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Thomas Buckley

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THE SHAKER CHURCH AND THE INDIAN WAY IN NATIVE NORTHWESTERN CALIFORNIA¹

By Thomas Buckley

The Indian Shaker Church originated on Puget Sound in 1882 and was brought into Native northwestern California in 1926. Outsider scholars have often reduced it to the status of a minor "crisis cult" or "revitalization movement," as opposed to a real—that is, "traditional"—Indian religion. Reports that California Shakers rejected all indigenous ceremonialism as "sinful" and anti-Christian while asserting that the new religion was a purely Native way, best closed to non-Indians, appeared to support this view (Barnett 1957: 142-143). While converted elders quietly defended the Church as a "continuation" of traditional ways (in Gould and Furukawa 1966: 59) they seemed, to some, to be deluding themselves in a struggle to maintain their Indian identities while becoming pseudo-Christians. But even outsiders do well to listen closely to what the elders say and to think long on it, as local people well know.

The notion that the Shaker Church is a "continuation" of an authentic Indian spirituality—an "evolution" of it, as a Church member said to me in 1978—rings false only as long as we view modern Native American history in terms of polarities—Indian/Christian, traditionalist/Shaker, this faction/that faction, and the rest (as anthropologists once did habitually). Perhaps it helps to view Native/European as the typical opposition, of which all the others are tokens, and to remember that it was, first, racist Europeans who insisted on its validity? But this, too, is over simple: the Indian Shakers themselves have insisted on a rigid us/them, inside/outside dichotomy (Gould and Furukawa 1966: 57-64), whether such oppositional dualism was "traditional" or the result of acculturation to "European" modes of thought (e.g., Buckley 1984).

Something more complex may be going on here, revealed in part by the powerful reemergence of indigenous ceremonialism that has occurred in northwestern California as elsewhere in Indian Country during the past two decades. The contemporary emergence of forms of religious life that non-Indian anthropologists and Native people alike once viewed as utterly gone should alert us to the possibility that, yes, innovations like the Shaker Church have indeed been continuations of Native traditions, and that—perhaps more difficult to see—reemergent traditions are themselves continuations or evolutions of modern innovations like the Shaker Church. That is, theoretically, that such seemingly diametrically op-

Thomas Buckley is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and American Studies at the University of Massachusetts in Boston.

posed tokens are better understood as emergent processes co-participating in a historical and spiritual dialogue.

Survival

The Indian peoples of northwestern California—Tolowas, Yuroks, Karuks, Wiyots, Hupas and others—underwent their first massive encounters with Euroamericans beginning in 1850. Suddenly, in the first few months of that year, news of a gold strike on the Trinity River brought an estimated 10,000 fortune seekers into the Klamath River drainage. It was the beginning of what Indian people came to call, variously, “the end of the world,” “the time when the stars fell,” and “the end of Indian time.”

It has been hard for Indian people in that region (as virtually everywhere else in the United States) in the hundred and forty years since. A short time ago a friend remarked about young men on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation, “Well, there are two ways for Indian men to save their lives these days, Christianity and the Indian Way, and that’s it.” I don’t think that she was over-dramatizing. Impressionistically at least, without the support and discipline of a religious practice, life for these men—and women—tends to be rough and, tragically often, short. Fortunately, if my friend is correct, there is a lively and diverse assortment of Christian congregations in the region, and there has also been a considerable renaissance in traditional Indian religious practices, gathering momentum steadily since the late 1960s.

Not that “the Indian Way” disappeared entirely after 1850, but it had indeed “gone underground for awhile,” as a Hupa-Yurok ceremonial doctor put it in 1976. Most strikingly, the re-emergence of the Indian Way has manifested in the regeneration of the complex system—including religious, social, economic, and political dimensions—that the anthropologist A. L. Kroeber called “the World Renewal Cult” and that he deemed moribund and nearly extinct by the 1940s (Kroeber and Gifford 1949).

Resistance to Christianity

Today, the northwestern California Indian Way tends to be construed by participants as exclusive of Christian belief and practice, and individuals following it tend, in many cases, to forcefully reject Christianity as un-Indian. Anti-Christian sentiment, found especially among the upper ranks of these somewhat stratified societies from which the spiritual elite has always tended to come, can be traced back to the earliest years of contact.

Presbyterian missionaries came to the Hoopa Valley in 1873 and had extended their evangelical efforts outwards, up and down the Klamath and along the

various forks of the Trinity River, by the 1890s. Conversions were few, however, and seem to have been restricted to mixed-blood Indians who were, at that time, marginal to both Indian and non-Indian societies and thus had little to lose in moving even farther from the moral center of elite Native society. By contrast, the Native elites did not seek parity with the increasingly oppressive whites, who dominated northwestern California after the end of armed Indian resistance in 1867, through conversion to Christianity. Between 1870 and 1890, for instance, Wolf Morris, a Polish-Jewish trader dealing in dentalium shells with Yurok and Tolowa customers, found it advantageous to stress the fact that he, like his high-status potential customers, was *not* a Christian (Pilling 1970: 4; cf., Pilling and Pilling 1970: 103). No full-blooded Yurok Indian is known to have converted to Christianity before the end of the First World War.

There were, it should be mentioned, some notable Native efforts to secure religious tolerance and respect from non-Indians through *apologia* cast as comparisons of traditional belief systems to Christianity. Thus, by 1900, the Yurok trickster-creator Wohpekumew was being called "God," in English, by certain Yuroks in an effort to increase cross-cultural understanding (Kroeber 1976:420). This mythical equivalence has been reiterated throughout this century and still is popular today. A contemporary Yurok intellectual and religious activist suggests that the first Yurok Indian to compare the licentious Wohpekumew to God was perhaps acting in the spirit of a trickster himself. But there are other possibilities.

The comparison was at least in part based on an interesting similarity: Wohpekumew tried to kill his Immortal son, Kapuloyo, imprisoning him high in a tree and blinding his own grandson, Kewomer. Wohpekumew did not try to sacrifice Kapuloyo and Kewomer to save humanity, however, but to facilitate his own seductions of women. Happily, Kapuloyo resurrected himself by his own wits and restored Kewomer's sight. Together they went to the spirit world, abandoning Wohpekumew (Kroeber 1976).

While the Wohpekumew/God equivalence may have reflected some Yuroks' perceptions of the darker similarities of the two myths (cf. Bakan 1968: 96-128), the crucifixion of Christ has not, historically, had much resonance for Yurok people inclined toward traditional ways, or for their like-minded neighbors—Hupa, Karuk and Tolowa Indians. A late Yurok Indian doctor told me in 1978,

Now Christianity. . . . If an Indian had a brand new pair of hundred dollar boots and cut off his foot with his axe, he'd throw those boots away because they had blood in them and weren't any good. We throw away whatever has blood in it because it's spoiled. But Christians have this cross where they killed Jesus, which is covered with blood, and they fool with it and wear it around their necks, and that's no good. [fieldnotes, 1978.]

In light of such strongly held views, Indian efforts at rapprochement through creating intercultural equivalences, as in identifying the trickster-creator Wohpekumew with "God," the hero Pulekukwerek with Christ, or in calling the indigenous mythic Immortals "angels," seem at best half-hearted (cf. Thompson 1916).

Despite all such resistance, be it softly apologetic or harshly anti-Christian, Christianity has indeed made inroads into the staunch religious conservatism of a region where cultures are epitomized by the social and spiritual elites. The Presbyterian Church is a central feature of Indian religious life at Hoopa today, a hundred and seventeen years after it was established. Other churches came much later, but remained in the area as well. By 1928 the Four Square Gospel Church at Klamath was attracting Yurok members, the Baptists were active in Requa, and at least one Yurok woman had become a Pentecostal Christian (Pilling 1970: 5). Today there are Assembly of God Churches in Hoopa, on the Yurok Reservation at Weitchpec and at Pecwan, in Karuk country at Orleans, and so on; Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, various fundamentalist Protestant churches as well as Roman Catholic missions—including the Mission of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha (the Algonquin-Mohawk saint) at Hoopa—all attract significant Indian congregations. Traveling revivalists, especially those offering to heal, do a lively business in the area as well.

Still, the rise of these congregations during the past sixty years should not obscure the continuing tensions and occasional conflicts between Christian and traditional ways. Christian preachers and parishioners alike have castigated indigenous beliefs and practices as heathen delusion, going so far as to urge the burning of traditional dance regalia and accusing medicine people of devilry. Traditionalists, on the other hand, have accused the Christians of being "superstitious" in their rejection of "spiritualism."

The Indian Shaker Church, a syncretic sect perceived by its members as a special religious dispensation intended by God for Indians alone, has sought since 1926 to mediate this rift that dates back to the earliest years of contact in northwestern California precisely by incorporating indigenous religious elements: what critics of Christianity refer to as spiritualism. I turn now to the Shaker Church, examining its teaching and its history as well as its degree of success in this effort.

Shaker Syncretism

In 1882, John Slocum, a Nisqually Indian from Puget Sound, "died." He revived, and then once again died, his spirit ascending to Heaven where he was instructed by "an angel of God." He came back into his body, awoke, and instructed those about him in the new religion that God had revealed to him through His angel.

Slocum's experience was coherent with the Prophet Dance pattern of coastal Washington and the Plateau, and it also showed the considerable influence of both

Protestant and Catholic missions in the Puget Sound area. In brief, as God's agent, John Slocum taught that there are:

good things in Heaven. God is kind to us. If you all try hard and help me, we will be better men on earth. . . . They know in Heaven what we think. When people are sick we pray to God to cure us. We pray that he takes the evil away and leave the good. [This is the] good road for us to travel. . . . do good and sing good songs . . . Christ said he sends power to every believing soul on earth. [Slocum, in Slagle 1985: 354.]

This teaching was augmented by John Slocum's wife, Mary, who discovered that the power of the "Spirit of Christ" (Smith 1954: 121) manifested in her own body as light trancing and physical trembling—"the Shake" through which she could heal. The Shake has been viewed widely by anthropologists as a reembodiment of the indigenous Salishan concept of "power," particularly as it once pertained to "shamans" (Smith 1954:121). "Shaman," however, has never been a viable term for most Native people on the Klamath River. Yuroks, for instance, once called their most powerful healers kegey (Buckley 1992). Today, the spiritual heirs of these "sucking doctors" are usually called "Indian doctors," and—as Smith suggested would be the case—the recent history of these Indian doctors has been richly intertwined with that of the Shaker Church.

John Slocum incorporated his wife Mary's innovation of the Shake into his own teaching and instructed his followers to build him a church at Mud Bay, Washington, where their joint revelations might be put into formal practice by a congregation. The Indian Shaker Church was organized as an association in 1892 and incorporated in 1910 (Slagle 1985: 353). The wooden church itself was illuminated by copious candles. Services focused on Christian worship as well as singing and dancing to the accompaniment of handbells, which supported the converted in light trancing. Preaching stressed the importance of "like-mindedness," among the congregants, and a famous song instructs:

Make all one mind
and Jesus will help you. [In Valory 1966a:76.]

The unity of the congregation against the forces of evil outside the church was paramount, and this like-mindedness reinforced the Shake, which empowered congregants to heal, prophesy, trace lost objects, and cast out evil. Healing focused both on individuals and on the world at large. Shakers prayed for the end of war and a return to world balance and harmony, when the necessary and rigid inside/outside dichotomy would be outmoded.

The new syncretic church spread widely in the Pacific Northwest. In 1926 Jimmy Jack, a Yurok Indian, brought the Shaker dispensation to the Lower Klamath

math River. There was a barn there owned by the Gensaw family that was being rented out by a foster daughter, the late Florence Shaughnessy, for use as a dance hall. Jimmy Jack rented this barn at the beginning of September for the first Shaker meeting in California. Fifty years later, Mrs. Shaughnessy, a Yurok Indian, gave this account:

Jimmy Jack from old Klamath went up to Siletz in Oregon, and he married a Siletz woman. The Shakers were there, and they wanted to come down here, so Jimmy Jack brought them. They asked me if they could use the big barn where I used to have my dances, so I let them. They had the whole place full of white candles, and it was quite beautiful. They all started dancing in there and ringing their bells. People kept pouring in until the hall was full, and people kept coming and crowded all around the place in front of the door. It was packed. There were commercial fishermen on the river and they heard bells ringing and they all came in too, because they'd never heard anything like those bells at Requa.

I went with my mother. She asked me to take her and we stood in that crowd outside. But this woman who was dancing inside saw us and she came out, and she touched my mother and said, "You are in terrible trouble; come inside." But my mother said, "Flo, take me home. I feel so weak." So I walked her back, and she was trembling and shaking and she could hardly stand and walk. And that woman was right: two or three days later my mother was found, drowned. Strange things happen. Perhaps she should have listened. [fieldnotes, 1976.]

At first, Shakers, as had the Presbyterians before them, mainly converted people marginal to respectable Yurok society: half-bloods, the illegitimate and the very poor. For instance, despite his strong efforts Jimmy Jack was unable to convert the influential Requa traditionalist and spiritual leader Robert Spott. Spott attended Shaker meetings out of politeness, as he did Baptist services. At one point, Jimmy Jack touched him, transmitting the Shake to him as the Siletz woman had done to Florence Shaughnessy's mother. But Spott refused to convert, even after this experience, on the grounds that the Shakers were Christians and thus un-Indian (Barnett 1957: 76-77, 272-74).

Jack continued to seek such conversions, however, knowing that the Church could gain a solid foothold in the region only with the support of influential people like Spott. While Robert Spott's sister, Alice, was helpful but ambivalent, other Yurok women of high repute did eventually convert wholeheartedly.

Since the 1880s and '90s, Yurok candidates for the traditional doctoring vocation of *kegey* had increasingly failed to gain their powers in the mountain sacred sites and were unable to demonstrate these powers in the requisite *remohpoh*,

"Kick Dance," or "Doctor Dance," put up in the riverine village sweat houses (Buckley 1992). Nonetheless a number of women who had been spiritually called, while failing to gain full standing as *kegey*, achieved some recognition as clairvoyants and healers. Several of these women lived on the lower Klamath in the villages near Johnson's Landing. They began, by 1930, to find a new context for legitimacy as Indian doctors in the Shaker Church, whose dancing they claimed as a substitute for the older, non-Christian *remohpoh*. Although some of the very few old-time *kegey* who survived disparagingly referred to these new healers as "half doctors,"²² the younger Yurok Indian doctors soon virtually controlled the Shaker Church established at Smith River, twenty-five miles north of Requa, in Tolowa territory. The participation of these powerful Yurok women inspired the conversion of highly respected Tolowa religious people, including the influential Sam Lopez. With this impetus, other important conversions were achieved, including that of Woodruff Hostler, a Hupa Indian. In 1932 Jimmy Jack cured another Hupa, John Charlie, who, giving up all traditional ways and selling all of his family's dance regalia, established a church at Hoopa. Other churches were eventually established at Johnsons and at Jimmy Jack's hometown of Klamath, both in Yurok territory.

Despite its increasing strength, the Shaker church in California was rife with dissention and controversy almost from its inception, and this conflict centered, generally, on issues of Indian identity. In 1933, the Church in northwestern California was riven by the "Bible controversy." "Book" congregations argued for the use of the Bible in services; "Shake" advocates insisted that God intended the Bible for white people only, and not for Indians who received the Holy Spirit directly, through the Shake.

A second focus of controversy was ownership of traditional dance regalia and participation in pre-Christian dances, such as the child-curing Brush Dance. Some Shakers argued that traditional dancing was of the devil and all regalia must be destroyed if individuals were to be cured, wars ended, and the world saved. Others declared that this was an individual matter and that the Church could not dictate individuals' religious lives. Nonetheless, some converts were accused of "backsliding" when they insisted on their right to participate in both Shaker meetings *and* in Brush Dances: taking part in "outside" activities, they weakened "like-mindedness" and threatened the "inside," the church.

From one point of view, particularly strong among Smith River Shakers, the Shake was a "continuation" of the old Indian Way, completely Indian but also obviating earlier traditional practices. It was on the strength of this sentiment that the anthropologists Richard Gould and Theodore Furukawa wrote, in 1964, that, "it is our tentative prediction . . . that the Indian Shaker Church will provide the most tangible focus for the identity of the 'Indian' in the face of white American culture in this area of northwestern California" (Gould and Furukawa 1964: 67).

However, many Indian people continued to agree with, for instance, the Hupa traditionalists who hold that dancing in the traditional Brush, Deerskin and

Jump Dances makes folks more Indian, more “real,” or *xoche*. As a person dances through the night in the Brush Dance, for example, he becomes more and more “real” and more and more “Indian” until, in the last dance shortly after dawn, he is once again completely *xoche*: real, pure, beautiful, balanced—*Indian* (Lee Davis, personal communication, 1989). The notion was recently reiterated by a Karuk ceremonial singer and dancer, Julian Lang, who said that, in displaying regalia and dancing in ceremonies like the world-renewing Jump Dance:

[t]he whole idea of displaying that stuff is to spark people inside so . . . if that power is in there sleeping inside them . . . in the ceremony you’re waking up those people, that power inside the people, so when that wakes up and looks at that stuff and it sees all that kinship, pretty soon it wants to go into that stuff again and it wants to participate in that stuff, and it turns the people back into Indians. [Taped interview, 1988.]

By 1965, with the passing of the first generation of converts including, pertinently, most of the Indian doctors, the Shaker Church was already losing significant membership. Sam Lopez, the Tolowa spiritual leader, was drifting away, moving towards the Bible-oriented Four Square Gospel Church. Others, were attempting to keep a foot in both camps, Shaker and traditional. Most church members, however, while accepting Shakers’ attendance at other Christian church services, firmly rejected Shaker participation in traditional dances or the participation of those committed to the older Indian Way in Shaker meetings. Complex negotiations of membership and identity occurred, as when the late Ella Norris, Yurok-Tolowa, moved to the Four Square Gospel Church both as an adherent to Biblical teaching and because Church members did not object to her participating in Brush Dances.

Thus, while Gould and Furukawa wrote in 1964 of the Shaker Church as the probable focus of Indian identity in northwestern California in the future, in 1966 Dale Valory confidently described the Shaker Church as having already reached its peak and beginning to ebb (Valory 1966: 67). In fact none of the three, all graduate students in anthropology at Berkeley in the mid-1960s, were entirely correct. Twenty-six years after Gould and Furukawa wrote, the Shaker Church has neither ebbed to insignificance nor does it form a primary religious focus for Indian identity today: not, at least, for the majority of the most visible and influential religious people in northwestern California.

Resurgence of The Indian Way

Among these people, often the modern descendants of the old “high families,” another option has all along been open, that of denouncing Christianity alto-

gether, as had their lineal ancestors in the nineteenth century and before the 1920s. This option became more attractive as the 1960s wore on and became the 1970s, a time that saw, in northwestern California as in much of Indian Country, a concerted effort among many to renounce the ways of the dominant society and return to "Indian" traditions. This renaissance was most evident among younger Indian people, but was certainly not limited to them.

Along with a burst of new enthusiasm for the Brush Dance, the 1960s also saw a profound regeneration of interest in the far more portentous Jump and Deerskin Dances at Hoopa, under the leadership of the elder Rudolph Socktish. In the 1970s Karuk Indians, led by another elder, Shan Davis, revived their equally solemn New Years "World Making," *pikiawish*, at Katimin, on the Klamath River. By the 1980s, Yuroks, under the guidance of the elders Dewey George and Howard Ames, both of whom trained in the sweat house at Pecwan in the 1930s, restored the Jump Dance at Pecwan. Slightly later in that decade, Tolowa Indians led by a protege of Sam Lopez were beginning to revive their own world renewal dance at Smith River.

In the 1980s, as younger men took over from elders who were rapidly passing away, almost as a group, the anti-Christian sentiment which had long been a feature of "high" or elite thought, came increasingly into prominence among, especially, Indian religious activists in their 30s and 40s and now responsible for most of the formal traditional leadership positions in the region: the "dance makers," "medicine men," singers and dancers, feasting "fire owners" and so on. Such sentiment extended naturally to the Shakers, who tend to be seen more simply as "Christians."

By 1989, Loren Bommelyn, a charismatic and respected craftsman and teacher who is an excellent singer as well, had come to regard anti-Shaker sentiment as counterproductive. At a large intertribal gathering in Arcata in the fall of 1989 he introduced an evening of singing by a dozen of the most noted Yurok, Karuk, Hupa and Tolowa Indian singers, old and young, with an impassioned plea for religious tolerance of the Shakers by those following both Christian and Indian Ways. He said that he himself was no longer a Shaker but that he fully respected the Church as an authentic Indian religious expression and urged others to do the same, opening the evening's singing with a solo Shaker invocation of remarkable beauty and power. It was a brave, virtuoso move on his part, before a audience of three hundred or so people, many well known for their anti-Christian sentiments, and his words and song were greeted with silent appreciation and respect.

Despite Valory's pessimism in 1966, Shakers remain a strong presence in the religious life of the region, even now attracting younger men and women who, for whatever reason, do not find the traditional Indian Way satisfying. To an extent, perhaps, the continuing vitality of the Church is due to the resolution of the Bible controversy in 1984. This long-standing dispute caused schism among the various churches in the region and was not fully resolved until 1984 when Harris Teo, the

Bishop of the Indian Shaker Church in California, stated categorically that "Bibles were not to be used or directly quoted in any Shaker church" (in Slagle 1985: 354). Shakers have also survived through becoming less rigidly opposed to members' participation in the Brush Dance and other Indian doings, or to members' ownership of traditional dance regalia. The once heretical participation in Indian dances by prominent Shakers came slowly and however reluctantly to be accepted by many. Most today are willing to grant the membership far more personal autonomy and discretion than was once the case. People tend to work out their own solutions to the cultural conflicts posed by Shaker and traditional involvements. For example, a well-known Hupa-Yurok artist, widely recognized as among the finest living makers of traditional dance regalia, an inspired and proselytizing Shaker, will not himself dance in any of the rituals for which he makes such fine regalia.

If the Shakers have become more tolerant of multiple religious commitments among their members, the same cannot, I think, be said of the traditionalists, particularly the younger ones now ascendant in the so-called (by Kroeber) "world renewal cult." Observation suggests that those coming into leadership positions in the big dances are increasingly clear—as their efforts become increasingly secured—in their rejection of the Shakers as religiously un-Indian. On the last day of the ten day Jump Dance at Pecwan in 1986, for instance, a "dance maker" refused to permit a Shaker to lead a Shaker prayer in the dance pit, saying that the dance was an Indian, not a Christian, occasion.

These things are serious matters in riverine northwestern California. They become the source of endless gossip and often become what people talk about for the two years until the next dance, when something new and equally scandalous may come up. I relate such sensitive matters only to support my conclusion that the Indian Shaker Church, while it continues to exist and even to attract new converts, has largely failed as a mediation of mainstream Christianity and the Indian Way. Indeed, the kind of syncretic fusion that it enabled—a revolutionary response to dispossession and white oppression—itself became a new old way, a "traditional" way that younger neo-traditionalists, like the dance makers at Pecwan and at Hoopa, putatively returning to the old old way, now reject as old-fashioned and reactionary. However, while the Indian Way is on the upsurge once again in Native northwestern California, as a Yurok acquaintance said of his peers, "We may be Indians, but we all die Christians." Shaker and other Christian practitioners have become the most widely accepted and appreciated purveyors of funeral rites, whatever the spiritual commitments of the deceased and his family—much as, in Japan, Buddhist priests have come to be known for the mortuary services that they provide bereaved families that are, at best, only nominally Buddhist (Chadwick 1994).

Despite the broad acceptance of Christian burial services, the broader pattern that I have been narrating reflects a widespread, national movement toward retribalization and the reclamation of purely local cultural and spiritual traditions

in lieu of continuing in the development of pan-Indianism, as offered by the Shaker and the Native American Churches. The dialectic between two sets of oppositions—being “Indian” as opposed to “non-Indian,” and being Yurok or Hupa, say, as contrasted with “Native American”—is a newly dynamic one. The Shakers are rejected by the new traditionalists not simply in continuance of perennial anti-Christian sentiment among the religious elite, but also in defense of purely local religious knowledge and practice, as distinct from pan-Indianism.

Conclusion

T. T. Waterman, a Berkeley anthropologist of the Kroeber era, made the astute observation in 1924 that “the shake religion of Puget Sound,” with its heavy “shamanistic” content, was most appealing to Indians whose indigenous religious practices were still strong; that is, where traditional doctoring was still practiced. Waterman further observed that it was this purely indigenous component of the new Christian sect that attracted influential traditionalists—like, slightly later, the Yurok Indian doctors (Waterman 1924).

There is a mild irony here. The Shaker Church was most successful in converting those who were most confident in traditional spiritual practices and who were most resistant to mainstream forms of Christianity, such as Presbyterianism in the Hoopa Valley. It offered an acceptable compromise at a time when, despite strong commitment to the Indian Way, that Way seemed to be in need of updating, in keeping with the radically changed circumstances of post-invasion northwestern North America that, for example, mitigated against the Yurok Indian doctors gaining the traditional sucking doctors’ full powers. The adaptation of Christian belief to Indian purpose among the California Shakers provided a means of “vitalization,” in Marian Smith’s insightful terms (Smith 1954: 122): of adapting still strong cultures to current circumstances, rather than of “revitalizing” moribund cultures (cf., Wallace 1956).

Be this as it may, the Shaker Church comprised a powerful vehicle of acculturation to non-Indian beliefs—especially, to hierarchical, oppositional dualism as found in mainstream Christianity and in such Shaker polarities as inside/outside, Heaven/earth, Shake/devil, and other such dichotomies. And it is such acculturation that has been resisted by the newer generation of traditional practitioners, with their more self-consciously holistic world views (cf. Buckley 1984). The process amounts to a dialogue with a by-now familiar structure.

Edward Bruner has examined the nature of ethnographies of North American Indians and found them to be “narratives” that we anthropologists share with the putative objects of our studies. Bruner claims not only that non-Native anthropologists and non-anthropologist Natives tell each other stories, but that we co-author the stories that we each tell: stories that emerge dialogically from our interactions (Bruner 1986).

Bruner argues that, up until the 1960s, Indians and anthropologists shared a narrative of Indian history that was structured by a scenario of past glory, tragic defeat, current cultural fragmentation, and eventual assimilation. Our co-authored story changed, he says, in the 1960s to follow a different scenario: past glory, oppression, current resistance, eventual resurgence. In fact, Bruner concludes, both stories are true and both are oversimplifications. Our histories are codeterminous and dialectical, rather than mono-causal and linear. A degree of assimilation, he argues, both gave Indian people the means of physical survival and, eventually, a profound commitment to resist further assimilation. This resistance both ensures cultural survival and brings the self-confidence and firmness of identity that allow communities to accept further, moderate degrees of change. So the two varieties of narrative both witness, Bruner concludes, codetermined processes in post-contact Native American history.

From this perspective the Shaker church has afforded the Indian people of northwestern California a holding action. That is, its voicing of Biblical Christianity was, of course, a (contested) means of ideational assimilation to non-Indian intellectual and spiritual culture, but the Church also served as a vehicle for the preservation and transmission of indigenous doctoring traditions in changing circumstances, as its pan-Indianism was both a source of cultural loss, through amalgamation, and of preservation of Indianness, through the Church's insistence on the "like-mindedness" of congregants and its inside/outside, us/them dualism.

Ironically, the success of the Indian Shaker Church in northwestern California in these particular directions has ultimately led to its own seeming decline. It has preserved an Indian focus that ultimately emerged in resistance to the Christian context within which it was preserved, in a new expression of old anti-Christian feeling, and in a return from pan-Indian engagement to localized, non-Christian religious practice. If the Shake was a "continuation" of the Indian Way, as the most respected members of the Church have always claimed, then, too, the resurgent local Indian Way must be viewed as a "continuation" of the Shake.

"And so it goes," as the anthropologically-trained fabulist, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., is fond of writing, I have reached the end of my story but not, I think, the end of the dialogic process that is its subject. In the past, anthropologists have written confidently about the imminent demise of Yurok Indian culture (A. L. Kroeber and Claude Levi-Strauss, in Valory 1966b), about the disappearance of "American Indians" and their replacement by "Indian Americans" in Native northwest California (Bushnell 1968) and, as we have seen above, about replacement of earlier Native spiritual identities with that of the Shakers. All of these predictions have been wrong and now, for my own part, I would not hazard a guess as to just where the process I have examined leads next. I tend to agree with the contemporary Onondaga Turtle Clan chief Oren Lyons when he says of non-Indians, "as long as the Indian nations exist, so will you. But when we are gone, you too will go" (1981:93). In the meantime, mainstream Christianity, the Indian Shaker Church,

and the Indian Way continue to coexist in Native northwestern California, however contentious such pluralism occasionally may be.

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Notes

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2. The English term "half doctor" alluded to the fact that, although the new doctors had been spiritually called and trained, they had not capped their training by passing an "examination" in the mountains, nor had they danced the Doctor Dance in their villages. Thus they had done only half of what was traditionally required—as a person who married without the exchange of full bridewealth was once said to be "half married."

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