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“The Whirlwind Is Coming to Destroy My People!”

Symbolic Representations of
Epidemics in Arikara Oral Tradition

MARK VAN DE LOGT

Arikara Indian folklore is full of monsters: scalped men, cannibals, witches, water monsters, spirits, ghosts, and monstrous man-eating animals. But the most powerful monster of Arikara tradition was a devastating whirlwind. Appearing in several versions of the Arikara creation account, this whirlwind destroyed and scattered hundreds of people who had neglected to make sacrifices in its honor. Only some people were saved from total destruction through the intervention of *neešaanu načitákUx*, *Great Chief Above*, who fell out of the sky as a rock, and Mother Corn, the Arikara culture hero, who turned herself into a cedar tree to provide the people with shelter.

The study of religious symbols has long been the territory of folklorists, religious studies scholars, anthropologists, ethnologists, and psychoanalysts. Historians usually leave the interpretation of such symbols to scholars in the aforementioned fields. The purpose of this ethnohistory is to encourage historians to study these symbols and link them to actual historical events. This article contends that the monstrous whirlwind, as well as a few other symbols such as snakes and bears, in fact may have represented a series of epidemics among the Arikaras in the eighteenth century. If this hypothesis is correct, this would mean that the Arikara creation account not merely tells the story of Arikara creation in the distant past but in fact covers Arikara history over an extended period of time, at least until the great smallpox epidemic of 1780–81.¹

A NOTE ON THE ARIKARA SOURCES

Analyzing Arikara oral traditions poses certain challenges. The stories were not recorded until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centu-



FIG. 1. Edward S. Curtis's photograph depicting Sacred Cedar Tree, Grandfather Rock, and doctors' society dancers, 1908. Courtesy of the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

ries. One of the most important collections was done in the first decade of the twentieth century, when James Murie, a Skiri Pawnee from Oklahoma, visited the Arikaras. Murie had been hired by George A. Dorsey of the Field Museum in Chicago to record the stories.² They were published by Dorsey in *Traditions of the Arikara* in 1904.

Because the accounts were recorded at a relatively late date, they may have been subject to change over time. New themes and elements found their way into the narratives. For example, Hand's version contains a reference to a mysterious tall man "whose hair from his mouth reached down to his waist. . . . They thought this man was from the heavens."³ It appears that Hand was describing Jesus Christ, with whom the Arikaras had been familiar through the work of Congregational and Catholic missionaries. Thus, although the accounts appear to have changed over time, it is difficult to document those changes without earlier comparative materials. Of course, many Arikaras today will contend that the above reference to Jesus was always an integral part of the story.⁴

Another problem was the fact that most of the storytellers had only secondhand knowledge of the creation story. The Arikara creation story was sacred history, and, therefore, it was the exclusive property of a priest. Ordinary people, such as the Arikara storytellers contacted by Murie, had only imperfect knowledge of the details of the story. This fact would explain the differences between the various accounts.

Even more problematic is the fact that neither Murie nor Dorsey provided any biographical information on the storytellers that would give the stories additional context. We know little more than their names: Hand (who contributed two versions), Star, Four Horns, and Hawk. It is impossible to determine which of these was the most "authoritative." Additional versions by Two-Crows, Two-Hawks, Bear's Tail, and Four Rings pose similar problems. These versions were published elsewhere but fail to provide adequate biographical information as well.⁵

Finally, we do not have the original versions of the stories in the Arikara language but only the free translations in English. Consequently, it is possible that some facts may have been lost in translation. Without the original texts in the Arikara language, the accuracy of the translations cannot be verified, and a complete analysis of the exact meaning of the stories is not possible.

Despite these issues, this article maintains that the stories are nevertheless useful ethnohistorical sources. For the creation story, Murie provided no fewer than five versions, which allows the researcher to confirm those points upon which the stories agree. The story of the whirlwind is basically corroborated by most storytellers. The different versions also allow the scholar to reconstruct the complete story with additional information from the other accounts. As for the accuracy of the translations, it ought to be pointed out that Murie was familiar with the Arikara language, which was quite similar to Murie's own Skiri Pawnee language. Furthermore, based on the quality of his other ethnographic work, there is no reason to assume that Murie did not do his work conscientiously and reliably. In addition, young, Western-educated, and bilingual Arikara interpreters contributed to the accuracy of the translations. Finally, the Arikara storytellers themselves strongly emphasized accuracy when they told stories. One must remember that pre- or nonliterate societies placed great emphasis on correct memorization of events and stories.⁶

The Arikaras are a Plains Indian tribe closely related to the Pawnees, from whom they separated, in stages, between AD 1450 and 1550. It is important to note that this separation was probably a lengthy process, with different groups leaving the Pawnees at different times, resulting in the establishment of multiple more or less autonomous groups that even displayed a diversity of dialects. Following these separations, the Indian groups that would eventually become the “Arikara tribe” established their villages along the Missouri River in present-day South Dakota. Like their Pawnee relatives, their religious complex centered around sacred bundles, which represented the various powers of the universe. For the “Arikaras,” the supreme powers were *neešaanu načitákUx*, Mother Corn, and the four semicardinal sacred directions. These were the powers responsible for creation, for keeping the universe in balance, and for dictating the seasons that determined the cycles of corn cultivation and buffalo hunts.

The Arikara “confederation” (it may be too soon to talk about a “tribe” yet) grew fast.⁷ Between 1675 and 1780, the Arikaras established over sixty villages along both banks of the Missouri River in South Dakota. Although these settlements were not all occupied simultaneously, they were fairly large, with an average of forty lodges. Archaeologist Donald Lehmer estimated the peak of Arikara population at circa 8,800, but Preston Holder speculated that there may have been as many as 15,000 in the 1700s.⁸ In 1714 Étienne de Veniard, sieur de Bourgmont, reported that there were forty-two Arikara villages on the Missouri. “They are very numerous,” wrote Bourgmont, who added that, considering their great numbers, they had to live in one of the “most beautiful countries to be seen.”⁹ In 1743 fur traders François and Louis-Joseph de La Vérendrye met several Arikara bands and reported that they were “the only tribe sufficiently brave not to stand in dread” of the powerful “Snake” Indians.¹⁰ The identity of the “Snake” Indians has never been positively established, but it is quite possible that these were the Shoshone or Comanche Indians, who were regulars on the plains at this time.¹¹

These sources show that the Arikaras were a relatively healthy and numerous people. They were so successful that they began to intimidate their Mandan neighbors to the north. Sadly for the Arikaras, their rise to prominence was cut short by a series of devastating epidemics

between 1750 and 1781. These diseases, inadvertently introduced by Europeans, ravaged the Arikara people at a pivotal moment in the development of their tribal identity.

Although European fur traders introduced many new things to the Indians of the plains, including guns, horses, and a variety of other objects, none of these items appear to have left a mark in surviving Arikara oral tradition.¹² This is not true for the appearance of crowd-type diseases and the arrival of new tribes on the plains who were displaced as a result of European immigration.¹³ These new Indian tribes entered the plains in two separate waves. The first wave occurred during the late 1600s and consisted of the Kaws, Osages, Omahas, Poncas, Iowas, Otoes, and Missourias. These tribes did not leave an imprint in Arikara oral tradition, primarily because these Indians adopted the sedentary lifestyle of the Arikaras and because their relations with the Arikara people were relatively friendly. Among the peoples of the second wave were the Plains Apaches, Kiowas, Comanches, Plains Crees, Plains Ojibwas, Blackfeet, Assiniboines, Arapahos, Gros Ventres, Cheyennes, and Sioux. Although these tribes entered the plains from different directions, at slightly different times, and for different reasons, eventually they all adopted nomadic lifestyles that challenged the horticultural lifestyle of tribes like the Arikaras. The sudden influx of these peoples upset the traditional balance of power on the plains. Intertribal warfare increased as nomadic tribes competed with each other for access to horses, guns, hunting grounds, and slaves. The Arikaras and other horticultural tribes were soon swept up into this cycle of violence.¹⁴

The arrival of the *sanánat* (Sioux), especially, proved disruptive for the Arikaras. Sioux-Arikara relations were complex. The Santees and the Yanktonais were generally friendly, but the Yanktons were not. Arikara relations with the Lakota bands were even more complex. The seven Lakota bands or subtribes (Oglala, Brule, Minneconjou, Hunkpapa, Sans Arcs, Blackfeet, and Two Kettle) had loose social and political organizations in which chiefs had little coercive authority. Internal disagreements often resulted in bands breaking up. Families or individuals easily moved between bands. There were often divisions and disagreements on the issue of war and peace with the Arikaras. In general, the Arikaras and the various Lakota bands were at a state of enmity with each other. This state was interrupted only when a temporary truce was concluded in order to conduct trade. Apart from corn, horses were the objects that

the Sioux desired most from the Arikaras during the first half of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ Because of the Sioux presence, the Arikaras were forced to bolster village defenses. Still, until the epidemics of the 1750s and 1780s, the Arikaras were quite able to resist the Sioux.¹⁶

The arrival of the Sioux is not recorded in the Arikara creation story. The Sioux are mentioned only in conjunction with the epidemics that weakened the Arikaras militarily, thus allowing the Sioux to rise to dominance. Furthermore, whereas the epidemics were depicted as “whirlwinds” or ferocious man-eating animals, the Sioux simply appear in human form. The Arikara creation accounts imply that the Sioux did not become a major problem until Whirlwind scattered the people across the earth. Until the epidemics, the Arikaras viewed the Sioux as a nuisance rather than a lethal threat to tribal survival. Consequently, the Sioux do not appear in symbolic form in the Arikara creation accounts. Although Sioux arrival was disruptive, what caused the Sioux to become powerful opponents were the epidemics that weakened the Arikaras.¹⁷

THE IMPACT OF THE EPIDEMICS

Scholars identified several epidemics that affected the Arikaras in the eighteenth century: smallpox or measles (1750–52), influenza (1761), followed again by smallpox or measles (between 1762 and 1766). The most devastating epidemic, however, was the smallpox outbreak of 1780–81.¹⁸ As a result of the epidemics, the Arikaras suffered an estimated population decline between 80 and 90 percent by 1781.¹⁹

The symptoms of the diseases, especially smallpox, tell a story of tremendous suffering: fevers, vomiting, severe head and body aches, painful skin rashes, and sores in the mouth and on the face, soles of the feet, palms of the hands, forearms, neck, legs, and back. Patients sometimes died bleeding from the gums, eyes, nose, and other orifices. Survivors carried the disfiguring scars of the disease on their faces and bodies for the rest of their lives.²⁰

In addition, the epidemics struck whole villages at once, incapacitating entire populations and preventing men from hunting and women from tending their fields. Starvation often followed, further increasing the risk of new diseases. During an epidemic there were not enough healthy people around to take care of the sick, to cook, to light fires, to fetch water, or to bury the dead. Secondary infections, such as colds

and pneumonia, were common side effects that further reduced a victim's chances for survival. Survivors not only carried the scars of the disease on their bodies, but also carried the sad memory of having watched loved ones suffer and die from a terrible scourge.²¹

After the epidemic of 1780–81, the surviving Arikaras gathered in a handful of villages to rebuild their lives. The process proved to be very difficult. Whereas the old village system, based on the bundle complex, had provided each group with a sense of community and identity, the new villages threw together people of diverse backgrounds and traditions. Many of the survivors spoke different dialects, causing a confusion of tongues. Worse, families from different villages competed with each other for political control.²² When Lewis and Clark visited the Arikaras in October 1804, they noticed bitter rivalries within the Arikara tribe. In his journal, Clark wrote that “we have every reason to believe that a jealousy [*sic*] exists between the Villages.”²³

In contrast, the Sioux were less affected by the diseases, although they, too, suffered greatly. Sioux social organization was more flexible, allowing them to break up at the first signs of infection. Hence, Sioux population numbers rebounded more quickly than those of the sedentary Arikaras, who lived in more compact villages, which provided more fertile breeding grounds for infectious diseases.²⁴ As a consequence of the epidemics, Arikara power declined, while that of the Sioux increased. The decline of Arikara power emboldened the Sioux, who began to push the Arikaras northward.²⁵

Archaeologists uncovered evidence for this increasing Sioux boldness when they excavated an Arikara village site in Walworth County, South Dakota. This site had been established around 1750 but was abruptly abandoned shortly before 1785. In the village, the archaeologists found the remains of seventy-one people who had been killed in a terrible massacre. Many corpses had been mutilated. After the tragedy the village was abandoned. The massacre reveals that the Arikaras were no longer the formidable military power they once were. The reasons for the decline are written in the archaeological record. In the years before the massacre, the village became successively smaller as a result of depopulation caused by infectious diseases until Larson Village, according to the archaeologists, “reached the threshold below which defense of the village was no longer possible.”²⁶

The epidemics thus reduced the Arikaras from a military power of the

first rank to a secondary power at best. Sioux pressure forced the Arikaras to give up their villages on the Cheyenne River in present-day South Dakota in 1796 and move upriver.²⁷ Although they clung tenaciously to their independence, the Arikaras were now frequently at the mercy of the Sioux, who often forced them to trade at unfavorable terms.²⁸

THE EPIDEMICS IN ARIKARA ORAL TRADITION

At first glance, no accounts of these monstrous epidemics appear to have survived in Arikara oral tradition. Could it be a case of collective “amnesia” caused by the sheer psychological traumatic impact of these events, similar to the one Raymond Fogelson described for the Cherokees after their removal to Indian Territory?²⁹ Although this is possible, Arikara traditions do offer clues. In this case, however, the epidemics appear in symbolic form.

The most powerful of these symbols is Whirlwind.³⁰ Hand, one of Dorsey’s sources, said that “the Whirlwind was a disease and wherever the wind touched the people, diseases would be left” (17). Four Horns emphasized the destructive nature of the storm: “We must hurry, for the big Black-Wind is coming, taking everything it meets” (32). In Star’s account, Whirlwind addressed the people: “You wanted your people to live forever, but I have left sickness behind, so that it will fall upon the people who are proud and dress fine; but always remember when you offer smoke to the gods to give me smoke towards the last, so that I shall not visit the people very often” (22–23). When Whirlwind struck the people, it scattered them and changed their language, thus forming new tribes (21). Among these were the Cheyennes, the “Pichia” (an unidentified tribe), the “Wooden Faces” (Iroquois), and the enigmatic “Witchcraft-People” who lived in the South. Interestingly, Star does not mention the Sioux, unless these are the before-mentioned “Pichia” (22).

In other stories, animals personified the diseases. They attacked the villages after some people violated a taboo.³¹ Two Hawks tells the story of an attack by snakes upon an Arikara village after two foolish boys killed a mysterious snake. While hunting, the Arikaras passed a pretty little snake. The elders told the people to make sacrifices of deer meat and moccasins to the snake. The two foolish boys, watching jealously as the snake lay coiled up on the pile of presents, complained bitterly that they were poor and needed help but that this snake received all these

presents from the people. In anger they killed the animal. Soon all kinds of snakes came down both sides of the Missouri River. Armed with clubs, the people fought them off. One of the foolish boys was killed, while the other was bitten all over. The snakes eventually went away, but not until they had killed many people (125–26).³²

It is possible that the “snakes” in this story may refer to an enemy tribe. Perhaps these were the “Snake People” mentioned by the Véndrye brothers in 1743. If so, these could possibly be the Shoshones or Comanches, who also entered the plains around this time. However, the bite marks left by the “snakes” are more comparable to the wounds and lacerations caused by smallpox. It is tempting to associate the scar-covered body of the surviving foolish boy—who had been bitten by the snakes “all over”—with the pitted scars left by smallpox pustules.³³

In another story, also told by Two Hawks, the attackers were bears. According to this story, the bears attacked the village after a jealous man shot a bear who had seduced his wife. The bears tore many people to pieces. Only those people who hid in their cellars were saved (126–27).

Unlike the snake story, the wounds inflicted by the bears cannot be so readily associated with a particular disease. Perhaps the bears refer more accurately to an unidentified enemy tribe. The only disease that could provide a possible explanation for the violence of the attack would be rabies. However, scholars are entirely unfamiliar with a rabies “epidemic” at any time in history, and this disease seems an unlikely candidate.³⁴

What makes the attack by “bears” such an appropriate symbol for a contagious disease is the sheer violence with which the people were attacked. Furthermore, the “bear” not only attacked the man who had killed the bear but attacked the people indiscriminately. In short, the random nature of the bear attack seems to reflect the indiscriminating “attack” by a contagious disease. If this is indeed the case, perhaps the people who “hid in their cellars” may refer to those who quarantined themselves from infected fellow Arikaras.³⁵

The use of these metaphors implies that the magnitude of the suffering caused by the epidemics was so dramatic that they could be described only in symbolical or cosmological terms. Undoubtedly, many Arikaras (such as the storytellers whose accounts were published in George Dorsey’s *Traditions of the Arikara*) believed that the disasters were punishments for a variety of offenses against the supernatural: ta-

boo violation, witchcraft, a decline in religious observances, or a failure to treat sacred things properly.³⁶

In other accounts, disease and death appear in the form of dogs. In what may be the most important theological Arikara text, Arikara priest Four Rings described this event:

It is said that when the smoke offerings first were made to all the powers and elements of the world there were two dogs sleeping at the time which were forgotten, and so no smoke offering was made to them. They awoke and found that they had been forgotten and they were aggrieved and angry because of it. Therefore they said to the people: "You neglected to make smoke offerings to us when all other beings were remembered. In punishment for your neglect of us we shall bite you. And we shall never leave you, we will always abide with you, and we shall follow you forever." The names of the two dogs were Sickness and Death. Wherefore it was said: "Sickness and Death shall be among the people always."³⁷

Interestingly, sometimes the dogs appear in conjunction *with* Whirlwind. In one story, a dog came to warn the people that Whirlwind was coming to destroy them and offered to sacrifice himself so that the people would live. Ever since, whenever diseases came, the Arikaras would sacrifice a dog and offer its meat to the different powers in the heavens so that these "would send a storm that would drive away the disease from the villages" (17).

THE EFFECTS OF THE EPIDEMICS ON ARIKARA RELIGION

The epidemics may actually have *reinforced* the Arikaras' faith rather than causing them to lose confidence in their religion. Many of the stories show that it was faith and religion that eventually helped them to weather the storms of disease. In Star's account, Mother Corn appealed to neešaanu directly. "Nesaru and the gods," she cried out, "I want help, for the Whirlwind is coming to destroy my people!" (21). In the story "How the People Escaped the Buffalo," Hawk explained that when Whirlwind came, the people "prayed to Mother [Corn] to help them, and she turned around and told them to give presents and smoke to the Whirlwind." Although the Whirlwind "scattered some of the people over the country," most people simply "went on again" (37–38).

In most stories, the people were saved by Mother Corn and, indeed, by neešaanu himself. Mother Corn turned herself into a cedar tree, and neešaanu fell from the sky in the shape of a rock. The people found shelter in the tree and on top of the rock and so escaped the wrath of Whirlwind. The message was clear: if failure to properly observe religious customs caused disease and death, then faith was the way to redeem and save oneself.³⁸

The bear and snake stories also served as powerful warnings to the people not to neglect their duties toward the mysterious powers. In the bear story told by Two Hawks, peace and tranquility returned only after the man who had wounded the bear had been killed. In this story, the man represented someone whose pride had endangered the entire community.

The 1780–81 epidemic may have increased the role of doctors in Arikara society and religion. Although the sacred bundle ceremonies conducted by the priests to ensure bountiful harvests, successful hunts, and growth and stability among the people remained supreme, the emergence of medicine societies may indicate that doctoring became more important as a result of the epidemics. After Whirlwind left behind diseases, the work of medical specialists became increasingly important.

According to Hand's version of the Arikara oral tradition, neešaanu gave three things to the people: Mother Corn, who taught the people how to live; the office of the chief; and, after Whirlwind introduced sickness and death, the "medicine men." Of these three gifts, the doctors played an important role in the day-to-day lives of ordinary Arikaras. Although the story suggests that the doctors came *after* the whirlwind, Hand refers to medicine men before the coming of the whirlwind. Still, this leaves the possibility that doctors became more significant after the introduction of new infectious diseases (17).

Other Arikara traditions suggest that the doctors eventually may have even harnessed the destructive powers of Whirlwind. In a story told by Many Fox, Whirlwind's power was counteracted by a young man who received help from certain animal powers. In the story, a boy and a girl were accidentally left behind when the people crossed a river on their annual buffalo hunt. Whirlwind took the girl and gave her its power. The girl used it to kill and devour people. Because she had to look after her little brother, Whirlwind Girl planned to kill him. Fortunately, some owls took pity on the little boy and gave him their power. When his sister

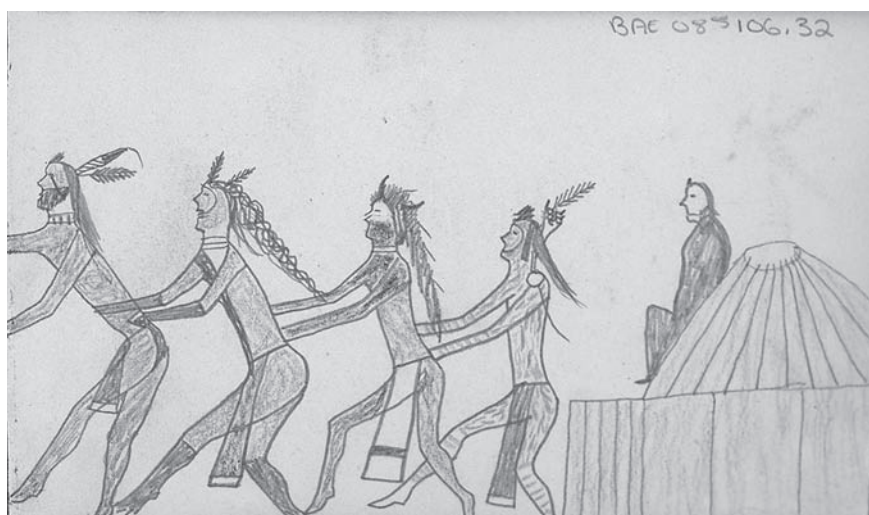


FIG. 2. Ledger drawing by an anonymous Arikara artist depicting the Medicine Lodge ceremony, including Cedar Tree and doctors' society dancers, ca. 1875. MS 154064B, INV 08510631 and 08510632, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

came to kill him, the boy promised to give her the first woman he would marry. Whirlwind girl agreed. When the boy returned to the people he had Owl power and distinguished himself in battle against enemies. A grateful Arikara chief allowed him to marry his daughter. The boy then gave his new wife to his Whirlwind sister (Many Fox does not explain what happened to her). The next day, Whirlwind Girl gave her power to her brother. This power, she said, would enable him to kill the enemy and remain unharmed himself. "My brother," Whirlwind Girl said, "When the wind comes you must know that I am the Whirlwind. I will listen to the prayers of our people. When I am coming do not let my people be afraid of me, for I shall always hear their prayers and shall always heed them. I shall not destroy them, but will always comfort them" (134–36).

This story suggests that diseases had lost some of their terror. The Arikaras believed that they now had doctors who could control the worst effects of the diseases. Not surprisingly, the different doctors' societies became increasingly powerful institutions among the Arikaras. The annual Medicine Lodge ceremony, in which the different doctors' societies competed against each other in extraordinary feats of legerdemain, became one of the most awe-inspiring ceremonies among the Arikaras. It also survived longer than all other great Arikara ceremonies.

In fact, the doctors' societies were fully integrated in the Cedar Tree ceremony, described by scholars and even filmed in July 1924. The ceremony featured the cedar tree and Grandfather Rock, which were placed side by side in front of the Arikara ceremonial lodge. The different doctors' societies danced around the tree and rock before entering the lodge, where they displayed their sleight-of-hand performances.³⁹

CONCLUSION

The epidemics were traumatic events in Arikara history. Occurring only shortly after the Arikaras separated from the Pawnees and while the Arikaras were still in the process of establishing their national identity, the epidemics hit with terrible force. It is not surprising that the Arikaras came to regard these events as having great cosmogonic significance.

The great smallpox scourge of 1780–81 especially was seen as a disaster of cosmic proportions. The Arikaras attributed it to supernatural causes, possibly as a punishment for the decline in religious observances among the people. This and other epidemics were of such scale and intensity that

they could be represented only symbolically to reflect their cosmological nature. Hence, they appear as mysterious powers: as whirlwinds, ravenous bears, or vicious snakes seeking to avenge human insults.

However, as Arikara oral tradition shows, the sacred powers also offered hope. They provided the Arikaras with medical specialists who could treat these maladies. Eventually, these doctors, though never quite overshadowing the ceremonies and sacred objects associated with corn horticulture and subsistence, became increasingly important in Arikara social and sacred affairs.

NOTES

1. To many present-day Arikaras, these are sacred texts, and the Arikara story of their creation is sacred history. Seeking to explain the stories, as I try to do in this article, may appear controversial. This contribution does not question the integrity of the Arikara creation story or the mysterious supernatural power behind it. On the contrary: I accept that these texts are of great mystical and spiritual power. My purpose is merely to suggest a link between the sacred and the historical.

2. Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, "George A. Dorsey and the Development of Plains Indian Anthropology," in *Anthropology, History, and American Indians: Essays in Honor of William Curtis Sturtevant*, ed. William L. Merrill and Ives Goddard (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 59–74. See also Tristan Almazan and Sarah Coleman, "George Amos Dorsey and His Comrades," *Fieldiana. Anthropology*, n.s., no. 36, Curators, Collections, and Contexts: Anthropology at the Field Museum, 1893–2002 (September 30, 2003), 87–97.

3. George A. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Arikara* (Washington DC: Carnegie Institution, 1904), 15. Hereafter cited in the text.

4. For information on the Congregational mission, see Harold and Eva Case, comps., *100 Years at Ft. Berthold: The History of the Fort Berthold Indian Mission, 1876–1976* (Bismarck ND: H. W. Case, 1977). For the Catholic mission, see Terrence Kardong, *Catholic Life at Fort Berthold, 1889–1989* (Richardton ND: Assumption Abbey Press, 1989); Thomas W. Foley, *Father Francis M. Craft: Missionary to the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Louis Pfaller, OSB, *St. Joseph Mission, Twin Buttes, North Dakota: A Brief History and Picture Review Published after the Dedication of the New Church in June 1972* (Richardton ND: Assumption Abbey Press, 1973). In 1952 Eagle Rises Up (a.k.a. Frank Heart) told a story of Jesus that was handed down to him by his grandfather Two Crows. According to the story, Jesus had first appeared to the Arikaras, who did not give him a proper welcome. Offended, Jesus then granted his teachings and powers to the white man. According to Eagle Rises Up, Jesus was a handsome-looking white man with a yellow beard. When he spoke he said, "I am the person that you desired to see. You did not see

me but I came so that you could see me. Now you see me. I will tell you that I have been offended that the people did not welcome me. I came purposely to visit you people and to leave you with this blessing that you would be blessed with the talent to make things and to develop things so that you would not remain poor but you would be gainful in the use of your talents but since your people have ignored me and not welcomed me I have decided to turn this blessing over to that people that is white and will give to them that blessing that you have rejected. Although this man is white and has been wayward, heinous, yet I will give to him this blessing that you are rejecting because of your failure to welcome me and greet me when you saw me. I have decided to leave this talent to this white person so he can develop and become useful and be gainful in use of his talent" (Eagle Rises Up, "The Appearance of a Stranger among the Arikaras," March 31, 1952, unpublished story, transcription at the American Indian Studies Research Institute, Indiana University, Bloomington).

5. The main primary sources are Dorsey, *Traditions*, 11–37; Edward S. Curtis, "The Arikara," in *The North American Indian* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), esp. 5:80–86; Melvin R. Gilmore, "The Arikara Book of Genesis," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters* 12 (1929): 95–120; George Bird Grinnell, *The Story of the Indian* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1908), 186–94; and Grinnell, "Pawnee Mythology," *Journal of American Folklore* 6, no. 21 (April–June 1893): 113–30. Another version of Two Crows' account was recorded by Gilbert L. Wilson, "The Arikara Cosmogony," unpublished notes, Gilbert L. Wilson files, American Indian Studies Research Institute, Indiana University, Bloomington.

6. DeMallie and Parks, "George A. Dorsey," 59–74.

7. For an excellent overview of the European-Arikara trade, see J. Daniel Rogers, *Objects of Change: The Archaeology and History of Arikara Contact with Europeans* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990). See also Elmer E. Meleen, *A Report on an Investigation of the La Roche Site, Stanley County, South Dakota* (Vermillion SD: University of South Dakota Museum, 1948); J. J. Hoffman, *The La Roche Sites*, Publications in Salvage Archaeology, no. 11 (Lincoln NE: River Basin Surveys / Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution); Donald J. Lehmer and David T. Jones, *Arikara Archeology: The Bad River Phase*, Publications in Salvage Archaeology, no. 7 (Lincoln NE: Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, 1968); Richard A. Krause, "Plains Village Tradition: Coalescent," in *Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie, vol. 13, pt. 1, *Handbook of North American Indians*, William C. Sturtevant, gen. ed. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 206; W. Raymond Wood, "Plains Trade in Prehistoric and Protohistoric Intertribal Relations," in *Anthropology on the Great Plains*, ed. W. Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 98–109. For the presence of white, mostly French, fur traders among the Arikaras at this time, see Richard L. Jantz and Douglas W. Owsley, "White Traders in the Upper Missouri: Evidence from the Swan Creek Site," in *Skeletal Biology in the Great Plains: Migration, Warfare, Health, and Subsistence*, ed. Douglas W. Owsley and Richard L. Jantz (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution

Press, 1994), 189–201. However, Wesley R. Hurt, who excavated the Swan Creek site, reported that there was no evidence of direct contact with Europeans (*Report of the Investigation of the Swan Creek Site*, 39ww7, Walworth County, South Dakota, 1954–1956 [Pierre SD: South Dakota Archaeological Commission, 1957]).

8. Donald J. Lehmer, “Plains Village Tradition: Postcontact,” in DeMallie, *Plains*, pt. 1, 245–55; Preston Holder, *The Hoe and the Horse on the Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 85.

9. Frank Norall, *Bourgmont: Explorer of the Missouri, 1698–1725* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 110. See also Guillaume Delisle, “Carte du Mexique et de la Florida des Terres Angloises et des Isles Antilles du cours et des environs de la Rivière de Mississipi” (Paris: Chez l’auteur sur le Quai de l’Horloge, 1703); Douglas R. Parks, “Bands and Villages of the Arikara and Pawnee,” *Nebraska History* 60, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 215; Douglas R. Parks, “Bands and Villages of the Arikara and Pawnee,” *Nebraska History* 60, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 217, 220, 228; Donald J. Lehmer, *Introduction to Middle Missouri Archaeology* (Washington DC: National Park Service, 1971), 168, 169–70; Sara Jones Tucker, comp., *Indian Villages of the Illinois Country*, vol. 2, Scientific Papers, Illinois State Museum, pt. 1, *Atlas* (Springfield: State of Illinois, 1942), plate XV. In 1719 Jean Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe learned from the Tawakonis (Wichitas) that the Arikaras were numerous, that they inhabited seven villages, and that they formed part of forty-five villages of Pawnees. According to La Harpe, the Arikaras also fought a “cruel war” with neighboring tribes like the Canecy, Padoucas, and some Panis. Unfortunately, the exact identity of these latter tribes has never been established satisfactorily. See Pierre Margry, *Découvertes et établissements des français dans l’ouest et dans le sud de l’Amérique septentrionale, 1614–1754, mémoires et documents originaux*, vol. 6, *Exploration des affluents du Mississipi et découverte des montagnes rocheuses, 1679–1754* (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 289–90, 293.

10. See Margry, *Découvertes et établissements*, 407–12. The quote is from Lawrence J. Burpee, ed., *Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de la Vérendrye and His Sons* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1927), 18–23, 413. It is possible that this was a Pawnee rather than an Arikara band.

11. For the etymology of “Snake Indians,” see Thomas W. Kavanagh, “Comanche,” in DeMallie, *Plains*, pt. 2, 886, 902–3; and the chapters on the Shoshones in *Great Basin*, ed. Warren L. D’Azevedo, vol. 11, *Handbook of North American Indians*, William C. Sturtevant, gen. ed. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 262, 279, 305, 334.

12. Although guns changed Arikara military tactics (ambushes rather than pitched close-formation battles became more common), the cultural values associated with warfare did not change fundamentally. From all appearances, the gun merely reinforced existing Arikara cultural traits in hunting and warfare. The introduction of the gun did not leave an impression on Arikara oral tradition. In fact, the introduction of the bow and arrow was far more significant. See Louis A. Garavaglia

and Charles G. Worman, *Firearms of the American West, 1803–1865* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1998), chap. 17, “Indian Arms,” 343–60; Arcadi Gluckman, *Identifying Old U.S. Muskets, Rifles & Carbines* (Harrisburg PA: Stackpole Books, 1965); T. M. Hamilton, comp., *Indian Trade Guns: The Missouri Archeologist* 22 (December 1960); John C. Ewers, *Plains Indian History and Culture: Essays on Continuity and Change* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 48–50; Frank Raymond Secoy, *Changing Military Patterns of the Great Plains Indians: 17th Century through Early 19th Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics among the New England Indians* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Armstrong Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare, 1675–1815* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998). The same is true for the arrival of the horse. Although horses turned the Arikaras from foot soldiers into cavalymen and allowed the people to travel greater distances in search of buffalo herds during the annual summer hunt, the semisedentary lifestyle of the Arikaras did not lend itself to the maintenance of large herds, because horses required fresh grass for forage and thus needed to be moved around often and sometimes over great distances. Instead, the Arikaras preferred to sell surplus horses as soon as possible. When they lacked horses, the Arikaras preferred to trade for them rather than steal them from enemy tribes. In this case, the Arikaras used corn (neešaanu’s greatest gift to the people) to obtain what they needed. Some research shows that the arrival of the horse may actually have intensified Arikara horticulture, as the Arikaras preferred to buy horses and even the buffalo meat and robes that increased agricultural production offered them. Because corn remained supreme, it is not surprising, then, that the introduction of the horse went unrecorded in Arikara oral tradition. See Gilbert L. Wilson, “The Horse and the Dog in Hidatsa Culture,” *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 15 (1924): 125–311; John C. Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfeet Indian Culture: With Comparative Material from Other Western Tribes* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1955); Clark Wissler, “The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture,” *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 16, no. 1 (January–March 1914): 1–25; Frank Gilbert Roe, *The Indian and the Horse* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979); Jeffrey R. Hanson, “Adjustment and Adaptation on the Northern Plains: The Case of Equestrianism among the Hidatsa,” *Plains Anthropologist* 31, no. 112 (May 1986): 93–107; Jerrold E. Levy, “Is This a System? Comment on Osborn’s ‘Ecological Aspects of Equestrian Adaptations in Aboriginal North America,’” *American Anthropologist* 86, no. 4 (December 1984): 985–91; Patricia S. Bridges, “Prehistoric Arthritis in the Americas,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992): 76, 81–82. The only mythological reference to horses is in a story told by Not Afraid of the Enemy (Alfred Morsette), but there are some problems with this account. See Douglas R. Parks, ed., *Traditional Narratives of the Arikara Indians*, vol. 3, *Stories of Alfred Morsette: English Translations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 101, 134–37. The increase in corn production actually resulted

in an increase in joint problems among Arikara women. See Daniel J. Wescott and Deborah L. Cunningham, "Temporal Changes in Arikara Humeral and Femoral Cross-sectional Geometry Associated with Horticultural Intensification," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 33 (2005): 1022–36.

13. It is possible that European fur traders carried the smallpox virus directly to the Arikaras, although it may also have been transferred along already existing Native trade routes.

14. Melvin R. Gilmore, *Prairie Smoke* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987), 166–72, and, by the same author, "A Study in the Ethnobotany of the Omaha Indians," *Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society* 17 (1913): 330–31. See Melvin R. Gilmore, "Account of the Piraskani Ceremony of the Arikara at Armstrong ND, September 1922," unpublished manuscript, transcription at the American Indian Studies Research Institute, Indiana University, Bloomington. For Arikara relations with the Cheyennes, see George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 1:6, 8–9, 37–38, 47, 240, 251–52, 302, 2:190, 205, 338. See also John H. Moore, Margot P. Liberty, and A. Terry Strauss, "Cheyenne," in DeMallie, *Plains*, pt. 2, 863–85; John Stands in Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 16.

15. For excellent discussions of Sioux history and culture, see various chapters in DeMallie, *Plains*, pt. 2, 718–820. See also Royall B. Hassrick, *The Sioux: Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964); Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003); Gary Clayton Anderson, "Early Dakota Migration and Intertribal War: A Revision," *Western Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (January 1980): 17–36.

16. Warren W. Caldwell, "Fortified Villages in the Northern Plains," *Plains Anthropologist* 9, no. 23 (February 1964): 1–7.

17. Sioux winter counts provide fragmentary information but suggest that conflicts between the two nations were common after the first recorded battle around 1694. See James Henri Howard, "Yanktonai Ethnohistory and the John K. Bear Winter Count," *Plains Anthropologist* 21, no. 73, pt. 2, memoir 11 (August 1976): 1–78; Garrick Mallery, *Picture-Writing of the American Indians* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1893), 1:297. Some of the better-known winter counts that note conflicts between the Sioux and the Arikaras are in Edward S. Curtis, "High Hawk's Winter-Count," in *The North American Indian*, 3:159–82; James Henri Howard, *The British Museum Winter Count* (London: British Museum, 1979); Stanley Vestal, *Warpath: The True Story of the Fighting Sioux Told in a Biography of Chief White Bull* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934); Russell Thornton, "A Rosebud Reservation Winter Count, circa 1751–52," *Ethnohistory* 49, no. 4 (2002): 723–42; Josephine F. Waggoner, "An Oglala Sioux Winter Count," *Museum of the Fur Trade* 24, no. 4 (1988): 11–14.

18. Michael K. Trimble, "Infectious Disease and the Northern Plains Horticulturalists: A Human Behavior Model," *Plains Anthropologist* 34, no. 124, memoir 23

(1989): 50. Although it is unclear how these diseases reached the Arikara settlements, it seems likely that germs traveled along the old trade routes that connected the Arikaras to the various corners of the continent.

19. Europeans introduced a large number of diseases into the Americas, including chicken pox, bubonic plague, yellow fever, whooping cough, cholera, mumps, malaria, diphtheria, typhus, influenza, measles, and smallpox. Frequently, two or more diseases struck at the same time, multiplying mortality by an unknown factor. Epidemics followed each other so fast that populations did not have enough time to recover. See Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), chaps. 2 and 3. In effect, there was “an epidemic of epidemics” in the eighteenth century (personal communication, September 13, 2005, Dr. Mark Braun, School of Medicine, Indiana University, Bloomington). Dr. Braun holds an MD and an MA in bioanthropology and teaches at the School of Medicine, Indiana University, Bloomington. He studies the impact of infectious diseases introduced by Europeans and Africans into Native American populations during the early period of colonization of the Americas. Several historical sources comment on the decline of the Arikaras. In 1785 the governor-general of Spanish Louisiana, Esteban Rodríguez Miró, reported that the Arikaras lived ninety leagues upstream of the mouth of the Niobrara River, where they had seven villages and some nine hundred warriors. See Abraham P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785–1804* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 1:123, 126–27; Douglas R. Parks, “Arikara,” in DeMallie, *Plains*, pt. 1, 366. Miró’s figures were probably based on outdated information. A more reliable estimate comes from French fur trader Jean Baptiste Truteau, who visited the Arikaras in the mid-1790s. Truteau wrote that before the epidemics the Arikaras had been able to muster about four thousand warriors but that the disaster had reduced their fighting strength to a mere five hundred. Truteau also noted that since the epidemics, Arikara attitudes toward fur traders had changed. They formerly called all white men “spirits” because of the powerful objects they carried. But “now they think of us simply in connection with the items of merchandise that we bring them [and] that are so necessary to them.” See Douglas R. Parks, ed., *A Fur Trader among the Arikara Indians: Jean Baptiste Truteau’s Journal and Description of the Upper Missouri, 1794–1796* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming), n.p.

20. Elizabeth Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775–82* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2002), 16–18.

21. Braun, personal communication.

22. Annie Heloise Abel, *Tabeau’s Narrative of Loisel’s Expedition to the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 124, 126.

23. Moulton, *Journals*, 3:156–57. For an Arikara perspective, see Loren Yellow Bird, “Now I Will Speak (Nawah Ti Waako’): A Sahnish Perspective on What the Lewis and Clark Expedition and Others Missed,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 73–84.

24. The plagues that devastated the Arikaras between 1750 and 1781 may have resulted in a population decline of almost 90 percent. One of the reasons is that the diseases disproportionately affected the young, who were the future reproductive group. A succession of diseases, then, had a “snowball effect” upon the reproductive capacities of the group. Braun, personal communication.

25. Lehmer, *Middle Missouri Archaeology*, 170. The Arikaras eventually lost their Cheyenne allies as well. See Joseph Jablow, *The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations, 1795–1840* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 65, 78–89.

26. Although the identity of the attackers cannot be established with absolute certainty, only the Sioux were strong enough to launch an attack of this magnitude against a heavily fortified Arikara village. This was not an ordinary hit-and-run attack. Searching for a cause of the attack, researchers discovered that the number of young victims was relatively small. Based on this finding, they concluded that the purpose of the attack was to capture children under the age of five. Perhaps the attackers were trying to replenish their own numbers and to replace loved ones lost to smallpox and other diseases. See Douglas W. Owsley, Hugh Berryman, and William M. Bass, “Demographic and Osteological Evidence for Warfare at the Larson Site, South Dakota,” *Plains Anthropologist* 22, no. 78, pt. 2, memoir 13 (1977): 119–31. The quote is on p. 128.

27. Parks, *Fur Trader*, n.p.

28. Some scholars called these Sioux trading visits “friendly raiding parties.” According to Truteau, the Arikaras tolerated the Sioux “owing to fear, wishing to avoid [making] too great a multitude of enemies among the Sioux nation who would certainly overpower them.” Truteau added that the Sioux visit the Arikaras “and make great promises to live in good unity and in good accord with them in order to smoke their tobacco, to eat their maize, to freely hunt the bison and beaver on their lands in the autumn and winter; and in the spring they withdraw to the other river bank from which they return usually to kill [the Arikaras] or steal their horses” (Parks, *Fur Trader*, n.p.). Less than a decade later, Pierre Antoine Tabeau, who was not inclined to be friendly toward the Arikaras, wrote that the Sioux saw in the Arikaras “a certain kind of serf, who cultivates for them and who, as they say, takes, for them, the place of women” (Abel, *Tabeau’s Narrative*, 130–31).

29. Raymond D. Fogelson, “The Ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents,” *Ethnohistory* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 133–47.

30. Only in Bear’s Tail’s account does Whirlwind have a positive role. Although this account is an anomaly, it ought to be mentioned nonetheless. According to Bear’s Tail, as they traveled west, the Arikara people came upon a thick stand of timber that blocked their way. “A Whirlwind came and made a pathway through the timber,” said Bear’s Tail. “The Whirlwind did not hurt the people, although it was mad, for the powers had not called on it for help” (Dorsey, *Traditions*, 29).

31. In the account by Hawk, the animal that threatens the people was “Cut Nose.” “This was an animal that had been a man, and he had gotten away from the people,

but he was now trying to kill these people. His horns were long, and they seemed to touch the heavens" (Dorsey, *Traditions*, 33). Based on this description, one might confuse the horns as stylized "whirlwinds" or, because at this time the Arikaras had been under the influence of Christian missionaries for three decades, distinguish a resemblance to Satan. But "Cut Nose" was apparently the ancestor of the buffalo. At this time, the buffalos still hunted and ate people. Because he was formerly a man, one could also see him as a sort of "cannibal," which is an image very common among the more distantly related Caddo Indians.

32. For a slightly different and more modern version of the story, see Alfred Morsette, "The Foolish Ones Who Killed the Beloved Snake Child," in Parks, *Stories of Alfred Morsette*, 209–12.

33. It is possible that the "snake" might refer to the Missouri River itself and that the disease might have made it to the Arikara settlements by way of the river. The Arikaras believed in a serpent-like monster named nuutawáčeš that lived in the Missouri River; this monster had to be appeased by sacrifices of tobacco. See Melvin R. Gilmore, *Prairie Smoke* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987), 38–39. See also George A. Dorsey, *Traditions of the Arikara* (Washington DC: Carnegie Institution, 1904), 79–80.

34. For an excellent and highly engaging history of rabies, see Bill Wasik and Monica Murphy, *Rabid: A Cultural History of the World's Most Diabolical Virus* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

35. It is possible that this event refers to a war with an enemy tribe or perhaps to a "civil war" among the Arikara people themselves. In both these cases, a murder may have caused a cycle of devastating revenge killings. The people hiding in their cellars may refer to those who sought to escape or remain neutral in the conflict.

36. In the story of the bears, there is an interesting twist. By having intercourse with the woman, the bear was actually transferring his power to her husband. But when the husband attacked the bear in a fit of jealousy, this power was denied, and the bears retaliated. In other words, human "sin" (greed, jealousy, etc.) caused these misfortunes. See Parks, *Stories of Alfred Morsette*, 205.

37. Melvin R. Gilmore, "The Arikara Book of Genesis," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters* 12 (1929): 102–3.

38. In Star's version, it was not Mother Corn herself but an unnamed woman who saved the people by turning herself into the cedar tree (Dorsey, *Traditions*, 21).

39. *Arikara Ceremonies*, filmed by Melvin Gilmore for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York, 1924.