

The following extract is from a translation of a letter dated March 30, 1891, written in Sioux by an Indian at Pine Ridge to a friend at Rosebud agency:

And now I will tell another thing. Lately there is a man died and come to life again, and he say he has been to Indian nation of ghosts, and tells us dead Indian nation all coming home. The Indian ghost tell him come after his war bonnet. The Indian (not ghost Indian) gave him his war bonnet and he died again. (G. D., 8.)

The Sioux, like other tribes, believed that at the moment of the catastrophe the earth would tremble. According to one version the landslide was to be accompanied by a flood of water, which would flow into the mouths of the whites and cause them to choke with mud. Storms and whirlwinds were also to assist in their destruction. The Indians were to surmount the avalanche, probably in the manner described in speaking of the southern tribes, and on reaching the surface of the new earth would behold boundless prairies covered with long grass and filled with great herds of buffalo and other game. When the time was near at hand, they must assemble at certain places of rendezvous and prepare for the final abandonment of all earthly things by stripping off their clothing. In accordance with the general idea of a return to aboriginal habits, the believers, as far as possible, discarded white man's dress and utensils. Those who could procure buckskin—which is now very scarce in the Sioux country—resumed buckskin dress, while the dancers put on "ghost shirts" made of cloth, but cut and ornamented in Indian fashion. No metal of any kind was allowed in the dance, no knives, and not even the earrings or belts of imitation silver which form such an important part of prairie Indian costume. This was at variance with the custom among the Cheyenne and other southern tribes, where the women always wear in the dance their finest belts studded with large disks of German silver. The beads used so freely on moccasins and leggings seem to have been regarded as a substitute for the oldtime wampum and porcupine quill work, and were therefore not included in the prohibition. No weapon of any kind was allowed to be carried in the Ghost dance by any tribe, north or south, a fact which effectually disposes of the assertion that this was another variety of war dance. At certain of the Sioux dances, however, sacred arrows and a sacred bow, with other things, were tied on the tree in the center of the circle.

Valuable light in regard to the Sioux version of the doctrine is obtained from the sermon delivered at Red Leaf camp, on Pine Ridge reservation, October 31, 1890, by Short Bull, one of those who had been selected to visit the messiah, and who afterward became one of the prime leaders in the dance:

My friends and relations: I will soon start this thing in running order. I have told you that this would come to pass in two seasons, but since the whites are interfering so much, I will advance the time from what my father above told me to do, so the time will be shorter. Therefore you must not be afraid of anything. Some of my relations have no ears, so I will have them blown away.