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“I Was Brought to Life to Save My People from Starvation and from Their Enemies”: Pahukatawa and the Pawnee Trauma of Genocide

Mark van de Logt

One day in the early 1830s, a Lakota war party surprised five Pawnee Indians trapping beaver. Four of the Pawnee escaped to the hills, but the Lakota killed the remaining man and dismembered his body. When the Pawnees returned later that spring to collect the bones of their slain friend, they found only arrows and bullets. His remains had disappeared. Several years later, however, the slain man's spirit returned from the dead. His name was Pahukatawa (“Hills along the banks of a river” or “Knee-print by the water”).¹ He had come to help his people who, at this time, were extremely desperate. Euro-American travelers introduced devastating diseases and used up valuable resources such as the buffalo; drought and grasshoppers were destroying their crops; and the Lakota and Cheyenne were waging a relentless war of annihilation against them. Fortunately, Pahukatawa had now returned to give the people strength and hope. He promised to protect them from diseases and inspire them to many victories against their enemies, thus preserving the Pawnee from extinction. Pahukatawa became both prophet and messiah to the Pawnee people. After visiting the Pawnee for a few years, he ascended to the heavens and took his place among the stars in the northern sky.

The ethnohistorical record is sparse about his life and death. Although present-day Pawnees vow that Pahukatawa was wonderful and important, he nonetheless remains a mystery. Yet placing Pahukatawa in the context of his time provides more insight

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into his mystery. With his reappearance loosely coinciding with the arrival of the first Christian missionaries among the Pawnee in the mid-1830s, there are certain similarities between Pahukatawa and Christ that imply some religious cross-fertilization. However, the differences between Pahukatawa and Christ are too significant to suggest simple syncretism. Equally intriguing, Pahukatawa's rise as a sacred and powerful spiritual entity coincided with a crisis in the worship of Morning Star, the powerful cosmic warrior whose marriage to Evening Star had resulted in the creation of the Pawnee people.²

This article argues that genocidal warfare with the Lakota and Cheyenne caused a spiritual crisis among the Pawnee: that is, loss of confidence in the established sacred powers. Neither Morning Star, a traditional sacred power, nor Jesus, a newly imported religious figure, seemed to provide sufficient protection against enemy threats. In this crisis Pahukatawa appeared. Among traditional Skiris who favored Morning Star his appearance was quite controversial, but eventually he was accepted as one of the major Skiri sacred powers. The worship of Pahukatawa differs from other revitalization movements in that, at first, it responded to Lakota and Cheyenne expansionism rather than Euro-American settler colonialism.³

PAWNEE RELIGION AND COSMOLOGY

Pawnee religion was highly elaborate with a rich ceremonial life. The Pawnee attitude towards the sacred powers was "intensely devout" and characterized by an "intensity of emotion."⁴ Unlike the great monotheistic world religions, Pawnee religion did not owe its existence to a single revelation, but was based on the visions of numerous individuals. Indeed, the quest for visions is a distinctive aspect of American Indian religions.⁵ Because new visions occurred with regularity, possibly induced by social or political stress, Pawnee religion evolved continuously, and visions may also explain religious differences between various Pawnee bands. The Skiris had a slightly different creation account and different ceremonial practices than the South Band Pawnees (Chauis, Kitkehahkis, and Pitahawiratas). New visions added to a deeper understanding of the sacred and frequently resulted in additions to the Pawnee ceremonial repertoire.⁶

Tiiraawaahat, "The (Expanse of the) Heavens," was the creator of the universe. The Pawnees addressed him as Atius ("Father"). Although Atius Tiiraawaahat was the source of everything, in their daily affairs the Pawnees looked more toward subsidiary powers for support. Of these there were two kinds: celestial powers (stars, moon, sun, thunder, and lightning), which had been created directly by Tiiraawaahat, and terrestrial powers (animals), which in turn had been created by the celestial powers. Celestial powers governed the universe, such as the passing of the seasons, the arrival of rain, the planting and harvesting of crops, and the arrival of bison and other animals. In other words, the celestial powers ruled creation and subsistence. Priests had charge of the seasonal round of ceremonies associated with these powers. They knew the secrets of the sacred bundles and the sacred songs that were an essential part of each ceremony. The sacred bundle associated with Evening Star, for example, was the most powerful and important of all, because it was essential for bountiful crops and procreation. The

Skiri Morning Star ceremony, with its sacrifice of a human captive, commemorated the suffering undergone by Morning Star in the creation of the Skiri people. The ceremony itself had procreative properties as well.⁷

Skiri Pawnee cosmology, with its constellation of powers (sacred bundles), can be illustrated as seen in Figure 1:

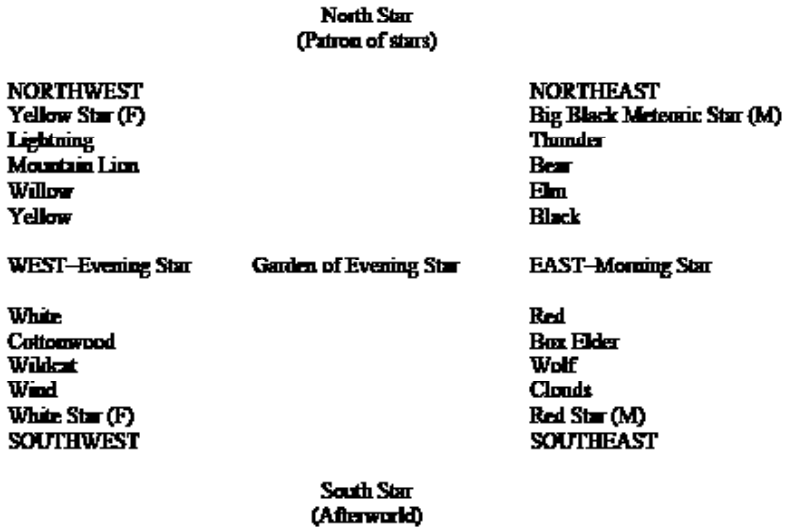


FIGURE 1. *Skiri Pawnee cosmology, adapted from Von Del Chamberlain, When Stars Came Down to Earth: Cosmology of the Skidi Pawnee Indians of North America, 97.*

Social status in Pawnee society was based primarily on spiritual power (see fig. 2). Unlike modern-day American society, where social status is related to income and wealth, among the Pawnees it depended on spiritual capital. Visions were the most common ways to acquire spiritual power, but the power of a vision could also be purchased from someone else.

The Pawnees recognized two levels of power: *paaruksti* and *waaruksti*. One can associate these with celestial and terrestrial powers. *Tiiraawaahat* was *paaruksti*. He created by sacrificing part of himself and then “breathing” life and placing a soul into his creation. Creating, then, involved self-sacrifice on the part of *Tiiraawaahat*.⁸ Because *Tiiraawaahat* created the stars and other celestial objects, they, too, were *paaruksti*. Among the most powerful celestial powers were Morning Star (a warrior), Evening Star (keeper of gardens and fertility), Sun, Moon, and the four directional powers. These powers created earth and all living things on it, including humans. Occasionally, however, one of the celestial powers would bestow power on worthy humans through visions. Pawnee priests owed their power and status to these celestial beings.⁹ Animals formed the lower level of sacred power. In effect they had received

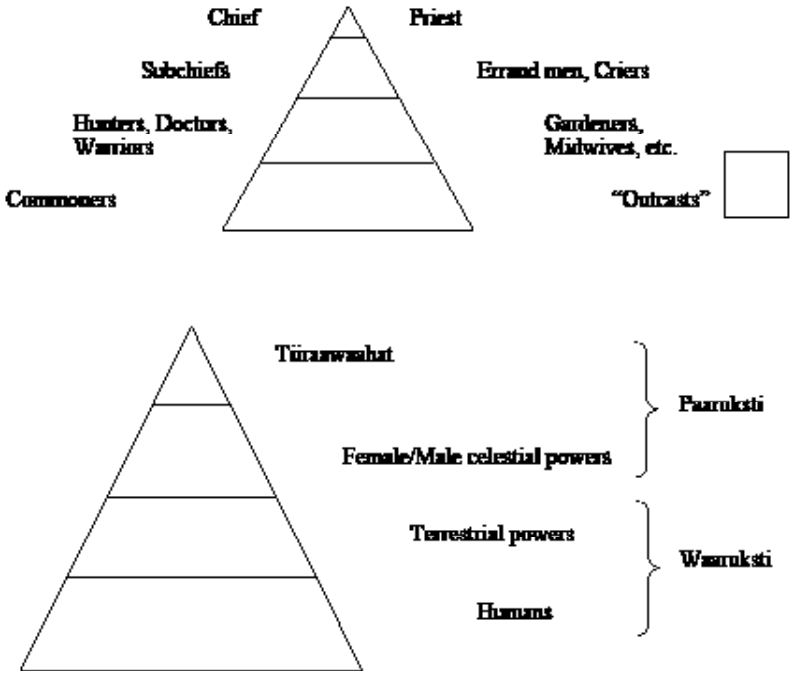


FIGURE 2. Author's theoretical charts depicting Pawnee social pyramid and Pawnee sacred powers. The social pyramid was a reflection of the hierarchy that existed among the sacred powers.

their power from the celestial objects, and thus were *waaruksti*. Animals too sometimes bestowed their power on worthy humans through visions, who would then become successful doctors, hunters, warriors, or gardeners.

Humans were placed on earth when Wolf accidentally released them from the whirlwind sack in which they were carried. Humans received a physical form, a life force which animated them, and a soul which enabled them to think and worship. This soul resided in the combined heart, trachea, and tongue of a person. As punishment for opening the whirlwind sack, Wolf was killed, and this event introduced death on earth. At death, the human physical form returned to the earth, while the soul departed to the afterworld. The life force ("breath") of man or animal would return to *Tiiraawaahat* and allow him to continue the process of creation (see fig. 3). While the soul was immortal, the life force was "recycled." This life force could be captured (in the form of scalps, bones, skulls, skin, or blood) and used by its taker for sacrificial purposes.¹⁰

To ensure the survival of the people, the Pawnees conducted ceremonies. Most of these dealt with fertility, birth, and the maintenance of life. Sacrifices were an integral part of these ceremonies. Perhaps the most spectacular (and often overstressed) sacrifice was the ritual death of a captive during the Morning Star Ceremony. The

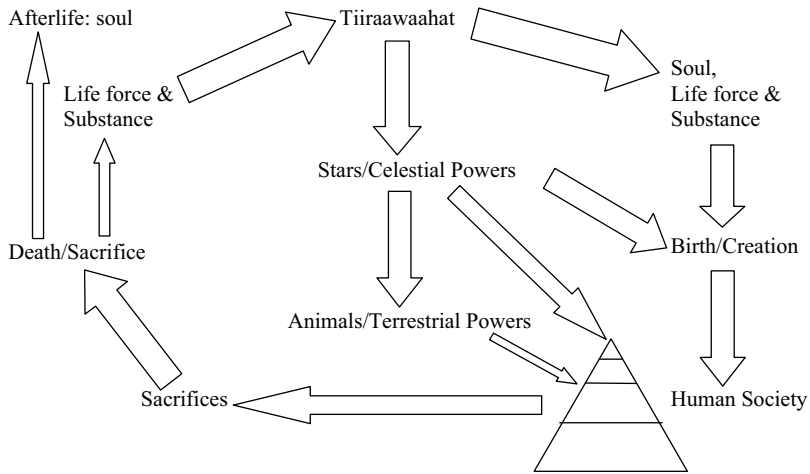


FIGURE 3. Author's theoretical representation of the Skiri Pawnee cycle of creation.

ceremony was based on the story of Morning Star's marriage to Evening Star and the creation of the Skiri people. Morning Star demanded the occasional sacrifice of a human captive to remember his efforts to create humankind. This ceremony was held irregularly and sometimes years passed between performances. What is important to remember is that the Skiris believed that the physical remains of the victim died, but that her spirit became a star who took her place alongside Morning Star as his wife.¹¹

These blood sacrifices were intended to *sustain* life rather than destroy it. Death was necessary to allow the sacred powers to continue the process of creation. The proper way to release and transfer the revivifying powers of death, was through ceremonial sacrifice.

"I HAVE GREAT POWER FROM THE GODS IN THE HEAVENS AND ON THE EARTH"

Although the Pawnees often viewed warfare as a ceremonial act which could involve a sacrifice, nothing prepared them for genocidal conflict with tribes that, supplied with guns and horses, invaded their territories in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Warfare with the Lakota and Cheyenne was especially traumatic. It resulted not only in disturbingly high mortality rates, but also in a large number of so-called "scalped men," men and women who had survived the ordeal of scalping while unconscious. The Pawnee believed that these people had died and then had been restored to life by a mysterious, sacred power. They were no longer considered human, but potentially dangerous spirits. Feared and shunned, scalped persons lived a lonely existence away from their own people who, if encountered, might kill them. Scalped men stories became a popular genre among the Pawnees. Usually scalped men appeared as

terrifying bogeymen who abducted women and children, but sometimes they appeared as distant providers who supported loved ones, or they acted as sources of spiritual power which they bestowed on worthy individuals. Indeed, as anthropologist Douglas R. Parks points out, the figure of the scalped man eventually evolved from a historical character to a mythological one.¹²

Because he had survived death and mutilation, Pahukatawa was, in effect, the ultimate scalped man. Several versions of his story exist. The main sources include Roaming Scout, a Skiri Pawnee priest; James R. Murie, who conducted much ethnographical work in the early 1900s; Lone Chief, a Skiri chief and owner of the Morning Star Bundle; John Brown Dunbar, son of a Presbyterian missionary to the Pawnees in the 1830s and 1840s; George Bird Grinnell, an ethnographer; and Samuel Osborne, son of a Pawnee scout and a graduate of Haskell Institute.¹³ Although their accounts differ in details, they agree with each other in outline.¹⁴ According to these sources, Pahukatawa was the son of Hikus (“Breath”) and possibly brother of Kawaharu (“Wind Ready To Give”), both of whom were stars in the northern sky. His mother was an ordinary woman, providing an interesting parallel with Jesus, who was the son of God and born of the Virgin Mary. While the tale of his origins may have been apocryphal, Pahukatawa eventually assumed his station in the northern sky alongside Hikus and Kawaharu.¹⁵

The sources provide conflicting accounts about Pahukatawa’s death. According to Roaming Scout, Pahukatawa died while trapping beavers.¹⁶ Lone Chief stated that he was killed while hunting.¹⁷ In Samuel Osborne’s version, Pahukatawa was looking for horses when the Sioux surprised him. In any case, when his friends returned the next spring to recover his remains, they found only arrows, bullets, and other rubbish, but no corpse. Grinnell reports that the Sioux had thrown Pahukatawa’s body parts into a river. However, all accounts agree that the animals took pity on Pahukatawa and put him back together. It is uncertain in what year Pahukatawa’s spirit returned from the dead. According to Grinnell, the animals danced around him until he was alive again. Unfortunately, the animals could not find Pahukatawa’s scalp or brains because crows had eaten these. The animal powers replaced the brains with some downy feathers, but ever since Pahukatawa had difficulty speaking. According to Lone Chief, when Pahukatawa’s spirit returned he visited an old friend, but Samuel Osborne claimed that Pahukatawa first visited his mother, who had cried so much over the loss of her son that she had gone blind; in the first of a series of miracles, Pahukatawa restored her vision.

Most sources claim that Pahukatawa visited a man, but only Murie provides a name for this individual, which Pahukatawa himself bestowed on him: “Coming Sun.”¹⁸ According to Murie’s account, Pahukatawa first appeared as a voice and told Coming Sun to meet him on a hill and offer tobacco in his honor. Coming Sun did as Pahukatawa had told him, but instead of finding Pahukatawa, he encountered first a mountain lion, then a bear, and finally the leader of an enemy war party. At each encounter, Coming Sun backed away in fear. Pahukatawa scorned him for his cowardice, but gave him one last chance. When he appeared as a charging buffalo bull, this time Coming Sun closed his eyes and stood his ground. When he opened his eyes,

Pahukatawa stood before him, dressed in a fine buffalo robe and buckskin leggings. He wore “a whole eagle on his back and in his right hand held a staff six feet long upon which was tied eagle down.” Blessing Coming Sun with the power of prophecy, Pahukatawa told him to repeat his words to the people: “I have great power from the gods in the heavens and on the earth,” he told him; “I was brought to life again that I might save my people from starvation and from their enemies.”¹⁹

After appearing and giving Coming Sun his name, Pahukatawa left a robe, leggings, staff, and an eagle amulet behind.²⁰ The giving of the name symbolized rebirth after the dormant and dark, but revitalizing, period of night. Indeed, the name symbolizes a new era in Pawnee history. Speaking through Coming Sun, Pahukatawa presented himself as a savior. One night, for example, Pahukatawa warned Coming Sun about an upcoming attack by the Sioux and other tribes: “They will make war upon us; I have come to tell you so you can warn the people.” He added that the Sioux and their allies “intend to wipe us out and burn our village.”²¹ The next day, Coming Sun alerted chief Big-Eagle and the chiefs and headmen gathered in council. There, Pahukatawa’s spirit appeared to them in a fire, first as a buffalo sitting down, next as an eagle, and briefly as a person. Pahukatawa instructed Coming Sun to perform the One Horn Dance.²²

Over subsequent days, Pahukatawa returned. One time he instructed the people to build “a high embankment around the village.” At another, he said that the enemy was so near that it was time for the people to dance and imitate the animals. On this occasion, he also noticed skeptics among the Skiris: “They are now coming in and I must make myself visible to them for many still doubt me,” he said, “They do not believe I am here.”²³ While dancing, each dancer asked for a brave deed in battle. Some wanted to kill enemies, while others asked for coups or scalps. An old man wished to strike twelve men and take a prisoner whom he pledged to hand over to the women of the tribe for torture. Pahukatawa promised to grant all their wishes.

Not everyone believed Pahukatawa’s prophecies. In fact, there were many who did not think that Pahukatawa was real. Among them was a young man who asked Pahukatawa to be wounded or killed in the upcoming battle. Of this young man, Pahukatawa said: “That young man has no faith in me, but what he says will come true.”²⁴ On the day of the battle, Pahukatawa first appeared as a buffalo to alert the people that the enemy had launched an attack. Then he took the shape of a rain cloud to wet the enemy’s weapons and render them useless. Finally, he appeared in the shape of a wolf, to signal to the people they should get behind the breastworks. In Samuel Osborne’s account, Pahukatawa also appeared as the wind.

All happened as Pahukatawa had prophesied. The old man struck twelve enemies and captured the war leader. The young man who had mocked Pahukatawa with his wish to die in battle, also received what he had asked for. According to Murie, he was wounded, but Roaming Scout stated that he was killed. In return for his help, Pahukatawa demanded that the people should honor him with the One Horn or One Horn Buffalo Dance: “When I was living among you, I valued the One Horn of you people—the dance named One Horn. You must dance that One Horn,” he said. “When one dances it, one must be painted with white clay and one must wear on

his head, uh, the scalp of a buffalo bull.”²⁵ Pahukatawa also provided the people with medicine to restore their health.²⁶

Unfortunately, the faction of disbelievers remained strong. After a while, feeling unappreciated and ignored, Pahukatawa left. The accounts vary on the exact circumstances of his departure. In Lone Chief’s version, Pahukatawa departed because one day nobody wished to smoke with him.²⁷ Roaming Scout explained that Pahukatawa left to live among other Indians after some Skiris had spoken disrespectfully about him. According to Murie, after Coming Sun’s death, Pahukatawa selected a successor and instructed this young man in the secrets of his powers. Unfortunately, this man one night refused to visit with Pahukatawa because he was sleepy. Offended by this slight, Pahukatawa left earth and ascended to the northern sky. He would stay there forever, but said that “he would help the people when they called on him.”²⁸

According to historian George E. Hyde, Pahukatawa’s own brother offended him. By 1835, before taking his place in the sky, Pahukatawa “was aiding the Sioux.” When the Sioux defeated them in a battle that winter, the Skiris told missionary Samuel Allis that they did not win because Pahukatawa “caused their guns to flash in the pan and the bullets to roll harmlessly from the muzzles.” Pahukatawa also broke their bowstrings.²⁹ That same year, Pahukatawa supposedly sabotaged an attempt by the Pawnees to negotiate an alliance with the visiting Arikara against the Lakota. The Arikaras rejected Skiri overtures and made themselves a nuisance, on various occasions spoiling Skiri hunting expeditions. According to Hyde, the “Skidi said that Pahukatawa had put the Arikaras up to this; and many Skidis firmly believed in later years that Pahukatawa went back to [North] Dakota with the Arikaras around 1836.”³⁰ Grinnell’s sources confirmed that Pahukatawa left to live with the Arikaras before he ascended to the heavens.³¹ However, all sources agree that he eventually took his place among the stars. Thus, Pahukatawa’s series of transformations was complete: he went from human, to spirit, to star power.

The Arikara version of the Pahukatawa story is very different from that of the Pawnee. The Arikaras said that the Cheyenne had killed him and that he was brought back to life by a mysterious mist or cloud that carried his body away. In any event, after abandoning the Pawnees, he joined the Arikaras, living among them for a long time and even having “one or more children by a Ree woman.” Pahukatawa’s Arikara grandson told Grinnell that he had once seen Pahukatawa. “He was described as a man, having feet like a wolf, and wearing a robe made of wolf skins,” Grinnell wrote. “The old man who told this—whose name was also Pahukatawá—went toward the form, intending to speak to it, but when he came close to it, it suddenly disappeared.”³²

After taking his seat in the northern sky, Pahukatawa became a revered celestial power. According to the Skiri Pawnee smoke offering, he was the seventh of the major powers to receive smoke after Tiiraawaahat, Morning Star, Evening Star, the Big Black Meteoric Star, and his father Hikus and his brother Kawaharu. Interestingly, he received smoke before Sun and Moon. One head priest once explained the significance of the smoke offering:

Now priests, young men, and you chiefs who rule over the people, this offering will be made to Ready To Give; the son of Ready To Give stands there. When he was upon the earth, he taught us to keep our villages clean so that disease would not enter them. It was he who came to warn our people of the approach of the enemy. He assists his father [Hikus] in sending buffalo. He assists the warriors to capture ponies. When we are near the village of the enemy, ponies come out on account of his power. He is Pahukatawa (Knee Prints Upon The River Bank).³³

INTERTRIBAL WARFARE AND GENOCIDE

Pahukatawa told people to keep their villages clean to help them fight off infectious diseases. Likewise, when he warned the people against approaching enemies, he was referring to the Lakota and Cheyenne, who posed a more immediate military threat to the Pawnee people than the US Army or Euro-American settlers. To be sure, whites threatened Pawnee culture and existence by exploiting natural resources such as wood, grass, and game; by introducing diseases; and by advocating the destruction of Pawnee culture. Still, the Lakotas and Cheyennes had vowed to exterminate the Pawnees, and their campaigns had a devastating and demoralizing effect on the Pawnee people.³⁴

Today the Pawnee, Lakota, and Cheyenne peoples enjoy amicable relations and admire one another's cultural accomplishments. But this was not the case in the nineteenth century when they fought bitter wars of annihilation against each other. Of course, the Lakota and Cheyenne also fell victim to genocide at the hands of American settler-colonialism. The massacres of Cheyennes at Sand Creek (1864) and Lakotas at Wounded Knee (1890) are only two examples of such genocidal warfare. Furthermore, the systematic destruction of the bison, violation of treaty rights, invasion of their territories, harassment by settlers, and, later, the systematic dismantling of Native cultures by the US government's civilization program meet present-day criteria of genocide and ethnocide, the intentional destruction of a people's cultural identity, as do the forced placement of children in boarding schools or non-Indian foster families, sterilization programs, and economic neglect by the federal government.

The term *genocide* evokes strong emotions and is controversial when applied to intertribal warfare. In 1948, the United Nations defined genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." The convention identified five acts of violence under this definition: (1) killing members of the group; (2) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (3) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (4) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and (5) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. Because the UN definition emphasizes the physical destruction of a people,³⁵ some scholars argue that the US government did not commit genocide because Indian policy was not aimed at the physical destruction of American Indian nations.³⁶ Recently, however, historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz disputed this position, arguing that the United States did in fact pursue a *policy* of genocide because its support of settler-colonialism "is a genocidal policy." Dunbar-Ortiz identifies four

periods when the United States pursued more specific policies of genocide: (1) the Jacksonian era, including removal; (2) the California gold rush; (3) the Indian wars of the Great Plains; and (4) the 1950s termination era. In fact, the evidence suggests that state-supported settler colonialism caused most acts of (physical) genocide against American Indians.³⁷

But is there evidence of genocide of American Indian tribes at the hands of other American Indians? According to genocide scholars, mass killings and attempts to wipe out social groups can be found in “all stages of human existence, and nearly all parts of the world have known genocide at one time or another, often repeatedly.”³⁸ In some cases American Indian nations too were perpetrators of genocide as well as victims of it. Often, however, such intertribal genocide was linked to European and Euro-American settler colonialism. For example, Jeffrey Blick has discovered that during the colonial era Haudenosaunee warfare transformed because of their dependency on the fur trade, resulting in a dangerous cycle of violence. As beaver populations became scarce due to over-hunting, the Haudenosaunee were compelled to expand their territory through warfare. The increased mortalities were then offset by so-called mourning wars in which captives were obtained to replenish the nations’ populations. In turn, warfare further increased dependency on guns, which had to be paid for with even more beaver pelts. The overall results were the massacre of enemy Indians, especially the Huron, or their forced adoption into Haudenosaunee society. We can distinguish the former as physical genocide, while the result of the latter was cultural genocide, or ethnocide.³⁹

The larger public is more familiar with the genocide of American Indians perpetrated by the United States. Adam Jones distinguishes among several acts of genocide: (1) genocidal massacres; (2) biological warfare, using pathogens (especially smallpox and plague) to which the indigenous people had no resistance; (3) spreading disease via the “reduction” of Indians to densely crowded and unhygienic settlements; (4) slavery and forced/indentured labor, especially though not exclusively in Latin America, in conditions often rivaling those of Nazi concentration camps; (5) mass population removals to barren “reservations,” sometimes involving death marches en route, and generally leading to widespread mortality and population collapse upon arrival; (6) deliberate starvation and famine, exacerbated by destruction and occupation of the native land base and food resources; and (7) forced education of indigenous children in white-run schools, where mortality rates sometimes reached genocidal levels.

The United States committed acts 3, 5, 6, and 7 on the Pawnees. However, although settlers murdered Pawnees on occasion, state-sponsored genocidal massacres of Pawnees did not occur. In contrast, the Lakota committed genocidal massacres on various occasions (act 1 on the above list). Periodic Lakota attacks also forced the Pawnees to gather in densely packed, unhygienic towns in order to protect themselves against further attacks (act 3). The Lakota also threatened the Pawnee with starvation and famine by plundering Pawnee stores while the Pawnee were absent, targeting women working in agricultural plots in order to disrupt food production, and stealing Pawnee horses and ambushing Pawnee hunters on their annual summer hunts (act 6).

One might table these actions under the name of “war” and conclude that this was “simply part of Plains Indian warfare,” but in fact they are not so easily understood.

From the perspective of the Pawnees, the main invaders at this time were not the whites, but the nomadic tribes who sought to establish their dominance on the Plains. Like the Comanche in the south and the Blackfeet in the north, the Lakota and Cheyenne attempted to establish their supremacy on the central plains at the expense of the sedentary tribes such as the Pawnees, Arikaras, Mandans, Hidatsas, Omahas, Poncas, and Kaws.⁴⁰ When these tribes resisted, the Lakota waged war against them to obtain a monopoly on buffalo, horses, and the gun trade, which they depended upon to maintain their supremacy. As buffalo populations dwindled, the cycle of warfare intensified accordingly, much like the earlier Haudenosaunee wars against the Huron in the American northeast.⁴¹ Of course cultural practices such as revenge and the quest for war honors were important incentives for individual Lakotas, but these individual motives nevertheless took place within the larger geopolitical context of Lakota expansionism. Individual motives might explain incidental acts of violence, but they do not explain sustained aggression against the Pawnees.

Did the Lakota intend to destroy the Pawnee? The evidence certainly suggests so. On various occasions, the Lakota stated their determination to “wipe out” the entire Pawnee nation. Of course, this could simply be rhetoric to intimidate the Pawnee or to raise their own courage. Still, as we shall see next, the Lakota backed up their words with actions.

“THEY INTEND TO WIPE US OUT AND BURN OUR VILLAGE”

Between 1600 and 1850 there were four American Indian migrations to the Plains that challenged Pawnee power: the Athabascans (Apache and Navajo) arrived in the early 1600s;⁴² the Dhegihan Siouan tribes (Osage, Omaha, Ponca, Kaw, Otoe, Missouriia, and Iowa) arrived in the late 1600s; the nomadic tribes (Lakota and Dakota Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, and Kiowa) arrived in the 1700s;⁴³ and, finally, in the late 1820s and early 1830s, a fourth immigrant wave consisting of removed eastern tribes (such as Delaware, Potawatomi, and Kickapoo) entered the Plains. In short, by the late 1830s, dozens of enemies surrounded the Pawnee. Author Washington Irving, who visited the Plains in 1832, observed that the Pawnee were “like the sons of Ishmael, their hand is against everyone and everyone’s hand is against them.”⁴⁴

Of these intruders, the Lakota and Cheyenne brought Pawnee society to the brink of collapse. Ethnohistorical sources reveal that, on several occasions, the Lakota, Cheyenne, and the Arapaho threatened the Pawnees with extermination. The desire to annihilate the Pawnee people prompted the Cheyenne in 1830 to carry their Sacred Arrows, their most sacred tribal object, into battle against the Pawnee, believing that it would give them near-invincible powers.⁴⁵ In a remarkable feat of bravery, the Pawnee captured the Sacred Arrows, forcing the Cheyenne to abandon the fight.⁴⁶

As dangerous as such large-scale attacks were, small-scale Lakota and Cheyenne raids that targeted small groups of Pawnee women on their way to the gardens were perhaps more disruptive. Loss of these women undermined the tribe’s agricultural productivity as well as its ability to reproduce. To make matters worse, the Pawnee suffered from a chronic lack of weapons to defend themselves against enemy attacks.

In 1832, Indian agent John Dougherty noted that the Pawnee had a total of seven guns to defend themselves. Despite heroic resistance with bows and arrows during one fight, the Skiri were “soon convinced that they could not compete against powder & Ball, and therefore they retreated to their earthlodges where they were completely safe from any force of Indians.”⁴⁷

Lakota and Cheyenne attacks caused great anxiety among agency and mission personnel as well. In 1837, missionary Samuel Allis wrote, “The Agt. . . . thinks it not safe to settle among them until something is done to effect a peace between them and the Sioux.”⁴⁸ Four years later, Allis reported that the Pawnee numbered about 7,000 souls, but that they “are wasting [*sic*] away fast.” Allis believed that warfare was one of the main causes, for he wrote next that “a war party of Loups [Skiris] fought with the Shiennes last spring, when 50 of them were killed, and also many of the Shiennes.”⁴⁹ In September 1842, agency farmer George Belcher Gaston wrote that the “Pawnees have returned from their summer hunt & are verry poor & in consequence of government neglecting to send them such Annuitys as they want & the distruction of their village by the Sioux they are allmost discouraged though I think they will rebuild their village.”⁵⁰ Other factors, such as the weather and the poor condition of their horses, aggravated the situation for the Pawnee. In the summer of 1843, Reverend Dunbar wrote that there were plenty of buffalo around, but the Pawnee horses were so poor after an exceptionally long winter that they could not hunt them.⁵¹

On June 27, the Lakota staged a massive attack against the Pawnee in which they captured all Pawnee horses (about two hundred) and set fire to twenty of the forty-one lodges in the town. The Pawnee defended themselves well in this “Battle of Burned Town,” but the Lakota were too well-mounted and armed with guns. The outcome was devastating. “The Pawnees suffered a severe loss,” Dunbar wrote: “The Tappage [Pitahawirata] band had 35 killed—the Republican [Kitkehahki] 26—and the Grand [Chau] 6—making in all 67 slain, and 26 wounded.” The Pawnees had lost some of the best and bravest men. The Lakota killed some of the women and children when in panic they ran from their lodges towards the river. “It would take some 8,000 or 10,000 [dollars],” Dunbar estimated, “to make the property of the Pawnees as good as the day before the fight.”⁵² Dunbar concluded his report by stating that “The Sioux boast that they intend to exterminate the tribes south of them—as the Pawnees, Delawares, Shawnees, Kickapoos, Potawatomies, &c. On all these they have committed depredations, and they [the Pawnees?] will doubtless retaliate unless the whites interpose.”⁵³

The Lakota were serious about their threat. Allis reported on July, 21, 1843 that, since the first of March, the Lakota had killed “from 200 to 250 Pawnees” and stolen some four hundred horses. “We are at the entire mercy of the Sioux,” Allis wrote, but added that the whites had little to fear themselves.⁵⁴ If Allis’s numbers are correct, and between 200 to 250 out of an estimated 7,000 Pawnee were killed in less than five months (a mortality rate of 2.85 to 3.57 percent), at this rate, the entire Pawnee nation would be completely exterminated between eleven to fifteen years. In reality, the rate of extermination would be much faster because the economic and reproductive power of the Pawnee would be affected in such a way that it would result in a more exponential rate of population decline, including lower fertility rates due to stress and deprivation,

but also their ability to hunt, cultivate gardens, and care for children. After the June 27 attack the Pawnee moved their village. John Dunbar wrote on November 14, 1843: "When I informed the Pawnees of the Sioux' threat to exterminate them, which I had been requested to do by the agent, they moved up to the village where the Loups settled about two miles above where they have remained ever since."⁵⁵ The Pawnee were desperate for guns with which they could defend themselves. The 1833 treaty stipulated that they were entitled to twenty-five guns to be placed in the care of the agency farmer. Some government officials, however, were reluctant to pass out firearms to the Pawnee in times of danger. Skiri chief Spotted Horse complained in June 1845, "When the Sioux came I went to Mr. Mathers to get the guns but he would not let me have them and the Sioux came and destroyed my people."⁵⁶

The war with the Lakota and the Cheyenne also affected Pawnee subsistence. Allis reported that the barrage of attacks by enemy tribes resulted in severe economic losses and loss of food supplies, writing that "all of their corn is veery [sic] much injured" and the Pawnees were in real danger of starving to death.⁵⁷ Less than a year later, Dunbar wrote that over the past year, the Skiri "were so harassed by the Sioux, that they raised little or no corn; and in the winter the [Skiri] and the larger part of the [Pitahawirata], who hunted together, were repeatedly attacked by the Sioux, who succeeded in preventing them from hunting much, and indeed took from many of them all the provisions they had, and everything else of any value." Meanwhile, the Otoe, who may have been starving as well, plundered the Pawnee fields in their absence. In their desperation, the Pawnee began to steal corn from the missionaries.⁵⁸ In 1847, the Sioux killed eighty-three Pawnee hunters.⁵⁹ Fear of Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho ambushes prevented the Pawnees from participating in the peace conference at Fort Laramie in 1851. A reporter of *The Missouri Republic* wrote that the Pawnees "are now almost the only tribe upon which the Sioux, Cheyennes and Arrapahoes make war." He concluded that "It is probable that they will suffer very much this winter."⁶⁰

In an important stipulation to the 1857 treaty, the US government had promised to protect the Pawnee if they moved north of the Platte River. Sadly, the federal government failed to live up to its promise by refusing to commit enough troops to protect the Pawnee reservation. Thus, Lakota threats of extermination continued in the 1860s. In June 1860, Indian Agent J. L. Gillis wrote that "200 or 300 Indian warriors, consisting of Cheyennes, Arrappahos & Sioux," made a dawn attack upon the Pawnee in full view of the Agency buildings." Although the Pawnee repulsed the attack, the Lakota expressed "their full determination to return & 'wipe out' . . . the Pawnee Tribe."⁶¹ Without government assistance promised in the 1857 treaty, Gillis predicted, "there will soon be a vacancy in the Agency or no use for an Agent, for, as in the expressive language of the Indian, the Pawnees will soon be wiped out."⁶² Despite desperate calls from concerned Indian agents like Gillis, the US government neglected to provide protection and each year the attackers returned, killing women and seriously disrupting the Pawnee economy.

For decades prior the Pawnee had hoped to establish a military alliance with the United States to counterbalance the Lakota-Cheyenne-Arapaho alliance. To remove any obstacles with the United States, one of the first steps in diplomacy was to end the

sacrifice of a human captive in the Morning Star Ceremony. In 1816 and 1819, two Pawnee chiefs, Piitariisaaru' ("Man Chief") and Riiciriisaaru' ("Knife Chief"), tried to prevent the sacrifice of a captive in the Morning Star ceremony, possibly to appease the United States.⁶³ The strategy seemed to work at first, but the series of treaties that followed ultimately did not help the Pawnee because the United States failed to live up to its promise of protection. The tragedy at "Massacre Canyon" on August 5, 1873, was one of the reasons why the Pawnee left their Nebraska homelands and settled in Oklahoma. The war culminated near present-day Trenton, Nebraska, where a large Lakota war party massacred sixty-nine Pawnee men, women, and children, while government agents for both sides watched helplessly.

Although it is not from a Pawnee perspective alone that the behavior of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho can be identified as imperialistic and genocidal, this analysis should not be read as an after-the-fact justification for United States conquest and domination of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. Indeed, it has been argued that in failing to provide the Pawnee with protection as promised in the 1857 treaty, the United States was complicit in the destruction of the Pawnee people, or at least criminally negligent. It is a fact that the United States indirectly benefited from the allied tribes' assault on the Pawnee, which was an important factor in the tribe's decision to move to Indian Territory as the United States government had desired all along.⁶⁴

"HE WAS KILLED . . . EVEN AS CHRIST WAS KILLED": PAHUKATAWA, MORNING STAR, AND JESUS

It was against the background of genocidal warfare that Pahukatawa appeared. Early scholars noted similarities between Christianity and Pahukatawa worship. In the 1880s John Brown Dunbar, who grew up among the Pawnees in the 1830s and early 1840s, believed that Pawnee religion had appropriated ideas from Christianity. "Much of their system," Dunbar wrote, "has been manifestly borrowed, perhaps remotely, from the Christian religion." The "system" mentioned by Dunbar clearly refers to the worship of Pahukatawa because Dunbar also observes that the Pawnee listed Pahukatawa after Tiiraawaahat and "spirits" as one of the most important powers at that time.⁶⁵ Dunbar's Pahukatawa is ambivalent; his account depicts Pahukatawa as both savior and devil who sometimes aided the enemy because his friends had abandoned him at the time of his death. But the ambivalence that baffled Dunbar reflects the controversial status of Pahukatawa among the Skiri Pawnees in the 1830s and 1840s.

Many present-day Pawnees compare Pahukatawa to Jesus. Like Jesus, Pahukatawa rose from the dead, performed miracles for the people, and eventually rose up to heaven. According to Roaming Scout, Pahukatawa said: "There is another person, a person who lives there in the east [Jesus]. You will learn that he is like I am. He knows of the Heavens. . . . You people are going to learn from him. I am just like that one."⁶⁶ Ethnographer George Bird Grinnell too saw similarities between Pahukatawa and Jesus when he wrote, "The tale, as told by the Skidi, bears in certain respects a resemblance to the story of Christ." But Grinnell also believed that, unlike Jesus,

Pahukatawa did not willfully sacrifice himself, but “gained his immortality . . . by the exhibition of a selfish cowardice.”⁶⁷

Is there a direct link between Jesus and Pahukatawa? To answer this question first requires some understanding of five ways that American Indians responded to Christianity. One can generally distinguish between resistance, compartmentalization, syncretism, synthesis, and full conversion. Resistance, such as the well-known Pueblo Rebellion of 1680, involves passive and active resistance against any kind of outside religious interference. Compartmentalization occurs when both traditional and “new” religions coexist without crossing into each other’s realms, such as in certain Pueblo communities in the American Southwest in the mid-1690s after the Spanish returned to New Mexico. Syncretism refers to the blending of two or more religions, in which one religion absorbs and colonizes the other. Synthesis, on the other hand, is a blending in which an entirely new religion is created that is radically different from the traditional as well as the blending religion. For example, the present-day cult of Santa Muerte, rejected by the Roman Catholic Church, is a synthesis which bears little resemblance to its roots in Christian and Central American religions.

This spectrum of responses occurred among nineteenth-century Pawnee as well. Traditionalist Pawnees resisted any form of outside interference and meddling, while other Pawnees practiced both religions side-by-side, and a third group blended Christian and traditional religion apparently without any major contradictions, as in the later Pawnee Ghost Dance and Peyote religions. Eventually, however, largely as a result of government pressures and boarding school experiences—which constitute a form of ethnocide—most Pawnees accepted Christianity as the dominant religion.

On this spectrum, does Pahukatawa represent a syncretic response? Notably, some religious scholars have suggested that the term *syncretism* should be eliminated altogether because it is sometimes used pejoratively to mean pollution or a weakening of the “pure” faith. They argue that the term is meaningless because all religions are shaped by contact with other religions, as well as social, political, and cultural events.⁶⁸ Nonetheless the concept can be useful because religious syncretism can have several outcomes. In some forms the minority religion is absorbed completely by the dominant religion, such as seen in Christian churches’ adoption of the pagan “Christmas” tree. Alternatively, the people may adopt the symbols of the new religion but, consciously or not, continue to worship the traditional powers at the same time. How to draw the line between these two forms of syncretism is not always obvious and can be a matter of perspective. For example, because the Virgin of Guadalupe made the conversion of many Natives possible, some Catholic Church authorities saw in her an acceptable representation of the blessed Virgin. Others, such as Father Bernardino de Sahagun, believed that she was really the Aztec fertility Goddess Tonantzin disguised as the Virgin. Not surprisingly, the priest saw the Virgin of Guadalupe as “a satanic device to mask idolatry.”⁶⁹ If De Sahagun’s suspicions were correct, this particular form of syncretism incorporated resistance as well.

Among the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Pawnee, the Ghost Dance and the Peyote religion were similarly syncretic. As in the case of the Virgin of Guadalupe/Tonantzin, Christ plays an important role in both of these religions,

and in these cases also it is a matter of perspective as to which religion the Pawnees were professing. Some Pawnees emphasized the traditional powers over Christ, others put their faith in Christ, and a third group may not have distinguished between the two. Further, like De Sahagun's suspicion 360 years earlier that resistance was being masked, some acculturated Pawnees charged that the Ghost Dance was merely a device designed to fool the Indian agent. Among them was a young James R. Murie, who wrote to the Indian agent in 1891 regarding the new faith:

I was with them [the Ghost Dancers] 3 days, and it had no effect on my mind or physical power, nor my will power. I saw while with them that those who are weak minded were effected [*sic*] and thrown to the ground. All through the dancing they are told to have one mind upon Christ and the deceased Ghost relation. Major I am glad to say that that I found some good true hearts who only put their trust in our God and his son, Christ. They would not put their whole trust and faith in this unknown God.⁷⁰

Although resembling the Ghost Dance and the Peyote religion in some respects, the case of Pahukatawa does not appear to be any of these forms of syncretic blending of Christian and traditional Pawnee religious elements. Importantly, except for the fact that both were "scalped men," Pahukatawa had little in common with Christ, nor did he have much in common with Morning Star. He was an entirely new member in the Pawnee pantheon. His distinct character suggests that he was a different and original power altogether and, therefore, represents a synthetic response rather than a syncretic one. This novelty would also explain why both Christians and traditionalist (Skiri) Pawnees objected to him when he first appeared among the Pawnee people. Although initially controversial and viewed with suspicion by some, he nevertheless fit into the existing framework of Pawnee religion, which was flexible enough to absorb such spontaneous innovations. After the South Band Pawnees adopted him in the late 1830s, Pahukatawa eventually found acceptance among the Pawnees and became a religious figure not merely for the Skiri, but for the entire Pawnee nation, revitalizing the Pawnee people. Unlike the Ghost Dance and the Peyote religion, however, Pahukatawa did not result from Euro-American acculturation pressures, but from genocidal warfare with the Lakotas and Cheyennes. This makes him unique in the literature of such revitalization movements.⁷¹

Significantly, after the Pawnees moved to Oklahoma and the threat of genocidal warfare was gone, the worship of Pahukatawa declined. It was revived, however, after social circumstances changed once again during the Ghost Dance years in the early 1890s. This time, the Pawnees faced a different kind of genocide: the ethnocidal destruction of their language and culture by agents of so-called civilization, and Pahukatawa returned once more to give the people hope. This second coming, however, evidences a Pahukatawa who was closer to Jesus than to Morning Star. In *The Pawnee Ghost Dance Hand Game: A Study of Cultural Change*, anthropologist Alexander Lesser argues that the Pawnees now interpreted Pahukatawa in distinctly Christian terms. For example, while talking about the smoke offering in the One Horn Dance, a priest told Lesser that "Pahukatawa is the Holy Ghost." The priest added: "The Holy Ghost is placed in the

North, the same way as the North Star. Everything is supposed to go around him. The Holy Ghost is also thought to be the Morning Star in the East because God sent Christ in the East."⁷² Because the Pawnee also associated Christ with Morning Star as well as linking Christ's crucifixion to Pahukatawa, Lesser concluded that Pawnee conceptions of Pahukatawa and the Holy Ghost were inconsistent.

In my view, the overlapping and multiplying of these linkages that Lesser noted in the 1930s suggest that Pawnee philosophers in the 1890s were trying to synthesize the different teachings into a single coherent system. Indeed, in a narrative synthesis Lesser heard from one man, "This man [Pahukatawa] was killed in spite of his good ways, even as Christ was killed, in spite of the fact that he knew everything that happened and would happen on earth and in heaven." According to this source, a spirit bird raised Pahukatawa up to heaven "and he came to life again." Later "he went away [and] became the Morning Star."⁷³

"THROUGH THIS DANCE THE SKIRI CONQUERED EVERY TRIBE THAT MADE WAR UPON THEM": THE CONTROVERSY OVER PAHUKATAWA

In proposing that Pahukatawa worship was a synthetic religious response on the part of the Pawnee that arose from genocidal geopolitical conditions, this article throws new light upon a famous event in Pawnee history: the early nineteenth century attempts by some Skiri Pawnees to end the sacrifice of a human being to Morning Star. If Knife Chief and Man Chief sought to make a favorable impression with the United States when they attempted to prevent the sacrifice of a female captive in 1816, then they scored a diplomatic success: Man Chief became a celebrity when he visited the eastern states in 1821.⁷⁴ Contemporary white audiences depicted the rescue as a dramatic last-minute event, but actually, twenty-year-old Piitariisaaru' ("Man Chief") probably announced his intentions to free the captive in advance—thus risking the wrath of Morning Star and the scorn of Skiri supporters of the sacrifice.⁷⁵

Many people at home considered Man Chief's actions highly controversial. The Skiri people were in a difficult position: their Morning Star ceremony was under scrutiny from within and without, including South Band Pawnees and the United States government. According to Dunbar, Man Chief twice more tried to rescue captives, the first a Spanish boy and the second a captive girl in 1827. US Indian Agent John Dougherty witnessed the failed 1827 rescue operation in which angry Skiris killed the captive before the rescuers could escape. Man Chief's rescue attempts created serious tensions between his supporters and "traditionalist" or "conservative" Skiris. In this situation, Pahukatawa appeared with his message of hope and promise to assist them against the Lakota. Skiri traditionalists who favored Morning Star rejected Pahukatawa however, depicting him as a false power; eventually, they accused him of actively assisting the Lakota enemy.⁷⁶

These traditionalists suffered a major blow in 1838 when a Skiri war party returned with twenty Lakota women and children who carried the lethal smallpox virus with them. Soon the disease devastated the Pawnee, killing mostly children under thirteen or fourteen years of age. According to missionary Dunbar, the Skiri

hoped to reverse their misfortune by sacrificing one of the Lakota captives to Morning Star.⁷⁷ This decision backfired terribly. “As soon as the report of this sacrifice reached the Sioux,” wrote Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, “they burned with the desire to avenge their honor, and bound themselves by oaths that they would not rest until they had killed as many Pawnees as their innocent victim had bones or joints in her body.”⁷⁸ True to their word, the Lakota forged an alliance with the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche tribes in 1840, with the objective to punish the Pawnee.⁷⁹ In the aftermath of this dual calamity, a growing number of Skiris turned toward Pahukatawa and the One Horn Dance. Although the Skiris continued to perform the Morning Star Ceremony (eventually substituting the human captive with cloth and other goods), Pahukatawa’s One Horn Dance became more prominent in the Pawnee ceremonial repertoire.

The One Horn Dance was the most important sacred gift left behind by Pahukatawa. According to Murie, it “was a religious dance in which they took part to defend their villages from the enemy” and it “was only held when Pahukatawa ordered it and then only before an attack by the enemy.” The name probably refers to the single buffalo horn that certain dancers attached on the right side of their war bonnets. The purpose of the war dance was “to teach the men how to act during battle and to remind them that there was a being who watched over them and gave them courage.”⁸⁰ The dancers, *raris arika*, were young men eligible to go to war. Each dancer imitated a particular animal and was painted in the color of his particular spirit guardian; Murie specifically lists crows (black), jackrabbits (white), buffalo, and bears (yellow or red). A large drum with four flints tied inside and painted according to Pahukatawa’s instructions—black with four buffalo-skull designs on the side—provided the rhythm.

As mentioned, the worship of Pahukatawa competed with the Morning Star Ceremony. Both these ceremonies originated with the Skiri and were distinct features of Skiri Pawnee religious worship. While the other bands did not perform the Morning Star sacrifice, they did adopt the One Horn Dance. If warfare with immigrant tribes led to Pawnee diplomatic overtures to the United States, the worship of Pahukatawa was yet another response to the geopolitical and military realities on the Plains.

The tensions between “traditionalists” and “reformers” may explain John Brown Dunbar’s observation that some Skiri Pawnees viewed Pahukatawa as an “evil” spirit, while others considered him a savior. Those traditionalists who favored a strict observation of the Morning Star religion, attributed bad luck and misfortune to Pahukatawa in an attempt to undermine his growing popularity. At the same time, One Horn Dancers and others championed the worship of Pahukatawa. It appears, then, that Pahukatawa was not fully accepted as a true sacred power until after 1838. From this time on, he would receive smoke offerings during Skiri bundle ceremonies. In fact, Pahukatawa would receive smoke offerings after the Heavens, Evening Star, Morning Star, the Big Black Meteoric Star, and North and Lucky Wind, but before such important powers as Sun and Moon.⁸¹

As Murie stated in 1914, Pahukatawa left behind his leggings for Coming Sun. These valuable relics were kept in the “Wonderful Leggings bundle.”⁸² Along with the

sacred leggings (one of which was white, the other black), the bundle included seven reeds containing sacred power. These reeds were painted with white clay and staked into the ground during an approaching storm. After smoke offerings and smudging of the objects, the bundle would be closed again and it was “now ready when war parties set out.”⁸³ From *White Horse*, a member of the Pitahawirat band, Murie recorded the lyrics of two One Horn Dance songs, which the Pitahawirat had learned from the Skiris.⁸⁴ Relating episodes from the Pahukatawa story, the songs were probably the opening songs of an entire set of songs belonging to the One Horn Dance.

First Song

Here I do speak
The dance is coming
As he tells of the vision

(chorus)

The dance is coming
The dance is coming
The dance is coming
The dance is coming
The dance is coming
The dance is coming

Now they are happy in spirit
The dance is coming
Now (that) they have smoked

(chorus)

Now I tell of it
The dance is coming
The one who has flares
(chorus)

Now it has stopped
The dance is coming
The old One Horn Dance

(chorus)

Second Song

The same I do say
The dance is coming
The same it is the place

The dance is coming
The dance is coming
The dance is coming
The dance is coming
The dance is coming
The dance is coming

Oh, I am indeed pitiable
The dance is coming
My grandfather is listening (to my song)

Now I tell of him
The dance is coming
A person wonderful

Now it has stopped
The dance is coming
(The song of) the person who is different

Other songs may have told of the many wonderful things that Pahukatawa did for his people. In any case, the One Horn Dance strengthened and revitalized the Skiris and the other Pawnee bands. As Murie wrote: “Through this dance the Skiri conquered [defeated] every tribe that made war upon them.”⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

As visions and other experiences allow the Pawnees to add new insights to their religious understanding of the universe, it is clear that the dynamism that has long been a feature of Pawnee religion is ongoing. In the early 1800s, Pahukatawa appeared in an atmosphere of desperation when genocidal warfare with the Lakotas and Cheyennes caused a great spiritual crisis in which the established sacred powers, Morning Star especially, no longer appeared to provide sufficient protection. Although the worship of Morning Star continued (albeit without human sacrifices), the worship of Pahukatawa gained more ground and spread to all the Pawnee bands. This Pahukatawa was not an example of syncretism, but rather of synthesis: although Christian ideas of the resurrection may have inspired his story, Pahukatawa was in every other respect Pawnee: his “resurrection” occurred through the intervention of the animal powers; he appeared to others in forms of visions or as a spirit; and he provided military inspiration to the Pawnees and gave success in war. In contrast, Jesus was a peacemaker.

The worship of Pahukatawa faded after the Indian wars ended in the 1870s. But when white agents of “civilization” sought to eradicate traditional Pawnee culture—ethnocide—Pahukatawa returned a second time to give the people hope, but this time, he was more compatible with Christianity. Indeed, it appears that Pawnee theologians tried to incorporate Pahukatawa, Morning Star, and Jesus into a single coherent religion. Thus, Pahukatawa revitalized Pawnee society not once, but twice. The first time he appeared in response to genocidal warfare with the Lakotas and Cheyennes; the second time, however, he appeared in response to Euro-American ethnocidal policies.

Pawnee people today continue to hold Pahukatawa in awe. However, as in the past, Pahukatawa is viewed with a mix of reverence and fear. Some Pawnees consider him to be so sacred that they will not speak his name out loud. When speaking about him, they whisper his name.⁸⁶ Other Pawnees refuse to say his name at all because they fear that he might return and cause trouble. These Pawnees, then, treat his name as a taboo. However, all present-day Pawnee agree that he was a powerful being who “represented what was mysterious and holy.”⁸⁷ As Pawnee historian Roger C. Echo-Hawk explains:

The story of Pahukatawa today carries many resonations in Pawneeland. For some it is a curious tale of the ancient mysteries and hidden powers of the world. For others it serves as an enduring reminder of the ceremonial and religious cycles that long ago shaped what it meant to be Pawnee. But for many Pawnees of the early twentieth century, Pawnee mysticism and Christian mysticism found common ground in the story of a man who died and became a divinity. For these Pawnees, Pahukatawa helped to open an ideological door, a narrative passageway that both affirmed Pawnee tradition and validated new forms of religious life.⁸⁸

NOTES

1. James R. Murie, "Pawnee Indian Societies," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 11, no. 7 (1914): 616, <http://hdl.handle.net/2246/174>; John B. Dunbar, "The Pawnee Indians: Their Habits and Customs," *Magazine of American History with Notes and Queries* 8, no. 2, rpt. (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1887): 736, <https://archive.org/details/magazineofameric08stev>.
2. See, for example, Philip Duke, ed., "The Morning Star Ceremony of the Skiri Pawnee as Described by Alfred C. Haddon," *Plains Anthropologist* 34, no. 125 (August 1989): 193–203, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25668887>.
3. Following the current orthography of Pawnee words developed by linguist Douglas R. Parks, I use the term "Skiri Pawnees" instead of the older, if more familiar, "Skidi Pawnees." Douglas R. Parks and Lula Nora Pratt, *A Dictionary of Skiri Pawnee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), xvii, 13-14.
4. James R. Murie and George A. Dorsey, "The Pawnee: Society and Religion of the Skidi Pawnee," unpublished manuscript, nd, transcribed copy at the American Indian Studies Research Institute, Indian University, Bloomington, np.
5. Åke Hulkrantz, *The Religions of the American Indians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), Introduction and chapter 5.
6. George A. Dorsey, *The Pawnee Mythology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), especially pages 13-44. James R. Murie, in *Ceremonies of the Pawnee, Part I: South Bands*, ed. Douglas R. Parks (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 183.
7. James R. Murie, *Ceremonies of the Pawnee* (two vols.), ed. Douglas R. Parks (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981).
8. According to Murie's Skiri informants, *Tiiraawaahat* "created by thinking—he spoke and things were created." Murie and Dorsey, "The Pawnee," 113–14.
9. For more detailed information on (Skiri) Pawnee religion, see Murie, *Ceremonies of the Pawnee* (both volumes), and Murie and Dorsey, "The Pawnee."
10. George A. Dorsey and James R. Murie, "Notes on Skidi Pawnee Society," ed. Alexander Spoehr, *Publications of the Field Museum of Natural History, Anthropological Series* 27, no. 2 (September 18, 1940): 101–07, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29782230>.
11. James R. Murie, "Human Sacrifice to the Morning Star" in *Ceremonies of the Pawnee, Part I: The Skiri*, ed. Douglas R. Parks (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 114–36; Sonja Brigitte Ross, *Das Menschenopfer der Skidi-Pawnee* (Bonn: Holos Verlag, 1989).
12. Douglas R. Parks, "An Historical Character Mythologized: The Scalped Man in Arikara and Pawnee Folklore," in Douglas H. Ubelaker and Herman J. Viola, eds., *Plains Indian Studies: A Collection of Essays in Honor of John C. Ewers and Waldo R. Wedel* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 47–58.
13. Roaming Scout's account can be found in James R. Murie, "Roaming Scout Texts," ed. Douglas R. Parks (unpublished manuscript, American Indian Studies Research Institute, Indiana University, Bloomington), text 9, np; Lone Chief's is in George A. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), 49-51; Samuel Osborne's account of Pahukatawa, here called Powhohatawa, appeared in Haskell Institute's campus newspaper *The Indian Leader* XVIII, no. 33 (May 1915): 12–13, available at <http://www.roger-echo-hawk.com/resources/Powhohatawa.html>.
14. Additional stories featuring Pahukatawa include "The Son of Wind, Ready-To-Give," "The Boy Who Preferred Woman to Power," and "The Skeleton-Man and the Sun Dance," in George A. Dorsey, *The Pawnee Mythology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 90–95, 102–04, and 408–09. In the last story, Pahukatawa is credited with instituting the Sun Dance.

15. Murie and Dorsey, "The Pawnee," chapter 17.
16. Murie, "Roaming Scout Texts."
17. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*, 49–51, 337.
18. Murie, "Roaming Scout Texts," text 9, np.
19. Murie, "Pawnee Indian Societies," 618.
20. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*, 50.
21. Murie, "Pawnee Indian Societies," 619.
22. *Ibid.*, 619.
23. *Ibid.*, 620, 621.
24. *Ibid.*, 621; Murie, "Roaming Scout Texts," text 9, np.
25. Murie, "Roaming Scout Texts," text 9, np.
26. Apparently, they performed the dance until at least 1948; see Roger C. Echo-Hawk, <http://www.roger-echo-hawk.com/resources/Powhohatawa.html>.
27. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*, 51.
28. Murie, "Pawnee Indian Societies," 623.
29. George E. Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), 195.
30. *Ibid.*, 196. James Murie stated "that the Arikara claim that Pahukatiwa was of their tribe." See Dorsey, *Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee*, 337–38. The Skidi are also known as the Skiri Pawnee.
31. George Bird Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk Tales: With Notes on the Origin, Customs and Character of the Pawnee People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 142–60.
32. George Bird Grinnell, "Pawnee Mythology," *Journal of American Folklore* 6, no. 21 (1893): 128, doi 10.2307/533298; George Bird Grinnell, "Notes and Queries: Arikara Creation Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 22, no. 83 (1909): 90–92, especially page 90, doi 10.2307/534311.
33. Murie and Dorsey, "The Pawnee," chapter 12.
34. See David Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) and Martha Royce Blaine, *Pawnee Passage, 1870–1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).
35. Genocide scholars Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, in *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 23, take a strict definition of genocide when they argue that it refers to "a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator."
36. See, for example, Guenter Lewy, "Were American Indians the Victims of Genocide?" *History News Network*, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/7302>.
37. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 1–14; see also Walter R. Echo-Hawk, *In the Courts of the Conqueror: The 10 Worst Indian Cases Ever Decided* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press, 2010), especially chapter 6.
38. Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction, Second Edition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), xxiv, xxvii, 6.
39. Jeffrey P. Blick, "The Iroquois Practice of Genocidal Warfare (1534–1787)," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 3 (2001): 405–29, doi 10.1080/14623520120097215.
40. See Pekka Hamalainen, *Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
41. Colin G. Calloway, "The Inter-tribal Balance of Power on the Great Plains, 1760–1850," *Journal of American Studies* 16, no. 1 (1982): 25–47, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27554087>.
42. Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540–1795* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), especially 229–30, 247–50.

43. Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 65, no. 2 (September 1978): 319–43, doi 10.2307/1894083.
44. Washington Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies*, ed. John Francis McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 75–76.
45. Roger C. Echo-Hawk, personal communication.
46. George A. Dorsey, "How the Pawnee Captured the Cheyenne Medicine Arrows," *American Anthropologist* 5, no. 4 (1903), 644–58, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/658944>.
47. Richard E. Jensen, ed., *The Pawnee Mission Letters, 1834-1851* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 107.
48. *Ibid.*, 204.
49. *Ibid.*, 284.
50. *Ibid.*, 310, 315–17.
51. *Ibid.*, 325.
52. *Ibid.*, 332.
53. *Ibid.*, 333.
54. *Ibid.*, 335–36, 339, 340.
55. *Ibid.*, 343.
56. *Ibid.*, 512.
57. *Ibid.*, 359.
58. *Ibid.*, 491, 543.
59. Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians*, 223–29.
60. The *New York Daily Tribune* copied the letter from the *Missouri Republic*, October–November 1851. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, eds., *Life, Letters and Travels of Father PierreJean DeSmet, S. J., 1801–1873* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905/New York: Klaus Reprint Co., 1969), 687–88.
61. J. L. Gillis to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 22, 1860, 7–8. Information provided by Bill Coons of Houston, Texas, a member of the Pawnee Nation. Mr. Coons owns, and shared with me, an original ledger book with official correspondence from the Pawnee Agency that is designated here as "Pawnee Agency Ledger Book." The page numbers cited refer to the page numbers in this ledger book.
62. J. L. Gillis to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 24, 1860, "Pawnee Agency Ledger Book," 9.
63. Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians*, 160–61.
64. James Riding In, "The Betrayal of 'Civilization' in United States-Native Nations Diplomacy: Pawnee Treaties and Cultural Genocide," in *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations*, ed. Suzan Shown Harjo (Washington, DC: National Museum of the American Indian/Smithsonian Books, 2014), 153–71.
65. Dunbar, "The Pawnee Indians," 735–36.
66. Murie, "Roaming Scout Texts," text 9, np.
67. George Bird Grinnell, "Pawnee Mythology," *Journal of American Folklore* 6, no. 21 (1893), 128, doi 10.2307/533298.
68. Anita Maria Leopold and Jeppe Sinding Jensen, eds., *Syncretism in Religion: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 41, 61, 67.
69. Bernardino de Sahagun, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), v. I, Book 6.
70. Martha Royce Blaine, *Some Things Are Not Forgotten: A Pawnee Family Remembers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 63–64.

71. Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 2 (1956): 264–81, doi 10.1525/aa.1956.58.2.02a00040.
72. Alexander Lesser, *The Pawnee Ghost Dance Hand Game: A Study of Cultural Change* (New York: AMS Press, 1969 [1933]), 282.
73. Ibid., 282–83. Archaeo-astronomist Von Del Chamberlain believes that Pahukatawa was either Beta Persei or Gamma Cephei. Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify Pahukatawa on the famous Pawnee "star chart" (a map of the heavens painted on a buffalo skin) now held in the Field Museum in Chicago. Von Del Chamberlain, *When Stars Came Down to Earth: Cosmology of the Skidi Pawnee Indians of North America* (Los Altos: Ballena Press, 1982), 111–12, 204, 237.
74. Orm Overland, *The Making and Meaning of an American Classic: James Fenimore Cooper's The Prairie* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), 17, 56–60, 79, 83–84.
75. James R. Murie, *Ceremonies of the Pawnee, Part I: The Skiri*, ed. Douglas R. Parks (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 114–36.
76. Douglas R. Parks and Raymond J. DeMallie, "Plains Indian Native Literatures," *Boundary 2* 19, no. 3 (1992): 116, doi 10.2307/303551.
77. Jensen, *The Pawnee Mission Letters*, 220.
78. Chittenden and Richardson, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father PierreJean DeSmet*, 988; Wedel, *The DunbarAllis Letters*, 631.
79. Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Sioux Winter Count: A 131Year Calendar of Events* (Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph, 1998), 26. According to the Swift Bear and High Hawk winter counts, the Sioux and their allies killed one hundred Skiris that year. Lucy Cramer Cohen, "Swift Bear's Winter Count, part 2: Even in Those Days Pictures were Important," *Indians at Work* 9, no. 6 (February 1942), 31; Edward S. Curtis, "High Hawk's Winter Count," in *The North American Indian*, vol. 3 [1907], ed. Frederick Webb Hodge (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1970 [1907]), 175.
80. Murie, "Pawnee Indian Societies," 616, 617.
81. Gene Weltfish, *The Lost Universe: The Way of Life of the Pawnee* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), 152–53.
82. Dunbar, "The Pawnee Indians," 755–56.
83. Murie, *Ceremonies of the Pawnee, Part I*, 65.
84. Martha Royce Blaine implied that the "Buffalo Horn Dance" ("A ri ka") originally belonged to the repertoire of the Pitahawiratas. The Skiris would invite Pitahawirata singers to contribute to their One Horn Dance. Martha Royce Blaine, *Some Things Are Not Forgotten*, 195–96.
85. Murie, *Ceremonies of the Pawnee, Part II: The South Bands*, ed. Douglas R. Parks (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 433–34.
86. Walter R. Echo-Hawk, personal communication, September 21, 2016.
87. Adrian Spottedhorsechief, personal communication, September 21, 2016.
88. Roger C. Echo-Hawk, personal communication, September 21, 2016.