

The Kiowa were predisposed to accept the doctrine of the Ghost dance. No tribe had made more desperate resistance to the encroachments of the whites upon their hunting grounds, and even after the failure of the last effort of the confederated tribes in 1874-75, the Kiowa were slow to accept the verdict of defeat. The result of this unsuccessful struggle was to put an end to the boundless freedom of the prairie, where they had roamed unquestioned from Dakota almost to central Mexico, and henceforth the tribes were confined within the narrow limits of reservations. Within five years the great southern buffalo herd was extinct and the Indians found themselves at once ~~prisoners and paupers~~. The change was so swift and terrible in its effects that they could not believe it real and final. It seemed to them like a dream of sorrow, a supernatural cloud of darkness to punish their derelictions, but which could be lifted from them by prayer and sacrifice. Their old men told of years when the buffalo was scarce or had gone a long way off, but never since the beginning of the world of a time when there was no buffalo. The buffalo still lived beyond their horizon or in caves under the earth, and with its return would come back prosperity and freedom. Before we wonder at their faith we must remember that the disappearance of these millions of buffalo in the space of a few years has no parallel in the annals of natural history.

In 1881 a young Kiowa named Da'tekañ, "Keeps-his-name-always," began to "make medicine" to bring back the buffalo. He set up a sacred tipi, in front of which he erected a pole with a buffalo skin at the top, and made for himself a priestly robe of red color, trimmed with rows of eagle feathers. Then standing in front of his tipi he called the people around him and told them that he had been commanded and empowered in a dream to bring back the buffalo, and if they observed strictly the prayers and ceremonies which he enjoined the great herds would once more cover the prairie. His hearers believed his words, promised strict obedience, and gave freely of their blankets and other property to reward his efforts in their behalf. Da'tekañ retired to his sacred tipi, where, in his feathered robe of office, he continued to prophecy and make buffalo medicine for a year, when he died without seeing the realization of his hopes. The excitement caused by his predictions came to the notice of the agent then in charge, who mentions it in his annual report, without understanding the cause. On a Kiowa calendar obtained by the author the event is recorded in a pictograph which represents the medicine-man in his tipi, with his scarlet robe over his shoulders and a buffalo beneath his feet (figure 84).

About six years later, in 1887, another prophet, named Pa'iñgya, "In the Middle," revived the prophecy, claiming to be heir to all the supernatural powers of his late predecessor. He amplified the doctrine by asserting, logically enough, that as the whites were responsible for the disappearance of the buffalo, the whites themselves would be destroyed by the gods when the time was at hand for the return of

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