

THE FOCUS OF INDIAN SHAKER HEALING<sup>1</sup>

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The worship service of the Indian Shaker Church, a syncretistic movement of some Indian tribes of the Pacific Northwest, has been fairly well described. Shaker healing in general and Shaker healing sessions, however, to my knowledge have not been concisely and revealingly described. In addition, no one has attempted to lay bare the significance and function of healing as a unique sacrament, nor to specify its place in the matrix of Shaker ceremonial and religious expression. The most important documents on this cult are Homer Barnett's book, Indian Shakers: a Messianic Cult of the Pacific Northwest (1957); Chapter 8 of Mooney's study of the Ghost Dance of 1890 (Mooney 1896); Waterman's study (1924); and a very important descriptive work of Gunther's (1949). Barnett (1957:244-255) contains a description of an actual worship service, and Gunther (1949: 48-52) a composite description of Shaker worship; but both represent the church in its heyday, the 1930's and 1940's, since which time the church has expanded and ebbed in California and elsewhere, and generally seen its best days.

This lack notwithstanding, Barnett and Gunther are in accord when they observe that healing holds a position of functional primacy in the church, to which worship is second.<sup>2</sup> Gunther states, furthermore (1949: 58), that "the most important function of the church from the Shaker's point of view is the 'help' they [sic!] can give." This paper will provide a reasonably complete ethnographic description of an actual healing session which occurred in a church of the California branch, but at a convention of the entirety of the Church organization. It will also provide an historical and sociological perspective with which to view developments

and trends in Church life and experience associated with this central ritual. The emphasis will be upon the mechanisms and functions of healing in the California branch, to some degree, as that is where the observations and the experience of the author are best. A very significant and integral part of this study is the Appendix, in which historical and social perspective on Shaker beliefs and practices are brought to the individual, personal level in a series of narratives (recorded in 1965-1966).

The following portion of this paper is devoted to a description of healing as it occurred at the last annual convention of the Indian Shaker Church at Smith River, California, August 12-14, 1966. The setting and action of the healing session can be treated somewhat as drama, with occasional interjections on my part (resembling stage directions) which are designed to give continuity and the greatest possible breadth of ethnographic interpretation. Following this, a discussion of customs and habits introduced in the course of pure description will be elaborated upon. The discussion will also be based upon earlier observations at similar sessions. Finally, the reader is invited to examine historical and testimonial narratives, in the Appendix, which shed light on much of the material introduced here.

## I. INTRODUCTION

North of Eureka, California almost to Alaska, the terrain, topography, economic and political geography of the urban Northwest are generally alike. In this region are to be found similar industries, occupations, and religious, social and cultural forms shared by a fairly homogenous European white nucleus. A surviving and struggling Indian population, with its reservation or rancheria subculture, also exists here. This subculture shares internal similarities throughout its geographic extent, but is also marked by its peculiarities. For example, a Tolowa woman claims

partial descent from a Makah chief--through her mother--and her husband is an Alaskan Indian. Ethnic distinctions at times almost defy description due to a pan-Indian nucleus of cultural community which is pervasive.

It was perhaps a major contribution of the reservation system which brought about the effective spread of late nineteenth century nativistic, vitalistic, and revivalistic movements. It seems indisputable that such was the case with Indian Shakerism, and that the reservation system has contributed heavily to what stability and continuity Shakerism has enjoyed. This has largely been possible due to a maintenance of a pan-Indian communication network, cutting across ethnic, socio-economic, and even religious boundaries and limitations.

Yearly at Smith River (a discontinued Tolowa rancheria some eighteen miles north of Crescent City, California), Indians hailing from as close as Crescent City (in Del Norte County) and Hoopa Valley (in Humboldt County) and as distant as British Columbia convene at a Church-wide assembly for curing and worship. This assemblage is rivalled in attendance and distinction only by a similar annual meeting at Mud Bay, Washington, seat of the mother church. These are held on the 4th of July or, less regularly, at Christmas in conjunction with their regular celebration of the holiday. Smith River and its small Shaker community of largely commuter-worshipful, Yurok and a few Hupa, and even fewer resident Tolowa, comprise the only congregation of Indian Shakers left in California. This congregation is swiftly dissolving as a result of internal factionalism and a dispute over title to what Shakers claim is Church property.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, California and especially Oregon, represent what is now the focus of Shaker activity and influence, or so it seems from the perspective of annual conventions such as that about to be described. Once the Washingtonians dictated policy and manners to the Californians, but now, as they make their annual appearance at Smith River, they are barely able to hold their heads above the flux in influence which has put these

two states ahead of the traditional seat of Church organization. Their only recourse is snobbish behavior, which has alienated many California members. They harp on tradition and feebly attempt to revive what might be called Slocum-ism, which, never vital, is all but dead among the southern churches and in the memories of even their oldest members.

The church at Smith River in which the ceremonial is conducted is one like so many Indian Shaker churches north, south and east.<sup>4</sup> It is located in the heart of the dissolved rancheria, approximately seven miles north of the town of Smith River, California, on Highway 101, and is seated on a sandstone promontory overlooking the Pacific. At sunset on a clear night, with the sky swiftly filling with a foggy haze, the sound of lapping waves pervasive and soporific, the sound of bells and feet stamping on the hardwood floor of the church build a truly electrifying and impressive atmosphere. Such a convention may draw anywhere from one hundred to two hundred fifty disciples from near and far, curious local onlookers, and unidentified observers.

The minister of the local church and the convention's enthusiastic host is Charlie Bighead, a Cherokee Seminole, likable and respected by all. With his wife Mary Lou (a Yurok of Weitchpec), and nearly a dozen children, he lives in a wood block parsonage-cabin adjoining the church property, which also consists of a mess hall, a few adjoining bunkhouses which feed and sleep visitors and a cemetery a few blocks distant. Bighead is a large, powerful, but gentle individual.<sup>5</sup>

Others who need to be introduced as dramatis personae include local church faithful, mostly Yurok women from the town of Johnson's or Johnson's Landing (an upriver settlement on the Klamath aboriginally known as wohtek<sup>w</sup>): Olive ("Ollie") James, Frances Roberts (wife of a former Bishop of the church), Frances Jaynes, Ida James, and Maggie Pilgrim. "Ollie" James' nephew, Jimmy, and his wife Josephine (who are all Yurok) are, in

addition to the present Bishop, Woodruff Hostler who is a Hupa, the only members hailing from Hoopa Valley at the present time. The Tolowa members are greatly in the minority, and the only active members of the rancheria are Mrs. Bill LaFountain and Frank Moorehead. A few Tolowa like Amelia Brown (age 98), who are marginal to church interests, attend local Shaker "doin's."

Shakers from other areas who need to be identified as active participants include Leonard Young, a self-styled "grand nephew" of John Slocum, who comes from Warm Springs, Oregon; also, John and Eleanor Logan of Siletz, Oregon (Eleanor is a Yurok by descent). Logan is an influential leader in the church-at-large, timid and shy. Young is an intelligent, outgoing, and progressive member of the Indian Shaker Church, an excellent speaker, and one who can claim perhaps as much influence in the entire church organization as can any other single individual. He has introduced the method of taperecording business and legal affairs meetings in the Church. These, then, are the personalities and the circumstances under which they are drawn together, sacrificing brief leisure hours from the mills, the woods, or other employment and sometimes a few days' pay to travel in some instances thousands of miles to unite with co-religionists in a most spectacular and moving religious experience.<sup>6</sup>

It has been suggested to me to say a few preliminary words about what Shakers are doing in their healing, and what they expect to accomplish.<sup>7</sup> Barnett (1957:176) has characterized the tenets of Shaker faith as follows:

First of all, submission to a benign, omnipotent will brings with it assurance and consolation, at least, and beyond that the opportunity for a regenerated life. In addition, it brings a compulsion to accept certain individual charges and obligations; it offers relief from physical distress; and it bestows supernatural insight into hidden forces and events.

The significance of "regeneration" is primary. The association of evil sickness in the Shaker's life, past and present, is strongly asserted.

The most central obligation of the individual Shaker is to participate in response to a "call for help" when it comes from a physically or spiritually distressed individual. There is little distinction between the two ailments; this subject will be discussed fully later. In a situation where conscience is no longer stimulated by aboriginal cultural restrictions, sickness, as it sometimes did in the old cultures, provokes a feeling of sinfulness and provides a means whereby evil or incorrect behavior can be assessed in the form of a spiritual interpretation.

## II. A SHAKER HEALING CEREMONY

The first bell has been rung, and John Logan announces that those who have testimonies to offer may give them at this time. It is a requirement of all members of the Shaker Church that they be in the meeting by at latest the second bell, so they are not specifically required to hear and give testimonies.

There is a pause in activity and whispered conversations, a marked and painful silence which belies hesitance to act. Then Wilbur Martin, an octogenarian of Siletz, Oregon, rises slowly and painfully to his feet (he suffers from arthritis), leaves his seat and advances to the prayer table<sup>8</sup> at the front-center of the church, then turns to the left, as is customary, and addresses the assembly. This reveals the common counterclockwise directional symbolism in much of North American Indian ceremonial. He sings a hymn in a faltering voice to which the others gathered add their voices:

There's only one way, and it's God's way,  
 There's only one way, and it's God's way,  
 There's only one way, and it's God's way--  
 To be saved in this world!

Then he offers his testimony:

TESTIMONY OF WILBUR MARTIN: I<sup>9</sup>

I remember back in the year 1926. I was working in the woods then, and I had an injury. I got gangreen, gangreen--you know what gangreen is. They told me I'd have to have that leg cut off, 'cause if they didn't get it there, it keep going up and up until it reach my heart, and I'd be dead.

I was on my way to Portland to have my leg cut off. It was at Siletz--a group of Shakers had come down from Washington, and were working there. Someone said to me, "Why don't you go down, let the Shakers heal you?" I said, "No! Those Shakers are just crazy people!"

But, anyway, I was there, and I went in to see what they were like. I was sitting way back there in the back row (points to the back of the church) so nobody could see me. But pretty soon a man came back and saw me and asked, "What is wrong with you?" I told him, "I have gangreen, and I'm on my way to Portland to have this leg cut off." He said to me then, "Won't you come up and let us pray for you." I didn't want to go--I was ashamed because a lot of my friends were sitting back there with me.

But finally I went, and the Shakers worked on me, and I thank my Lord: I was healed! The gangree was gone! I had told God I would do anything He said, if only He would heal me, and He did--praise the Lord!

They were ringing the bells, and a brother came up to me and rang them over me, and it seemed a voice came like right out of that bell: "Praise the Lord, I surrender now! Praise the Lord, I surrender now!" (spoken soto voce). I asked the Lord then what He wanted me to do, and he told me to teach the Gospel to the Indian people. I didn't want--I didn't know anything about preaching, but I was willing and the Lord led me.

Having finished his testimony, Martin turns to the left, faces the altar, crosses himself in Catholic fashion, recites the benediction ("In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen"--three times), and returns to his seat. There is an interim of several

minutes during which no one comes forward to speak. Mrs. Martin, who is sitting mid-right, with the women, looks uneasy, shifts in her seat several times, clears her throat and rises hesitantly, looks briefly at her husband (who nods slightly, reassuringly), and goes to the front of the church. She stands in an awkward posture which suggests nervousness, her hands clasped in front of her. She is a woman in her seventies, sickly, thin and gaunt of face. Her voice is weak and tiresome in its whining drawl. She is part white, and shows actually very little Indian "blood."

#### TESTIMONY OF ETHEL MARTIN

First of all, I thank my Lord tonight for saving me from the sins of the world. Then I thank Him for all His healings. Oh, I couldn't begin to name all the wonderful things He's done for me, but He knows, and I'm thanking Him tonight. You know, He provides for everything you got, and no matter what it is, the Lord knows and He will take care of you.

Last July I was terribly sick--didn't know what was the matter with me. I went to the doctor, and he told me "You're full of cancer, you can't live." Then I was full of sorrow, but I prayed to the Lord to heal me.

I've been healed twice in this very church, and--praise the Lord!--I'm here--standing here tonight before you. Praise the Lord! I thank my Lord for all he's done for me. Tonight I'm going to ask for help.

A few days ago, before we were to come down here, I told my husbands, I says "I just don't think I can make it. I'm just feeling so bad." I've been sick the last three days or so, and I just didn't see how I was going to get down here, but--praise the Lord!--I'm here tonight. But then I told my husband, "I'm going to go down there anyway, because I know He'll heal me." So I'm calling for help tonight and trusting in the Lord to heal my body, and I thank Him for all He's done for me.

Since no more testimonials appear to be forthcoming, Logan rises to



announce the ringing of the second bell, at which time the preliminary service will begin, led by Bishop Hostler. Hostler, who is seated on the northeast bench, facing the assembly (to the left of the prayer table as one faces it) rises slowly, arthritically, and shuffles over to the prayer table. He clears his throat, and after the amenities of worship (described for Wilbur Martin--turning, crossing, etc.), turns to face the assembly while leaning back against the table with his hands behind him for support. He sings a hymn ("Call upon your Saviour, and you will be healed!") which soon develops into the "hai-hai" refrain characteristic as a coda to nearly all Shaker hymns. The congregation joins with him. He himself gives a testimony of sorts which is more polemic directed against Shaker worldliness and a reaction to the paucity of testimonials offered that evening:

When we come here, to a gatherin', we go home changed. We're happy, and nothin' bothers us, and while we're gone, the Lord watches over what little things we have at home. But we got to get down deep in the Lord--we got to give ourselves wholly to Him. I remember when we used to go 'round--everybody had something--everybody had a testimony to give for his Lord, but no more, these days! You got your mind on things of this world. The Enemy is going to make it easy to forget the Lord's work. We got to get down deep in the Lord.

Logan announces that there is a patient to be healed, a man named Arthur with a crippled arm who is from Warm Springs. He will now ring the third bell so that the healing may begin. As floor manager he announces that Frances Roberts will lead the service, and he exits via a recently added second door at the left to ring the bell on the roof of the church.

Frances Roberts approaches the prayer table from the right, where she had been standing while Hostler sang. She makes the left-turn, crosses herself, picks up a bell and rings it three times, prays briefly and almost inaudibly, and asks for success in the healing that is to come and for the general well-being of the assembly. Still facing the altar she

breaks into a hymn:

Make all at one mind, and Jesus will help you,  
 Make all at one mind, and Jesus will help you,  
 Make all at one mind, and Jesus will help you,  
 Make all at one mind, and Jesus will help you!

which is repeated two or three times. When she and the congregation have ceased singing she again rings the bell and crosses herself while making the left-turn. Taking two candles which she has lit from one on the prayer table, she hands one to Ollie James (at her left as she faces us) and the other to Frances Jaynes (directly ahead of her). Mrs. Jaynes moves back behind the stools, which have now been set out on the church floor (see "Diagram A;" cf. also Gould and Furukawa 1964:66). Meanwhile, Charlie Bighead and John Logan have just entered via the main (west) entrance, and have picked up the patient, who has remained in a chair next to the stove (to the right of "x" in "Diagram A") throughout the service thus far. They carry him bodily to the front where he is placed, on his chair, in the midst of those who seek healing, opposite the crucifix. He is emaciated, stooped to barely four and one half feet tall, and probably in his sixties. At the same time, Ethel Martin and Ida James move from the women's bench (right) and seat themselves on healing stools. Later Maggie Pilgrim and Frances Jaynes will also move to stools.

Frances Roberts takes a third lighted candle, comes forward from the prayer table, and passes before and behind each stool (see "Diagram A"), whether occupied or not, making the counter-clockwise "left-turn" and the "brushing" technique of cleansing (to be discussed shortly). While going behind each stool, she makes the left-turn, and crosses herself as well (this is partially depicted in Gould and Furukawa 1964:67, fig. 3).

The men line up on the left, women on the right, as the "hai-hai" refrain is struck up again. Frances Roberts then returns to the prayer table. She takes up a handbell and repeated the amenities of beforehand, then announces that they will "go 'round three times" before they "go to

work for the Lord." She strikes up the "hai-hai" chant, and as each repeats the left-turn three times in his place, Frances Jaynes, who is now in the rear, commences to lead the women in a counter-clockwise string around the room, at the end of which the men catch up in their own line. The men ring bells, as do some women, and all stamp their feet and sing in 4/4 time. Depending upon the number of participants (the observers are not obligated to participate), circling the room three times may take up to five or six minutes. When they have "gone 'round three times," each assumes his or her former position and stance, stamping the feet in place and ringing bells at a reduced loudness. Again they make three left-turns in place, as the song slowly dies away.

After this, and transitional between this highly structured initiation and the actual healing, another song may be voiced and sung in unison, or vociferous praying may erupt--also in unison but each praying aloud in his own fashion and words--depending upon the ceremonial leader's whim. This is invariably ended by reciting the benediction three times, making the left-turn with each repetition. The curing is now in order.

It begins by Frances Roberts' taking the initiative and proceeding from one stool with its patient to the next, in the same direction as prior (when she was cleansing them), followed by Ollie James and Frances Jaynes.

### III. METHODS OF CURING

Three main techniques of the "laying on of hands" are practiced in the Indian Shaker Church, and all can be seen in operation in this session and others. I say "techniques" because few use but one style or method. Most utilize techniques, singly or in combination, according to the taste or inspiration of the moment. While the "Shake," supposed to signal a special inspiration, tends to encourage ad hoc styles in healing, by and

large Shaker healing techniques are stereotypic, and are of small inventory, as are the epithets which arise in testimonies.

#### BRUSHING

"Brushing" is a most common technique, and consists of two subtypes. One subtype is a fanning motion of both hands over the surface of the body at a short distance from it, and usually begins at the head or shoulder level and works downward, the healer bending over further and further to cover the patient's entirety. It differs from other techniques mainly in that no physical contact is made with the patient's body. A second subtype is a splashing of light from the candle, either with a plucking and throwing motion which intermittently punctuates the type of brushing described above, or by waving both hands (palms facing the patient) such that the hand with the candle (from the healer's point of view) goes counterclockwise, the other hand in the opposite direction. During this operation the healer stamps his feet in time to the current song. I will observe, however, that this technique is practiced mostly by women. I have seen, in three years observation, only one man using this technique. He was a Yakima, I believe.

#### RUBBING

"Rubbing" as a technique of Indian Shaker healing is somewhat more complicated. It may begin with a hand, inspired with "the Shake," coming to rest on a head, a shoulder or a limb, as the inspired one passes about the room, eyes closed and head often bowed. In cases where Divine inspiration is claimed, healer or patient (or both) will exclaim proudly that the hand came to rest first on the exact spot of affliction as its target. After a moment, as "the Shake" becomes stronger, the hand will move from its resting position and with the other hand will effect a rubbing, cleansing movement, with a firm (but not painful) and usually downward motion (as with fanning or "brushing"), the hands being pulled over the body with palms down, cupped, until the extremity of a limb is reached.

Then the evil or sickness is clenched dramatically in one or both fists and either cast heavenward in a sudden jerky release, or carefully conveyed by the healer to the prayer table and liberated over the candles, which are believed to have a holy, immunizing affect. The rubbing, like the pushing-and-pulling method (next to be discussed) involves bodily contact and usually a coverage of the patient's entire body.

#### PUSH-AND-PULL

This is the third technique of Shaker healing, and one considered by Shakers as healing par excellence, although it does not appear that they have a separate term for it, at least not one which I have been able to elicit. It is somewhat more difficult to describe than the other techniques just mentioned, but apparently no more difficult to effect. Although this technique is considered truly "going to work for the Lord," the popularity and excitement which it generates among the Shakers may be due to its dramatic aspects rather than to its effectiveness. About the suitability of this technique there is much disagreement. Only disagreement about such issues as the use of the Bible is more intense.<sup>10</sup>

Like rubbing, this technique usually utilizes the downward method of covering an anatomical surface. The motion is firm, more firm than rubbing, and methodic, directed toward an arm, a leg, or merely the waist. It may terminate in a rubbing technique which involves cupping the hands about the heel and dragging the sickness off over the toes. The sickness is liberated in generally the same fashion for all techniques, but the dramatic nature of this technique is most often demonstrated in the actual liberation or stérilization of the sickness. First, however, let us examine more closely how the sickness is located and released.

Usually the healer assumes a kneeling posture at the feet of his patient, in front of the stool. His line of attack may be (a) to grasp the patient by the back of the neck with both hands (see diagram), or (b) to grasp the back of the neck with one hand for support and gently (with

increasing vigour) pummel the chest and shoulders, or slap the arms, at times yanking at fleshy portions of the neck, shoulders, hips, and occasionally the stomach. If the first posture and grasp is utilized, both hands will rub, pummel and firmly pass down the patient's arms or chest to the lap and are then released. While most such work is initiated in front of the patient, eventually the healer will work around so that he is at the side or behind the patient, and may grasp him by the neck or shoulder (again, for support) and pummel his back with simulated Judō chops (or with the flat of the palm), most often rubbing outward from the small of the back toward the shoulder blades or down the spine toward the small of the back.

A third aspect of this technique may involve the participation of a second or even third healer on the one patient. On this occasion the technique displays a dramatic effect. Kneeling on one knee at the side of the stool, a healer will customarily place one hand on the stomach of the patient and the other in the small of the back. Once this position is assumed, the Shaker healer will usually do one of two things. He will continue to hold the patient's stomach and raise his right hand (when at the patient's left side) and rub down the back or spine in a firm manner, often rubbing in a circular motion or in a series of downward spiraling circles. When his hand reaches the seat of the stool, the healer repeats the motion. The second alternative is to hold on to both the stomach and back of the patient and shake violently, or push from side to side, sometimes toppling the patient from the stool. This feature is a point of contention in the California church, where the tendency is to be much less severe; and thus these members judge the Washingtonians' practice to be harsh and severe. Often acts which result in near-mauling or in people being thrown about and onto the floor are appraised as inspired of the Devil, or of evil, and not of the Lord.

### TRANSFERENCE

Transference of sickness or evil to the altar where it is effectively immunized against varies in technique as well. Those who use the "brushing" technique of healing or cleansing may return to the prayer table periodically and cleanse their hands on the candles, clap three times, say a prayer perhaps, ring a bell, and return to their work after making a left-turn. And those who are rubbing may periodically clap their hands.<sup>12</sup> It regenerates power and is anathema to the sickness or evil residing in the patient nearby.

This is known as "throwing away" the cause of distress, and the method of release may vary according to the severity of the healing technique employed and the atmosphere. Pushers-and-pullers will cluster about a star patient and work on him furiously until one begins to make away with what he feels is the captured sickness. This often precipitates a grappling designed to be a group effort, which appears to some as histrionics, to others as aggression. Often, with their limbs entwined, the Shaker healers are miraculously able to make their way to the altar without injuring one another, the illness cupped in God knows whose hands. This is as exhausting and dramatic an undertaking as the healing itself. Many California members misunderstand this phenomenon, attributing aggression to it and personal will, and interpret it as fighting over claims to success. There is a grain of truth in this. It should be emphasized that in recalling specific cases of curing during interviews, Shakers are disinclined to lay credit at the feet of individuals. Curing is clearly, almost doctrinally, a group effort.

Still, the act of healing is all-important, and it is here that the dramatic art of Indian Shaker healing is due for functional analysis. It is on the floor that healers prove themselves and, if they are inclined, must prove their mettle in acts which approach an aesthetic performance. Accordingly, it is common that those who are said to be expert in healing

display the most dramatic behavior and a flurry of activity on the floor.

Two or even three (and I have seen as many as four or five attempt it) may join in attempting to bring the rapacious illness under control and convey it to the prayer table in order to loose it over the candles' healing power.

On occasion, the healer himself will fall faint at the side of the patient, collapsing on the floor. This is usually interpreted as the healer's accidentally consuming or being consumed by the sickness which has turned on him. Rather than as the result of exhaustion, this interpretation is confirmed when the healer appears to evince a form of madness, rolling about, not infrequently screaming, with the illness clenched firmly in the outstretched fist, lapsing finally into an immobility suggesting a deep sleep. Seeing this sign, others may approach him and come to his aid, either by working on him in like manner or attempting to revive him. They may also attempt to open his fist in which he has taken possession of a sickness, and to which he has now fallen prey. Others may attempt to bring him up and walk him around, or take him to the prayer table to revive him spiritually, ringing bells over him, splashing the candles' light and warmth on him, in unison and with vociferous prayer.

All fashions of transference agree in basic methodology. Whether into the air or over the prayer table, the sickness is released with the arms raised in a sudden jerking motion which opens the closed fist(s). Almost invariably the hands are clapped three times, and the healer makes the left-turn, crosses himself, and repeats the whole process indefinitely.

The functional nature of this aspect of healing should be clarified. At the prayer table, which is the focus of the church, in a conspicuous and dramatic jerk of the hands uplifted over the patient, the evil is plainly rid of, for all to see. This display combats any suspicion that the healer, like an "Indian Doctor," may be concealing something, or that



sleight-of-hand tricks are being utilized, or that the sickness is being spirited away for future use. The latter two practices were not uncommon in shamanism in aboriginal western North America (cf. Kroeber in his Handbook, throughout; also pp. 36-37). Notably, when a healing occurs, there is no diagnosis called for, nor any regurgitation and subsequent display of the cause of illness. This is in contrast to old shamanistic practices, Yurok in particular. Correspondingly, there is no personal responsibility nor credit for the cure or loss of a patient. In California, at least four or five of the women attempted to become Indian doctors when they were young (Yurok doctors were invariably women), but failed somewhere along the line in their training. Hence, for these women especially, Shaker healing has a great attraction. It is something all may participate in; it requires no secret "magic" or hidden gimmicks for regurgitation; and it has no association with payment, coming from Divine inspiration. Past failures at "pagan" forms thus lose personal significance.

One further note. During this particular session an illness was being conveyed to the prayer table, two or three persons were grappling for it at once, and there was some confusion which resulted in a bell falling to the floor. The result was most curious. These people apparently suspected that the sickness had removed to the bell in a move at escape. Rather than pick it up, Charlie Bighead put both feet around it (it lay handle up), grasped it with his feet, and jumped with it in a series of boisterous hops over to where the patient sat. With the help of several others, who joined him in getting down on their hands and knees and cautiously peering at it, he turned it over in a painfully slow and cautious motion. They looked at the upturned bell in a puzzled manner for a few seconds, and, apparently concluding that the evil had escaped the bell or that their suspicion had been incorrect, they got up, returned to their work, and ignored it. After some time the bell was casually picked up and returned to the prayer table from which it had fallen.

#### IV. ORGANIZATION

Attendance at Shaker services is not denied to visitors, but they are expected to sit on a few rows of benches against the entrance wall (west), on either side of the door. Those seated on the men's benches (left) or on the women's (right) or at the front, where there are occasionally benches if attendance is heavy, are expected to participate.

From the moment the ceremonial leader initiates the healing service by beginning to make her rounds, the service has little in the way of visible organization. An individualistic church which emphasises individual inspiration and revelation, The Indian Shaker Church seems to have little in the way of a well-ordered and structured service. Yet, when one has once witnessed several such services, he comes to the conclusion that there is probably more structure than meets the eye. There is a fairly predictable manner in which the service is carried out, with highly stylized and stereotypic ritual behavior, as has already been suggested in the analysis of healing and transference techniques. One gets the distinct impression that the regular church or worship service--with its order of three bells, etc.--is about the limit of ordering which these Indians find tolerable. A curing session, on the contrary, which they find exciting and important, is an occasion of marked spiritual liberation and personal gratification. While Shaker behavior can be analyzed almost to the point of prediction of what may generally transpire in such a service, there is no way of telling what sort of external stimuli may be brought to the scene. A wandering drunk finds himself in their astonishing midst, someone appears to go berserk and run about in the room. Such colorful sidelights add to the general drama.

At the beginning of the session the two or three women who have been given candles by the leader circulate with her from patient to patient in a rather routine manner. As more and more people come forward to the altar

to generate power into themselves, to take up bells or light candles to assist in the healing, the floor becomes almost impossibly congested, and regularity ceases. There is some similarity in the Shaker curing service to the old ritual pattern in northwestern California of filling a family house with heated dancers, with smoke intensifying the atmosphere. However, there is not with the Shakers the advantage which there was in the Brush Dance: the advantage of being able to remove the roof planks, which immeasurably improved the situation!

As the session continues the entire church floor is swarming with healers, bell ringers, and individually motivated wanderers endeavoring to "get up the Shake." Women who are not curing or ringing bells may stand in place in front of the women's benches and sway gently or stamp one or both of their feet, doing this conspicuously more delicately than the men. This stamping is known as dancing. Men too tired or uninspired to ring bells or dance sit on the sidelines, too, stamping one foot, then the other.

As the rhythm of the singing, dancing, and ringing intensifies, some Shakers are inspired to wander about the room, generally slowly, sometimes in a fast walk, continuously turning or whirling about, reeling, almost falling, "under the Power." Their eyes remain closed but for the slightest crack which the light of their candles betrays. This allows most to navigate fairly accurately while giving the impression of clairvoyance. They shout "Praise the Lord!" or mutter over and over a rhetorical affirmative "Yes, Lord, Yes!" directed seemingly at nothing or perhaps at the prayer of one nearby. Some mumble or pray inaudibly, while others are given to glossolalia. On occasions when I have heard it, glossolalia does not seem to represent any known language. It is a stacatto sequence of CV syllables, with the vowels numbering two or three and with a few alternating consonants: "Ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-na-na-na-ne-ne-na-ka-ka-de-na. . . ." This utterance sounds very impressive, varying in pitch as the utterer be-

comes absorbed in its auto-hypnotic effect and breaks into sobbing or wailing.

Some of the wanderers appear catatonic as they go about with their eyes closed, or with their heads up and staring blankly ahead. Almost always such trances are broken by the wanderer's running into somebody. This is embarrassing, as it suggests that the wanderer cannot navigate properly with the shut-eye method, that his guiding spirit is not very accurate, or that he is distracted due to exhaustion. A few appear to have the power to navigate in this fashion with their eyes firmly closed. Ollie James is one of these. She is a talented dancer, and her face in the candle light is stunningly attractive: her features bronze and well molded, framed by long, iron gray hair which falls over her shoulders to waist length. As she moves about, stamping first one foot then the other in a vigorous, well measured 4/4 beat, she sways gently from side to side, and drives her feet rigidly onto the floor in a most dramatic fashion, all of which lend her a handsome appearance.

Inevitably the pace of bells, voices, and feet slackens. Any individual may then take it upon himself to revive the participation of all by interjecting a new tune. This involves a few seconds' stamping of one foot, then both, which drowns out everything else. At the same time, this innovator must sing his or her new song, or variation, at the top of his lungs in order to dominate the fading din of other voices. Three distinct versions of the "hai-hai" chant appear to be used by Shakers:

hai-ha'i-hai-hai, or  
 hoi-ho'i-hoi-hoi, or  
 hali-hali-hai-hai!

The third is a favorite of Shakers from Siletz, Oregon. The beat is always 4/4 time to the rhythm of dancing feet, bells chiming in.

Dancing comprises two types, one with two subtypes. Each foot stamps either one count, feet alternating, or two counts, feet alternating. The

second type has special features, however. In all cases the entire foot is used to strike the floor, but a subtype of the second type involves alternating heel and toe, of first one then the other foot, so that four counts are measured: heel-toe/heel-toe. This subtype can be utilized while sitting on a bench, as it is not necessary to lift the entire foot. Alternatives may be employed: heel-toe/toe-heel. The other subtype of the second type involves two counts per foot: right-right/left-left. It is certain that the first type, with one count per footfall, becomes the most dramatic--and noisy.

The hymnology of the Indian Shaker Church deserves special study. I have collected some of this material on tape for analysis. The songs vary in detail, are rarely complex in nature, and usually consist of two or three short and simple verses, which are repeated a number of times, and which generally develop into the "hai-hai" refrain as a coda. These songs come to Shakers in dreams or waking moments, or are ad hoc inspirations during daytime activities.

The receiving of a song, which in Shaker parlance is a "gift" (like that of preaching or healing, etc.), is an extremely significant event in a Shaker's life. He must cease whatever he may be engaged in at the moment to reflect upon the words or tune that come to him, and perhaps to write them down. The manner in which a song is introduced to a body of the Church for healing purposes is fairly routine. It is announced and instruction is given ahead of time, during a pre-curing testimony or during a worship service preceeding a healing service. The composer sings it and the church repeats it a few times so that the song will be familiar when elicited later. The song must be sung exactly as instructed.

Leonard Young of Warm Springs recalled a cure the year before when he was in Smith River. He came in on crutches during the testimonial and instructed the Shakers assembled to sing the song he had been given--exactly--or it would not be effective in curing him. He claims that on the first circuit "going 'round'" he

could barely walk; on the second, he could put his weight on the lame leg; and on the third circuit of the church, as they continued to sing his song, he was able to stamp about with all the rest. He had left his crutches at the back of the room as an act of faith. He adamantly attributes his cure to the faithful duplication of his song by his fellow Shakers.

The session described above was a typical healing session. It began on Friday evening, August 12 at about 8:30 p.m. Sessions may continue indefinitely into the small hours of the night. At about 1:15 a.m. the following morning in the session described, Frances Roberts glanced at Charlie Bighead with a look of pained resignation. It was clear that the session would soon end as the patient from Warm Springs was still unimproved. All present were obviously exhausted. The session continued for fifteen to twenty more minutes, but the atmosphere was choked with heat and perspiration, and the participants showed definite signs of exhaustion. Despite this decline in fervor there was no yielding to defeat. This was but the first evening, the "slow" night, and one could anticipate with assurance that Saturday night would be exciting.

This particular evening of curing ended like all do. The Shakers "go 'round three times" again and shake hands in the Shaker manner, the right hand raised, palms touching as each crosses himself with the left hand. Then the assembly gradually breaks up as members pack their sleepy children off to bed or steal out into the cool darkness for parting conversation in the unlighted parking area between the church itself and the beach.

The session of the following evening was repeated in characteristic fashion, diverging in slight detail from the first evening. The only distinction was that it was the second, usually the final, evening of such activity. Thus an aura of expectation and excitement marked it as somewhat more crucial. The meeting lasted until about 3:15 a.m., Sunday, August 14. At this time, although the activity and fervor had lulled several times, the room seemed on the verge of exploding with the intense ac-

tivity of bell-ringing, dancing, and vociferous and high-pitched singing. Then Bighead, in an unanticipated move, suddenly swept the man from Warm Springs (who had been placed on a bed this evening) into his powerful arms, jumped around in a boisterous manner, gyrated gradually to the prayer table and placed the patient on it. The patient, frightened out of his wits, yelled a little and grasped helplessly at the crucifix. He nearly succeeded in toppling the whole affair, candles and all, onto the floor. This only provoked louder singing, dancing and ringing, as participants realized that their "help" must match the excitement of the moment. This scene climaxed the healing that night.

On the following day, Sunday, at the customary Sunday afternoon dinner in the "mess hall," it was announced that the afflicted man, Arthur, could now open and close his hand, which was a credit to their mass effort and was deemed a sufficient cure to give them self-satisfaction. The man is almost totally crippled.

## V. THE FOCUS OF INDIAN SHAKER HEALING

### SOUL LOSS

The significance and prevalence of the concept of "soul loss" among the northern Shakers as compared to the southern Shakers, to whom it is not meaningful, was born out in an event which occurred on Sunday afternoon, August 14.

During a quasi-healing service which took place after Sunday dinner in the "mess hall," a woman kicking and screaming, crying uncontrollably was brought forward to the end of the table near the door (which faces the beach), where an altar is located. John Logan and Harris Teio worked on her.

Suddenly Teio seemed to grasp at something appearing to hover in the air, and capturing it in his fist, passed it carefully to Logan, who was the principal in

this matter, placing it firmly in his hands. This Logan held over the candles, warmed his hands, and returned to the woman who was by this time somewhat calmer. Both of the men continued to work on her, their hands fluttering and shaking considerably. While at this little altar, Logan was heard to moan, "Her poor soul has gone out of her!"

When she had been pacified, the woman--who hailed from Washington--gave her testimony in a tearful, sobbing, pitiful delivery. Her husband had died the year before, still a young man, and she was so distraught that she no longer wished to live. But she said that she would go back with her people, try to pull through her misery, and live a Christian life, putting her sorrow behind her.

When he was subsequently asked his opinion of the event, Bighead negated the "soul loss" interpretation. A little embarrassed, he passed it off as a poor choice of words. "Well, some of the Indians' English is pretty primitive, and they don't use the right words. They say her soul left her, now they mean her spirit went--that is, the spirit to live has left her, that's all. And they've got to cleanse it and place it back in her." Nonetheless, in a testimony which Logan gave at the same time, he mentioned an occasion earlier in his Shaker experience when a fellow member had "lost his soul," had been consumed in a rigor mortis-like torment, and would not be stilled until healed. Thus Bighead holds the prevalent California attitude, in which the 'soul loss' concept has no part.

#### SICKNESS AND EVIL

Practices and beliefs prevalent in the Indian Shaker Church display a curious amalgamation of aboriginal and newly stimulated innovations of a local nature, as well as idiosyncratic convictions and methods. We have seen that northern Shakers adhere to a conviction that "soul loss" is one explanation of anxiety and spiritual pathology. Eell's letter to Mooney (Mooney 1896:749) describing generalities of Shakerism makes this clear:



In another point also this resembles very closely their old religion. For a long time before a person is taken sick they foretell that his spirit is gone to heaven and profess to be able to bring it back and restore it to him, so that he will not die as soon as he otherwise would. This was also a part of the old tomahnous belief.

As Gould and Furukawa have remarked (1964:64), "were the Shakers entirely dependent on any one Indian tradition to express their attitudes the whole enterprise would soon collapse, since no one native tradition has many members left to sustain it." They were speaking of the Smith River congregation. Still, there is probably very good reason why a unanimity of sorts exists in this case. The church is dominated by the Yurok, and if the aboriginal Tolowa and Hupa had the identical conception of evil associated with sickness as an expression of social pathology (cf. Valory Ms.), then the connection of these two elements is no accident; is a fundamental interpretation common to most of the members in this region. The church at Smith River is, moreover, the only one left in the state.

A correlation exists between the intensity of the "help"--dancing, singing, praying, and bell ringing--and the "laying on of hands" and its anticipated success. It is the duty of all Shakers assembled to support those who are actively healing by keeping songs going with the rhythm clear and loud. This is an anathema to the sickness and evil plaguing the patients.

There is little or no superficial distinction between the concept of intrusive pain or sickness and general illness or evil; and little between "taking sick" and "taking Shake." California Shakers use the phrases coterminously, and on several instances I have had to correct transcriptions of taped testimonies where I myself confused the utterances. Shakers confess they have little to go by in order to determine, if they are inclined to do so, whether "the Shake" of an individual is "of the Lord," or "of the Devil." To many, the relative violence of possession suggests the

latter, but few bother to make such distinctions. This seeming paradox arises in Shaker evaluations of an event which occurred at the 1965 annual convention of the Church, when a young but large and strong Klamath girl from Chiloquin became possessed (there is little more qualification for the term) and ran amok in a service.

This phenomenon occurred over the span of two evenings, Friday and Saturday night, August 14 and 15, 1965.

The Friday night curing service had lasted late into the early morning hours of the 15th of August, and somewhere about midnight or shortly thereafter a girl was seen to enter the church. She peered about suspiciously, sat down briefly, and then bolted and ran out of the building. This caused her mother, who was present, to be disturbed. She had apparently been aware for some days now that the girl was increasingly disturbed.

About five minutes later the girl reappeared, opening the door noisily and then strutting down the center of the floor toward the altar, where the curing service was, by now, nearly over. She wagged her head, which was bent forward, from side to side, as though drunk or thoroughly demented. Hers was a posture and behavior so drastically changed from but five minutes prior that all stared incredulously.

She careened toward the altar and fell over a lone stool as though purposely, and lay on her stomach--her head down, pointed toward the altar--kicking and screaming.

At first no one would touch her. Then Eleanor Logan of Siletz, and an unidentified Yakima man (both of whom had been most active in the curing) approached her, knelt down, and attempted to bring her up. Up she darted and ran towards the door, throwing her mother--who had seen her coming and vainly attempted to cover her exit--roughly aside. The woman was no small person herself, and all were amazed at her strength. Onlookers blinked wearily, and what was left of the curing ceremony continued weakly.

About ten minutes later, the same girl came in, barely crossed the threshold, and tripped onto the floor, after which she scooted along by digging the

toes of her crude boots into the hardwood, pushing the immense weight of her body along in the manner of a gargantuan lizard. She moaned constantly, as though in a state of shock. No one touched her, but her mother quickly moved several benches, now empty, in front of the door (the new door at the front of the building had not yet been added).

When the girl arrived at a distance of about two yards from the prayer table, Mrs. Logan and the Yakima again set upon her. She fought furiously with them, rolling and tossing about, and it was necessary to pin her down quite forcibly in order to prevent her from bringing injury to herself or to the others.

After about fifteen minutes, when she was under control, those who had been paralyzed by this shocking display exited for the most part, and wondered why I wished to stay. Then a few others who had remained, such as Frances Roberts and Mrs. LaFountain, cautiously approached her and ventured to look on, trying to be of use by consoling or rubbing the poor girl. But they were evidently at a loss to know what to do.

This interruption prolonged the curing session by about two hours, while the Yakima displayed every curing trick in his bag, including a shamanistic attempt to rub the sickness up and vomit it out on the floor, his face contorted with passionate agony. This itself alarmed several onlookers, who also later protested that he ought not to have been sitting on her with her blouse partially pulled up over her.

A few who are marginal to Shakerism and who had come mostly out of curiosity, later spread rumors that the Yakima and Mrs. Logan had tried to hypnotize the girl with candlelight! They added that they were just practicing witchcraft. These rumors caught up with me in 1966 when I returned to Smith River. What had been the attempt of the Yakima to direct the gaze of the girl at a picture of Christ on the wall over the altar, saying, "He will save you, He will save you! Look! Look! Look! Look!"--was interpreted by these malicious gossips as an attempt to hypnotize her!

The event was quite disturbing to Bighead, a sensitive and alert man, who, when he returned to the church after several hours' absence to find this going on, was mortified to find the girl in such a state. After

a while he went to work on her himself, stripped to the waist with sweat rolling off him, having draped his long-sleeve white shirt around the girl's shoulders. By now she had been seated on a chair in which she was slumped over, in a comatose state. Bighead declared that for the sake of this unfortunate girl he would ask the Church to remain at Smith River for at least another five or six days. He implored the Shakers not to return home until the work was done.

On the second evening, the service was marked by almost the identical performance on the part of this girl, only more vigorous and theatrical. Finding herself in the room with her exit blocked stoutly by several persons, and benches as well, she succeeded in jumping through a roughly one and one half foot square window, at a distance of eight feet off the floor (I later took the measurements in disbelief!), and thus made her escape from the church, vaulting over fences and running away for a mile or so. She eventually returned to the area, was captured by the waiting Shakers (who had faith she would come to no harm), and was led back into the building where more curing was attempted over her.

On the prior evening, during one of her several escapes from the building, she ran down onto the beach, pursued by Logan and a number of feeble old Shakers, who were of almost no use, and curious onlookers. Logan held up a candle and bell in front of him as he went, which was later explained as the customary way in which to treat a person who runs amok, as the possessed one will try to drown the evil possession by running into water like the herd of swine in the New Testament. The custom was to pursue the possessed with these instruments of Shaker power and thereby torment the spirits to flight.

It was the severity of this girl's behavior and her mother's conviction that she had been disturbed for several days that led some to assert that she had been possessed by the Devil. Shakers are evidently not in agreement as to what ought to be done in such cases, to interfere or to let the madness run its course to exhaustion.

As for the author of evil, the concept of Satan is not well developed

in Shaker outlook, a belief system not evidently known for its cohesiveness, anyway. Talk of such things as Satan or the Devil is usually limited to those Shakers whose religious experience in Catholic or Protestant churches has given them a notion of what is to be attributed to him. God himself, however, can and frequently will bring sickness upon an individual in order to chastize him and bring him to confession and a state of release from damnation. Sickness is almost a way of life with Shakers, and their behavior suggests a deep-rooted paranoia and neurosis which will be discussed more fully later.

Evil and the snare of its disease is not limited to an individual, but is most contagious. Not only do patients fall ill due to real or imagined sin and misdeeds, but others suffer as a consequence, too. A family's straying from the faith (or "going out into the world"), a church's lack of support for its officers, or selfish will ("getting ahead of God") may result in someone of the body of the Church falling ill. Then confessions may be forthcoming from all quarters.

Doctors are rarely called in to diagnose illnesses even today. The cause is invariably lain at the feet of immorality, backsliding, or "getting ahead of God"--placing personal will ahead of responsibility to the Church. At the 1966 convention a confession of this sort amply demonstrated the concept that sin and illness are coterminous. E\_\_\_ is a person of fairly great influence in the California church, and she suffers from great guilt stemming from a number of scandals in which she was involved (one of them being an affair with a former Bishop, who committed suicide as a result). She evinces anxiety constantly. She feels responsible to but alienated from her local church. This arises partially out of an animosity for the minister, essentially an outsider, who she feels has usurped her leadership role. To thwart the congregation, she snubs them by preferring to travel all the way to Mud Bay, Washington at 4th of

July and Christmas, instead of celebrating the events with her own church. This she partially justifies on the grounds that she travels widely on Church business. Over the last two years I have observed her spirit breaking, and she has been given to morbid and involved confessions in church, many of them not prompted by any actual discovery of sins by fellow Shakers, but by her guilt which leads her to suspect that people are spying on her and constantly observing her behavior. The following account of what happened last winter when she was in the company of a confidant, who travels with her, was given by this oldtime Yurok Shaker.

#### TESTIMONY OF J

I remember last Christmas it was. Sister E\_\_\_\_\_ and I were going up to Mud Bay. On the way she became ill and seemed to get worse. I said, "We better turn back." "No," she says, "I want to keep going." Pretty soon it got worse, and she said, "We better turn back, I guess." We were only a little ways from Mud Bay then and I says, "You try to hold out, we're almost to Mud Bay." She said, no, she couldn't make it, so we turned 'round and came all that way back.

At the Easter services the following spring this woman was still so crippled from disease as a result of her spiritual peril that she could barely drag her feet when going around the room. In an emotional testimony which was subsequent to her curing, she confirmed that it was her spitefulness in going to Mud Bay that had been the cause of her illness.

#### SUCCESS OF HEALING

Whether or not it is legitimate to ask if Indian Shakers can really heal is uncertain. I feel certain, however, that many afflictions are indeed healed through a form of faith embracing autosuggestion or sheer force of will. Serious maladies appear to be assuaged or arrested for a time (perhaps even for the duration of the patient's life). To my knowledge, only one case was ever "lost" in California, and at that, the pa-

tient was said to have died quite a good deal of time after the Shakers had worked on her; and her death was not necessarily attributed to the prior illness.

Part of the problem and mystery is that the paranoid nature of Shaker worldview, characterized as it is by bouts (real or imagined) with "the Enemy," and a constant dread of the sickening influences of "the outside world" with its inexhaustible reservoir of sin and sickness, obscures discernable physical illness and psychosomatic malaise. Life for these persons is constantly internal sickness and external peril. We cannot discern which are psychosomatic diseases, imagined versus real ailments, or induced versus random illness, since few of the cases ever see a doctor's attention.

Furthermore, it cannot be doubted that, at least for Washington, the heavy emphasis on curing in the Indian Shaker Church had its historic origin in the "medicine" which Mary Slocum received after her husband's second downfall and the effect it had in putting the Church on its feet. As testimonies often state, this is considered analogous to the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.

#### NATURE OF PAINS

When asked about the nature of their pains and ailments, the response of informants fall generally into two major categories, with slight distinctions in one.

- (1) Localized pains of a diagnosed or at any rate diagnosable nature: broken limbs, etc.; or localized pains of an undiagnosed nature which expert healers claim to be able to locate almost immediately.
- (2) Generalized sickness. While localized ailments may comprise common symptoms such as rheumatism, arthritis or general lameness, and are most routine, the generalized sickness is what some Yurok refer to as "Indian sickness." It is described as a general physical decline or sluggishness, compounded by depression and morbid fears, often characterized, in addition, by a conviction of the proximity of death.

Although no pre-white period of aboriginal culture was known firsthand to my informants, it appears from my investigations of Yurok shamanism and witchcraft that there was a similar connection between illness and transgression or social pathology, a symptom of which was this "Indian sickness." While this assertion may seem conjectural, oldest informants who were, in their youth, associated with survivors from the aboriginal horizon (in this area, prior to 1848), indicate that this was the most common complaint. It seems logical that the coming of whites, with their vast inventory of diseases (such as mumps, measles, whooping cough, tuberculosis, etc.) greatly complicated aboriginal medicine and probably contributed, at first, to disorder and witchcraft or accusations thereof.

Shakers are very conscious of their competition with other practitioners of medicine, and I might add, they are no more in competition with white doctors than with the "Indian doctors" who still continue to extract often exorbitant fees for traditional means of shamanistic curing. This is evident, for example, in the partial testimony of Jimmy James, a reconverted backslider who, up until recently, participated in the aboriginal Brush Dance, considered a "pagan" attraction by the Shakers. His testimony was given Sunday morning, August 7, 1966:

There's some that say we're worshipping the Devil in this church, but I thank my God this morning that ain't true. Why, I can remember--I can't count the times we've saved doctor bills by healing through this wonderful Shaker faith.

DIRECTIONS OF HEALING: INWARD, OUTWARD

A "call for help" from anyone at any time traditionally mobilizes a Shaker as nothing else can. He is expected to drop what he is doing, in the spirit of good faith, or to wake from his sleep to travel for perhaps hundreds of miles to participate in a group effort to heal a backslider or an ailing fellow Shaker. Where permitted, they visit hospitals. Informants seem to feel that the spirit today is not as fervid as it once was.



Disparaging the authenticity and effectiveness of the Brush Dance as the Hupa and Yurok continue to perform it annually (on the 4th of July), Ollie James made the following remarks:

Oh, they're just trying to make money, that's all. Why, I remember when I was a girl when they had the last Brush Dance at Johnson's--that was 1912, I think it was. Everybody had a good time, and everybody was friendly, and we were all happy about a new baby or something, or help some man sick. But now days they got no more spirit. We was all of one mind, that's how come. Now they just try to make money. Just like that Shaker religion (points to her altar in her front room). In old days when someone called for help, no matter what time it was, we all went up. Nobody sayin' like they do now, "Oh, I gotta go to work tomorrow," or "I'm too tired." We was all of one mind then.

Shaker healing is not merely outward directed, towards patients in the circumstances described above, but is self-directed as well. Shakers may be seen, during curing sessions (less often in worship services) clapping their hands, rubbing their limbs, or "brushing" themselves with candlelight. Shaking is more an activity of the healer than of the one being healed, but if the latter's affliction is not serious and he seems to be healed, he may "get under the Power" and "get up the Shake" to go and work on someone else.

The candles have a special place in Shaker ritual. Their light and warmth are an integral part of the "blessing" which is administered to patient and observer alike, with one of the techniques of "brushing" already described.

Shaking, as Waterman notes (1924:501-503), is more important in curing than in worship, which all the more points to curing as the focus of Indian Shaker religious expression. Indian Shakerism was not born of any particular creed or dogma, and whatever Slocum's dicta were, they seem to have become obscured. Rather, Shakerism served very practical needs being a special dispensation to the Indian and his new "medicine." Indian reli-

gious expression in western North America was not generally given to elaborate ritual for its own sake. It served practical needs and ends, whether in the World Renewal ceremonial of northwestern California (cf. Kroeber and Gifford, 1949) or the "Spirit Canoe" cult of the Puget Sound. Waterman (1924:504-505) sees Shakerism as having taken over the function of the "Spirit Canoe" observance, in which a loss of soul, to which illness was attributed, was returned by shamanistic means.

Furthermore, he sees Shaker removal of sin or sickness as analogous to this. It probably is not. Had he bothered to investigate "soul loss" healing among the northern Shakers, his comparison of Shakerism with the "Spirit Canoe" practices would have been more profitable.

A very certain function which the art of healing has is to enhance the prestige of individuals who are known to be leaders in this phase of religion, regardless of the fact that healing is considered a group effort with group credit. Bighead, for instance, was astounded to see the reception he got when he first visited Mud Bay in a northward trek about four years ago. A shy and self-effacing individual, he found that during the visits of the Washingtonians to Smith River they had been impressed with his ability at oratory and dynamic healing.

Still, there is considerable overlap in leadership and responsibility. As Eells observed: (Mooney 1896:749)

In fact, while it is a religion for use at all times, yet it is practiced especially over the sick, and in this way takes the place of the medicine-men and their methods. Though often they select one for leader who can pray the best, yet in his absence another may take the lead. . . . The others present use their influence to help in curing the sick one, and so imitate the attendants on an Indian doctor. . . .

## VI. DISCUSSION

Indian Shakerism never developed where there was not a reservation or rancheria environment which provided the essential channels of communication bringing Indians of widely varied backgrounds together (cf. also Gunther 1949:57). Where its influence has been wrought--in the microcosm of local communities and in the macrocosm of mass group worship and curing at annual conventions of the Church, such as described above--Indian Shakerism has been indeed a force for pan-Indianism. And although Gould and Furukawa are somewhat correct when they cite the pan-Indian influence which the Indian Shaker has had in California, the rapid dissolution of the church subsequent to their observations makes it doubtful that the organization will, as they assert, "continue to serve as the most powerful focus for any pan-Indian movement in this area of northwestern California" (Gould and Furukawa 1964:64). The Church never did attract as many on-lookers and participants as did the World Renewal rituals and the Brush Dance of aboriginal and acculturating northwest California, and I suspect that this is also true for the northern states. Pan-Indianism has received much more momentum from the revival of aboriginal religious dancing than it has from Indian Shakerism, although it must be emphasized that the Church appealed to those with a prior awareness of Christian precepts, as well as to aboriginal elements of dancing and group ritual. We have little or no idea of what the nature of healing practices was in the early movement of the Indian Shaker Church. However, perhaps a safe assumption is that the concept and practice were not developed until the coming of Mary Slocum's "medicine," as the Shake came to be known. This medicine appears to have developed from Mrs. Slocum's anxiety about the shaman who was aggravating her husband's illness and possibly bewitching him. The new dispensation of a healing medicine began to overshadow Slocum's early teachings, and has, as we have seen, become the focus of religious expres-

sion and experience in the Church.

Elizabeth Colson, in a study of the Church of the Puget Sound region, "in the context of its times," has pointed out both the significance of Mary Slocum's contribution and the function of Shakerism in providing a sanction against the rise of witchcraft in Indian communities. She notes that "orthodox Christianity sought to combat shamanism by denying the reality of the powers claimed for it," which Shakerism was never so naive as to deny (Colson Ms.).

The Indian Shaker Church arose as an effective foil against white interference by being, as a neo-Christian movement, an acceptable form of Indian religious expression. It alone was able to provide both a replacement for and an effective guard against the witchcraft and shamanism endemic in reservation communities. It did this partially by turning old elements associated with charlatanism and extortion to constructive group action, and partially by establishing an open and fairly regularized ritual in which all could participate equally.

The reservation system of the American Indian in captivity has been a major contributing factor in the rise and development of numerous nativistic, vitalistic and quasi-messianic movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Siletz, Oregon, for example, was the source of California's Ghost Dance of 1870 (cf. DuBois 1939), as well as the Indian Shaker Church movement. With the occasional exception of Indian agents who did attempt to interfere, Indian groups of considerable ethnic diversity were amalgamated into a society and subculture which could more or less develop as they pleased. Although more research is needed, it is evident that there was, at least in northwest California and at Siletz, Oregon, a rapid increase in witchcraft under these circumstances, aggravated by such abuses of white "civilization" as poverty, alcoholism, disease and unemployment. Nativistic or revitalistic movements like the Pom Pom cult among the Klamath, or the Smohalla or Feather Cult of the middle Columbia

region, attempted to intervene by reacting vigorously against pressure to conform to any culture change brought by whites. These ultimately vanished, leaving in their place syncretistic movements like Shakerism, which developed effective measures to insure their survival and to battle endemic social pathology in a meaningful manner.

Certainly it was not the teachings of Slocum, so dim and prehistoric as they seem now in the minds of many Shakers, rather the effecting of his cure by his wife that sparked the rapid development of the Church, once it escaped Puget Sound, Washington to Oregon and Idaho. Similarly, in California, it was not merely the enthusiasm and inspiration of the first convert or evangelist, in this case a Yurok names Jimmy Jack, that was primarily significant for the development and spread of the new religion. It was a miraculous cure, which occurred some years after the religion's introduction, similar to that of Slocum's. Who was Jack?

Informants and friends who knew him in those days, as well as testimonies and narratives I have collected, attest to the fact that Jack was indeed the first Shaker in California, and first preached Shakerism on his native soil. However, the image of Jack is somewhat different--and more interesting--than one might expect.

Easy-going, indolent and fairly wealthy (even by white standards in the area), Jack was popular and extroverted. In whatever he engaged--gambling or love-making--he was a born enthusiast. At Siletz, where he vowed to change his erratic and rambling ways, he became an avid disciple of Shakerism, but not one of its luminaries. Once again at home in Klamath Glen on the lower course of the Klamath River, Jack was an enthusiastic supporter and a warm host to the evangelists from Siletz and Chiloquin, Oregon. His own rather theatrical introduction of the Shaker movement among the Yurok at Requa--at the mouth of the Klamath--was only of partial significance for the future rise and spread of the Church in California.

Jack was a preacher more out of ironic circumstance than anything else; a speech impediment made his singing unbearable, his preaching a little less intoler-

able. But he could "get under the Power" as no one else could in those early days, so oldest Shakers testify.

Barnett (1957:75-81) has devoted insufficient space to the development of the Indian Shaker Church in California, but his emphasis on the curing of a Hupa man named John Charley is well justified. The developments of the Church in California could hardly be appreciated without being seen in this relief. I have collected versions of this healing from Shakers who were present and participating, the very core of the earliest Church in the state. These versions are synthesized below.

John Charley was a Hupa man who lived with his wife Marian in a cabin in the Bald Hills overlooking Hoopa Valley. He had apparently been employed in the woods. He was, however, dying of Bright's Disease, and doctors in Hoopa and Eureka had given him up for dead. Local Indian doctors concurred in the diagnosis of pessimism. He returned home shortly to his cabin to die in his native valley.

Charley had heard of Jack's prowess as a healer, but apparently knew little of the religion and associated beliefs. His wife Marian--doubtless disgusted with doctors and healers, Indian and white--discouraged his request that Jack be allowed to work his curing powers on him. It was a friend and neighbor, Stella Jarnaghan, who induced the Shakers to come anyway; they came over the rough mountain road to Hoopa by way of Orick on the coast.

To the astonishment of many, friend and neighbor alike, the cure was effected. Almost overnight many Hupa, formulists and other ceremonial leaders were proselytized away from "pagan" religious practices. These eventually drifted back, however. Charley himself became Head Elder of the new church at Hupa, his neighbor the Minister. The church enjoyed a popularity and zeal among the Hupa then that it never since has.

Soon thereafter, the Church spread to the Mad River region (formerly Wiyot Indian territory), to Indian reserves at Loleta and Blue Lake, although it soon withered on the vine in these southerly precincts.

It is probable that with the dissolution of the reservation and ran-  
cheria system in the near future (signs are already evident), the Indian  
Shaker Church will succumb. Its members are nearly all over sixty, even  
though the Church is into its second and third generation in California.  
It is upheld by a few of the second generation (aged 40-60), and by even  
fewer of the first and founding generation (aged 70-100). The outlook for  
conversion--even through healing (which has always been the main source of  
converts)--is not optimistic.

The flux in attendance at conventions mirrors a flux in mobility and  
interests of the third generation. As they grow up, get education, and  
seek jobs and homes as far away as San Francisco and Portland or Seattle,  
they move between dead and dying Indian reservation communities of the  
urban Northwest. Invariably, various combinations of the same faces turn  
up year after year at such assemblies, both in the Shaker Church and other  
pan-Indian functions. These are the faces of the curious, the backslid  
and half-believers, and those of marginal allegiance, many of whom, if  
they have religion at all, are simultaneously members of white-dominated  
churches such as the Pentecostal, Assembly of God, or Foursquare Gospel.  
Whether or not there will be a reserve from which to proselytize, to re-  
confirm, and to heal depends upon the immediate future stability of such  
Indian communities as Smith River and its sister communities north to  
British Columbia.

#### NOTES

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Indian Shaker Church in California" will shortly appear). Among these informants, a few are to be singled out for especial praise and thanks; they are: Nelly and Seeley Griffin, and Ollie James now of Crescent City, California; also to Charley Bighead, John and Eleanor Logan, to Jimmy James, and to a number of others I owe gratitude for their cooperation.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Barnett (1957:243) and Gunther (1949:58).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. "An Early History of the Indian Shaker Church in California," by the author. Ms.

<sup>4</sup> A drawing of the church at Smith River is contained in Gould and Furukawa (1964:66).

<sup>5</sup> The only occasion on which he has ever admitted to losing his temper occurred one day recently at the mill where he works; a certain man was ridiculing his Shaker faith, so he calmly lifted this man--who was not a small man--on the end of his foot and threw him some feet's distance without harming him, but astonishing him nonetheless.

<sup>6</sup> Readers will find further material on Shaker ritual elements (Barnett 1957:204-242) and ceremonial (Barnett 1957:243-284), although specific knowledge is not absolutely necessary for an understanding of this study. Gould and Furukawa have described the church at Smith River and its associated material culture (1964:52, 53-56).

<sup>7</sup> I wish to acknowledge the help of Elizabeth Colson, whose critical and stimulating reading of this manuscript was a valuable contribution. She herself has investigated the Indian Shaker Church (cf. Colson Ms).

<sup>8</sup> Readers should consult the Glossary in the appendix to this paper where these, and all Shaker terms used in this paper, are described more fully.

<sup>9</sup> Part II of Martin's testimony is to be found in the appendix, Narrative 1.



## APPENDIX

Narrative 1TESTIMONY OF WILBUR MARTIN. II

It was late in 1926. The Lord told me, "Go down and preach the Gospel to the people at New Klamath" (as Klamath was then known, Johnson's at that time being known as "Klamath"--Ed.).

And we must have been there near two weeks. Brother Lang came up to us and said, "Let's go home, these people don't want the Shake, Come on, all of you at Siletz are invited to come up to our place at Chiloquin. We'll have a wonderful time, and you can shake as long as you want.

He asked our Minister--he asked Tom Jackson, and he said, yes, he'd go home by way of Chiloquin. Those were two cars full. And he asked John Albert, "Will you go back with us to Chiloquin?" and Brother Albert told him, he didn't see how he could go home when the work was not yet done. He (Lang) had asked me, said, "These people don't want the Shake--let's go home." But I told him, I says, "I didn't come down here to give 'em the Shake, I came down here to preach the Gospel." Then Brother Albert said, "I guess I'll stay here with Brother Martin."

So they went back to Chiloquin, but we stayed--praise the Lord!--and there was healing, and new Shakers come into the Church.

Narrative 2

## NELLY GRIFFIN'S TRACING POWER

When I was first saved, I got the tracing power. I go up to some man, see he's got a handkerchief belongs to someone else, I pull it out of his pocket, say, "It don't belong to you--belong to that fella over there!" Some boys bring in whiskey hid in their clothes--I find it! Then one time some old lady say, "You don't want that--that's not what you need--you want the power to heal!" And now I got that. Boy, I hear that lady say that, and I fell right down on the floor on my back--just layin' there like that! (imitates limbs spread, eyes rolling wildly). Then I lose it--can't do it since.

One time we went up to Siletz. There was some woman says, "You better be careful, Mrs. Griffin will be there--she can find things!" Was a man was backslid because his wife had died. Tore up his garment, make dishtowels out of it! He says, "Well, I'm going down to find out--she

finds out what's wrong with me, I'm going to put on my best clothes and rejoin."

Had real bad pain, 'round his heart, you know, and I go over, point right there (points to the heart), point right to where his pain was and then I go back. He was waiting for me to come back, but I didn't come back. He was healed. He said, "I'm going to dress up tonight--going to rejoin." Pain was gone.

Q. Do you remember his name?

A. Was Joe Simmons.

Q. Where was he from?

A. I don't remember--oh, his mother was from Puyallup--same place Joe Riddle was from.

### Narrative 3

#### SEELEY GRIFFIN ON JOHN CHARLEY'S CURE

There was a bunch of us. Ery (Ira) Turner was Minister in Johnson's. He gathered all of us together, some from Smith River, some from Klamath--gathered all of us, and we started out for Hoopa.

This man, John Charley, was in the hospital. I don't know what was the matter with him, but the doctors claimed they couldn't do nothin' for him--gave him up for dead--told 'em to take him home. Well, the Shakers come and pray. Turner gathered all from Smith River and here, and we stayed a week and prayed for him.

Well, a woman (Marian Charley) put her hand on the door and said, "Aint nobody more going to come in here now! There's too many now--I can't feed 'em all!" Well, we always used to get a place to sleep and get fed wherever we go when there was a call for help.

He had been sufferin' terrible, but in a week's time he was converted with his wife, and she could walk him all the way down to the gate and back. They lived in Bald Hills.

The Shakers told him, "You got to do away with the old ways, superstitions, and believe in the Lord only." He went at it so strong he got rid of 'em--he had a whole bunch of things, stuff for dances and ceremonies like that--sold 'em all.

### Glossary

BELL: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, denote order or service; also handbell used in Shaker worship and curing, usually one held in each hand, and rung simultaneously.

- BRUSHING:** A technique of curing, also of splashing candle light as a general form of blessing.
- CALL FOR HELP:** Term used to denote a request for healing from Shakers or non-Shakers, to which Shakers are obligated to respond (see **HELP**).
- DANCING:** A general term applied to the stamping of feet and/or swaying in Shaker ceremonial; may be accompanied by bell ringing and singing.
- ENEMY:** "The Enemy"--a frequent reference to the Christian concept of Satan, the author of evil and sickness.
- FLOOR MANAGER:** A person designated to lead the services in general, usually an officer of the Church, who may, in turn, delegate responsibilities to others for various phases of services.
- GO 'ROUND:** A term referring to the counter-clockwise dancing which Shakers do in their services; "go 'round three times" refers to the manner in which the services are always opened and closed, with a circuit of the room made three times.
- HAI-HAI, HAI-MASSE:** Epithets used by Shakers to express emotion or affirmation of words being spoken by others in services. Also, the basis of the common chant in the Church, known to all members, which develops as a coda to most hymns.
- HEAL:** Designates Shaker curing of body and spirit, either for purposes of relief from physical and spiritual distress of members, or to attempt to reconvert a backslider.
- HEALING STOOL:** A low bench (roughly 1 x 2') on which patients are seated on the church floor for the purposes of being attended to by healers. Stools are constructed to fit under the regular benches on which observers sit, at the sides of the church floor.
- HELP:** A "help" is aid which a Shaker gives a fellow Shaker in healing him, or which one gives to assist one who is healing in the form of singing, dancing, and bell ringing.
- PATIENT:** Most commonly used term to designate a spiritually and physically afflicted person who seeks and submits himself to healing.

PRAYER TABLE: A white painted table in the altar alcove at the front of a Shaker church, on which candles and bells are situated, with a large model crucifix in the center. This is the most common way of referring to the altar.

LEFT-TURN: A turn which is made by going around in a (counter-clockwise) circle while standing in one place, usually accompanied by crossing oneself. It is the way in which Indian Shakers punctuate ritual acts.

SHAKE: A term which denotes states of physical excitation in which Shakers tremble all over, most specifically with fluttering of the hands and arms, which signals a Divine inspiration and that the Shaker will attempt to heal or deliver a Divinely inspired message. Attaining this state is known as "getting up the Shake" or "getting under (the) Power."

TESTIMONIAL: A part of every Shaker religious service, in which a time is allotted for the delivering of testimonies of individuals' experiences and the lessons which they believe are to be learned for all. Testimonies are delivered between the ringing of the first and second BELL.

THROWING AWAY: The manner in which Shakers refer to transference of sickness or evil by one who is healing a PATIENT.

WORLD, OUTSIDE WORLD: Term of reference used to designate non-Shakers and the world at large, regarded as in a state of original sin and damnation; considered the origin of sin and temptation to Shakers.

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