



Figure 1 Summer Camp on the Prairies (Sunset), no date, photographed by Walter McClintock and Charlotte Pinkerton Blazer (Grafe, 291)

The Native American Sense of the Sacred: The Tipi as a Collective Transformational Vessel

Joan Golden-Alexis

Western science, following Roger Bacon, believed man could force nature to reveal its secrets; the Sioux simply petitioned nature for friendship.

Vine Deloria, Jr.



Figure 2: *Inside The Blackfoot Black Buffalo Lodge, drawing, Paul Goble (Goble, 38)*

This project begins when I stand inside a tipi at the Brooklyn Museum. The tipi's buffalo skins seem like a translucent glowing parchment revealing huge illuminated spirit animals painted over the entire outside cover. Inside I feel

surrounded by and held in the embrace of their protective presence. At the same time that I am aware of the poles that cross these shadow-like silhouettes, reaching out through the smoke hole to the zenith, I am aware that I am standing in a circle. I feel drawn up to the sky, held by the earth and enclosed in something otherworldly and deeply instinctual all at the same time. I feel transported into another realm and begin to understand what Jung meant when he said, that the American Indians live under a spell—the spell of their land, and the spell of their sky. I am drawn to understand both the power of and the inner tranquility that this experience evokes.



Figure 3: *Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota, August 2006, photographed by Michael Forsberg (Rosoff and Zeller, 4)*

Jung describes the white Americans as disconnected from their land and

its rich offerings, zooming across its surface with a resultant loss of connection with their own bodily rhythm and their depth. For Jung the white Americans' disconnection from the land results in dissociation and a split in their psyche.



Figure 4: *Black Buffalo and Otter Tipi*, no date, photographed by Walter McClintock and Charlotte Pinkerton Blazer (Grafe, 201)

In contrast, “under the spell of their country” (C.G. Jung, Vol. 10 §960) the American Indian has access to an internal dimension; this allows for fluidity, a

connecting and interweaving of the mundane and the sacred, and the conscious and the unconscious. As a result the American Indian resonates with this inaudible cosmic pulse, responsive to both time and place. For him life is not a shallow horizontal stream flowing out of an impatiently forgotten past through the present into a future one is hurrying to reach. Rather, it has a vertical dimension that cups past and future in a timeless present. (Waters, p. 335) This allows entrance into something ancient and primordial—a fluid space, which brings the American Indian’s sacred symbols into consciousness. These symbols then take on a defining reality, penetrating his character, providing him with an essential dignity.



Figure 5: *Navaho Man, c 1904, photographed by Edward Curtis, LCUSCA4-7990. From Library of Congress online catalogue of prints and photographs of the Edward Curtis Collection (www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ecur/) reprinted in (Psychological Perspectives, Vol. 54, 2, 2011, cover)*



Figure 6: *Pretty Nose, Cheyenne Girl, Northern Cheyenne reservation, Montana, 1879, photographed by L.A. Huffman (Hanson, 52)*

The mythology and cultural forms of the American Indian seem to guard against the splitting that Jung describes, and instead bind these opposing forces. It is the purpose of this project to explore the tipi as an earthly container and living symbol, which connects and interweaves the mundane with the sacred as well as the masculine and feminine domains. The vital linking of the mundane with the sacred creates within each Indian the potential for his own unique vision quest. It is this quest, a central aspect of Native American life, which provides access to the unconscious and its timeless wisdom for the individual Indian and the culture.

The tipi is the main living structure of all the migratory tribes of the Great Plains that followed the buffalo—to name a few—the Blackfoot, Lakota, Kiowa-Apache, Gros Ventre, Crow, Oglala, Cheyenne and Arapaho. It is much more than a shelter and reflects and beautifully reiterates the mythology of these tribes. In this sense the mythology of the American Indian creates its architecture and its architecture in turn echoes and reinforces the sacred realm of the mythology. (Oldershaw, p. 38) As both home and sacred space, the tipi serves as an imagistic lens to view the interaction of the mundane and timeless in this culture.

Embedded in the feminine, the Native American world consists of circles within circles, and the tipi cannot be fully understood independently of the circle. Giant circular constructions described as sacred hoops or medicine wheels dot

the landscape across
the prairie and indicate
the circle's centrality
and spiritual power for
the Plains Indians.

These immense
circular forms were and
remain sacred ritual
spaces for fasting,
vision quests and
prayer.



Figure 7: *Medicine Wheel, Big Horn Mountains, Wyoming, 1986, photographed by Richard Collier (Hanson, 26)*

For the Native American the circle is the sanctified pattern of movement; it has no beginning and no end: it is a form that always comes back around to its beginning, integrating its past, constantly enlarging its circumference and deepening its dimensions through its connection with the unconscious and the sacred. The circle is anti-linear; linearity is a process, which always pushes forward, deserting its history and thus deserting its destiny. The circle, however, embraces the wholeness central to the Plains Indian culture; it depicts the unity of the universe—the unity between history and destiny, the unity between present and memory, the unity between above and below, between the conscious and unconscious, and the mundane and sacred.

Unraveling the secret of the circle—the sacred hoop—gives us entrance to the Indian way of being present in the mundane world, and at the same time present in the sacred, timeless feminine dimension. The sacred or medicine hoop can be pictured as a series of concentric circles or mandalic forms that spiral down from the largest, which, encompasses the whole universe, to the circle of the earth, to the circle of tipis, to the individual tipi, and finally to the smallest circle which encompasses the individual Indian. The process in the wider hoop affects the process in the individual Indian, and the circular and internal process in the individual as expressed through dreams and visions, in turn, affects the largest hoop. Set in this wider context of hoops, the individual Indian is encouraged to seek within, through visions and dreams, ways to integrate and re-integrate the culture in relationship to change.

The uppermost circle encompassing the lives of the Plains Indians extends far beyond the limits of human vision into the mysterious world of *wakan*. This hoop divides cosmic space into distinct spatial zones associated with different zones of power—the sky, earth's surface, and the realms beneath earth and water. These zones of power are connected through a vertical axis termed the *axis mundi*, the cosmic axis or world tree. The Native American sees this axis as an intimate part of his nature and a path ultimately available to him to connect with this cosmic energy. Human prayer, the smoke of the sacred pipe and the smoke emanating from the hearth located within the heart of the tipi, travel along this

route and connect him on a daily basis with the universal and infinite world.

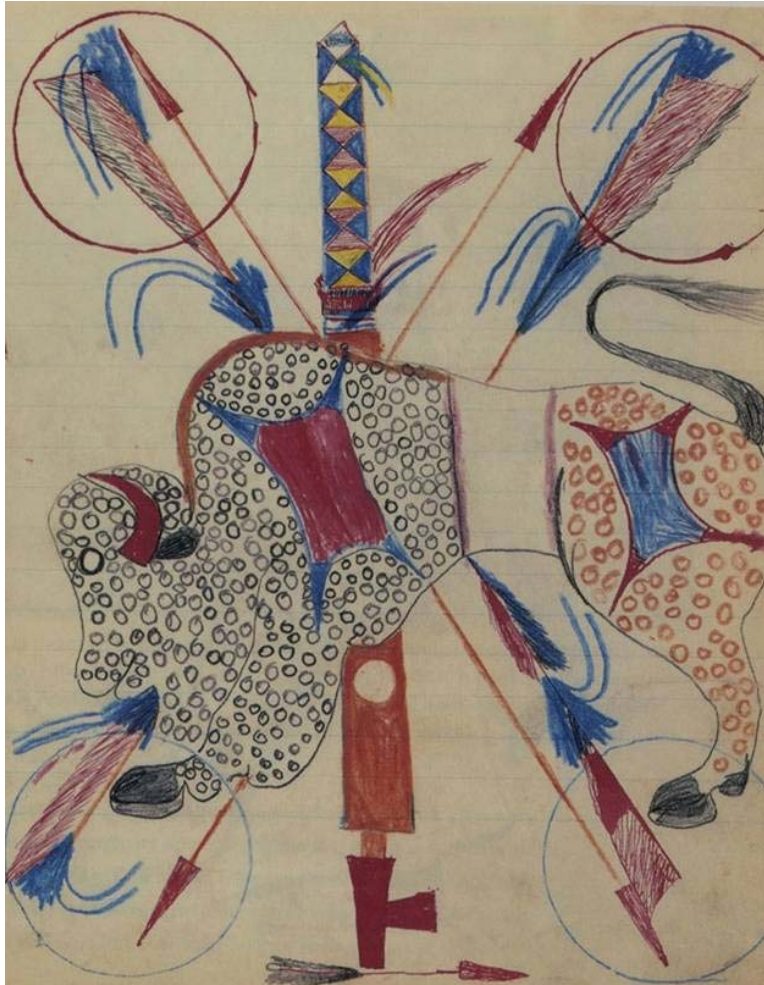


Figure 8: *A Diagram of an Altar Made as a Result of a Vision; Drawing of Buffalo Medicine, 1880, Black Hawk, Sans Arc Lakota (Berlo, 35)*

This powerful image drawn by Black Hawk of a sacred altar demonstrates the nature of the sacred hoop and expresses the basic form of the altar of the Plains Indians. It is the result of a vision, and of Black Hawk's capacity to stand in awe in front of the mysteries.

The altar consists of the sacred pipe, buffalo, sacred hoops and arrows. The sacred pipe stands in the place of the *axis mundi* linking earth with sky. The

pipe decisively punctures the earth and the sky, indicating the profound conjunction between these realms of power and spirit in the Native American worldview; the pipe impregnates the arrows lying under it and forming a cross in front of it, with its power. The buffalo serves as the heart and soul of the altar. Its body is permeated with elements of the sky (small circles symbolizing hail). This suggests that the buffalo is not wholly of this world—but rather a vehicle of the connection with another world. The web-like forms on the buffalo's sides indicate its role as a portal to the sacred realm. (Berlo, p. 32) Individual visionary experience stands at the crossing of boundaries between the mundane world and the sacred, and the portals illustrated in the image provide the entrance to these transformational experiences.

According to the Lakota myth this wisdom was brought from the Buffalo Spirit by the White Buffalo Calf Woman, who brought the circle and the sacred pipe and taught its meaning. In the world of the American Indian, all life emanates from the sacred pipe, the sun and the buffalo. The Native American can connect with *Wakan Tanka*, the great mystery, only through the sacred pipe, the sun and the buffalo (*Ibid.* p. 37). Smoking the sacred pipe one enters into the mysterious world of *wakan*, difficult to translate, but best rendered in English as that which is not and can never be understood.

The smoke from the pipe allows the crossing of the directions and the

levels of the sacred hoop, uniting the directions with what is below and what is above. In this regard the Native Americans can always invoke the powers attributed to each of the directions by pointing their pipes in the four directions and then up toward the sky and down to the earth. Here, “space becomes a physical/spiritual reality” (Deloria, p. 86) and has the power to center the Indian.

A sense of the cosmic center within and without enters the Indian’s awareness as opposing energies from the different directions interact, and images rise up directly from the unconscious, inspiring and enlarging consciousness. Incorporating the four directions, the sacred pipe now contains and integrates the whole universe. “When it is lighted, life and breath are invested in the universe, and when it is smoked, the universe passes through one’s own body and is sent back to *Wakan Tanka*.” (Powers, 1977 p. 180) This provides for the Indian



Figure 9: Pipe Bowl, Lakota, Northern Plains, ca. 1880, Pipestone (catlinite); 9 5/8 x 5 1/8; *Iktomi, the trickster*, (Hansen, 35)

an extremely intimate sense of what exists beyond his senses and provides him with access to it. Lakota holy man, Thomas Tyon, said, “The pipe is their heart; all hold firmly to it.” (Quoted in Walker, p. 149)



Figure 10: *Black Elk Leaving to Visit the Six Grandfathers, Standing Bear, date unknown, but drawn around the publication of the first addition of Niehardt's book, *Black Elk Speaks*, (1932) (Niehardt, figure 5)*

The American Indian inhabits these two worlds simultaneously. In art the American Indian attempts to map out, to define time and space as conceptualized in the sacred hoop; in this sense his art, and his sense of *Wakan Tanka* are inseparable. His art has the same quality that he assigns to religion—a *mysterium*. (Powers, 1987, p. 86) In this drawing by Black Hawk (fig. 10), Black Elk the famous Lakota medicine man is shown making a visit to the land of the ancestors. This is a visit made daily by the Plains Indian, through prayer, dance and music. There are many examples of the sacred music used to induce the trance that enables the spirit to travel between these two worlds. It is the particular tonal quality of the sound that aids the journey; it appears to penetrate

the body. ([Click here](#) to hear this unique sound.)



Figure 11: *Black Elk Living in Fear of the Thunder Beings, Standing Bear, (Niehardt, figure 14)*

Having successively integrated the sacred and mundane world, Black Elk is drawn standing in the middle of the hoop of the nation. Thunder Beings are shown on the left depicted here as monstrous horses behind him. Their energy pictured as dangerous electrical spikes approaches him from the rear. Ultimately this energy is transformed by Black Elk's devotion and prayer into a life-giving form, which brings fertility to the hoop—the circle of tipis. Healthy green growth is shown sprouting between each and every tipi. This energy is potentially

available to all through a proper relationship with these powerful beings. The traditional Native American lives in this space; the experience of ritual in everyday life is not symbolic but is an immediate event; the Thunder Beings are felt as directly affecting the fertility of the earth.



Figure 12: *The Wanekia Under the Holy Tree, Standing Bear (Niehardt, figure 26)*

The *Wanekia*—the one who creates life—is pictured as one with the Holy Tree (the *axis mundi*) and the buffalo. Each aspect is depicted as morphing, one into the other. Black Elk is shown on his knees with raised hands.

The drawing depicts a circular village in the other world and represents both the fluidity and the transformational aspect of the connection between men, the buffalo and the sacred tree. The drawing indicates the connection between

the spirit world and the world of the living—and the transformational potential of the mixing of the different realms of power. Connected through prayer to the axis, the tree lives and grows within the individual Indian's psyche, allowing him to exist nourished by the earth and connected to the heavens—the transpersonal.

The Indian coexists within a creative process, one that exists as an internal and organic part of him—unlike the white American for whom this process is most often split off and for whom this creative source exists mainly in the unconscious. For the Indian the realms of the Grandfathers-- the heavens, and of the Grandmothers-- the earth, infiltrate and penetrate, holding him in their numinous grip.



Figure 13: *Dream or Vision of himself Changed to a Destroyer and Riding a Buffalo Eagle, Black Hawks rendition of a spirit being, c. 1880 (Berlo, 29)*

This is a startling picture by the artist Black Hawk entitled, *Dream or Vision of Myself Changed to a Destroyer and Riding a Buffalo Eagle*. Through

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the title Black Hawk conveys his experience of the vision quest and that receiving the vision involves one in an extraordinary event. In this drawing he attempts to describe the internal experience and the transformational nature of the vision quest. He depicts himself as captured by the vision; while in its possession the sacred world penetrates deeply into his being. He shows the power of that penetration as startling terror, electrical intensity and powerful illumination. The picture gives the impression that Black Hawk has ridden into and through an electrified rainbow, and as he passed that boundary, he has been shot through with the enormous power of an electrical storm.

The Native American lives in a world in which the visible world is always alluding to the invisible world of which it is a manifestation. The Indian lives within this world, always on the edge of numinous transformations. This process often harnesses the Indian's ego for its purpose of overstepping the boundaries of current understanding, searching for symbols as an intimation of meaning beyond the level of present comprehension. This process is shown clearly in the following drawing.



Figure 14: *The Taimay Power and the Sundance Lodge, Wohaw, Kiowa (1876) (Berlo, ed., 69)*

This Wohaw drawing pictures the power of a transformational vision, one, which is both personally transformative and consequently illuminating to his culture as a whole. The vision appears in the guise of a Thunderbird; it is asked to protect the Sun Dance, carried on to initiate the young warriors to the sacred. It is the ceremony conducted each year to ensure the continuation of the Lakota as a people and to renew their connection with the Grandfathers and Grandmothers. The drawing depicts the physical Sun Dance ritual permeated by the trans-human. Profane time is broken into and illuminated through a visionary moment. (Poitras, p. 69) ([Click here](#) to hear the music accompanying this vision.)

It appears that the American Indian embedded in his culture is able to transmute the intoxication of his visions into a conscious symbol utilized to

create new cultural forms—new images, which help stabilize his personal life and integrate the culture. From the images as presented in Native American art, one can see that there is a symbolic consciousness at work here with a highly developed relationship between the American Indian's connection with nature, his connection with his visionary consciousness (spirit) and his consciousness.

As translated into his art, we can dispel once and for all Jung's early misunderstanding of the Native American psyche following the formulation by Lucien Levy-Bruhl as *participation mystique* "wherein the subject cannot clearly distinguish itself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship which amounts to partial identity." (Quoted in J. Bernstein's Introduction in Deloria, *xiii* [CW 6§ 781]). Instead it appears we have a symbolic consciousness at work that can tolerate and embody the penetration of the awesome; it is a symbolic consciousness that can hold the full-bodied affective experience in a sensate intimacy and transform it into an image that captures qualities of the "unknowable." This image can penetrate and transform the individual and also influence the culture as a whole.

For the Plains Indian this ability to embody, or in spirit in matter the "great mysterious" results in something more than having a "strictly symbolic encounter." It results in being able to successfully call it to "show itself physically" and to "produce actions in the material world." For the Plains Indians energy has

a visible and invisible form. The potential to transform visible energy into invisible energy and the reverse, is called *tun*. The *tun* of every invisible aspect is its visible aspect. (Powers, p. 52)

It is through the individual Indian existing within the magic circle—within the sacred hoop, connected to the absolute, that his vision quest and individuation process occurs; it is through this process of individuation that the culture has access to a creative process of understanding. The individuation creates the space for new images, which enlarge the consciousness of the entire tribe. Thus, the American Indian exists individually, in his tipi, at war, in love, in collective ceremonial functions and he exists simultaneously within the same transformational space determined by the principles of the sacred hoop. The hoop focuses time as a purely spatial configuration reflecting images of remembrance (presence) and forgetting (absence) as a crossroads where the self is constantly re-represented.

Although certain individuals have exceptional receptivity to visionary experience, the vision quest is at the core of life of the Indian and his community. All are expected to make a quest at puberty and whenever necessary. The vision quest called *hanbleceya*, means crying for a vision (Powers, 1977 p. 91) and is the central means for the eventual sharing of received vision and power with the larger community. The visions change and transform not only the culture, but

also the sacred language. For the Lakota, sacred language is not static—it changes readily in relationship to each new enlarging vision. (Powers, 1986, p. 5)



Figure 15: *Camp Circle From Hill, 1909, photographed by Walter McClintock (Graph, 119)*

The next hoop, embedded in the feminine world of concentric circles is the land itself. On the prairie one sees a continuous unbroken horizon and is surrounded equally on all sides—one feels surrounded by, and contained within a flat circle. The sky is the boundary of this circular vision. Sky marks the end of the earthly world and marks the beginning of the super-natural world and as such is the surround that evokes a sense of ultimate safety; it signifies the Native American's sense of his enclosure by the power of the *Mysterium*.

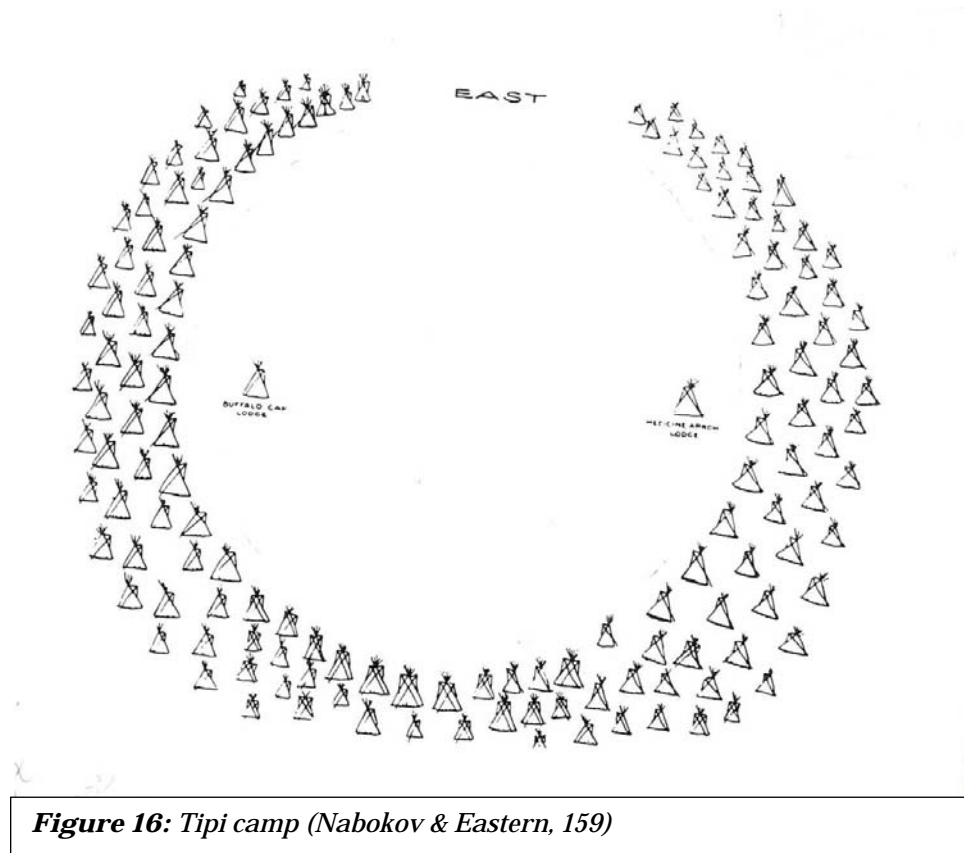


Figure 16: *Tipi camp (Nabokov & Eastern, 159)*

The experience of living within a circular container is reiterated in a more human and intimate fashion by the circular form of the tipi encampment. Its containing and holding form provides “a welcome sense of enclosure on the broad-reaching prairie.” (A. Hungrywolf, p. 227, quoted in Oldershaw, p. 44) It is this three- layered embrace of rows of tipis that is the visible and experienced aspect of the sacred hoop of the tribe and it reflects the sensed embrace of the largest and most cosmic form of the hoop symbolized by the sky.

The camp circle brings the sacred down to the human level where it palpably expresses security, safety and defines social unity and solidarity. Symbolically and emotionally everything within the camp (although its

boundaries during most of the year are in flux) belongs to the tribe. Outside of this sacred and symbolic holding environment are the enemies, the inconsistencies of nature, the evil spirits and the white man. The American Indian has drawn a permanent magic circle around the world that he can see; inside the circle all is safe, knowable, and auspicious. The camp circle is experienced as *cangleska wakan*, the sacred hoop and as the Indian holds that intimate circle in his vision, it evokes all the holding power of the sacred.

(Powers, 1977 p. 41)



Figure 17: Buffalo Track Tipi of Poor Buffalo. This tipi was owned by a distinguished Kiowa military and ceremonial leader, Poor Buffalo (1833-1898), who also made this model of the tipi in 1892. The green lines are buffalo tracks and give this tipi its name. (Ewers, 24)

On the most intimate and personal level (Oldershaw, p. 44) mirroring this embrace is the circular form of the tipi, itself. It is a form that every tipi follows as it provides for a linking and bridging to the sacred hoop, for the culture as a whole. The floor of the tipi is the earth, the walls, the sky, and the poles are the

trails that lead to the spirit world. The tipi on the feeling level is the palpable link between man and the great mystery. (Laubin, p. 108)

The tipi is highly regarded as a sacred object—it represents the most intimate and personal connection with the hoop. However “the tipis with painted exteriors possess even greater symbolic significance as they indicate a particular tipi was the point of convergence for especially potent spiritual powers.” (Oldershaw, p. 44) The painted tipi represents the results of the males’ fasting and vision quests and culminates in the painting of images that bring timeless and sacred wisdom. Unlike most sacred art, each is unconventional and surprising, as it emerges from a culture that values private individual sacred visions.



Figure 18: *Porcupine Picture Tipi of Black Cap. Wooden Lance and his wife, son of Black Cap's daughter made this tipi model. This tipi was said to have originated with Tumor or Swelling Inside, whose son Black Cap was a prominent Kiowa chief as early as 1830. As depicted on the cover, the porcupine family was a large one, and the owners of this tipi had larger families and none of their members died of consumption. (Ewers, 21)*



Figure 19: *Moon Tipi of Daveko. Daveko was a medicine man. His name is difficult to translate but refers to a person who is unique but well known. It is translated as “that one”. The Moon Tipi gives the owner the power of not falling down even in the worst symbolic or literal storm. (Ewers, 44)*

This sacred art included here and the visions that provided access to it have occurred at a particular time. These images were made at a time when Native American culture was under assault, and the parameters of the American Indian’s world were deeply shaken. They reveal a painful view into this devastating historical time. We are privileged to know something of the individuals who had the courage to experience the aggressive destruction of their culture and at the same time to find a way to transform their pain and sense of disintegration. They did so by seeking a vision and transforming it into art. These images reveal the painful situation and how the vision enabled the culture to sustain itself in the face of the assault.

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The images given in these visions are a magnificent compilation of the painfully felt experience of the American Indian. They are infiltrated, however by an aspect of spirit which is particularly available to the Native American due to the fluidity of his connection with nature and with his unconscious. Spirit here adds a viewpoint, a new attitude that transforms the devastating nature of the original experience. The original affect is widened to include something that provides vision into future potentials. Each image reveals both the despair and a slightly new way to reflect upon the experience. The original experience is compensated with an aspect that resides in the unconscious, in the archetypal, in the sacred realm of the ancestors—a realm particularly available to the Indian.

The archetypal brings a poetry, mystery and numinosity to the image, which is intensified by the song and dance that comes with the vision and is always embodied in it as it is presented to the individual seeker. The vision is always a multi-sensory experience—it is composed of the visual, the narrative, and the music—the bodily held sense of rhythm and sound. Thus, the vision is never a figment of the mind, but rather a palpable and bodily experience of the image's spiritual essence.



Figure 20: *Little Bluff's Tipi with Battle Pictures. This is the best known and most admired tipi among James Mooney's Indian informants. A son of Little Bluff II, known as Charley Ohettoint, made this model of the tipi. Little Bluff added the black stripes. Each stripe represents a war party he had led that brought back one or more enemy scalps without sustaining any loss to its own members. (Ewers, 16)*

In the above tipi cover, on the left, the force of the Indian is directly displayed against the force of the white soldiers—this is opposition, collision, danger, and is bordered by the sacred pipe, which gives entrance to the other side of the tipi cover: flowing stripes, bands of contrasting color. The tipi was originally painted with yellow stripes; the black stripes were added as battles were won and courageous acts were performed. The tipi given in this vision suggests that it is the warrior's courageous acts that strengthen the opposition to the white men with guns. In each dyad drawn on the left side of the tipi cover, it is the Indian that is having his way with the white soldier.



Figure 21: *Bear Tipi of Chief White Man. (1860) It was a wide spread belief among the Plains Indians in the power of the bear to cure illness. According to the origin myth, its first owner in his vision saw a great bear grasping a tipi in this way, and the bear told him, "Make this tipi and I shall always hold you up." (Ewers, 42)*

The Bear Tipi of Chief White Man, also known affectionately as simply “hugging,” shows the bear’s front and hind legs, exaggerated in both length and thinness, virtually encircling the entire tipi and appearing to hold it in an embrace. The elongated bear creates a circle and a closure in the broken wholeness of a fractured culture. It appears in a vision of a particular individual as a healing symbol for a culture experiencing its incapacity to remain intact.

Symbol of feminine wisdom and healing, the bear’s embrace gives entrance to the sacred feminine, the timeless dimension, the sacred hoop and its capacity to contain a culture under assault. The Indian viewing this feels both the cosmic and the material all at once: there is the intensity of the animal heat of the

enormous bear saturated with the feminine, and he is at the same time encircled in its cosmic embrace. The image sets in motion the desire for the emergence of the bear's protective and healing energy. The bear chant employs dance and song to usher in the emergence of its comforting spirit presence.

A bear dance similar to the Ute Bear Dance accompanied the original vision. Its rhythm and sound further awakens the earthy-cosmic presence of the bear—if one listens carefully to the music accompanying the bear dance, one can hear the sounds of the yearned-for emergence of the bear through the subtle “snorting” sounds that appear in between the pounding of the feet of the dancers. It is as if the dancer's feet pounding on the earth bring forth the palpable presence of the bear. The bear seems to take form from the sound and it appears



Figure 22: *Blackfoot Hugging Lodge (1930). This has a striking similarity to the Kiowa-Apache Bear Tipi above. The Blackfoot referred to this tipi as “Hugging.” (Goble, 80)*

to emerge from thin air. It exists for a brief evaporating moment as embodied spirit during the duration of the music. ([Click here](#) to hear the emerging bear sounds embedded in the music.)

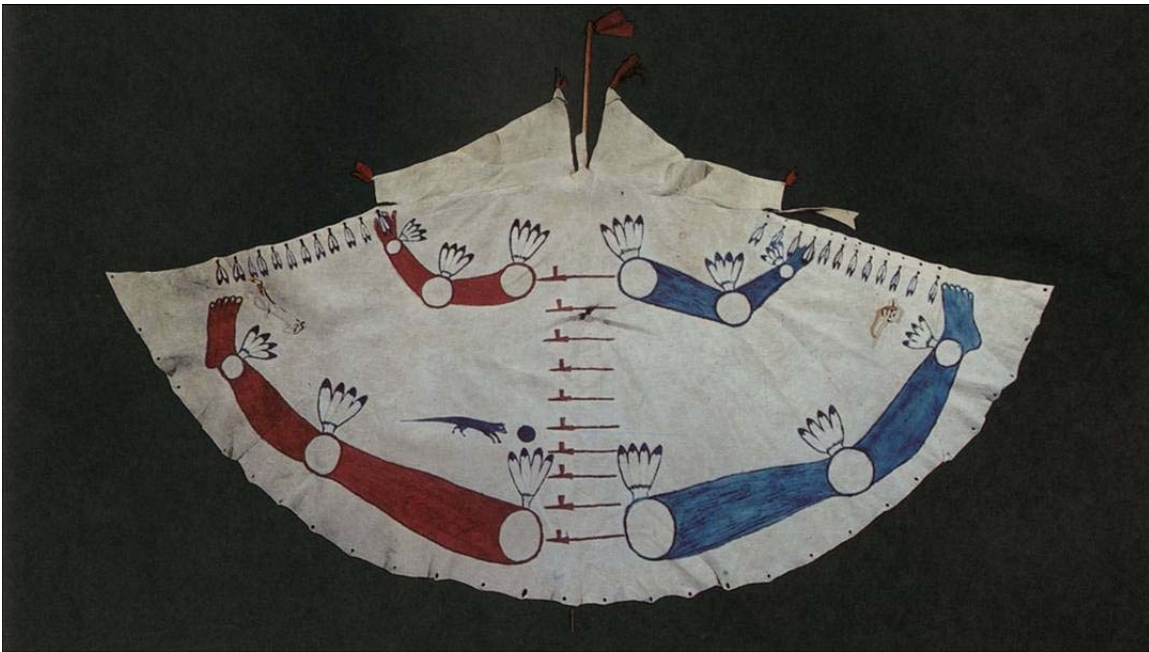


Figure 23: *Leg Picture Tipi of Fair-Haired Old Man. This tipi was re-made by a son of Brave Boy as late as 1890 (originally made before 1820) and considered one of the most unusual painted tipis. There is a pair of dismembered legs near the bottom. Outlined unpainted circles, atop each of which is bunch of blue feathers, mark the joints of each leg. Nearer the top of the tipi a pair of arms are treated in the same way. Both are shown hugging the tipi. Down the center of the back are the solid red tobacco pipes, one above the other with the bowls facing north. Above a segment of the leg and facing the center of the tipi are a blue otter and a blue circle. (Ewers, 29)*

This Kiowa-Apache Leg and Arm Tipi reflects in one image, as seen by one Indian who possessed the power to capture the felt dismemberment and rupture of a culture, and at the same time to hold the tension of the opposites—the potential return to a new form of wholeness. This new wholeness has not yet been dreamed.

The Indian viewing these images (Figures 23 and 24) experiences bodily the dismemberment, the separation of extremities from a central unifying core—the sense of a center that no longer holds. However, these dismembered limbs join at the tipi closing. What has been torn asunder is shown to reassemble. The containing center re-emerges.

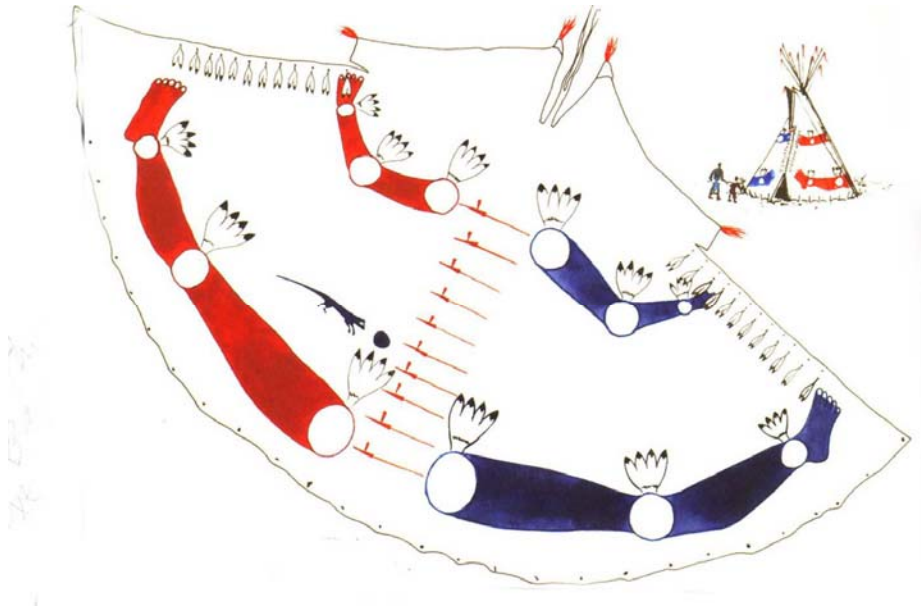


Figure 24: *Drawing of Leg Picture Tipi, Goble (Goble, 90)*

The image expresses the truth of the Native American's experience: the destruction of continuity and at the same time the potential for its re-emergence. It brings the Native American to the experience of agony, but the image binds the agony with hope. Circles and eagle feathers mark the joints and place of dismemberment of each—a reiteration of the fracture of the culture and its panacea, the healing circle of the sacred hoop and the transformational power of the feathers of the Thunderbird. The blue otter with a blue circle marks the portal to the plenitude of otter power and serves as a portal to the sacred world. Ten sacred pipes point towards the north and twelve eagle feathers on each side of the opening meet at the closure of the tipi, insuring the intervention of the sacred and the transformational in the culture's attempt at reconnection.

Through vision—in every sense of the word—the American Indian lives in the world as we know it, but at the same time in a privileged space where rules are abolished and time resonates with all-time—a place in which he comes in contact with the sacred world and is granted spirit helpers and knowledge beyond the profane. It appears that it is this visionary consciousness, or double vision of the mundane world enriched with the perspective of the sacred, that provides encircling levels of containment and enclosure which may be a fitting home for man in general—a fluid space of safety and creativity that provides both a sense of a center and the potential for expansion—individually and as a culture.

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Music Credits:

Music accompanying Figure 10: "Acoma Song of the Sky" sung by Ed Lee Natay in *Traditional Voices: Historic Recordings of Native American Music*, Various Artists. (1998)

Music accompanying Figure 14: "Prayer Chant" sung by Chief Jimmy Bruneau School Drummers in *Drum Dance Music of the Dogrib*. (1994)

Music accompanying Figure 21: "Ute Bear Dance Song" sung by Bert Redd in *Traditional Voices: Historic Recordings of Native American Music*, Various Artists. (1998)