

WAKANYAN: SYMBOLS OF POWER AND RITUAL OF THE TETON SIOUX

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ABSTRACT/RESUME

The author examines Lakota mythology, ritual and religion in the course of an analysis of an unusual garment, a shirt apparently of a type worn only by men of high rank. The analysis of particular facets of the shirt reveals much of Lakota cosmology, and indicates the potential for symbolic analysis of material artifacts.

Au cours d'une analyse d'un vêtement rare, une chemise du type porté seulement par les hommes du rang social élevé, l'auteur examine la mythologie, le rituel et la religion Lakota. L'analyse des aspects particuliers de la chemise révèle beaucoup sur la cosmologie Lakota, et indique l'importance de l'étude symbolique des artefacts matériels.

Introduction

At the onset I must admit that in common with many anthropologists, sociologists and others I have tended to view the interpreting of symbols as something of a sport perhaps best left to the romantics and poets rather than as an area of serious scientific research. However, strong encouragement to pursue these studies has come from Gordon Brotherston and John Ewers who independently have implied that such research could lead to a considerable extension of Plains Indian material culture investigations.¹ It is becoming clear that they are correct in this assumption because as the work progresses it is increasingly apparent that it is not only a fascinating and rich area for investigation but one which offers significant insights into the cosmos of a people who dominated the central Great Plains of North America in the nineteenth century.

This study has, in part, been inspired by the observations of the American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan, who in the latter part of the nineteenth century was to refer to American Indian artifacts as "silent memorials" which he felt could unlock the social history of the past; and, "although silent, they speak more eloquently than all human description" (Ewers, 1976). By application of the ethnohistorical approach (Wedel and Demallie, 1980) considerable progress has been made in the reading of the cultural and historical content of two related styles of ceremonial garment, namely the robe and shirt. This approach has a possible secondary spin off, demonstrating the value of well-documented ethnographical collections as important source material in research on Plains Indian culture. This is a preliminary report which touches on certain facets relating to ongoing research: to illustrate the technique of analysis, the main focus is on an Oglala Sioux artifact.

The Specimen and the Problem

Figure 1 is a shirt which was collected just over a century ago by the army officer Captain John Bourke from the Lakota warrior Little Big Man who told Bourke that it had once belonged "to the great chief of the Sioux, Crazy Horse, or had at least been worn by him" (Bourke, 1892:476). There is good evidence which suggests that Little Big Man actually sketched Crazy Horse wearing this garment (Johnson, 1891:114).

At the time of acquisition Bourke was unable to obtain details regarding its symbolism but speculated that the colours of yellow and blue represented the earth and water or sky, the attached feathers referred to birds and the painted circle on the breast was an image of the sun. He was, it seems, particularly interested in the significance of a cocoon attached to the left shoulder of the shirt but was unable to determine its meaning.



Figure 1: *Oglala hair-fringed shirt presented to Captain John Bourke by Little Big Man who said that it had "once belonged to the great chief of the Sioux, Crazy Horse, or had at least been worn by him". From a plate published in the Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Volume 9. This piece is now at the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York. Specimen number 16/1351. The author considers this a classic "silent memorial".*

The shirt is fabricated from two complete deerskins, the upper part of each forming the arms, the lower the body. As Bourke described it, the upper is painted blue, the lower yellow. Other features are truncated triangular neck flaps, hair fringing and red zig-zag lines, some of which are forked at the end, painted on the body and the arms. This particular specimen was considered an excellent piece for analysis; not only is it historically well docu-

mented and representative of a form of regalia exclusive to a few high-ranking Sioux leaders, but it raises two crucial questions:

- (1) Given Bourke's difficulties in obtaining information on the symbolism, what justification is there in thinking that important symbolism actually is associated with the garment? (2) Further, if such symbolism does exist, is it now possible to achieve a convincing interpretation more than one century after its manufacture and long after all the exponents of early Sioux military and religious symbolism are dead?

The initial task was to *examine* the evidence for the existence of a structured and recognized body of symbolism amongst the Sioux in order to define the parameters with a view to giving a quantitative explanation of some, preferably all, of the features exhibited by the specimen under analysis. In order to achieve this, the earlier work of such observers on the Sioux as Parker, (1976), Walker (1917, 1980, 1982, 1983), Fletcher (1887), Wissler (1904, 1907), Densmore (1918), Dorsey (1894), Sword et al. (1914), Beckwith (1930), Nicollet (1976), and more recently Macgregor (1946), Smith (1943), Hassrick, (1964), Neihardt (1932), Brown (1953), Powers (1977), DeMallie & Lavenda (1977) was examined. A good deal of the *material contained* in many of these volumes was derived directly from Sioux informants.

What does come through in the reading of some of these reports is the awe in which the Plains Indian stood with regard to the natural elements, which inhibited their willingness to impart information to early fieldworkers. Wissler, for example, reports that after a day of fieldwork amongst the Lakota in the summer of 1902 (when some aspects of symbolism were discussed) a number of tipi poles on the reservation were struck by lightning and splintered. "The Indians said that was because the people had been talking about things that were forbidden and that the thunder was avenging it" (Wissler, 1902:120). In more recent years, particularly while considering some aspects of religious symbolism with Hidatsa and Mandan people, I have come up against similar attitudes. It is thus a tribute to the early fieldworkers amongst the Sioux - particularly Wissler, Walker and Densmore - that they managed to record as much as they did!

The Sioux Cosmos

Those who have analyzed the society and personality traits of the Western Sioux are generally agreed in the view that the stand these people took towards mankind was to regard themselves as superior to them all (Macgregor, 1946; Hassrick, 1964). This aside, however, before the

awesome forces of nature (which soon become apparent to anyone who has travelled their traditional domain) they presented themselves as humble and weak supplicants yearning to gain some of the powers which almost daily they observed around them. They perceived an all pervading force *wakan* - the power of the universe - which to them was manifested in the blue of the sky or as Sioux informants told Mooney, in the brilliant colours of the rainbow (Sword et al., 1914). There was recognition of the life giving energy of the mellowed earth with that of the sun and its consort the moon: then there was the terrifying crash and reverberation of the thunder and associated destructive power of the lightning: these together with the wind and hail to name but a few were all viewed as a potential source of power which, if symbolically harnessed, could be used to personal best effect. Some of these are shown in a painting which was used to illustrate the narrative of the Sioux shaman, Black Elk (Neihardt, 1932:32). It is interesting to observe that the Sioux artist, Standing Bear, depicted the more unusual secondary rainbow where the sequence of colours is reversed (Nussenzveig, 1977).

A close observer of the Sioux during the early part of this century was Dr. J.R. Walker, a physician, who spent nearly twenty years in intimate association with these people. He was with them at a time when aged shamans and well informed tribal historians were still alive and, taking a more than usual interest in the Sioux, gained - and recorded - valuable insights into their cosmos (Walker, 1917). After years of consultation and contemplation he was able to define the totality of the creative force of the Sioux universe which they called *Wakan Tanka* - the great mysterious. Although the Sioux recognized that *Wakan Tanka* could at the sametime be both one and many, it was only the shamans who attempted a systematic classification; clearly a system which was not fully comprehended by the common man. Their *tobtoob kin* - "the four times four" - unified the spiritual and physical aspects of the Sioux cosmos and it assigned a definite power quantum and function to a matrix of beings: it embraced all the benevolent gods, "each of four classes and four in each class, as one whole" (Walker, 1917:58). It is interesting to note that psychologists have drawn attention to the repeated aspect of four-foldness in human society and that the number 16 played a particularly important role "since it is composed of four fours" (Jung, 1964:214).

The shaman Long Knife (George Sword), described as "a man of marked ability with a philosophical trend far beyond the average Oglala" (Walker, 1917:59) elaborated on the concept of *tobtoob kin*; he also explained the place of the shaman as a medium through which *Wakan Tanka* could communicate with mankind: "When *Wakan Tanka* wishes one of mankind to do something he makes his wishes known either in a vision or through a

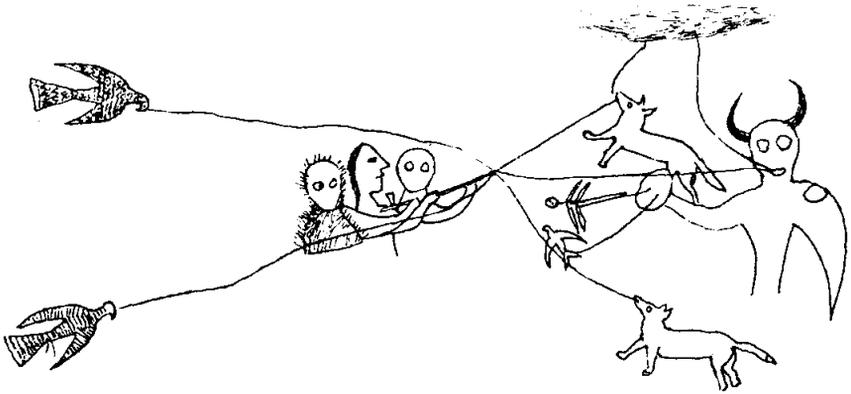


Figure 2: *Some akicita wakan or sacred messengers of the Hunkpapa Siouxas depicted by His Fight. Here, His Fight shows the cedar and pipestone spirits, a homed thunder god, dragon fly, swallow and coyote. The lines linking each tell the observer that these sacred messengers smoked the pipe with His Fight and were there to help him. From a pictograph collected by De Cost Smith, circa 1885.*

shaman...The shaman addresses *Wakan Tanka* as *Tobtob Kin*. This is part of the secret language of the shamans...*Tobtob kin* are four times four gods while *Tob kin* is only the four winds. The four winds is a god and is the *akicita* or messenger of all the other *gods*...*Wakan Tanka* is like sixteen different persons: but each person is *kan*. Therefore, they are all only the same as one...All the God persons have *ton*. *Ton* is the power to do supernatural things...Half the good Gods are *ton ton* (have physical properties) and half are *ton ton sni* (have no physical properties)" (Walker, 1917:153). Based on Sword's information, DeMallie and Lavenda have recently produced a chart of these 16 "good *Wakan Tanka*" (DeMallie & Lavenda, 1977:156).

In an attempt to give the common man an understanding of the complex relationships within the hierarchy of gods the shamans made use of metaphors so that the inanimate objects and abstract concepts were endowed with life and action or given attributes of living beings. Sword's reference to the vision hints at the media through which *Wakan Tanka* could

also communicate with humans; thus the *Akicita Wakan* or Sacred Messengers were "anything animate or inanimate other than mankind which makes itself known as such" (Walker, 1917:79). The Hunkpapa Sioux warrior and shaman His Fight (or Battle) attempted an illustration of his vision experience after nine days of fasting (Figure 2). Here he shows the cedar and pipestone spirits sharing the pipe with His Fight (that pipe - like Black Elk's - will henceforth become sacred). From the clouds comes the Thunder God (shown here as a horned figure) who by the flash of the mirrors on his wings brings forth a dragon fly, swallow and coyote. From the east and west come the fox and two hawks of different kinds. The lines linking each tell us that these sacred messengers of *Wakan Tanka* smoked the pipe with His Fight and that they were there to help him (Smith, 1943:134).

Similar messengers are shown on an Oglala shield which was said to have belonged to Crazy Horse. This is now at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Here again is shown the thunderbird and dragon fly as well as symbols of the lightning and possibly also the spider - which by its industry and intelligence was endowed with unusual powers.

Both realistic or conventionalized representations of these messengers or gods are to be found on the ceremonial garments so the key to their interpretation must lie in an appreciation and understanding of the concepts and mythology embodied in the *tob tob kin*. Once these are grasped and expanded upon it does seem possible to achieve a semiotic reading with a fair degree of confidence. This exegetic type approach is obviously potentially open to criticism as even in historic times most Indians (in common with most societies) did not fully understand much of the symbolism, and the use of these as informants would give few consistent interpretations. This problem was early recognized by the Plains anthropologist Clark Wissler who felt that one might well attempt to test the artistic sense of a city by "calling in one or two persons from the street" (Wissler, 1907:21), obviously an absurd approach with little scientific merit! Later, in correspondence with Wissler, Walker, then himself deeply involved in attempting to document and understand the symbolism of Sioux ritual, reported on the criticism of his work by a white man who had long lived with the Oglalas: "He is writing of things I never heard of, and I think the Indians don't know anything about them either. They do these things just because they happen to do them that way. They have no reason for it." Walker simply countered such judgements with the comment: "A *superficial* investigation of the subject would uphold the criticism" (Walker, 1980:28). In order, therefore, to obtain consistency, it was necessary to consult with several of the initiated - the holymen, the shamans. Sitting Bull, by the way, was such a shaman and it is perhaps significant that he had a great and somewhat mysterious influence over his

people; I particularly mention this leader as he was a close associate of Crazy Horse. Of such holymen the ethnologist Captain John Bourke was to observe that they were "the repository of all the lore of the savage, the possessor of knowledge, not of the present world alone, but of the world to come as well" (Porter, 1986:263).

After some twenty years of detailed research of Sioux ceremonial and ritual (during which he was initiated as a shaman) Walker was finally led to the conclusion that in the days prior to confinement on the reservation the Oglalas had "ceremonies that pertained to almost every act in their lives" and that in performing these ceremonies every word or movement is a formal rite that has reference to the mythology" (Walker, 1917:56).

Although Walker's studies of the Sioux related mainly to the Sun Dance, he made some efforts to collect data on war insignia and he seems to have utilized symbolic data from the myths and legends in an attempt to explain the meaning of such insignia. Although some of these interpretations lack consistency (possibly due to the relatively limited amount of time he spent on this topic) Walker did indicate the general direction that he obviously felt that such research should take; such work Elaine Jahner and Raymond DeMallie have commented "deserves further study" (in Walker, 1980:259). Such involvement with the people he was studying - especially the shamans - makes his work particularly important and it is in the same class as that referred to by Jean Malaurie in his comments relating to studies of Bedouin Arabs and of the Eskimos by such participant observers as Thesiger and Rasmussen (Malaurie, 1987:9).

Nevertheless, even after more than half a century, the reluctance to consider symbolic interpretations of artifacts seriously still exists and little systematic work has so far been carried out in this area. For example, recently the Plains ethnologist John Ewers cautioned that my studies of Plains Indian symbolism would probably meet with a "certain amount of negative reaction" citing the experiences of early fieldworkers who turned their attention to the symbolism of bead and quillwork in Plains women's decorative arts but failed to come up with any consistent system of symbolism. However, Dr. Ewers was of the opinion that there was much symbolism in *religious* and *military* art and that detailed analysis of artifacts could lead to an important understanding of the symbolic thinking of Plains Indians (personal correspondence, 1987).

Such research is not easy; it takes a great deal of time and effort and although the historical record needs to be examined in detail, a vital key is to know that it was really only the shamans and their close associates who by consultation and direction gave both the continuity and consistency to ritual and ceremonial. Failure to recognize these individuals as the genuine

interpreters of dreams and visions and the proper advocates of the symbols employed in religious and military heraldry can only lead to confused and inconsistent deductions. In any interpretation of symbolism the direct pronouncements of the shamans must clearly carry much weight; at the same time their data needs to be cross examined bearing in mind the possible use of a sacred language which might mask the true meaning to the uninitiated.

Ritual and Symbolic Interpretations

The Sioux artifact here under discussion is one of two now extant in the world. The rituals which Walker reported on as pertaining "to almost every act in their lives", are epitomized in the complex ceremonial of conferment when this so called "scalp shirt" was bestowed on those who acted on behalf of the tribal leaders. The shirts were spoken of as "owned by the tribe" (Wissler, 1912:7) so clearly they should exhibit much tribal ethos and holistic thinking - a classic Lewis Henry Morgan "silent memorial".

Fifty years ago He Dog, the Oglala Sioux historian and friend of Crazy Horse, described to Eleanor Hinman the ceremonial conferment of such garments to the tribal executives. At that time He Dog was 92 years old but was possessed of a remarkable memory and described as "a living depository of Oglala tribal history and old-time customs". Hinman was deeply impressed with He Dog's strong historical sense and the moderation and carefulness of his statements (Hinman, 1976:5). What comes through in the information from this man and others such as Wissler (1912) and Colhoff (1949) is the great emphasis put on the integrity and responsibilities expected of the elected shirt wearers. One previously unpublished version of the conferment lecture is notable for its poetic metaphors: "You are the choice of the people. There are many kinds of timber in this land, some are weak, others stronger, only one is firm, sound and stronger than all others. You are like this one, firm, sound, strong. Keep so, and do not get weak. The trail you are to lead your people is narrow and full of storms and cactus, and even when your own brother falls at your feet mortally wounded, or your tipi be urinated by a dog, do not be angered by the barking of the dogs, but be patient for all these will cause a good man to (lose) face ... always remember your sacred pipe ... do not take offence in minor affairs ... overlook all grievances and abide by our sacred pipe" (Colhoff to Balmer, 1949, Colhoff, 1949:50).

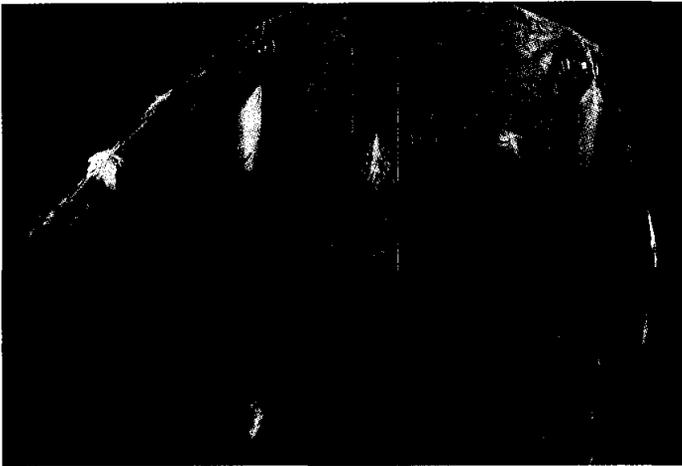
The full ceremonial is lengthy and a complete description will be left for another time but this is perhaps sufficient to illustrate another facet of the complex ritual of Sioux culture to which Walker makes detailed reference.



a



b



c

Figures 3 a,b,c: *A chief of the Naudowessie based on a description by the eighteenth century explorer Jonathan Carver. The knife carried at the throat was a symbol of rank - a successful war chief. Note the remarkable similarity between the sheath shape and that of the neck flap on an 1850 Sioux hair-fringed shirt and now in the collections of the Denver Art Museum. Specimen number LS-7-P - collected by F.M. Walker near Fort Laramie in the 1860's.*

Structural Symbolism

A consideration of some specific features exhibited by the ceremonial shirt under discussion shows that the structural characteristics are in keeping with the Plains Indian tendency towards the use of the archaic or reversion to the natural order of things when ceremonial and ritual were to be evoked. Thus the shirts are fabricated from largely unfashioned bighorn skins so that they retain the semblance of the animal, emphasizing the close relationship these people felt that they had with nature and symbolically transferring the power of the animal - in this case the agile and intelligent bighorn - to the wearer. Such concepts have been touched on by several observers over the years such as Willoughby (1927), Skinner (1911), Wissler (1916) and more recently Ewers (1982). It should also be noted that the lower part of the arms have been laced together rather than sewn, an ancient technique. Hatt observed that the use of sinew "represents a step more recent than sewing with skin thongs" (Hatt, 1969:22).

There are several other structural characteristics which are suggestive of symbolism but I can only consider one more here. According to the explorer Jonathan Carver, who travelled amongst the Sioux in the late 18th century, high ranking warriors of the tribe carried a knife in a sheath decorated with porcupine quills and hung around the neck as shown in an early illustration (Figure 3a). The most striking aspect of the sheath, which it would be reasonable to assume was based on Carver's description of the artist of this engraving, is its very close similarity to the neck flap which appears on the scalp shirts (Figure 1 and 3c). These flaps served no structural function. It is interesting to note that Carver described the knife as being "a sword worn by the chiefs of the Naudowessie" - entirely the same ethos evoked by the scalp shirt. The idea may, it appears, be taken one step further. The more elaborate shirt worn by Red Cloud (and others) and now in the Plains Indian museum at Cody (Figure 4) has an unusually shaped neck flap, the lower extremity being cut into an inverted vee producing two further small flaps. We see this also in the regalia of the *wakicun* or pipe owners in a drawing of them in council by Amos Bad Heart Bull. These men were the true executives of the tribe: as symbols of office they carried a ceremonial pipe and a beaded or quilled bag. A distinctive feature of such bags was the addition of unusual triangular-shaped appendages at the bottom instead of the usual quill-wrapped rawhide strips. Thus the distinctive cut of the neck flap appears to be again a statement of status and office.

Colour Symbolism

As with the Crazy Horse shirt under discussion, many of the ceremonial shirts worn by high ranking Sioux warriors were painted blue on the upper

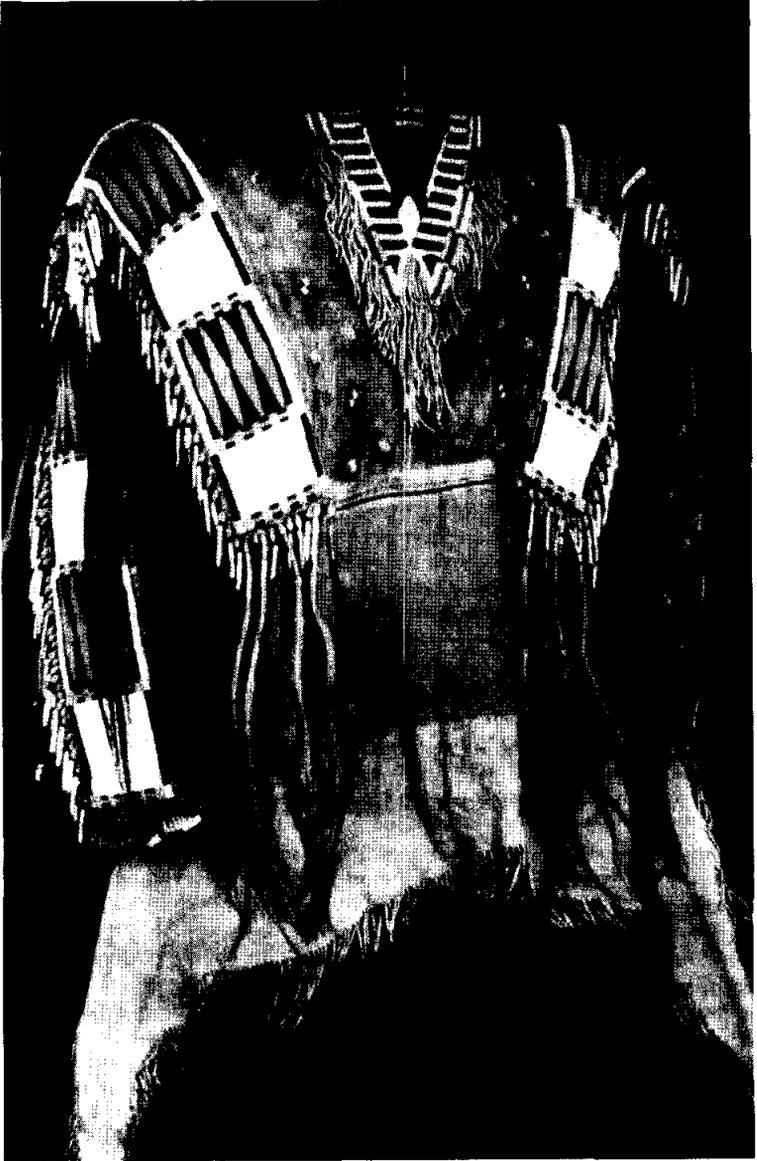


Figure 4: *An extension of the neck flap symbol referred to in Figure 3. Here, the cut of the neck flap - with the inverted vee producing two further small flaps - is illustrated on the Red Cloud shirt now in Cody.*

half. For example, the Sioux historian Bad Heart Bull depicted the Hunkpapa Sioux leader Sitting Bull in such a garment.

The colour blue traditionally held a particular place in Sioux symbolism and its use can be traced back to the early nineteenth century at least. The colour was representative of one of their most powerful Gods which the shamans called *Skán* or *To* - energy or the moving force of the universe. As Walker noted, *To* is the "immaterial blue of the sky which symbolizes the presence of the Great Spirit"... "he is the source of all power and motions" ... "he may sit in judgement on other Gods"... "he can undo that which is done" (Walker, 1917:81-82). On a more personalized level the emblem of blue was said to be "the immaterial being whose domain is the regions above the earth, and who gives life, strength, and spirits to mankind, and governs everything that moves of its own volition". Of the four superior Gods of the Sioux (Sun, Earth, Rock and Engery [*Skán*]), Sword said that *Skán* had the most "to do with the affairs of mankind" (Sword, 1914).

It is of interest to note that although blue was an important colour to the Sioux, according to early fieldworkers blue paint was not indigenous to Teton Sioux territory (Wissler, 1904:270; Densmore, 1918:173). Wissler suggested that the colour was obtained from the traders. Densmore, however, makes reference to a traditional source as being a "blue clay" found in southern Minnesota (Densmore, 1918:116 and 173). Such comments give an important clue to the probable original source of this colour because *Maka* is the Sioux word for earth and *to* - as noted above - is for blue. In southern Minnesota is the so called Blue Earth county through which flows the Mankato river. It was reported locally that the river was so named by the Sioux because of an unusual and limited quantity of coloured clay found upon its banks about four miles from its mouth. References to such coloured clay in this region go back to the days of the French explorer Le Sueur who first visited the area in 1683. The clay was mistaken for an ore of copper and some "4,000 pounds of it were sent to France" (Winchell, 1884:17). The area was later explored and reported in great geographical detail by Joseph N. Nicollet in the 1830's who called it the "Undine region" - reminiscent of the German fable referring to water-spirits living in the brooks and rivers. As with the Sisseton Sioux who had inhabited this region for generations it obviously had a marked impression on Nicollet who described the area as "most picturesque" observing that the tributaries of the Mankato spread out in the shape of a fan: it contrasted markedly with the monotonous and treeless prairies which flanked the region both to the east and west.

Nicollet was accompanied by Sleepy Eye, a chief of the Sissetons, who told him that in earlier days "the Ndakotahs formerly assembled in great numbers to collect the coveted blue earth". It was now, however, in very

short supply, the main concentration being some six miles from the mouth and found in "cavities" which were located in a "rocky bluff composed of sandstone and limestone" (Nicollet, in Winchell, 1884:71-72). Some seventy years later when Sisseton informants were interviewed the clay was still "very highly prized by the IndJans" as a pigment for painting and was considered to possess the ability to "protect them from the missels of their foes" (Hughes, 1908-1909:3). In the context of this statement it is meaningful to note that George Sword's manuscript (written in Lakota) makes particular reference to the painting of the Ghost Dance shirts "with blue across the back" (Mooney, 1892:798). As is well known, such garments were believed to protect the wearer from the bullets of the enemy (Wissler, 1907:39).

The clay was obviously a coveted commodity and in limited supply particularly to the Lakota; possibly it was obtained at the Dakota rendezvous trade fairs which dated back to at least 1700 and annually took place on the James River in present-day eastern South Dakota (Ewers, 1968:17). It was at such fairs that the western Sioux traded with related Dakota tribes such as the Sisseton in whose territory, as has already been stated, the blue clay was found.

This all fits in well with the nature of Lakota thinking because there was an ethos amongst the Teton Sioux which put great emphasis on the genuineness of things. "A man ought to desire that which is genuine instead of that which is artificial" stated Shooter (Densmore, 1918:173) and into this class came several colours of earth paint which "could be obtained only in certain places". These paints included a special red vermilion which did not fade - "mixed colours faded" - and also the coveted blue clay. Thus the use of such blue on the upper part of the Sioux hair-fringed shirt clearly had considerable symbolic associations and it is very unlikely that such colouring would be put on items which were not in this class. Comparison of the colours displayed on both the existing shirts of this type together with the so called Red Cloud shirt at Cody (which will be dealt with in another paper) indicates a similar range of blue. This blue is somewhat lighter in shade than that which, for example, appears on a Brule Sioux shirt now at the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. This, perhaps significantly, was probably made up for a white collector in a close imitation of the early style but not utilizing the "genuine colour". Such questions may be finally resolved by spectrochemical and diffraction analysis such as have been applied to the early robes from North America now in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris.

The Symbolic Cocoon

As has already been mentioned on the left shoulder of the Crazy Horse shirt is attached the cocoon of a moth and although Bourke mentions it -

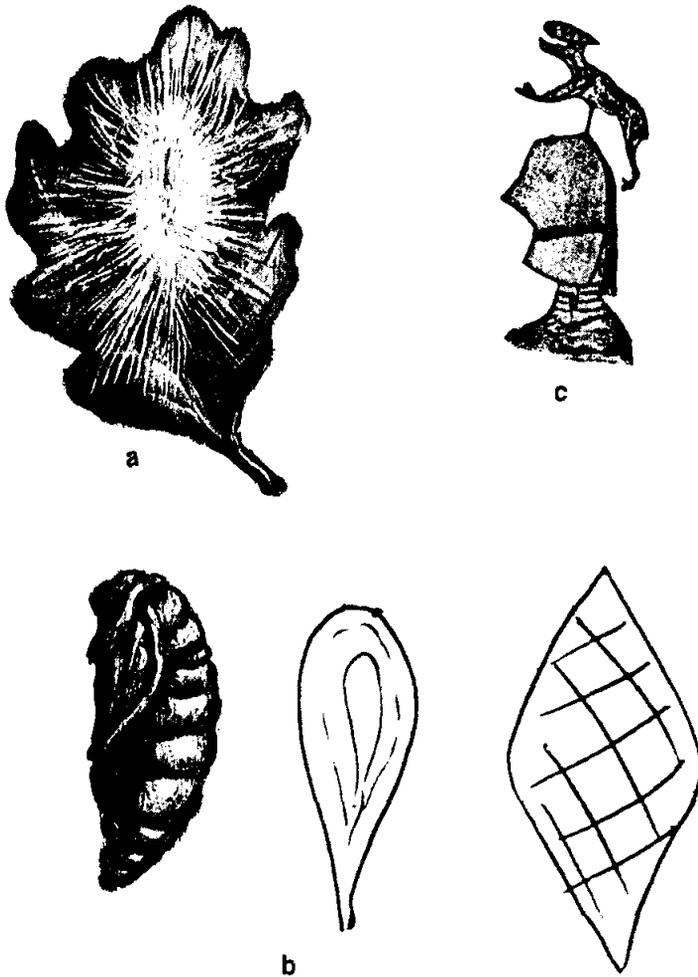


Figure 5 a,b,c: *Symbols of whirlwind power. (a) The cocoon and pupa worn by Sioux warriors as a symbol of whirlwind power (A cocoon was attached to the left shoulder of the shirt worn by Crazy Horse - see Figure 1) (b) Graphic symbols of the whirlwind cocoon (After Wissler, 1907). (c) 'Whirlwind Bear', a Sioux name glyph (After Mallery, 1893).*

obviously it caught his attention - he confesses "the significance of (this) I do not know." This, however, opens up another fascinating area of Sioux symbolism and evokes the power of another Sioux god, namely, *Yumni* the whirlwind. *Yumni* was considered the son of Tate, the wind, "who established

the four directions of the world" (Walker, 1917:85). The Sioux regarded the cocoon as a most mysterious object from which a power "similar to that of the whirlwind emanates" (Wissler, 1905:258). The metamorphosis emphasized the uncanny power of the moth "because it had the power to escape from an enclosure" (Wissler, 1905:258), and, as with the wind, it was impossible to confine it.

It is interesting to note that the name of a Sioux curing ritual (which has been described in some detail by William Powers and others) namely the Yuwipi - where a man is bound tightly in a quilt from which he attempts to escape - derives from *yuwí*, a "wrap around" or "roll up" action very similar to the effect of the whirlwind *yumni*. It seems more than a coincidence that emphasizes on escape from an enclosure and influence on human events is associated with both the micro cocoon and the macro Yuwipi man power; further these concepts seem ancient, the explorer Jonathan Carver reporting in the 1760's of a ritual where Naudowesee (Sioux) "juglers" bound in "buffeloe skin" escape "in the space of an hour" (Parker (Editor), 1976:101-102).

Some of Wissler's most reliable informants were of the opinion that the moth by its wings "reproduced the phenomenon of the whirlwind" and that the mysterious acts of the moth could be explained "by its rapport with this power". It is interesting further to observe that, as mentioned previously, Yumni was considered the little son of Tate (the wind) and that the whirlwind referred to was actually the small whirls which one often sees on the Plains especially on a hot day; the swirling columns of dust made a marked impression on the Plains Sioux; as Black Elk said "the wind in its greatest power whirls" and his people linked them with a state of confusion.

in his unpublished field notes Wissler further refers to the cocoon power, the whirlwind bug being described as about the length of the forefinger and marked by peculiar spiral-like grooves (Figure 5a). This unusual shape, Wissler reported, was thought to cause the little whirlwinds that take up the dust. It was sometimes worn on the head, the twigs being cut off to hold it and it was generally wrapped in an eagle plume. The bug was said to have great power over people frequently being carried on the warpath "and it was said to make a whirlwind and confuse the enemy and make him lose his senses" (Wissler, 1907:119). The whirlwind association in the minds of the Sioux is emphasized by the pictographic symbol utilized to express a name which has whirlwind connotations, for example "Whirlwind Bear". Such a representation is shown in Figure 5c which is taken from Mallery (1893:604). Here a cocoon is clearly shown above the head of the bear and represents the whirlwind phenomena. The symbolism of the cocoon on the Crazy Horse shirt can thus be interpreted with some confidence. The graphic symbol of

the cocoon is shown in Figure 5b. Additionally, Wissler reports that it was also represented in wood or modelled of buckskin decorated with beads (Wissler, 1905:259). In this respect it is most interesting to observe that the famous Red Cloud Shirt (Figure 4) which is now in the Plains Indian Museum, Cody, Wyoming (and which my researches are showing reflects much of the symbolism associated with the Crazy Horse shirt but at a higher political level) has what is undoubtedly a beaded representation of this symbol on the neck flap. The shirt was worn on the two occasions that the Red Cloud delegation visited Washington to negotiate with the U.S. Government for Sioux rights; the cocoon's "great power over people" seems a fitting use of this aspect of Sioux symbolic power.

NOTES

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