

Foreword

(By Dr. F. W. Hodge, director of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, former director of the Smithsonian Institute, Editor of the Handbook of the American Indian, Curtis' 20 Vol. Edition, American Indians, etc.)

to

DRUMMERS AND DREAMERS

The story of Smowhala, the Dreamer of the Priest Rapids River People and his nephew, Puck Hyah Toot, the Last Prophet of the Last Wanapums.

by

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In a serious and sympathetic endeavor to preserve whatever knowledge concerning the almost unknown Wanapum Indians of Eastern Washington has been obtainable at this late day, our author, after an extended study, has been enabled to record much that remains. Save through friendship with the few survivors has this been possible; for, like many other Indians who have been browbeaten and cheated by whites almost since the time they first became known, it would not have been an easy task to gain the confidence of a people who feel that little reliance can be placed in white people--the "Superior race."

The most noteworthy event in the lives of the Wanapum Indians (called Sekulk by Lewis and Clark after the turn of the 19th Century) was the advent of a prophet and teacher, known as Smowhala, who achieved such prominence as a religious reformer when thirty or thirty-five years of age that his teachings were so generally adopted by his own and neighboring tribes that they became popularly known as the Smowhala religion.

Like other Indian preachers and prophets, Smowhala urged his people to return to the old aboriginal ways of life, arguing that the white man's wisdom was poor and weak and of no value to Indians, who must learn the highest wisdom from dreams and from participating in the Dreamer ceremonies. This appeal met with high favor, one observer characterizing Smowhala as possessing such forcefulness that "his audience seemed spellbound under his

magic manner."

Mr. Helander was most fortunate in pursuing his researches through his friendship with Puck Hyah Toot, a nephew of Smowhala, the Last Prophet of the nearly extinct Wanapum, who, through the years, had preached the beliefs which were transmitted from prophet to prophet for more than a century. Through this intimacy our author had the highly exceptional opportunity of learning the fundamentals not only of the beliefs of the Yakima and their cognates, but those of several tribes unrelated except their adoption of and adherence to the Smowhala cult. This led him into a study of the Wanapum daily life, their history, philosophy, traditions, taboos, and many other aboriginal practices that are now revealed for the first time.

Within our knowledge of the American Indians there have been a number of more or less similar movements which had as their object a return to the old mode of life, to live as did their ancestors, to pursue their own philosophies which the white man aimed to despoil. It may well be wondered, however, whether any of the attempts toward a new order of things had such a far-reaching effect as that of the teachings of Smowhala, which still persist. Other efforts in the same direction were those of the Pueblo Indians of the present New Mexico and Arizona who rebelled against Spanish authority in 1680; the Delaware prophet and Pontiac in 1762-64, Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee prophet, a few years later; Tecumtha in 1807-13, Kanakuk, the Kickapoo prophet in 1819-31.

Many other leaders who sought to restore the ways of their ancestors, but with little permanent effect, arose from time

to time, but it was not until the late 1860's that Tavibo, a Paiute of Mason Valley, Nevada, practiced his beliefs. Dying in 1890, Tavibo left a son, Wovoka, then about fourteen years of age, who later followed the teachings of the father, which had a far-reaching effect and ultimately resulted in the Ghost Dance religion which, far from a part of the Paiute belief, practically met its end in the disgraceful massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890.

So much, inadequately told, for the story of a few of the various religious movements that had their inception in the primitive philosophies of their Indian prophets. None of these were of greater interest in reflecting the earnestness of the leaders in the new religions, nor of illustrating the working of the Indian mind, than the Smowhala cult so well presented in this volume. The author is to be commended for gathering the information regarding a movement which, though not so far-reaching as some others, left its impress on a people who have long since adopted much of the culture of civilization but have retained their faith.

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