Chapman that after "God showed him everything there . . . [he learned that] when the people died here on this earth, if they were good, they came to heaven [and they would be made] . . . young again . . . [and] never [grow] . . . old afterwards."¹⁰⁶ And Mooney similarly reported that if followers "faithfully obeyed his instructions they would at last be reunited with their friends in this other world, where there would be no more death or sickness or old age."¹⁰⁷ Everlasting life in the world-to-come and Wovoka's pacific doctrine are consistent with what we know about his life experience.¹⁰⁸

For example, Ed Dyer would write that, as a young man, Wovoka lived on the David and Abigail Wilson Ranch, where he

received "religious teaching through family Bible readings, evening prayers, grace before meat, and similar family devotions." J. I. Wilson outlined his father's course of instruction: "M[r]. [David] Wilson talked to him about religion. Was a United Presbyterian. Told Jack about Jesus—resurrection, etc. Not to steal or lie—[as well as the] doctrine of peace" (DCN). Dangberg learned from another Wilson family member that the "Messiah idea" resulted from Wovoka's direct questioning of the Wilson Ranch founder about "life after death, [and the] happy hunting ground. [David Wilson used to] [t]alk to them a lot about that."

Since the Wilsons were Presbyterians, Wovoka in all likelihood was exposed to its regnant nineteenth-century "Princeton Theology of the Old School," characterized by rigid monotheism, emphasis on literacy, abolitionism, and opposition to drinking, smoking, gambling, and social dancing.¹⁰⁹ Whether or not Mooney is correct that the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet obtained a "confused idea of the white man's theology,"¹¹⁰ the salient point, as Dyer wrote, is that "some particular effort . . . [was also] made by the lady of the house to read to the boy some of the better known Bible stories," and particularly, as Dyer suggested, that Wovoka "fashioned himself as some sort of an Indian version of an Old Testament prophet." Mooney likened him to Moses, who similarly "goes up into a mountain to receive inspiration," and Dangberg proposed Jesus as a second possible role model: "It is quite natural that anyone failing to distinguish some of the elemental concepts common to all, or most, prophecy would make an effort in this instance to link the prophet living on the Walker River and in the Walker Lake area to men or to a single divine person, who led his people two thousand years ago on the banks of the Jordan and the shores of the Sea of Galilee."¹¹¹ Although the great Hebrew prophet Elijah the Tishbite might speculatively also have been a role model for Wovoka,¹¹² new evidence leads us to a more mundane source of inspiration.

"Jack began to be prominent at 18 but old men did not honor the youngster's raving," or so J. I. Wilson told Dangberg:

He was so intimate with the David Wilson family that he often attended family prayers, morning and evening and heard them read of the Bible. He also saw much of the honor, deference—money paid to [the] itinerant preacher. He sometimes attended the evangelistic meetings. When J[ack] was present at prayers, [he was] very reverent, respective. [He] [n]ever knelt however (DCN).

Wilson is referring to "circuit riders" or "saddle-bag riders," traveling evangelists who, in lieu of established churches in the Walker River area, carried the banner of frontier Protestantism to resident *Taivos*. The Reverend R. Carberry, for example, conducted services in Mason Valley on behalf of the United Community Methodist Church as part of a Walker River circuit that included Smith Valley, Pine Grove, and Antelope Valley.¹¹³ Gunard Solberg (personal correspondence), interestingly enough, learned that J. I. Wilson's wife Carrie was the daughter of Reverend Willis, another active preacher in this area at the time of the 1890 Ghost Dance. These clergymen, in any event, encouraged daily prayer and revivals, or "concerts of prayer," in the form of "short, two or three day 'sacramental seasons' which were usually held on weekends."¹¹⁴ J. I. Wilson (WN) commented that Wovoka not only was deeply "impressed" by those traveling evangelists but also came to believe that only he "could save Indians from hell fire" (WN). Therefore, another hypothesis about the 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada can be formulated: that, in addition to shamanic-like demonstrations of his weather-control powers, trance-states, and "bullet power," Wovoka might have intended the Round Dance-like ceremonies that we call the 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada to be magically imitative Presbyterian revival-type meetings.

Chapman, in any case, reports that the prophet admonished the Numu [Indians] "not [to] fight the white people or one another . . . [because] we were all brothers and must remain in peace."¹¹⁵ In Mooney's account of the Great Revelation, "after showing him all," God tells Wovoka to "go back and tell his people they must be good and love one another, have no quarreling, and live in peace with the whites; that they must work, and not lie or steal; that they must put away all the old practices that savored of war."¹¹⁶ Yet another proof of the pacific nature of Wovoka's message comes from Phister's independent investigation of the 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada. On the basis of interviews with "many of the Nevada Indians on the subject," the United States Army Lieutenant concluded, "The doctrine as preached by Kvit-tsow [Wovoka] is not at all in the nature of a crusade against the white people."¹¹⁷ A "'hell-of-a-good Ingin [sic]!" the *Walker Lake Bulletin's* editor characterized Wovoka on 26 November 1890, writing that he was "a Simon pure, yard wide, all wool Christ . . . who advised peace and performed miracles which made all people feel good." Angus McCloud told Wier, "Jack calls [the 1890 Ghost Dance] the 'Friendship Dance of the Indian Race'" (WN). And years later, Special

Inspector Lafayette A. Dorrington would write, after a 1917 visit to the prophet's home in Mason (Mason Valley), "From all accounts . . . [Wovoka] has always been friendly with the whites."¹¹⁸

Yet a survey of anthropology texts reveals that, with few exceptions, scholars ordinarily view the 1890 Ghost Dance through its Plains incarnation or equate it with the 1870 Ghost Dance.¹¹⁹ Both were militantly antiwhite, "nativistic" movements arising out of collective despair (deprivation), whose prophets told of the resurrection of the dead on earth; both meet all criteria of the "revitalization movement" as proposed by A. F. C. Wallace in his classic paper.¹²⁰ One way out of the confusion, then, has been to contend that Wovoka, like other prophets (e. g., the Seneca, Handsome Lake), altered his original doctrine following the Wounded Knee Creek massacre.¹²¹ Mooney, as we saw, felt he probably received "different revelations," and Bailey, arguing this case, wrote that Wovoka not only went into hiding after Wounded Knee but had to be "summoned" to meet Chapman; was still incognito when Mooney traveled to East Walker country to interview him on New Year's Day, 1892; and, for years to come, used to sneak into Ed Dyer's grocery store at night to conduct his mail order business in paints and Stetson hats, which supplemented an income from his shamanic practice.¹²²

That a profound change had indeed come over the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet is amply evidenced. Mooney quotes him as stating how "some of the Indians had disobeyed his instructions and trouble had come of it. Whites had lied about him." Consequently, Wovoka said he "did not like to talk to them . . . [but] after some deliberation," the prophet related that he now (1 January 1892) "counseled delegates, who with ardor [were] still sent . . . to Nevada seeking news of the millennium, that they should return to their respective tribes and stop the dances."¹²³ "The Indian resurrection . . . [is] postponed," James Mooney quoted Wovoka's message to a skeptical Kiowa delegate in 1891; they should "quit the whole business."¹²⁴ To the Arapaho Sitting Bull (not the famous Sioux chief), Wovoka reportedly said in October of 1892 he was "tired of visitors and wanted them to go home and stop dancing."¹²⁵

This seeming change of heart is also evidenced in the WN and DCN: "Jack Wilson avoids people here," George Plummer told Ms. Wier. "Never told [Plummer] anything about [his] religion" (WN). J. I. Wilson, noting a visit by the "head of [the] Bureau of Indian Affairs," told Dangberg how, after the government official

drove out "to see him [Wovoka] in a rig—Jack shut up—Wouldn't speak. Wouldn't look at him. [Thus] [a]ll information [was] got[ten] from Mr. Wilson." And Bob Dyer (DCN) would similarly relate how the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet became "quiet after Mooney interviewed him." Wovoka's son-in-law, finally, recalled being told by him, "'My boy, don't mention it to the white people.'"¹²⁶

Of course, a change of heart need not imply a change of ideology. And, in fact, Chapman *pace* Bailey reported no difficulty whatsoever in either locating or interviewing Wovoka: "I sent for Jack Wilson to come down to Mr. Pierce's house, as the weather was not suitable for holding outdoor meetings, it raining and snowing alternately. He put in his appearance and I was introduced to him by Captain Ben, the Indian policeman. We shook hands, Jack Wilson remarking that he was glad to see me."¹²⁷ Thirteen months later, Mooney stated much the same:

As he came up he took my hand with a strong, hearty grasp, and inquired what was wanted. His uncle explained matters After some deliberation he said that the whites had lied about him and he did not like to talk to them; some of the Indians had disobeyed his instructions and trouble had come of it, but as I was sent by Washington and was a friend of his friends, he would talk with me.¹²⁸

Indeed, the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet's tone with these government officials was confident, even arrogant: "I heard that soldiers were coming after me. I do not care about that; I would like to see them. That is all I care to talk now. We are going to have a dance next Saturday," he said to the Indian scout Chapman.¹²⁹ "If they [Tovusidokado? Numu? Native Americans?] went to fighting," Wovoka was also quoted by Chapman as stating, "he would help the soldiers to make them stop," for he had the power to destroy this world and make it whole again!¹³⁰ Chapman's interview, of course, took place before Wounded Knee, and when Mooney interviewed him later, the prophet not only disclaimed "all responsibility for the ghost shirt . . . [but] earnestly repudiated any idea of hostility toward the whites, asserting that his religion was one of universal peace."¹³¹ Was Wovoka frightened? Duplicitous? Had his original message shifted? It can be argued that the otherworldly message of the 1890 Ghost Dance was and continued to be pacific, because of (1) its prophet's perduring belief in the Great Revelation, and (2) the sociological context of his religious movement.¹³²

"[Wovoka was always] cooperative, neither cringing, bellicose nor evasive," wrote Ed Dyer, who knew him well. And Mooney related, "He made no argument and advanced no proofs, but said simply that he had been with God, as though the statement no more admitted of controversy than the proposition that 2 and 2 are 4."¹³³ More evidence appears in the *Mason Valley News*. On 9 March 1916, it is reported that Wovoka was thinking to visit President Wilson during World War I, "to terminate the murderous war in Europe." And Richard Magee, the government contract physician for the Yerington Indian Colony, a ten-acre federal reservation in Mason Valley on which Wovoka lived the last ten or so years of his life, proposed the manner in which the (retired) 1890 Ghost Dance prophet intended ending the first World War, one that was consistent with the Numu's belief in his supernatural, weather-control *booha*:

I heard that he gave a talk to a very large number of people on Bridge Street in Yerington, right at the bridge, you know, where the Walker River comes down. He stood out in the water, and there were people lining the banks, white and Indian, and predicted—this was in 1916—Wilson's election, and also said if the Germans did win the war he was going to freeze the Atlantic and send all of the Indians over there and equip them with ice (Gunard Solberg, personal correspondence).

Then there is Ed Dyer's account of Wovoka's disheartened response to the news of the public inebriation that accompanied the neighboring Utes' federal land claims settlement in the 1920s: how Wovoka was "immediately prompted to request that a telegram be sent to Mormon state authorities, advising that if they couldn't resolve the confrontation, he would, and with a word." And even at the very end of his life, Wovoka still "talked readily of the ghost dance religion, and of the great visits he once had with the tribal leaders from the east," wrote Bailey, quoting silent film cowboy star and showman Tim McCoy, who interviewed him in the 1920s: "He still talked of the coming millennium, in which the Indians would be given a new earth to dwell upon. He still emphatically declared that he visited God, and had talked to Him . . . and still talked of the coming millennium."¹³⁴

There also is this sociological way of refuting any argument that a radical shift had occurred in the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet's ideology: Would Smith and Mason Valley Numu in the late 1880s

have participated in a religious movement calling for the return of the dead and the destruction of *Taivos*? To begin with, no evidence exists for the sort of deprivation that gave rise to the 1870 Ghost Dance on the Walker River Reservation and the spread of Wovoka's religion onto the Plains. True, there was scarlet fever and other illness in adjoining areas, but wars, the loss of land, starvation, broken promises surely by then were fading parts of the Tovusidokado past. Nor do we find in the local newspapers more than passing mention of alcoholism, arguably the sine qua non of disintegration among postcontact Native Americans—an impression validated not only by my genealogical research¹³⁵ but in the very absence of any temperance plank from Wovoka's Great Revelation. Farm and ranch work, to be sure, were arduous, their hours long, and earnings discriminatory. But Smith and Mason Valley Numu, and the neighboring Walker River Reservation Paiute who emigrated for seasonal work, probably had access to more food, more clothing, and more materiel in those years than any possibly could have dreamed of previously. Indeed, in contrast to the conditions that gave rise to the 1870 Ghost Dance in Nevada and the 1890 Ghost Dance on the Plains and what followed the demise of Wovoka's religious innovation, the 1880s in the Walker River area might well have seemed halcyonic, as evidenced, for example, by Mooney's oft-quoted description of the Numu:

[F]or, strangely, although these Paiute are practically farm laborers and tenants of the whites all around them, and earn good wages, they seem to covet nothing of the white man's, but spend their money for dress, small trinkets, and ammunition for hunting, and continue to subsist on seeds, pinon nuts, and small game, lying down at night on the dusty ground in their cramped wickiups, destitute of even the most ordinary conveniences in use among other tribes. (It is a curious instance of a people accepting the inevitable while yet resisting innovation.)¹³⁶

Why, then, do we read on 10 September 1890 in the *LCT* that "something . . . [must] be done with the Indians in Mason and Smith Valleys. They are becoming impudent and treacherous, and we think it would be a good idea to confine them on the Reservations for a time"? Or on 29 January of the following year: "The Piutes [*sic*] in Mason Valley are all well armed and very saucy. They say pretty soon they will own the stores and ranches and

houses" (*Walker Lake Bulletin*)? And a few days later, the LCT (31 January 1891) would similarly note, "The Piutes [*sic*] in Smith Valley are reported to be very ugly. They say that the country all belonged to them once and that pretty soon they will own the farms and horses away from the white man."

Chapman, probably quoting Zadok Pierce, who was Mooney's Smith Valley host, also wrote that "he [Pierce?] could see that the Indians were a little more exacting every day. Only recently did one of them, with all his stock, move into a white man's field and would not go out when he was told to do so."¹³⁷ Just how did this Numu respond to the angry white's threat to get off his property? "You had better bring a big crowd if you attempt it!" And even Ed Dyer was prompted to comment that for all his years of acquaintance with them, the "small group" of Numu assembled under a cottonwood tree during that "most solemn [Ghost Dance] occasion" were "distinctly not talkative to a white." Do not these sources, then, evince the very sort of antiwhite hostility at the time of the 1890 Ghost Dance consistent with arguments that Wovoka's message either originally was militant or that he had shifted to pacifism after Wounded Knee? Once again, I think not.

Brad Logan's survey of Nevada newspapers at the time of the 1890 Ghost Dance led him to conclude, "[I]n western Nevada during the four years of marked proselytism of the Ghost Dance, with delegations of Indians entering the area continuously, the tone of the official dispatches and most of the newspaper articles remains fairly calm."¹³⁸ And where there were reports of Numu militancy, i. e., the Walker River area, historian Sally Zanjani argued that they were politically motivated, for example, as means of soliciting state funds for construction of forts. "Wovoka's teachings strongly opposed warfare with the whites," she also argued.¹³⁹

Mooney, of course, espoused this view a century ago. "Few of the white men were suspicious of Wilson's doctrine," was how he characterized the mood of Walker River area *Taivos* in late 1891 and early 1892.¹⁴⁰ Since the Numu had "steadily resisted the vices of civilization," he concluded that they "would be the last Indians in the world to preach a crusade of extermination against the whites, such as the messiah religion has been represented to be."¹⁴¹

The *Mason Valley News* of 2 June 1961 carried a story about the Nevada National Guard unit of 125 uniformed and fully armed volunteers of Company I (including Ed Dyer), which organized in 1890 and drilled under the hot summer sun to convince local

Numu that any Lakota-type uprising would not be tolerated. Some may regard this story as evidence of Wovoka's ideological militancy. If the Tovusidokado were hostile, however, why do we read, in an article in the *LCT* about the Fourth of July celebrations in 1888, about "more Piutes [*sic*] in town [Yerington] . . . than for many weeks before," and of an "Indian race of 1/4 mile . . . then run by a large number of Piutes . . . [with] a string of bucks for 1/4 of a mile all in Indian file" (14 July 1888)? "Ugly" and hell-bent on dancing to destroy this world and every last *Taivo* in it? And what can be more difficult to explain than the Tovusidokado reaction to a fire that broke out in Greenfield (Yerington) on a Monday morning in late December 1893, ultimately destroying twelve wooden buildings? Would Smith and Mason Valley Numu who were committed to a race war and Apocalypse have come "flocking into town in droves shortly after daylight and worked well to save property" (*Mason Valley Tidings*, 30 December 1893)?

CONCLUSION

The 1890 Ghost Dance originated among the Tovusidokado of Smith and Mason valleys, Nevada, in late December 1888, blossomed full with its prophet Jack Wilson/Wovoka's Great Revelation of 1 January 1889, and was effectively over in less than two years, or following the 29 December 1890 Wounded Knee massacre in South Dakota, which it inspired. High fever, combined with an earthquake and the solar eclipse of 1 January 1889, were the factors precipitating Wovoka's near-death experience and correlated vision or altered state of consciousness. As a result of this Numu's advertised claim of weather-control powers and the regional drought in the Walker River area in the late 1880s, i. e., the prediction of rain in three days' time, Wovoka gained an immediate constituency among the farming Numu of the Walker River Reservation. However, in Wovoka's own community, Smith and Mason valleys, a variety of unusual environmental conditions, coupled with his successful demonstration of weather-control powers, were what initially led to acceptance among these wage-laborers.

The 1890 Ghost Dance prophet not only demonstrated that he was invulnerable, i. e., bulletproof, but dared, in broad daylight and before he was recognized as a shaman, to enter trance-states and heal individuals accidentally shot during rabbit drives.

Nor is there evidence of the sort of "deprivation" that gave rise to the 1870 Ghost Dance in the Basin-Plateau and the 1890 Ghost Dance on the Plains.¹⁴² Rather, Wovoka's religious innovation should be seen as the creative synthesis of a charismatic individual who melded a pre-existent ceremony—the Numu Circle or Round Dance—with knowledge gained from exposure to Christianity during formative years, the latter inspiring him to emulate Protestant "saddle-bag preachers" or traveling evangelists who conducted revival meetings in the Walker River area. The 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada might originally have had this meaning or taken it on following the arrival of large numbers of Plains delegations. Be that as it may, its prophet's abiding fascination with the frontier brand of Presbyterian Christianity he learned as a youth on the Wilson Ranch shaped an ideology that called for racial harmony on earth, pending everlasting life in Heaven, beliefs consistent with Tovusidokado biculturalism and aspirations in those years.

The 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada, in other words, was a "reformative" rather than a "nativistic" religious movement (Ralph Linton), a "redemptive" not "transformative" movement (Aberle), whose "accommodative" (Jorgensen) ideology Alice Kehoe succinctly characterized as the quest for a "clean, honest life."¹⁴³ Why was it so commonly confused with its ritual expression on the Plains and its immediate predecessor, the 1870 Ghost Dance? Ironically, the founder of Ghost Dance studies himself might have had something to do with this.

Although Mooney took care to distinguish between the pacific nature of Wovoka's doctrine and its radical reinterpretation on the Plains, sweeping conclusions in chapter 10 of this grand work could have altered our own consciousness: "The great underlying principle of the Ghost Dance doctrine is that the time will come when the whole Indian race, living and dead, will be reunited upon a regenerated earth, to live a life of aboriginal happiness, forever free from death, disease, and misery." "The white race, being alien and secondary and hardly real, has no part in this scheme of aboriginal regeneration and will be left behind with the other things of earth that have served their temporary purpose, or else will cease entirely to exist." "It seems unquestionable that this [doctrine of racial equality] is equally contrary to the doctrine as originally preached."¹⁴⁴ Elsewhere, Mooney wrote that "resurrection and return of the dead formed the principal tenet [of the 1890 Ghost Dance]."¹⁴⁵

But "the Indian Man," of course, cannot be held responsible for

so large an historic error. Rather, America's fascination with the Plains and its corresponding disdain for Great Basin "Digger" Indians more probably are the reasons why.¹⁴⁶ For as George Pierre Castile has written, our "archetypical Indian . . . [has been] the befeathered horseman . . . with his tepee, buffalo hunts, painted face, and colorful beaded costume."¹⁴⁷ If any moral can be drawn from the above, let us, at the dawn of our second century of Ghost Dance studies, heed William G. McCloughlin's plea for "more careful stud[ies] of the unique characteristics of traditional religious revivals," rather than merely perpetuate "extrapolate[d] broad constructs."¹⁴⁸

NOTES

1. Smith and Mason valleys were part of an even larger territory claimed by these "Grass Bulb Eaters," identified by Omer C. Stewart, *The Northern Paiute Bands*, University of California Anthropological Records 2 (1939): 142–43, as *Brodiaea capitatum* and, more recently, as *Cyperus esulentis* by Harry W. Lawton, et al., "Agriculture among the Paiute of Owens Valley," *Journal of California Anthropology* 3 (1976): 13–50. Smith and Mason Valley Numu were incorporated under the Wheeler-Howard Act as the Yerington Paiute Tribe of Nevada (see Michael Hittman, *A Numu History* [Yerington, NV: Yerington Paiute Tribe, 1984]).
2. *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, 14th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology for the Years 1892–1893, Pt. 2, J. W. Powell, Director (Washington, DC: 1896; NY: Dover Publications, 1973).
3. *Ibid.*, 653–54. Also see L. G. Moses, *A Biography of James Mooney* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 52–96.
4. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1891* (Washington, DC: 1892; reprinted in Brad Logan, "The Ghost Dance among the Paiute: An Ethnohistorical View of the Documentary Evidence, 1889–1893," *Ethnohistory* 27 (1980): 284–88.
5. Special Collections, University Archives, University of Nevada Libraries, Reno.
6. Paul Bailey, *Wovoka, The Indian Messiah* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1957). Bailey also turned this into a novel, *Ghost Dance Messiah: The Jack Wilson Story* (Tucson, AZ: Westernlore Press, 1970).
7. Nevada Historical Society, Reno.
8. *Letters to Jack Wilson, The Paiute Prophet*, Anthropological Papers, Bulletin 164, no. 55, Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, D. C., 1957); "Wovoka," *The Nevada Historical Society* 11 (1968).
9. Nevada Historical Society, Reno.
10. See Michael Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance: A Source Book* (Carson City, NV: The Grace Dangberg Foundation, 1990). Especially, Appendix K, "I Remember Jack, Yerington Paiute Elders Remember the 1890 Ghost Dance Prophet."

11. Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion*, 764–76; Arthur I. Chapman in Logan, "The Ghost Dance among the Paiute."
12. *The Ghost-Dance Religion*, 802.
13. "Wovoka," 27.
14. See Julian H. Steward, *Basin Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 120 (Washington, DC: Bureau of American Ethnology, 1938): 54, 60; Julian H. Steward and Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, *Paiute Indians III: The Northern Paiute Indians* (New York: Garland, 1974), 48; Catherine S. Fowler and Sven Liljebblad, "Northern Paiute," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, gen. ed. William C. Sturtevant, vol. 11, *Great Basin*, ed. Warren L. d'Azevedo (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 453.
15. Hittman, *A Numu History*, 35–37.
16. *Walker River Paiutes: A Tribal History* (Schurz, NV: Walker River Paiute Tribe, 1975), 26–68.
17. *Ibid.*, 62. According to the *XIth Federal Census* (1894: 381–93), only 352 of Walker River Reservation's 481 residents were counted on 1 June 1890, consisting of 40 Numu families on 36 land assignments.
18. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1947).
19. Hittman, *A Numu History*, 41–46.
20. Shirley W. Lee, "A Survey of Acculturation in the Intermontane Area of the United States," *Occasional Papers of the Museum*, no. 19, Idaho State University, 1967.
21. Timothy Smith, "Recollections of the Early History of Smith Valley, Nevada Historical Society Papers, Third Biennial Report (1911/1912): 226.
22. Earl W. Kersten, Jr., *Settlements and Economic Life in the Walker River Country of Nevada and California* (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1961).
23. *XIth Census*, 1894, 395.
24. Dangberg, "Wovoka," 7n7a.
25. On high fever and visions or altered states of consciousness, see Weston La Barre, *The Ghost Dance: The Origins of Religion* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Company, 1970), 55–61. The discussion of near-death experiences in Kenneth Ring's *Heading toward Omega: In Search of the Meaning of the Near-Death Experience* (New York: Quill/William Morrow, 1984) opens yet another important avenue for any scientific understanding of prophets.
26. Such information, however, would have been available to Wovoka. The 29 December 1888 edition of the *LCT*, for example, announced on page 1 that an eclipse was coming "next Thursday."
27. *Walker River Paiutes*, 47.
28. *Ibid.*, 773.
29. "Science Section," *New York Times*, 20 July 1982.
30. "Early History of the Area," manuscript, Lyon County Public Library, Yerington, Nevada.
31. Also, in 1884, 1885, and 1886, partial eclipses were reported by Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion*, 773.
32. S. M. Lamb, "Linguistic Prehistory of the Great Basin," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 24 (1958).
33. See Miguel Leon-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962).
34. *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost*

Dance, General Series in Anthropology, no. 1 (Menasha, WI: 1935).

35. "Oral Tradition: Content and Style of Verbal Arts," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11, 657. In "The 1870 Ghost Dance at the Walker River Reservation: A Reconstruction," *Ethnohistory* 20 (1973): 273n24, I reported a Numu apocalypse; I also note here the impression of exaggerated Numu alarm to sonic booms and the like.

36. And even I got teased by Numu family members for having "caused" a torrential rainstorm in Pine Grove after photographing the site of Wovoka's Great Revelation.

37. *Shamanism in Western North America: A Study in Cultural Relationships* (Evanston, IL: Northeastern University Press, 1938), 15.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, 19.

40. Ake Hultkrantz, "Mythology and Religious Concepts," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11, 632.

41. *Ibid.*, 772-73.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Park, *Shamanism*, 20. In light of his role as prophet, the mention by Park (p. 18) that Wolf, Numu demiurge, was another of Wovoka's personal guardian spirits is significant.

44. "Wovoka," 27.

45. *Ibid.*, 13.

46. *Letters to Jack Wilson*, 285.

47. *Ibid.*, 286.

48. *Documents Relative to the Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890 (1890-1898)*, Bureau of Indian Affairs (Land Division, Special Cases, No. 188, RG 75, Federal Archives, San Bruno, California). Probably this was reference to the "recent gathering by 1,600 Indians, including Cheyennes, Lakotas, Arapahoes, Utes, Navahos, Shoshones, and Bannocks," mentioned by Indian agent Gregory to Chapman (quoted in Logan, 285), and which reportedly included "a tribe to the south of them [Walker River Reservation Numu] that they called the Umapaws." "I think that all white men should pay me for things of this kind, some two dollars, others five, ten, twenty-five, and fifty, according to their means," the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet unabashedly told Chapman (*ibid.*).

49. *Ibid.*, 767n1.

50. *Annual Reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington, DC: 1890/1891), 300.

51. See Hittman, *Wovoka*, Appendix K.

52. *Ibid.*, 38. Alex Miller also told me that Wovoka had threatened to flood his mother-in-law's garden when she, Mrs. Ben Dickinson, the wife of an original Smith Valley settler, was perceived as gouging the price of a watermelon he had come to purchase.

53. Wheat-Vidovich Tape 90, pp. 6-7. I am indebted to Gunard Solberg for lending his transcriptions of those tapes, and for generous assistance throughout the Wovoka Centennial Project.

54. "Basin Religion and Theology: A Comparative Study of Power (Puha)," *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 5 (1983): 10.

55. Bailey, *Wovoka*, 25. And regarding what Bailey additionally dismissed as a "false miracle" (p. 71), the Prophecy/Miracle of Ice in the Summer in the Walker River, Ed Dyer wrote that he had either missed it entirely, or, more likely, this was a "distortion of what I witnessed."

56. "Wovoka," 14n11.
57. "Early History of Mason Valley," reproduced as Appendix H of Hittman, *Wovoka*. This contradictory view of the Prophecy/Miracle of Summer Ice as either the duping of an ingenuous Numu by "fun-loving" Taivo boyhood playmates or a "false miracle" perpetrated by a cunning Native American represents the very sort of "noble" versus "treacherous" or "ignoble savage" that Robert Berkhofer, Jr., in *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) writes has been characteristic of Euro-American stereotyping of Native Americans since contact.
58. *Ibid.*, 716–45. See Clifford E. Trafzer and Margery Ann Beach, "Smohalla, the Washani, and Religion as a Factor in Northwestern Indian History," *American Indian Quarterly* 9 (1985), and Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989) for modern treatments of these religious movements.
59. Jack Forbes, *Nevada Indians Speak* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1967), 176–77; Hittman, *Wovoka*, 149–51.
60. *Ibid.*, 763.
61. In Logan, "The Ghost Dance," 286.
62. Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion*, 748–61.
63. See Reginald and Gladys Lauben, *Indian Dances of North America* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 52–71.
64. Hittman, "The 1870 Ghost Dance."
65. *Culture Element Distributions: XIV. Northern Paiute*, University of California Publications in American Archeology and Ethnology 40 (1941): 413.
66. Quoted in Dangberg, "Wovoka," 12.
67. See Beatrice Whiting, *Paiute Sorcery*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, 1950, vol. 31; Frances A. Riddell, *Honey Lake Ethnography*, Anthropological Papers, Nevada State Museum 4 (1960): 64.
68. Quoted in Dangberg, "Wovoka," 11.
69. "The 1870 Ghost Dance," 261–62.
70. Park, *Shamanism*, 31.
71. *Ibid.*, 773.
72. Cf. Park, *Shamanism*, 17, 23; Miller, "Basin Religion," 73; Liljeblad, "Oral Tradition," 656.
73. "When shamans get power it always comes from the night. They are told to doctor only at night. This power has nothing to do with the moon or stars. I knew one woman who used the sun, moon, and stars for her power. I saw her fill her pipe and just as the sun came up she puffed and started to smoke. I saw her do this several times. I watched her closely but she did not use matches. Her power lighted her pipe," Park, *Shamanism*, 17. Interestingly, Smith and Mason Valley Numu also reported that Wovoka's cures could take place in broad daylight, noting, as well, that if he doctored at night, they were likely to conclude before midnight (Hittman, *Wovoka*, 143–49). See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), on status reversals and liminality.
74. In Logan, "The Ghost Dance," 287.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*, 789–93, 944–45.
77. *Mormons, Indians and the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 155. Bailey, *Wovoka*, 77, paints an unsubstantiated scenario that has Wovoka stealing a Mormon endowment robe from the

clothes line.

78. Don D. Fowler and Catherine S. Fowler, eds. *Anthropology of the Numu: John Wesley Powers' Manuscripts of Western North America, 1868–1880*, Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology 12 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1971), 246, 287.

79. Park, *Shamanism*, 109.

80. *Ibid.*, 26.

81. *Ibid.*, 5.

82. *Culture Element Distributions*, 414.

83. Michael Hittman, *Nomogwet: The Life History of Corbett Mack, Numu Opiate Addict*, n. d.

84. *Ibid.*, 771.

85. See Steward, *Basin Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups*, 82–83, 97–98.

86. *Numu Ya Dua'* ('Northern Paiute Speaks') III, Yerington Paiute Tribe (4 June 1982): 28.

87. Cf. "Jack Wilson was an excellent doctor for gunshot wound," Willard Z. Park, "Paviotso Shamanism," *American Anthropologist* 36 (1934): 107.

88. Ake Hultkrantz, in *Belief and Worship in Native North American*, ed. Christopher Vecsey (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 266.

89. "A Study of the Ghost Dance of 1889" (M. A. thesis, Stanford University, 1952), 16.

90. Hittman, *Wovoka*, 92.

91. With "gift-giving," for example, an important component. I count approximately sixty Native Americans from at least ten distinct sovereignties traveling to Smith and Mason valleys between 1889–1904 for audience with the 1890 Ghost Dance prophet (see Hittman, *Wovoka*, 89–90).

92. "Cultural Succession in the Great Basin," in *Language, Culture and Personality*, ed. Leslie Spier, A. Irving Hallowell, and Stanley S. Newman (Sapir Memorial Publication Fund, Menasha, WI, 1941), 184.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*, 184–87.

95. Park, *Shamanism*, 60n18.

96. "Cultural Succession," 186.

97. *Ibid.*, 184–85.

98. Liljeblad, "Oral Tradition," 647, noted another striking similarity between the two: Both Round Dance and 1890 Ghost Dance songs have "one thing in common: unless a song refers directly to the dance as such, each song is an image in miniature of a scene from nature . . . [They] express the delight in dancing and the beauty of nature, not its usefulness."

99. "Cultural Succession," 184.

100. In Logan, "The Ghost Dance," 287.

101. *Ibid.*, 802–803.

102. *Ibid.*, 791.

103. Although Corbett Mack did say that "some of those real Old-Timers said Jack Wilson's dances are supposed to make storms in the winter, so our Indian foods can grow."

104. *The Religions of the American Indian* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 23.

105. Chapman in Logan, 285.

106. *Ibid.*

107. *The Ghost-Dance Religion*, 771–72.

108. Hittman, *Wovoka*.

109. See Michael Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes Toward American Indians, 1837-1893* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1985); Joseph H. Hall, *Presbyterian Conflict and Resolution on the Missouri Frontier*, Studies in American Religion, vol. 26 (Lewiston, ME: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987). Wovoka was publicly opposed to drinking and championed education (see Chapman, in Logan, 287; Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion*, 772; Dorrington, quoted in Omer C. Stewart, "Contemporary Document on Wovoka (Jack Wilson), Prophet of the Ghost Dance in 1890," *Ethnohistory* 24 (1977): 222; and Hittman, *Wovoka*, 58, 161-63.

110. *Ibid.*, 765.

111. *Ibid.*, 929-30; Dangberg, "Wovoka," 6.

112. Hittman, *Wovoka*, 61.

113. Sam P. Davis, ed., *The History of Nevada*, vol. 1 (Reno, NV: Elms Publishing Co., 1913), 565.

114. Hall, *Presbyterian Conflict*, 27.

115. In Logan, "The Ghost Dance," 286-87.

116. *Ibid.*, 771-72.

117. *Ibid.*, 107.

118. In Stewart, "Contemporary Document," 221-22.

119. See Harold Driver, *Indians of North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 536; Fowler and Liljebblad, "Northern Paiute," 460; A. H. Gayton, *The Ghost Dance of 1870 in South-Central California*, University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 28 (1930): 57; Hultkrantz, *Religions of the American Indian*, 152; Hultkrantz, *Belief and Worship*, 266; La Barre, *The Ghost Dance*, 44; Marvin K. Opler, "The Ute and Paiute Indians of the Great Basin Southern Rim," in *North American Indians in Historical Perspective*, ed. Eleanor B. Leacock and Nancy O. Lurie (New York: Random House, 1979), 283-84; William K. Powers, "Indians of the Plains," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 496-97; Robert F. Spencer and Jesse D. Jennings, et al., *The Native Americans* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 499; Stewart and Wheeler-Voegelin, *Paiute Indians III*, 304; Russell Thornton, *We Shall Live Again: The 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dance Movements as Demographic Revitalization* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1. Museum displays are notorious in this regard. A case card at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (Plains Wing) in Cody, Wyoming, for example, read, "As preached by Wovoka, a Paiute prophet of Nevada, the Ghost Dance was a short-lived movement which promised the disappearance of white men, and the return to the old native way of life . . ." A pamphlet advertising this otherwise impressive 1990 "Wounded Knee: Lest We Forget" exhibition similarly has Wovoka prophesying, "Dead relatives would be alive, the buffalo would reappear in great numbers, and the white man would be gone." Other instances can easily be supplied.

120. "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58.

121. See Thomas Overholt, "The Ghost Dance of 1890 and the Nature of the Prophetic Process," *Ethnohistory* 21 (1974), for example. And I ignore in this discussion the thorny matter of the "Messiah Letter" and the question of whether Wovoka self-consciously promoted himself as "The Christ" (cf. Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion*, 780-81; Hittman, *Wovoka*, 179-94).

122. *Ibid.*, 18, 175, 181-82, 188; Hittman, *Wovoka*, 135-49.

123. *Ibid.*, 769, 913.

124. Ibid., 901.
125. Ibid.
126. Wheat-Vidovich Tape 90:8.
127. In Logan, "The Ghost Dance," 286.
128. Ibid., 769.
129. Ibid., 287.
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid., 772.
132. Bailey, *Wovoka*, 33, 47–61, argued that Wovoka's ambivalence and "incipient hatred of the White man" inspired the 1890 Ghost Dance.
133. Ibid., 773.
134. Ibid., 207. Hittman, on the other hand, presented evidence in "The 1870 Ghost Dance," 268–69, for its prophet's seeming disillusionment at the end of Wodziwob's life.
135. Michael Hittman, "Ghost Dances, Disillusionment and Opiate Addiction: An Ethnohistory of Smith and Mason Valley Paiutes" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1973).
136. Ibid., 1050. I am alluding to widespread and long-lasting opiate addiction which followed the 1890 Ghost Dance in Nevada.
137. In Logan, "The Ghost Dance," 287–88.
138. "The Ghost Dance," 278.
139. "The Indian Massacre That Never Happened," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 30 (1988): 121. Impending war with Mormons might also have been a factor.
140. Ibid., 772.
141. Ibid., 1050.
142. For this distinguished lineage, see A. L. Kroeber, "A Ghost Dance in California," *Journal of American Folklore* 17 (1904); Alexander Lesser, *The Pawnee Ghost Dance Hand Game: Ghost Dance Revival and Ethnic Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933); Philleo Nash, "The Place of Religious Revivalism in the Formation of the Intercultural Community on Klamath Reservation," in *Social Anthropology of North American Tribes*, ed. Fred Eggan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937); A. J. F. Kobben "Prophetic Movements as an Expression of Social Protest," *International Archives of Ethnography* 44 (1960); Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults* (New York: Mentor Books, 1965); Deward E. Walker, Jr., "New Light on the Prophet Dance Controversy," *Ethnohistory* 16 (1969); Joseph Jorgensen, "Religious Solutions and Native American Struggles: Ghost Dance, Sun Dance and Beyond," in *Religions, Rebellion, Revolution: An Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Collection of Essays.*, ed. Bruce Lincoln (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); "Ghost Dance, Bear Dance, Sun Dance," in *Handbook of North American Indians*; "Modern Movements," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*; Weston La Barre, *The Ghost Dance*; David F. Aberle, "The Prophet Dance and Reactions to White Contact," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15 (1959); *The Peyote Religion among the Navahos* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1966); "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as Applied to Millenarian and Other Cult Movements," in *Millennial Dreams in Action: Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements*, ed. Sylvia L. Thrupp (New York: Schocken Books, 1970).
143. Linton, "Nativistic Movements," *American Anthropologist* 45 (1943); Aberle, *Peyote Religion*; Jorgensen, "Ghost Dance, Bear Dance, Sun Dance"; Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and

Winston, 1989).

144. *Ibid.*, 777.

145. *Ibid.*, 785.

146. See Warren d'Azevedo, "Introduction," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 2-4.

147. *North American Indians: An Introduction to the Chichimeca* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company 1977), 4-5.

148. "Ghost Dance Movements: Some Thoughts on Definition Based on Cherokee History," *Ethnohistory* 37 (1990): 42.