

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The American Indian Ghost Dance, 1870 and 1890. Compiled by Shelley Anne Osterreich.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/50b9x3dq>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 16(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Marken, Jack W.

Publication Date

1992-06-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

REVIEWS

The American Indian Ghost Dance, 1870 and 1890. Compiled by Shelley Anne Osterreich. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991. 104 pages. \$37.95 cloth.

The best bibliographies are useful to a wide audience, ranging from scholars to members of the inquiring public. Such compilations are comprehensive and inclusive. Selective bibliographies can be very useful, but only if the parameters of inclusion are carefully and exactly stated. Selective bibliographies should be confined to elements of large subjects; the more restricted or limited the subject, the more comprehensive the bibliography should be.

Shelley Anne Osterreich's bibliography of the American Indian Ghost Dance is a selective bibliography that is intended, according to the compiler, "to reveal some of the topics or paths of inquiry into the Ghost Dance which have been pursued by previous scholars" (p. ix). In another place, she writes, "I have attempted to include . . . a sample of the wide variety of the material available concerning both of these American Indian Ghost Dance Movements" (p. xiii). And also, "The intention in collecting, annotating and offering this bibliographic collection is to provide access to a selection of the available material on these Ghost Dance Movements" (p. xiii). The publisher modifies these purposes by saying, "Included are most of the major works on the Ghost Dance and its attendant features."

These statements are the kind that we cannot argue with, nor

can we analyze the results as they show up in the bibliography. But we can question why the compiler would include only some of the topics covered by previous scholars or only a sample of the wide variety of material available. Bibliographies built on subjective premises, especially those on narrow subjects, have limited use. We always wonder on what basis various materials are omitted. Also, if, as the publisher claims, most of the major works are included, what criteria separate major from minor works. For instance, why has a one-page article by Robert Lee from *Wi-iy-Iyohi Bulletin* (see page 3) been included and not a sixty-four-page book by Alvin M. Josephy, Trudy Thomas, and Jeanne Eder? And why omit an account of the Ghost Dance by Masse Hadjo, a Sioux Indian? (See "A Defense of the Ghost Dance Religion," in *Great Documents in American Indian History*, ed. Wayne Moquin and Charles Van Doren [1973].)

The bibliography is organized under the following headings (with entry numbers in parentheses): "Ghost Dance Histories and Observations" (1-20); "Tribal Histories" (21-33); "Religion and the Ghost Dance" (34-40); "Personal Narratives and Biographies" (41-61); "Anthropological Theory" (62-96); "Ghost Dance Music and Photographs" (97-105); "Government and Military Histories" (106-110). Actually, there are 109 sources: Numbers 6 and 86 are duplicates, although with differing annotations. Almost three-fourths of the entries concern the 1890 Ghost Dance Movement among the Plains Indians, primarily the Sioux. The entries are followed by three indexes, organized by author, by journal, and by subject.

The bibliography starts on a sour note when Osterreich begins her introduction as follows: "In late December of 1890, a small band of Miniconjous Sioux fled the reservation at Pine Ridge Agency in South Dakota, trying to escape into the Bad Lands, or maybe to Canada The Miniconjous band was eventually intercepted by one of the many U. S. cavalry units which had converged on the area, and they were escorted back to the Agency." Actually, Big Foot's band was northeast of Pine Ridge, going toward the agency rather than away from it; the Indians were intercepted by elements of the Seventh Cavalry, who massacred the band.

Most of the introduction recounts the history of Wounded Knee I and the Ghost Dance Movement among the Sioux. Also included is a sketch of the origins of the Ghost Dance in California, with biographical material on Wovoka.

All entries are fully annotated, averaging about three hundred

words each, with several nearly a thousand words long. The annotations are generally descriptive rather than evaluative.

The bibliography provokes a great many questions. Why does the section of tribal histories focus on the Sioux, with no tribal histories of any of the myriad of California tribes that participated in the 1870 Ghost Dance? Why did the compiler omit most of the citations on the Ghost Dance contained in *The Bibliography of the Sioux* published in 1980 by Scarecrow Press? Why omit nearly a dozen articles on the subject found in *South Dakota History*? Why is Angie Debo's general *A History of the Indians of the United States* included, when Royal Hassrick's acknowledged classic history of the Sioux is excluded? Why include the biographies of Sitting Bull by Alexander Adams and W. Fletcher Johnson but not Stanley Vestal's?

There is much evidence that this bibliography has been put together hastily and carelessly. For instance, three-fourths of the page numbers in the journal index are incorrect, and four journals cited in the entries are omitted from this index. The entire content of page 46 is a portion of an annotation that has no entry. Entry number 58 is incorrect. The book in this entry is known as *Black Elk Speaks*, not as *The Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, which is an incorrect version of the subtitle. It was first published in 1932 by Morrow, not by the University of Nebraska Press in 1961, although the latter publication is virtually an exact reprint of the Morrow edition. The compiler's annotation for this entry ends with a misleading statement: "Black Elk was present at the Wounded Knee Massacre, and the book is informative, straightforward and a very moving account of his life and times."

Besides these, there are numerous misspellings of words and names. For example, John Neihardt's name is spelled two different ways in two consecutive lines. There is an average of nearly one typo per page. In addition, the compiler uses no consistent form for journal articles, and the original publication date is not given with reprints.

In her compilation, Osterreich has initiated a bibliography of the Ghost Dance Movements. With careful revision and expansion into a comprehensive bibliography, this work could become a useful resource for information on the Ghost Dance Movements from 1870 to 1890.

Jack W. Marken

South Dakota State University (emeritus)