

THE GHOST-DANCE RELIGION

By JAMES MOONEY

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1890 the author was preparing to go to Indian Territory, under the auspices of the Bureau of Ethnology, to continue researches among the Cherokee, when the Ghost dance began to attract attention, and permission was asked and received to investigate that subject also among the wilder tribes in the western part of the territory. Proceeding directly to the Cheyenne and Arapaho, it soon became evident that there was more in the Ghost dance than had been suspected, with the result that the investigation, to which it had been intended to devote only a few weeks, has extended over a period of more than three years, and might be continued indefinitely, as the dance still exists (in 1896) and is developing new features at every performance. The uprising among the Sioux in the meantime made necessary also the examination of a mass of documentary material in the files of the Indian Office and the War Department bearing on the outbreak, in addition to the study in the field of the strictly religious features of the dance.

The first visit of about four months (December, 1890–April, 1891) was made to the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Caddo, and Wichita, all living near together in the western part of what was then Indian Territory, but is now Oklahoma. These tribes were all more or less under the influence of the new religion. The principal study was made among the Arapaho, who were the most active propagators of the "Messiah" doctrine among the southern tribes and are especially friendly and cordial in disposition.

On returning to Washington, the author received a commission to make an ethnologic collection for the World's Columbian Exposition, and, selecting the Kiowa for that purpose as a representative prairie tribe, started out again almost immediately to the same field. This trip, lasting three months, gave further opportunity for study of the Ghost dance among the same tribes. After returning and attending to the labeling and arranging of the collection, a study was made of all documents bearing on the subject in possession of the Indian Office and