

The Wilkins Ledger,
An Oglala Lakota Record
of the 1870s

A Report for Russell Kloer
Clear Sky American Indian Art
Sonoma, California

by Mike Cowdrey
2015

Acknowledgements

Linda Wilkins, a granddaughter of the collector of this ledger, has been a faithful conservator of this unique document of both American and Lakota tribal art-history. She is of the third generation of her family to have honored this important trust. Linda has been generous with her time, in answering many questions about her family's history, and in providing many of the documents and family photographs which appear in the Appendices. We admire her community spirit, and are grateful for her patience and many courtesies.

Russell Kloer immediately recognized the historical importance of the drawings in the Wilkins Ledger, and has worked for more than twenty-five years to preserve and further document them. He voluntarily undertook the arduous task of reading through ten years of microfilmed newspapers from territorial South Dakota, searching for the important clues to activities of Charles Wilkins during the 1880s, which appear in the Appendices. This analysis would have been far-less-complete, without his dogged determination. His perceptive recognition of this and other, primary documents, has been a signal gift to American historiography.

It has been my good fortune to work with both of them.

Mike Cowdrey
San Luis Obispo, California
July 2015

Family Provenance of the Ledger

Charles Abbott Wilkins was born at Manchester, New Hampshire, May 4, 1862, attending schools there, and later at Henniker. In 1883, at the age of twenty-one, he emigrated to Dakota Territory, at Le Beau, a steamboat stop on the Missouri River in present Walworth County, South Dakota (see **Maps I & II**, and Appendices, **Documents 1- 6**). After three years, he moved a few miles north, to the small community of Campbell, in present Campbell County, S.D., where he purchased property on which to plant wheat and oats (Appendices, **Document 12**), and raise horses (Marquis, 1909: 1015). By 1889, he was also employed as a Justice of the Peace in Campbell County (Appendices, **Document 18**). Among other duties, this gave him charge of the small jails at Mound City, and La Grace, a small trading community near the Missouri River, directly opposite the large, Standing Rock Indian Reservation, home of the Hunkpapa Lakota, a Western Sioux tribe. Their famous Chief, Sitting Bull (**Figure 1**), who had only recently returned to the United States after a five-year exile in southern Saskatchewan, following the Battle of the Little Bighorn, in 1889 was living on the Grand River, S.D., about 50 miles west of La Grace (see **Map II**). The Lakota people of Sitting Bull's camp often traveled to La Grace to trade, as it was the nearest White community to their camp. The Wilkins family tradition, passed down for three generations, is that Charles Wilkins obtained the ledger book of Indian drawings directly from Chief Sitting Bull. On one occasion when the chief was in La Grace, Justice of the Peace Wilkins offered him the overnight hospitality of sleeping in one of the beds at the jail, not as a prisoner, but as a courtesy, because there was no other accommodation available in the tiny town. The following morning when Sitting Bull departed, in gratitude he presented to Justice Wilkins the book of drawings.

In testing this provenance, a first problem is whether there is any other evidence that Sitting Bull ever visited La Grace, Dakota Territory. Another resident of the community testified that he did.

“Sitting Bull, Baby Tender” (*Boy's Life*, 1932: 34):

“Gidyap,” shouted my father at our team of sturdy oxen who were trudging slowly and clumsily along toward our trading post, La Grace. My mother and father were sitting in the front of our bulky old lumber wagon. Father was holding a long whip made of deer hide fastened to a strong elm stick of about four feet in length. Mother was holding Coda, our two-year-old baby. Coda was very cute, with dark brown, curly hair twisting tightly around her little head...Coda had a cunning little smile with a merry 'coo' and in other words, she was the pride of our family.

I was sitting in the back of the wagon with my sisters on a buffalo robe. I was thirteen years old and tall and sturdy for my age. We were going to La Grace to get our few necessities. I was going to get a knife, which I needed very badly and for which I had been saving up pennies that the soldiers had given me...to buy the much-prized implement. It was quite an event to go to La Grace for us children, as we seldom got to go.

La Grace was a small, white settlement with a store, a saloon, a post office, a blacksmith shop, a livery stable, a small church, and a few dwelling houses. La Grace was frequented often by the Sioux Indians who would go there to trade furs for trinkets and novelties. This settlement was on the rushing Missouri River and was a small port for steamboats,

As we neared La Grace, we noticed a large encampment of Sioux Indians . Their camp was in the form of a circle and the tepees were of various heights and were made of...skins. Each tepee was painted with numerous colorful characters, each having its definite meaning...

Our oxen drove up in front of the store and we piled out, tickled about the prospectes of having a good time. When we entered the store, I noticed a middle-aged Indian sitting with his legs crossed on the floor. He was smoking a long, red-stem pipe. This was the fearful Indian Chief, Sitting Bull. He had

straight, long black hair and a beaver hat upon his head. He wore deerskin trousers and was very gloomy and ill-humored looking.

Around this surley-looking old Indian was a group of boys about sixteen years of age constantly teasing Sitting Bull. They would pull his hair, make faces at him, cut off short locks of his hair and pull Sitting Bull's pipe out of his mouth and smoke it...

While the boys were aggravating him, Sitting Bull would not change his expression and kept the same, determined look, pretending not to notice the lads' actions. "How, cola," the boys would thrust at him; but nary an answer did they receive.

I really pitied Sitting Bull. I sympathized with him in my own mind, and wished that I were big enough to whip the mischievous youths.

Mother began to do her trading and placed little Coda on the counter, telling my sister Maud to tend her. Instead of watching Coda as she was told, Maud walked over to a nearby showcase and delightfully gazed...at some gay, colored glass beads. I was looking at the knives, feeling of the blades and interesting myself immensely.

After doing her trading, mother came back to the counter where she had left Coda with Maud to tend.

"Where is she? Why, where's little Coda? Oh dear---Maud!" she cried.

"Oh, I forgot to watch her. Honest, mother, it isn't my fault," Maud pleaded.

"Maybe brother has her. We'll ask him."

After I told mother that I had not seen the baby, mother became frantic. Questioning everyone in the store without results, mother went out to search for father.

While I was puzzling over the situation an old Indian squaw came up to me and said, "Sittin' Bull take kid."

"Where?" I demanded.

"To camp."

I dashed out the door and ran to the livery stable. "Sitting Bull took Coda!" I shrieked at my folks.

"Oh, he'll kill her or take her away forever. Oh dear, what shall we do? Do something!" screamed poor mother.

"Be calm, I'll get her if I have to kill every Indian in Dakota Territory," father assured.

Father hurried out and gathering a large group of men ventured toward the great chief's camp. I begged to go too, but all in vain---I might get killed.

The armed men marched fearlessly into the camp. Dogs barked and timid little Indian children would run and hide, while squaws would look curiously at the invaders.

The men went to the biggest tepee and father and a few others went in. The sight that they saw greatly surprised them, for there was Coda laughing and cooing at that dangerous chief Sitting Bull, and his wives who circled about Coda were making faces and playing with her.

Lest some might disdain a personal memoir that appeared in a youth magazine, the State of South Dakota has erected an historical monument on the site of the now-abandoned town of La Grace, which specifically documents the sometime presence there of Sitting Bull, as a visitor (**Figure 3**).

Is it possible to narrow the time frame, and place both Charles Wilkins and Sitting Bull together in La Grace at the same time? Not directly. After a thorough search of the surviving newspaper records for Campbell County, through the offices of South Dakota Historical Society, no direct mention has been found of Sitting Bull spending a night in the La Grace jail. However, the event was merely a courtesy, probably never of general knowledge, so the lack of any mention is rather to be expected.

On the American frontier, the 4th of July was always one of the rare holidays celebrated during the

19th century. In 1889, Dakota Territory had just been split in half, and the two, newest states of North and South Dakota admitted to the Union. The celebration of July 4th was, therefore, of special significance that year, and every community planned a large celebration. The June 14, 1889, edition of the *Campbell County Courier-Journal* carried the invitation on its front page: “*At La Grace on the 4th there will be a war dance by twenty-five Indians, also the thrilling sight of a cow boy riding an untamed broncho. All are invited to come. Full particulars next week. By order of Com[missioners]*”; and on an inside page: “*Come to LaGrace on the 4th and see the Indian war dance...LaGrace is just wild over the prospect for the 4th of July. Come, everybody*” (see Appendices, **Documents 15 & 16**).

In the issue of the same newspaper for Friday, July 5th: “Charlie Wilkins, of Campbell, was in town Tuesday” (Appendices, **Document 17**); and the following week: “The regular quarterly report of Chas. Wilkins, justice of the peace was presented and on motion was accepted and warrants ordered drawn on the County Treasurer as follows, viz:...Chas, Wilkins, Justice...\$10.70” (Appendices, **Document 18**). These reports demonstrate that Charles Wilkins would have been in possession of the keys to all of the county's jails---there might have been three---the previous week, when both he and “twenty-five Indians” invited as guests of the community were in La Grace. This is *not* direct proof of the Wilkins family tradition, but is strong evidence that the story is likely to be accurate.

Charles Wilkins always believed that Sitting Bull, *himself*, had done the drawings which he presented to his host. This was entirely reasonable. The Wilkin's family has always believed the same. That is also a proposition which is easily tested, because there are several collections of drawings done by the chief.

In the National Anthropological Archives, Washington, D.C., for example, is a collection obtained from Sitting Bull in 1882, while he was a prisoner-of-war at Fort Randall, South Dakota (see **Figure 2**). Compare Sitting Bull's horses with those in the Wilkins Ledger, say **Plates 16, 20 or 24**. Sitting Bull's horses are corpulent, short-necked and have curved bellies; while those in the Wilkins ledger are thin through the chest, long-necked and have the bellies drawn usually as a straight line. Sitting Bull's horses have oval eyes with a black pupil; those in the Wilkins Ledger are shown with round eyes that lack any pupil. The ears of Sitting Bull's horses are curved and separated; those of the Wilkins Ledger are straight, sharply-pointed, and side-by-side. In his human figures, Sitting Bull drew the thumb, and all four fingers splayed apart. The artist of the Wilkins Ledger represented hands in a unique way, always with the fingers closed into a fist, as viewed from the back, with four (rarely five) rounded knuckles. In more than forty years of studying Plains Indian drawings, only in the Wilkins Ledger has the author seen hands represented in this way.

It must be apparent, therefore, that despite the stated provenance of the Wilkins Ledger, Sitting Bull could not possibly have created any of these drawings. We must look, instead, to the drawings, *themselves*, to demonstrate the identity of their creator, through specific details that are elsewhere documented as referring to one, specific individual. In the essay which follows, many such details will be noted, all referring to a well-known Oglala Lakota mystic and spiritual leader whose name was Black Road. Before addressing his remarkable history, however, we must briefly review the journey of the “hostile” Oglala, after the defeat of General George Custer's 7th U.S. Cavalry, in June, 1876, in order to demonstrate how Sitting Bull could have acquired a ledger book created by Black Road.

Despite their great victory, the Indian allies were attacked several times by Army forces during the winter of 1876-77. In May, 1877, Crazy Horse's large village surrendered at Red Cloud Agency, near Fort Robinson, Nebraska. The Crazy Horse camp remained at Red Cloud Agency through the summer of 1877, until Crazy Horse was killed in September. Then all of the Red Cloud Oglalas were forced to

move far east to the Missouri River for the winter. During this migration, many of Crazy Horse's followers broke away, under the leadership of Big Road (**Figure 5**), and fled into Canada to join Sitting Bull's large village at Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan, where they remained for three years. Other members of the same Oglala band were He Dog (**Figure 8**), who had been the war partner, or “brother-friend” of Crazy Horse, and He Dog's stalwart brothers, as well as their favorite nephew Amos Bad Heart Bull (**Figure 9**), who would document in a ledger book of his own, the ceremonies of Black Road (Bad Heart Bull, 1967: 182-184 & 415). Other Oglala who were later closely associated with Black Road were Brave Heart (**Figure 15**) and Good Eagle (**Figure 16**)---Paul, 1994: 227 & 231.

The Big Road camp of Oglala exiles remained with Sitting Bull until the winter of 1880, when they returned and surrendered to Col. Nelson Miles at Fort Keogh, M.T. (present Miles City, Montana)---**Figure 4**. In the spring of 1881, near Fort Keogh, Black Road is first mentioned in an historical source as an “old Medicine Man” (he was forty-five), who directed a day-long, tribal ceremony with dozens of participants (Neihardt, 1932: 161-176). This was the now famous re-enactment of the visionary experience of a young man named Black Elk (**Figures 17 & 19**). Shortly afterward, Big Road's Oglalas were moved to Standing Rock Reservation, to join the other members of Sitting Bull's exiles, who had surrendered at Fort Buford. This put Black Road just across the Missouri River from Campbell County (then, still Dakota Territory), a year before the arrival of Charles Wilkins. Then in May of 1882, the Big Road band, including Black Road, were sent to re-join the other Oglala at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. There is no possibility that Black Road was ever in Campbell County, so he could never have encountered Charles Wilkins.

We cannot be certain how the transfer occurred, of Black Road's ledger book of drawings, to Sitting Bull. It might have happened any time during the three years in Canada, when Black Road was a guest in the other Lakota's village. Both men were mystics, undoubtedly interested in each other's sources of spiritual power. It is likely they visited. They might have participated in each other's sweatlodge ceremonies. The presentation of unusual gifts is a Lakota tradition, especially between leading men. And it was very clear to them all that the days of their independent life, and inter-tribal warfare were over. In an important sense, then, both men, who had been prominent war leaders, were out of a job. Black Road's Sacred Bow Warrior Society no longer had a function, so perhaps his book of careful drawings documenting its origin was no longer of real use. Or Sitting Bull might have expressed his admiration of Black Road's accomplishments, and the book was presented, in return, by a man who may not have had much else of a material nature to give.

Alternatively, it is possible that Black Road may have given his drawings to someone else, while the Oglalas were interned at Standing Rock, 1881-82. Sitting Bull was then being held downriver at Fort Randall, until 1883. After he was returned to Standing Rock, Black Road's book might then have been given to Sitting Bull by the earlier recipient. And when Sitting Bull felt the need to present a suitable gift, for a kindness received from Charles Wilkins, Black Road's incomparable creation once again changed hands.

Black Road

The artist and visionary who created the Wilkins Ledger was the son of a Sans Arc Lakota named Stinking Bear, who married a sister of the Northern Cheyenne chief Standing Elk (One Feather, 2014---**Figures 10 & 11**). Despite these separate tribal origins, by the 1830s, the couple were living among the Oglala. Black Road (**Figure 6**), their first son, was born in 1836 (**Figure 7**). He grew up in the same camps with men like He Dog and Crazy Horse, and like them became a prominent war leader.

In 1850, when Black Road was fourteen, smallpox struck the Oglala, and many other tribes on the Central and Northern Plains. The Lakota winter counts called 1850 the “Big Smallpox Winter” (Corbusier, 1886: 136 & 142). “*The Indian agent on the Upper Missouri reported that the Sioux talked constantly of all their people who had died of cholera and smallpox and bitterly blamed the whites for introducing these diseases...many chiefs and headmen had died in these epidemics, tribal control had relaxed, and good order could no longer be maintained in the camps, where hotheads and troublemakers were now free to do as they pleased*” (Hyde, 1961: 52, note 7).

Plains Indians, like most of humanity prior to the discovery of inoculation, had no defense against this contagion. The only viable strategy was quarantine. It is likely that Black Road's parents were both incapacitated, because---as will be shown in more detail, below---he was driven out of the Oglala village and left to die. Lying alone, probably beside some creek, as his fever raged he experienced a transformative vision that he believed was inspired by the Thunder, Lakota avatar of warfare. Somehow, the boy survived his abandonment and, doubtless covered in scars, rejoined the Oglala community. His survival, when so many others had perished, probably conferred upon him a special status, which he quickly improved in his late teenage years by a series of successful forays against the neighboring Crow.

Black Road was married to Brule Woman (b. 1841) in about 1866, during the Powder River War, the year of the Fetterman massacre. They had seven children, four sons and three daughters, including *triplets* (!) born in 1873 (**Figure 7**). The name given to Black Road's youngest son, one of the triplets, was He Has a Holy Sword. It is possible this had been a war nickname for Black Road, himself, as he shows very clearly in **Plate 16**.

Black Road had a younger brother, named for their father Stinking Bear (*Mato Hwimna*---Buechel 1970: 334 & 196). In 1907, Stinking Bear was interviewed by Edmund S. Meany, a researcher for the ethnographer Edward S. Curtis, then at Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, preparing Volume 4 of his *The North American Indian*. Although the Stinking Bear interview was not included in the printed work, Meany's transcript survives in the University of Washington Library, Special Collections.

“His brother Black Road wanted to go on war party, erected sweat house, called in medicine man. Black Road was at that time a war prophet. Long before, he had fasted and had a dream in which an eagle came and told him he would be his friend, and whenever he was in trouble or wanted to know anything, to build a sweat house and call on him in songs and prayers. Thus he became a prophet [See Plate 15, and compare Figure 27].

In the sweat house he erected that morning he repeated a song four times and a prayer four times in supplication to this eagle. [In Plate 15, note that the four wavy lines emanating from the corners of the firepit-altar in a sweatlodge radiate toward the Four Directions, and each passes by a bird associated with war, including two bald eagles. These wavy lines represent the quavering sound of the four songs/prayers of Black Road's sweatlodge ceremony.] When he got through with songs and prayers, he told people there was party of 10 Crows on way to Sioux village and that Sioux party would meet the Crows and kill all of them east of where Crow Agency is now on little creek east of the agency.

After sweating process was over, 45 Sioux started out on warpath. Met Crow party where prophesied, Crows having erected a sweat house, and Sioux killed all of them and took home scalps, when they had quite a war dance. Scalps tied on small [thin] sticks and squaws carry them in war dance” (Meany, 1907).

While no portrait of Black Road is known, something of his appearance may be glimpsed in several portraits of his brother Stinking Bear (**Figures 12 - 14**), who also had a successful war career.

“Long time ago [when] any Indian wants to go on the war path, he tells any special friend he has decided [to do this]. When night comes he will give war feast and ask the young men to come to the feast. All being noted, the first man announces he intends to take the war trail and asks that someone would follow him. The first, and the special friend are always considered the head men of war party.

Once he decided to go on war path and told his friend Hollow Wood [Figure 13] about it, and that evening they put pemmican in wooden bowl and he called in his four brothers and told them where he was going and said he would erect a sweat house in morning and have a medicine man forecast in it what was going to happen.

Next morning erected sweat house, got some rocks and heated them and put them in sweat house. Medicine man came in and took his knife and cut off grass to make smooth spot [a bare, earthen altar]. They could see nothing. It was all smooth. Medicine man put down [cover of] sweat house. He sang medicine song and repeat two or three prayers. As soon as tarp was raised they saw nothing but small horse tracks on [the earthen] plot. The place looked as though big band of horses went over this place.

Medicine man told him he would get so many horses from the enemy, and told him that Crow Indians were camping at head of Elk River [the Yellowstone].

Later, he and thirteen others started on war path. It took a few days to get to the place mentioned by med. man, where they found Crows camped. Waited till nightfall, crept on camp and stole something over 100 horses from Crow Indians. They reached home without encountering anything.

Just before they came in sight of Sioux village they dressed in war bonnets and rode through village calling out their own names and said they had brought home Crow horses. They went back and brought horses. The Indians in village took buffalo ropes and caught whatever horses they wanted.

Sioux were glad, because the war party had brought so many horses without losing a life, so they had quite a victory dance...

*....**Brother killed buffalo with bird's nest on neck...Indians kept that hair long time** [as sacred talismans---compare **Plate 9**, which depicts a brown-headed cowbird flying up from a buffalo cow as it is shot by Black Road]” (Meany, 1907).*

Further information about Black Road's family comes from the grandson of his brother Stinking Bear:

*“My ancestors on my mother's side were medicine men. Charlie Stinking Bear was my mother's father. His father, also named Stinking Bear, married two sisters of Chief Standing Elk [Figures 10 & 11]. The sisters were Northern Cheyenne, and also had some Yanktonai heritage. Stinking Bear was a noted bear medicine man, and used a bear paw in his healing ceremonies” (One Feather, 2014). **Plate 75** in the Wilkins Ledger, which shows a mystical connection with a black bear that could “blow” aside deadly bullets, may have been a depiction of the encounter in which Black Road's brother acquired his healing powers from a bear. The tipi in **Plate 86**, painted with the figure of a standing black bear, may have been created by Black Road specifically for his brother, in the nature of an “advertising shingle” announcing to the community his particular gifts. Black Road is elsewhere documented as a painter of mystical tipi compositions (Neihardt, 1932: 162).*

The Sacred Bow Warrior Society

Since he was a grandchild of the Cheyenne, as well as the Lakota, Black Road must have visited his mother's natal community, probably many times throughout his youth, when he would have observed the Contrary Warriors (**Figure 21**), with their distinctive bow-lances, forked support sticks and red body paint (Grinnell, 1926, II: 79-86). During his delirium while suffering with smallpox in 1850,

these images seem to have coalesced in Black Road's imagination with the Lakota traditions of his father's community, producing a vibrant, hybrid concept that revitalized the Oglala camps throughout the 1860s and 1870s.

At the age of fourteen, when he experienced this vision, Black Road was too young and inexperienced to be taken seriously by the Oglala leadership, so he doubtless bided his time, earned an impressive war reputation through concrete deeds, then around 1860, publicly announced the gifts he had received from Thunder, and initiated the Sacred Bow Warrior Society (*Itazipa Wakan Yuha Okolakiciye*, or Brotherhood of Those Who Own the Sacred Bow (Buechel, 1970: 239; 525; 637; & 392).

“The organization of the Sacred Bow among the Dakota...was a very definite and complete one...corresponding to the regular warrior societies in some respects, and yet having apparently a much deeper ceremonial and spiritual significance...”

I use chiefly information secured from two old men, He Dog and Short Bull (Figures 8 & 9), both prominent in the old native society and still highly respected members of the tribe.

The Oglala society of the Sacred Bow was originated in response to a vision by Black Road. When but a young man Black Road was driven out into the wilderness by the chief medicine man of the band because he had smallpox. In his solitude he dreamed of the Thunder beings instructing him as to the Sacred Bow. After his recovery he returned to his people and ceremonially organized the Sacred Bow society. He it was and he alone who appointed the carriers of the Bow.

*It is evident from conversation with He Dog, the oldest living old-time leader of the Oglala, that this medicine man was regarded with almost superstitious respect. 'He was a real magician,' said He Dog, 'a great medicine man.' He truly possessed medicines that healed and protected. His snake medicine was especially potent; when he used it on snake bites they did not even swell; and people came to him from far and near for help. No one knew the source of his power or knowledge, however: that he kept absolutely secret. **But, insists He Dog, he was the only medicine man to use snake symbolism** [compare Plate 83]. **His personal charm was the long-tailed deer [white-tail deer---compare Plates 44 & 45], apparently one source of his power; and in his role as medicine man he always carried a hoop** [compare Plate 75 and Figures 32 & 33]. *The Sacred Bow is the man's greatest single gift to his people...**

In its basic conception the Sacred Bow was doubtless borrowed from the Southern Cheyenne... [Unknown to Blish, Black Road's mother was a Northern Cheyenne, a sister of Standing Elk, a major chief (One Feather, 2014). The significance of this is that a knowledge of the Contrary Warriors, Cheyenne carriers of bow-lances, was part of Black Road's family legacy.]

The underlying motive of the Sacred Bow ceremony was preparation for war...Always...it was 'danced' primarily as war medicine...and performed as definite preparation for a specific warlike undertaking. Incidentally, the ceremony was performed only when some officer, having proved himself worthy in battle, wished to resign his post; and when new members of the rank and file were being taken in...

The officers of this organization usually numbered ten, the minimum being eight: always four bow-carriers and four hanger-carriers, two club bearers being usually added (Figure 7). The first four were in reality the leaders of the group. Appointment was governed by numerous and strict rules. Only men of unquestionable reputation for bravery, generosity and general integrity could even aspire to such office. The four hanger-carriers ranked next, their qualifications being much the same, but not quite so rigorous. These eight were truly picked men. The two other officers correspond in a certain sense to sergeants-at-arms: they, too, were bound to meet the constant requirement of high courage and fortitude. In keeping with the general almost superstitiously reverent attitude toward the whole institution, all officers commanded the deepest respect of their fellow tribesmen.

There were strict requirements to be fulfilled by the eight leaders if they would retain their offices. The bow-carriers were not allowed to use any metals, even their drinking vessels being of wood. Their bodies were symbolically painted red both in peace and in war. Most important, they had constantly to lead in battle, show extreme bravery, and strike at least one enemy with the bow in every encounter. If they carried their bows straight up in combat, they were not obliged to make a stand when hard-pressed; but under no circumstances might they retreat if they bore the emblems with spear-points pointed at the enemy. The hanger-carriers were not under 'metal-taboo' or no-flight regulations. Their bodies were painted yellow instead of red; otherwise the requirements were similar. Obviously, the lives of these eight men were distinctly strenuous. No one could endure the strain or the dangers long. So, while theoretically a man might hold office indefinitely (that is, until he were killed or voluntarily resigned by returning his instrument to the organization), in reality tenure of office was at most from two to four years.

After a man had proved himself unquestionably worthy in office, he might honorably return his emblem in token of resignation to the medicine man [Black Road], who immediately chose a successor. The Sacred Bow was then 'danced,' at once as an initiation and resignation ceremony, and as a pledge of fidelity. Appropriately but incidentally, prayer was made during its performance for the recovery of someone suffering from serious illness, or for power to fulfill vows manfully.

*The ceremony itself was known as itazipa wakan yuha ki inyan kapi [Itazipa(Bow)Wakan(Sacred) Yuha(to own)Kiinyankapi(They are racing)---Buechel, 1970: 239; 525; 637; 306], "the Sacred Bow [Owners are] racing." The generic term ki inyan kapi is appropriately descriptive of the ritual, which was a veritable endurance race with the officers as runners (see **Figures 23 & 25**). The sacred lodge of the society was placed at the center of a circular encampment, facing west. This was sacred ground; no one but the performers and the medicine man being allowed to enter during the ceremonial period. In front of it stood the sweat-house. **The four cardinal points were marked by stakes set up at the circumference of the camp circle, each bearing the image of a man representing an enemy [Figure 24].** The ceremony proper began as the runners in ceremonial regalia emerged from the sacred lodge [Figure 22]. Facing the west in single file, the men raised their right hands and blew upon eagle bone whistles in appeal to the Great Spirit: first the club bearers, then the hanger-bearers, last the bow-carriers [In his depiction, **Figure 22**, Amos Bad Heart Bull shows the Bow-Owners in the center of the file, between the Club-Bearers and the Hanger-Carriers.] Then the race began. No established order was essential once the ceremony had begun; each man ran his best and the first to arrive won. **The men ran first straight to the west and circled the enemy stake, striking the "man" symbolically with bows, hangers and clubs [Plate 64 & Figure 23];** then back to the lodge which they circled; then to the north and back to the lodge in similar manner; third to the east; and finally to the south. After circling the lodge for the fourth time, the runners left their regalia in proper ceremonial arrangement before the tipi (hangers erect and bows suspended from them), and then entered the sweat-lodge for their final purification. Then the ceremony was at an end. Considering the form of the ceremony and the size of the camp-circle---frequently a mile or more in circumference---one realizes that the ritual was a true test of endurance. [Blish misspoke, here: the Oglala summer encampments, comprising more than a thousand lodges, were more nearly a mile in diameter, rather than "circumference" (**Figure 25**).]*

*As the name of the whole institution indicates, the bow was its most prominent emblem [**Figures 22 & 23**]. It was never used in the manner of a regular bow. There were four of these instruments, all about four and a half feet long and all alike except for minor variations and for a difference in the type of wood: [choke]cherry, ash, willow and oak. The bow was double-curved and unstrung. Rattlesnake skins wrapped the wood, and strips of sinew were strung along it, bound firmly at the center of the two curves and at the handle at the center of the bow. At the centers of the curves were also fastened bunches of eagle plumes and small bags of medicine. At one end of the bow was a long spearpoint of flint. The most striking decoration, however, consisted in the feather banner which hung from the*

[upper] end. To a strip of buckskin of about an arm's length were fastened bunches of feathers of different kinds and colors: eagle plumes (not tail feathers) and covert feathers of various other birds. A rattlesnake skin was suspended from the banner near the bow; and from the lower tip of the banner hung two eagle tail feathers, attached to it by ribbons of bear gut, for when stretched and dried, bear gut has an iridescent surface and so was considered colorful and beautiful. The result was an unusual banner rather gorgeous in effect and a bow that was unique. [In **Figure 22 & Plate 64**, both Bad Heart Bull and Black Road concur by showing a *single* rather than paired eagle tail feathers suspended from the bow-lance banners. Both artists also clearly show that the lance points were triangular iron or steel. Black Road indicates three cross-tangs on the blade.]

The bow was always carried with the banner end uppermost, else the banner would be dragged; but it might be carried at an angle or perpendicularly. In the ceremony or in battle, the bow was held in the left hand, gripped firmly by the handle; but at all other times it was carried in the crook of the left arm and held by the right hand. At no time was it allowed to touch the ground, for it was sacred; and it was kept away from women. When out for ceremonial performances or for battle without being borne by its owner, it had to be laid upon sage or hung from its hanger. On other occasions it was kept in a strip of buffalo hide painted red, into which it must be placed ceremonially. Always before use it was passed through the smoke of burning sweetgrass to purify it.

[In addition, shortly after 1900, Clark Wissler learned: "The figure of the dragonfly was usually painted upon the bow and its support, as well as dots that represent insects that fly swiftly, and zigzag lines representing thunder. Feathers of the eagle, the magpie, the hawk and...all birds swift of wing were likewise attached to it...since they were swift in motion, and difficult to strike, they represented the qualities desired by the bearers of the bow. **These bows have long since passed out of existence**, but survived in models made for commercial purposes (Wissler, 1907: 51-52). In **Plate 66**, Black Road depicted the dragonfly figures painted on his own body.]

The hangers (four in number to correspond to the bows) were sticks of [choke]cherry or ash about six feet long, forked at one end and pointed at the other, and unadorned except for a coating of red paint and a single eagle tail feather hung by a buckskin thong from the longer prong of the fork. When the bows were not in use the hangers were usually stuck upright in the ground and the bows hung from the forks.

The other emblems of office were the two wooden clubs decorated with small banners made of hawk tail-feathers. They also were hung from the bow hangers.

*There were several other distinctive paraphernalia and paint markings. Probably the most noticeable was the head decoration: one of the most prominent forms of the founder's snake symbolism. A rawhide band cut in the shape of a snake, sometimes embroidered with porcupine quills, bound the head and unbraided hair of each dancer: through this, horizontally across the forehead, was thrust an eagle tail feather. [The snake headbands and cross-feathers are depicted in **Figure 22**. Compare **Plate 83**, and note He Dog's earlier testimony that Black Road was the only Oglala spiritual leader who employed snake symbolism.]*

Another interesting emblem was the small medicine hoop (cangleska), a miniature of one form of the Dakota sacred hoop. One was worn by each officer slung by a looped buckskin string from the left shoulder so that it hung at the right side. The hoop itself, about three inches in diameter, was cut from rawhide which was wrapped with a small buckskin thong. Buckskin also formed the web of the hoop, which consisted of four thongs painted blue. These radiated from a hooped center and divided the circumference into quadrants...Along one of the cross-thongs was fastened a tail of a long-tail deer [white-tail deer], and at the center was a small bag of Black Road's [herbal] medicine. Before every Sacred Bow 'racing' and before going into battle each bow-carrier put a pinch of this medicine in his mouth. No one except Black Road knew just what it was, but everyone knew that it was good medicine.

Less noticeable were the wrist and ankle-bands, made by matting together hair shed from the hump of a buffalo.

Each officer wore an eagle's wing-bone whistle on a rawhide cord around his neck. Near the whistle also hung the image of a spider, cut from rawhide. This was supposed to carry a certain kind of deadly poison. Without doubt, however, this use of the spider symbol was prompted...by the significant association of the spider with Thunder, that is, by the association of the spider with higher powers, powers that can protect and strengthen.

*The only other regalia common to all the 'dancers' were the **specially-trimmed moccasins; each instep having a beaded or quilled sign of a black-tail or white-tail deer track.** The unembroidered buckskin was painted red, and from the heel hung a deer tail.* [Very significantly, Black Road depicts himself wearing moccasins with these decorations, in **Plate 64**. As the foot is depicted in profile, only half of the black, track motif is seen. Compare **Plate 33**, where buffalo tracks seen from overhead are shown as two black, triangular shapes. It is likely that Blish was misinformed, or incorrectly assumed the animal "tails" attached to the moccasin heels were those of "deer." In **Plate 64**, these are represented as solid-black, so more probably were buffalo tails, like those worn by the Cheyenne Contrary Warriors which Black Road took as his model (**Figure 21**).]

Among the paraphernalia used only by bow-carriers was a tanned buffalo hide blanket about five feet square. Taken when the hair was short, i.e., just after the shedding, it was worn with the hair inside. Along each side of the robe, running from left to right (beginning at the top) a snake was painted. [Compare **Plate 6**, which is almost certainly Black Road's own depiction of a variant design for the painted robes prescribed for the four Sacred Bow Carriers of his warrior society. Clark Wissler illustrated yet another Sacred Bow Society robe motif---see **Figure 27**, bottom right.] *Just below the snake at the top of the blanket was painted a red-breasted swallow* [There is no such known bird. It is likely that the informant was trying to describe to Blish the red-shafted flicker, a "war bird" revered by the Lakota.] *The symbol of the dragonfly occupied the center of the robe. From the top near the middle hung two strips of buffalo hide painted red, like streamers down the back. The robe was the official garment of the bow-carrier, being worn whenever he was carrying the bow, except during the 'race' itself.*

The officers' horses also had special equipment in battle and on festal occasions. The rope used on a carrier's horse had to be woven by an old woman from three strands of buffalo hair. When finished it was about sixteen or twenty feet long and as large around as a woman's thumb.

In addition to all these regalia there was for men and horses definite ceremonial face and body-painting aside from the solid red and yellow already mentioned. The face-painting of the men consisted of a black or blue band drawn in a curve from temple to temple across the bridge of the nose. This was forked on each temple and represented lightning. [In **Plate 64**, Black Road depicts himself so painted, except the design is shown longer, so that the forked end of the lightning lies on the jaw.] *A crescent was drawn on the breast.* [Black Road, as Leader, does not show this crescent painted on himself, but the junior officers are shown wearing it, in **Figure 22**. Another reason the bird associated with the Bow-carriers was probably the flicker, is that it has a natural black crescent on the breast feathers---compare **Figure 31, bottom**.] *The joints (wrist, ankle, elbow and knee) of each 'dancer' were ringed with blue (a blue from a rock secured near Lusk, Wyoming). The mark was known as 'the blue rock mark' and symbolized the Winged God* [Thunder. Bad Heart Bull depicts these lines painted at the joints. In **Plate 64**, Black Road distinguishes himself with yellow bands painted at the elbows and knees.] [Footnote: Wissler (1907) describes all this and a variant face marking, but he does not mention the painting on the breast. The differences may be explained by the fact that these marks are dictated more or less by the individual 'dancer.' Wissler describes also two manners of arm and leg-painting in both of which the forked lightning symbol is the prominent feature, running down the arms and legs. My informants did not mention these. But again the seeming discrepancy may be explained by the differences in individual dreams.]

The markings of the horses were almost equally elaborate. White horses were painted red, dark horses white. Lightning symbols extended down the legs from withers and hips and were forked at the

hooves [In **Plate 66**, Black Road depicts himself actually applying these designs, with a “key” to each insect, bird or fish from which he obtained the protective element---see **Figures 28-30**.] *A so-called 'death line,' also representing lightning and therefore deadly swiftness, was painted across the shoulders in front of the rider and across the hips and flanks back of the rider. Two images of birds---the red-breasted sparrow [again, this most likely is a misunderstanding for the red-shafted flicker]---appeared inside the line in front of the rider. Two dragonfly symbols were drawn inside the line back of the rider. Dots or round spots, emblems of hail and storm, were painted on shoulders, hips, and flanks outside the 'death lines.'* [In **Plate 66**, Black Road depicts the “two dragonflies” painted on the black horse (the second would be on the opposite side). In **Figure 28, center, right**, Standing Bear, an Oglala participant in an 1881 ceremony directed by Black Road, depicted the horse he rode as painted with similar lightning lines and white hail spots.]

An outstanding fact about the decorations is that the symbols were almost entirely those of storm or death-dealing agents: lightning, wind, hail, the spider, snake, bear: forces that show no mercy. All others represented living creatures that possessed qualities greatly desired by the warrior. The eagle, hawk, swallow [sic], dragonfly, all possess great speed in flight and ability to strike swiftly and surely; and they seem to bear a sort of charmed life before bullets, arrows, hail and lightning, for one does not find them killed or injured by these forces.

But behind all this rather obvious and physical representation, there is a more deep-lying and significant spiritual symbolism. According to the story of origin, the instructions for the Sacred Bow society came from the Thunder beings. Consistently, most of the forces or creatures symbolized bore, according to Lakota belief, some direct or indirect relation to the thunder. Lightning, wind, hail---all storm elements---were definitely and directly associated with the Thunder beings, of course. The eagle, the well-known Thunder Bird, symbolized in this institution by wing-bone whistle, tail feathers and plumes, was one of the chief representatives of these sky forces. The buffalo, represented by the robe, the rope, the wrappings for the bow, etc., and its association with the Thunder need no explanation...Throughout, there is evidence of a feeling of close affiliation between the 'dancers' of the Sacred Bow and these spirits of high prominence in Lakota religion and philosophy, the Thunder beings.

The prominence of the long-tail deer and snake is chiefly due to their being among Black Road's personal charms, having come to him in dreams. The snake in Lakota lore primarily represented bad luck; bad luck in this case to the enemy. The fork-horned animals were considered particularly potent carriers of magic, prominently the long-tail deer. Doubtless, however, there was special secret significance attaching to them for Black Road which he never explained to anyone.

Every mark and every bit of regalia carried a charm of some sort against evil. Further, it announced to the enemy that he had more than a mere human foe to meet. But more than this, whether the significance of the figure used was primarily physical or spiritual, in all cases the symbol voiced a prayer for protection or for power against opposing forces, or for both.

*In its general outlines, the institution of the Sacred Bow was typical of Lakota organizations and conceptions. Beyond this it reflected significantly the attitude toward war as a part of everyday existence. **There seems, however, to have been something unique in the esteem in which the organization was held. As one speaks with various Indians about it, one is impressed with the awe and reverential respect it inspired, sentiments extended to the material instruments and the officers***” (Blish, 1934).

Implements of the Sacred Bow Warrior Society

With this background, we may now examine three surviving images (**Figure 24**) employed during the initiation ceremonies, the “Sacred Bow Racing,” of the Sacred Bow Warrior Society (**Figures 23**). As such, these were created about 1860, and figured at the heart of Oglala ceremonial life for the next,

two decades. We cannot be certain who the artists were. Stylistic differences suggest that more than one carver was involved. The effigies at left and right of **Figure 24** appear to be the work of the same artist; while the figure at center is by another hand. It is likely that Black Road, who is documented as making the bow-lances (Wissler, 1907: 51), was one of these artists. As the founder and only leader of the society, it is certain that Black Road “owned” all four of these effigies; would have kept them wrapped up and protected when not in use.

These images represent Crow enemy warriors reduced to their essentials, the head and the phallus. This can be seen specifically on the effigy in **Figure 24, right**, where the full body is represented. The limbs of these figures have been stripped away, because they are intended as a forecast of victory. Plains Indian people survived by a hunting economy. They were inured, from childhood, to the skills of rapidly butchering and dismembering game. This same knowledge and experience was applied to the bodies of any slain enemies, when hands and feet, even whole arms and legs, might be severed from the corpse and hauled in triumph back to their home camp, where they would be suspended as the focus for a Victory Dance. These effigies lack limbs, because that was the intended aim of the ceremonies in which they were employed.

During the “Sacred Bow Racing” initiation ceremonies, each effigy was lashed atop a tripod of poles. The four constructions were placed around the inner circumference of the summer camp circle, as shown in **Figure 23, top**. Black Road's own drawing of the initiation ceremony (**Plate 64**) may show an early protocol, when four entire tipis were erected at the four quadrants, to represent enemy camps. As the initiates raced around each of these enemy effigies erected on tripods, twelve or more men on each occasion struck the figures with their implements, either bow-lance, support hanger or war club, to demonstrate as a public vow to the thousands of surrounding spectators what they intended doing in the next battle. To have returned from battle *without* having succeeded in fulfilling those vows would have subjected the unfortunate individual to relentless ridicule. The “Sacred Bow Racing” was, therefore, the psychological imperative that drove its officers to succeed, or die in the attempt. This was the reason that, even half a century after the society had become defunct, those who had known it retained a feeling of “awe and reverential respect [toward] the material instruments and the officers” (Blish, 1934: 187).

Black Road and his brother Stinking Bear were present in the large Oglala camp on the Little Bighorn River that was attacked by George Custer's 7th United States Cavalry, June 25, 1876 (Wagner, 2011: 130). Black Road then was 42 years of age, so it is likely he was doing the same thing as all other middle-aged warriors, protecting the women and children, as a last defense, in case the younger warriors could not hold back the soldiers. Stinking Bear, ten years younger than Black Road, was one of those active, younger men. He rode with Crazy Horse, in the long flanking movement that circled Custer's position, then swept over Last Stand Hill to end the battle.

“Some of those old timers that were there, when it comes to hand-to-hand [fighting] they said the soldiers never stopped to take aim at you; they just shoot here and there, and the same time [they were] running. They saw many horses run over them and run over each other; it was quite a mess---really hand-to-hand...”

The Sioux say there was two [soldiers] come in [through the hanging powder smoke] about to rush them. The soldier came on...and had his gun by the barrel, and swung it and hit [one] indian down...[before they killed him]. One called Stinking Bear told it” (Stands in Timber, 2013: 403-04).

So at least one of the Sacred Bow Society warriors, who happened to be the brother of the society's founder, was on that lonely hilltop, at the end.

Cultural Elements of Lakota Society

The Wilkins Ledger comprises an “index” of Lakota social customs of the 19th century. Only the ledger drawings of Black Road's young neighbor, Amos Bad Heart Bull, approach a similar, comprehensive picture of the whole society.

The Kit Fox (*Tokala*) Warrior Society

In addition to his own organization, and probably because of the similarity of bow-lances employed, Black Road appears to have also been a member of the Kit Fox (*Tokala*) Warrior Society, perhaps as an elder advisor. In **Plates 62 & 63**, he depicted the two Councilors, or Pipe Carriers of the organization, possibly the office he occupied. While Bad Heart Bull depicted the Kit Fox honorific weapons as four bow-lances (**Figure 18, top**), Clark Wissler's informants spoke of two bow-lances, and a straight and crooked lance, each wrapped with strips of otter fur (Wissler, 1912: 15). This is precisely what Black Road shows (**Plates 62 & 63**). Black Elk and Standing Bear, who as youths in 1881 were instructed by Black Road, apparently were also Kit Fox Society members. They were photographed together in 1931, each holding one of the *Tokala* otter-wrapped lances (**Figure 19**).

The standard, English translation of “*Tokala*” as meaning “kit fox” is misleading. Black Road's important drawing shows us that rather than the “kit fox” species, which has legs that are colored light grey, and a black-tipped tail, the canid skin employed by the *Tokala* was actually the *kit* (pup) of the **red fox** species (*Vulpes vulpes*), with black legs and a white-tipped tail (**Figure 20**).

The Sweatlodge Ceremony

In constructing the framework for a domed sweatlodge, the place at the top, center (viewed from above), where the willow saplings cross, forms a square or rectangle with concave sides (**Figure 26**). The same figure, which represents *Yumnia*, the cleansing power of the Whirlwind (Buechel, 1970; 644), is created directly below, in a shallow, excavated pit in which are placed the red-hot rocks on which water is poured to create a cleansing steam. The *Yumnia* pit, as depicted by Amos Bad Heart Bull, is shown in **Figure 27, top**. The same motif depicted in **Plate 74 (Figure 27, bottom)**, connotes an overhead view of a sweatlodge, even though the artist solved the problem of overlapping imagery, by eliminating the willow framework altogether. This image is tied directly to Black Road by his brother's description of “four songs/prayers,” offered by Black Road, represented by the diverging, wavy lines; and the eagle mentors to which these invocations are directed. Further, the same shape was painted on robes worn by officers of Black Road's Sacred Bow Warrior Society (**Figure 27, bottom right**).

Thunder War Paint for Protecting Men and Horses

Plate 66 is one of the most-important of Black Road's drawings, in which he has detailed a whole catalog of protective influences, each discerned through visionary contemplation, and applied to guard or gird specific areas of the anatomy of a horse ridden to war. He Dog described to Helen Blish (1934) precisely this design of painted motifs, as they were employed by Black Road; and in this drawing he shows himself in the act of applying them---note the wavy line leading directly from his right hand to the white lightning line painted across the rump of the horse. The concept combines the “lifting” powers of birds, and flying insects, with the slipperiness of an albino catfish. **Figures 29 & 30** show the actual, South Dakota species represented. Compare **Plate 43**, which shows the source of “sure-

footedness” that Black Road is transferring, here, to the feet of a war horse.

An Elk Dreamer Ceremony

*“All persons dreaming of elks, or the elk cult [if they see the painted lodge, or an animal mask in their dream] are required to perform the ceremony and give a feast to the members...anyone may join in the dance, but only the dreamers can sing the songs and take the leading parts. A special tipi is set up (at left, in **Plate 75**). At the proper time the dancers appear in their regalia. They wear peculiar, triangular masks made of young buffalo skins, with a pair of branches trimmed to represent elk's antlers. These are wrapped with otter fur to represent horns 'in the velvet.' as the immature horns of the elk are described. They carry a hoop [with] two cross-cords, supporting a mirror at the center. These mirrors are believed to have magical powers and to throw or shoot their influence into all they oppose; so, as they dance about the camp circle, they stamp a foot and flash sunlight [like a bolt of lightning] from the mirror at persons in sight. This is supposed to put the victim in the power of the elk cult...*

Among the Oglala the elk was regarded as endowed with special powers over the females of its kind. The dreamers of the elk are supposed to be privileged to steal women...They profess to be familiar with the weakness of women and to know how to persuade them. They have a song:

*I throw a hoop,
It crushes anything it [touches].
I turned a whole tribe (that is, their thoughts, or prejudices).*

An elk dreamer makes a feast for the rest, when they sing and make medicine for procuring women (win cuwa) [women, hunting]. For this, they take the white part of the eye of an elk, or part of the heart, the inside gristle from the projection of the fetlocks, or the hind feet, and mix it with [herbal] medicine. The flute and the mirror are regarded as powerful accessories in using such charms.

At the feast, the elk dreamers are all invited...In the ceremonies, a member may get up, act like an elk and run about the tipi. When the people look at his tracks, they see genuine elk tracks. When a new member is inducted, they set up a tipi in the woods far away from the regular camp circle. There the members paint themselves yellow, and black from the elbow down and from the knee down, and put on the headdress. They spread fine earth over the floor of the tipi and walk out so as to make elk tracks” (Wissler, 1912: 85-88).

Most of the details mentioned in this description may be seen in **Plate 75**. Similar examples are shown in **Figures 32 & 33**. The elk, which amassed large harems of females, conferred similar abilities on its acolytes; hence the many, extra-marital liaisons appearing throughout Black Road's record: **Plates 67, 41, 37, 25, 11, & 5**.

Deer Dreamers

As deer are similar species to elk, many of the same, symbolical powers were attributed to them. He Dog, quoted above, reported that deer had “special, secret significance...for Black Road,” and that is reflected by his many drawings of them: **Plates 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, & 31**.

Buffalo Dreamers

*“There was a group of men and occasionally a few women known as the buffalo dreamers (Tatang ihanblapi kin). When they had their dance a shaman would appear in the head and skin of a buffalo (**Figure 35**). As he ran about the camp a nude young man [shown in a drawing by Bad Heart Bull,*

Figure 36, top], stalked him...At the proper time the hunter discharged an arrow into a spot marked on the buffalo hide (shown in Plate 33). The shaman would then stagger, vomit blood and spit up an arrow point...Later, another shaman would use medicine (pejuta), pull the arrow out and at once the wound was healed. In the regular ceremonies while the drumming is going on, the members bellow like buffalo, and some stamp a foot leaving buffalo tracks upon the ground” (Wissler, 1912: 91-92).

Most of these elements have been depicted by Black Road in **Plate 33**. What may be less obvious is that **Plate 61** is intended as part of the same scene. The author believes that the stuffed skin of an adult mole (compare **Figure 39**), and all the buffalo tracks, represent an inside, overhead view of the earthen altar covering the floor of the tipi from which the Buffalo Dreamer has just emerged in **Plate 33**. This was a sanctified space, that few others got to see. It was both a "dressing room," and also a "Control Room," wherein the Spirit of the supernatural Buffalo who had conferred the vision empowering Black Road, *made* him invulnerable to bullets or arrows.

During the long performance when Black Road was dressed in the buffalo costume and marching around the entire summer village, with crowds of spectators, he would be trailed and eventually "shot" by a "hunter," either with an arrow or a bullet, (note the circle on the buffalo skin, where this missile has penetrated Black Road's body), when he would "cough up" real blood, as shown in the drawing (the only blood depicted in the entire ledger, save for the wolf attack in **Plate 12**), but would emerge unscathed at the end of the journey. In Bad Heart Bull's drawing of a similar ceremony (possibly the SAME occasion, since they were from the same band of Oglala), the "hunter" following the Buffalo Dreamer is also shown (**Figure 36, top**).

A real Buffalo Dreamer---one who had the genuine power to heal people from piercing wounds and broken bones (commonly suffered during buffalo hunts)---would also be able to leave "buffalo tracks" on the ground as he walked, which all witnesses would be able to examine for themselves. The tracks were part of the PROOF that he was MORE than a man, with the Buffalo Spirit's Power residing within his body. Such a performance was comparable to the "orals" of a physician in our own day. Black Road shows us that he was such a man. The ceremony depicted was comparable to a physician "hanging out his shingle"---announcing that he was available to help the injured.

The reason that moles (also, pocket gophers, compare **Figure 38**) are related to buffalo in the Lakota view of the Cosmos, is that buffalo were believed to be bred *under* the earth in sacred caves, and periodically released for the benefit of the Lakota people, in response to elaborate prayers such as the Sun Dance, and other ceremonies. Moles make their own tunnels and caves under the earth, so they are the symbol of Earth Power---that which makes things grow, and can also heal. Crazy Horse, in preparing his horse before any battle, sprinkled it with dirt gathered from a mole hill. The puzzling, wrinkled figure in **Plate 14**, which depicts a new-born mole (compare **Figure 40**), tells us that Black Road was so obsessed with learning about "Mole Power," that he actually excavated a mole's burrow, down to the "nest," which new-born animals never leave, because they are both blind and vulnerable.

The row of eight concentric circles across the left side of **Plate 61**, represent "whirlwind" motifs---compare **Figure 37**. They are included on the earthen altar "painting", because a running buffalo herd creates both the sound of thunder, and huge clouds of dust. A whirlwind is the structural analog (in the sky) of the mole & buffalo tunnels, under the earth. The Buffalo Ceremony is uniting Power from the Above World and the Below World in *one man*, for the benefit of injured Lakota in *this* world.

Note the single, miniature buffalo track at far right, returning to the earthen womb of the cave: not *all* the buffalo have been called forth by Black Road's ceremony. Simultaneously, MORE buffalo

calves have been "planted," or returned to the Sacred Cave, for "next time." That is the reason the tiny buffalo track is shown "going back."

Compare Black Road at work in a similar situation, with an earthen altar and "Sacred Tipi" as the focus of an elaborate performance for the young Black Elk (**Figure 17**), at Fort Keogh, in 1881:

"There was a man by the name of Bear Sings, and he was very old and wise. So Black Road asked him to help, and he did.

*First they sent a crier around in the morning who told the people to camp in a circle...They did this and **in the middle of the circle Bear Sings and Black Road set up a sacred tepee of bison hide**, and on it they painted pictures from my vision...It took them all day to do this, and it was beautiful...*

That evening Black Road and Bear Sings told me to come to the painted tepee. We were in there alone, and nobody dared come near us to listen. They asked me if I had heard any songs in my vision, and if I had I must teach the songs to them. So I sang to them all the songs that I had heard in my vision, and it took most of the night to teach these songs to them...

[The next morning, all of the performers in the ceremony, and all of their horses, were painted, outside the Sacred Lodge.] *All this time I was in the sacred tepee with the **Six Grandfathers**, and the **four sacred virgins** were in there too. No one outside was to see me before the dance began.*

*Right in the middle of the tepee the Grandfathers made [an earthen altar] **a circle in the ground with a little trench, and across this they painted two roads---the red one running north and south, the black one, east and west. On the west side of this they placed a cup of water with a little bow and arrow laid across it; and on the east they painted the daybreak star...***[Then the performers all left the tipi---the **Six Grandfathers last**---and the lodge was closed.]

[After the conclusion of the long performance re-enacting Black Elk's vision]...*the riders all yelled 'hoka hey,' and charged upon the tepee...*

Then the horses were all rubbed down with sacred sage and led away, and we began going into the tepee to see what might have happened there while we were dancing. The Grandfathers had sprinkled fresh soil on the nation's hoop they had made in there with the red and black roads across it, and all around this little circle of the nation's hoop we saw the prints of tiny pony hoofs as though the spirit horses had been dancing while we danced..." Neihardt, 1932: 162-175].

This "prophesying" [or "Christmas morning"] aspect, using earthen altars with impressed & painted designs, is a common feature of many Lakota ceremonies. Additions and alterations to the altar areas are understood to be generated by spiritual entities, to reify the abilities of the performers, and also to predict future events that the ceremony was designed to foster.

So, not only is the drawing of buffalo hooves surrounding the mole skin in **Plate 61** linked to the Buffalo ceremony in **Plate 33**, by the buffalo tracks proceeding from the door of the Sacred Tipi; but the drawing and the ceremony depicted were created by the same Black Road, who created a similar earthen altar for the "Horse Dance" ceremony of Black Elk. In both the written description and the drawing depictions we are seeing the "psychological practice" of the same, Lakota healer.

Painted Tipis

Black Road is documented as making a specially-painted tipi for the ceremony of Black Elk in 1881. Four other painted lodges appear in the Wilkins Ledger (**Figure 41**). One, in **Plate 84**, with the same motif of white lightning on a black ground, seen on the war horse in **Plate 66**, was almost certainly either Black Road's home tipi; or the meeting place of the Sacred Bow Warrior Society. In either event, the “lady of the house” represents Black Road's wife, Brule Woman. She appears again, in nearly the identical clothing, in **Plate 67**---compare **Figure 42**.

In **Plate 4**, as speculated earlier, the tipi painted with a standing black bear may have been created for Black Road's brother Stinking Bear.

A Women's Society Ceremony

Various women's societies, most of which were little documented by the mostly-male ethnographers of the late-19th century, existed in Lakota communities (**Figure 43**). Some were adjuncts of the warrior societies, composed of wives or sisters. Others were purely social. Women who had accompanied a war party was another category. That may be what Black Road depicted in **Plate 67**, suggested by the wolfskin elevated on a pole. A wolf or coyote skin was the universal insignia of the scout for a war party. Its muzzle has been painted red, as if with blood; and an enemy scalp is attached to the maw. It is likely the occasion was connected with the Sacred Bow Society, for the woman at right is Black Road's wife, dressed nearly the same as in **Plate 84**.

Weapons and Male Accoutrements

Cavalry Sabers, Figures 44 & 45

Army surplus weapons were commonly available through Indian trade outlets. Sabres were widely favored, not always for the obvious reason of utility. The blades also could be used to flash sunlight, which was similar to shooting lightning at the foe. Black Road depicted himself carrying a favorite saber in several drawings. He may also have named his youngest son for the weapon---see **Figure 7**.

Spencer Carbine, Figures 46 & 47

Black Road must really have favored this firearm, for it appears in many of his self-portraits, always recognizable by the bulge below the hammer.

Colt Army Percussion Revolver, Model-1860 Holster, Figures 48 & 49

While Black Road was usually an innovative and careful artist, all of the pistols he represents are too generic for us to be certain of the model. A further clue which may be helpful is that the black-leather holsters he portrays are a pretty close match for the Model-1860. Colt Army Percussion Revolver..

Pipe Tomahawk

Only one of these is shown, in **Plate 37**. It is depicted with a “bleeding heart” cut-out in the blade, and a triangular flap covered in blue seed beadwork pendant from the haft. Compare **Figure 50**.

War Shield, Plate 52

Only one of these is shown, so it is a near certainty that it belonged to Black Road. Like many Plains Indian shields, it had multiple covers. The plain blue one would have been the outer, utility cover, always protecting the others and their eagle-feather attachments, except when riding into battle. **Figure 51** illustrates two actual shield covers which have motifs very similar to those of Black Shield. The buffalo figure on a red ground would have been the inner cover; while the jack rabbit figure shown between parhelia (“Sun Dogs”) is the actual design painted on the rawhide. It might seem counter-intuitive to prefer a rabbit, over a buffalo bull. Rabbits, however, were the common bait used to lure eagles to a pit-trap. A hunter would crouch in a pit perhaps 4 feet deep, with the top covered and camouflaged by a screen of branches, grass or leaves. The carcass of a dead rabbit was placed atop the screen. When an eagle or hawk landed on the bait, the hunter would quickly grasp its legs, trying to avoid the talons, and pull the bird down into the pit, where it would be suffocated. Using the same paradigm on a war shield was intended to attract the enemy to his doom.

Grimsley Dragoon Saddle, Model-1845

It is truly remarkable that Black Road was able to retain in his memory the proportions and shape of this saddle, and then to reproduce it so closely, and at a tiny scale. The circumstances of the drawing in which it appears, **Plate 43**, indicate that the saddle wasn't captured (for leisurely contemplation), and was glimpsed only by firelight while the associated horse was spirited away.

Mammals, Reptiles, Birds & Insects

Among the important aspects of the Wilkins Ledger is the careful documentation of the Plains biosphere, by a man who was curious, an astute observer, and with an artistic gift for capturing the essence of a quickly-moving creature in a few lines, often at a surprisingly-small scale. This comprises the largest zoological selection we have seen by any Plains Indian artist. Commentary, where pertinent, may be found with the Figure captions.

Mammals

- Badger (*Taxidea taxus*), **Figure 67**
- Beaver (*Castor canadensis*), **Plates 52 & 3**
- Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis*), **Figures 62 & 63**
- Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*), **Plates 77, 15, & 16**
- Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), **Figure 65**
- Buffalo (Bison bison), **Figures 58-59, Plates 39 & 9**
- Coyote (*Canis latrans*), **Plate 85**
- Dog (*Canis familiaris*), **Figure 53, Plates 7 & 18**
- Elk (*Cervus elaphus*), **Figure 60**
- Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*), **Plate 12**
- Horse (*Equus ferus caballus*), **Figures 54-57**
- Jack Rabbit, black-tailed (*Lepus californicus*), **Figure 69**
- Mole (*Scalopus*), **Plates 61 & 14**
- Mountain Lion (*Felis concolor*), **Figure 64**
- Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), **Plates 45, 46, & 47**

Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), **Figure 70**
Prairie Dog, black-tailed (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), **Figure 68**
Pronghorn Antelope (*Antilocapra americana*), **Figure 61**
Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), **Plate 62**
River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*), **Figure 66**
Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), **Plates 14 & 87**
White-tail Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), **Plates 46 & 47**

Reptiles & Fish

Channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*)
Bull Snake (*Pituophis catenifer sayi*), **Figure 71**
Collared Lizard (*Crotaphytus collaris*), **Figure 72**
Painted Turtle (*Chrysemis picta*), **Figures 73**
Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), **Figure 74**

Birds

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), **Figure 78**
Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), **Figure 76**
Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*), **Figure 85**
Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), **Figure 58**
Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), **Figure 81 & Plate 77**
Chicken (*Gallus gallus domesticus*), **Plate 13**
Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), **Plate 56**
Ferruginous Hawk, dark-phase (*Buteo regalis*), **Figure 77 & Plate 53**
Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), **Figure 75**
Golden Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*), **Figure 86**
Great-Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), **Figure 80, Plates 4 & 35**
Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*), **Figure 84**
Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*), **Figure 86**
Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), **Figure 31**
Raven (*Corvus corax*), **Figure 77**
Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), **Figure 86**
Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*), **Figure 82**
Turkey (*Melagres gallopavo*), **Plate 13**
Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), **Figure 79**
Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*), **Figure 83**
Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*), **Figure 86**

Insects

Ant (?), **Plate 65**
Butterflies
Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*), **Figure 29**
Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), **Figure 29**
Regal Fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*), **Figure 29**
Two-tailed Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio multicaudata*), **Figure 29**
Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio nutulus*), **Figure 29**

Dragonflies, **Figure 30 & Plate 66**

Mosquito, **Plate 69**

Moth

Bluish Spring Moth (*Lomographa semiclarata*), **Figure 29**

Spider, **Plates 65 & 75**

Tick, **Plate 30**

Conclusion

The ledger book filled with Lakota drawings, collected by Charles A. Wilkins in South Dakota in the late-1880s, contains unique information that identifies its creator as a prominent Oglala named Black Road. A mystic, visionary and noted healer, Black Road founded the paramount military organization among the Oglala during the 1860s & 1870s, the Sacred Bow Warrior Society. In a self-portrait, he depicted himself directing the initiation ceremony of that organization. His drawings reveal a student of the natural world, always searching for analogs that might be employed to protect and benefit his people: how to harness the whirlwind, to blow away illness, or to shield and protect a horse ridden to war. How to use one species of snake to counteract the poison of another; or to smite an enemy with lightning. How to call eagles into a sweatlodge ceremony, to gain a “bird's eye-view” of terrain and enemy movements. How to impart the erratic essence of butterflies and dragonflies, to lift a war horse away from danger. In the words of the famous Oglala chieftain He Dog: “He was a real magician, a great medicine man” (Blish, 1934: 180). In no other collection of Plains Indian drawings known to the author may be found so much of the *processes* underlying the mystical practice of Lakota visionaries. This is a uniquely-important document of Lakota religion, that also details the perceptions of a prominent Oglala leader during the mid-19th century.

Bibliography

Bad Heart Bull, Amos (Helen H. Blish, ed.)

1967 *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Blish, Helen H.

1926 "Ethical Conceptions of the Oglala Dakota." *Nebraska University Studies*, Vol. XXVI, Nos. 3-4: 79-123.

1934 "The Ceremony of the Sacred Bow of the Oglala Dakota." *American Anthropologist*, 36: 180-187.

Buechel, Rev. Eugene, S.J. (Rev. Paul Manhart, S.J., ed.)

1970 *A Dictionary of the Teton Dakota Sioux Language*. Pine Ridge, S.D.: Holy Rosary Mission.

Chaney, Brenda L.

1984 "Swords in the Western Fur Trade." *Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 2.

Cogswell, Leander W.

1880 *History of the Town of Henniker, Merrimack County, New Hampshire*. Concord, N.H.: Republican Press Association.

Corbusier, William H.

1886 "The Corbusier Winter Counts." In *Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1882-83: 127-147. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Ewers, John C.

1986 *Plains Indian Sculpture*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Grinnell, George Bird

1923 *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Ways of Life*. 2 Vols. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Henniker Historical Society

1980 *The Only Henniker On Earth*. New Canaan, N.H.: Phoenix Publishing.

Henniker, New Hampshire

1908 *The Town Register: Henniker, Bradford, Warner and Hopkinton*. Augusta, Maine: Mitchell-Cony Company, Publishers.

1938 *Annual Reports of the Receipts and Expenditures of the Town of Henniker, New Hampshire*. Henniker, New Hampshire: The Maxwell Press.

1941 *Annual Report of the Town of Henniker*.

Hyde, George

1961 *Spotted Tail's Folk: A History of the Brule Sioux*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Kingsbury, George Washington

1915 *History of Dakota Territory*. 2 Vols. Chicago, Illinois: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company.

Kroeber, Alfred L.

1902 "The Arapaho." American Museum of Natural History, *Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII. New York.

Marquis, Albert Nelson

1909 *Who's Who in New England*, Vol. 1. Chicago, Illinois: A,N, Marquis & Company.

McClure, P.F.

1887 *Resources of Dakota...Compiled by the Commissioner of Immigration*. Department of Immigration and Statistics, Pierre, Dakota Territory. Sioux Falls, D.T.: Argus-Leader Company Printers.

Mallery, Garrick

1893 "Picture Writing of the American Indians." In *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1888-89: 266-238*. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Meany, Edmund S.

1907 "Interview with Stinking Bear, Pine Ridge, S.D., July." University of Washington Library, Special Collections, Seattle. Online:
<http://amertribes.proboards.com/thread/2065/stinking-bear>

Morrell, Warren

1932 "Sitting Bull, Baby Tender." *Boy's Life*, January: 34.

Neihart, John G.

1932 *Black Elk Speaks*. New York: William Morrow & Company.

One Feather, Gerald (Tom Katus, ed.)

2014 "Biography of Gerald One Feather." *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, 9 November.

Paul, R. Eli

1994 "The Investigation of Special Agent Cooper, and Property Damage Claims in the Winter of 1890-91." *South Dakota History*, Vol. 24, Nos. 3 & 4.

Pearson, Harlan C.

1912 *Biographical Sketches of the Members of the New Hampshire Constitutional Convention of 1912*. Concord, New Hampshire: Thomas J. Twomey, Publisher.

Stands in Timber, John (Margot Liberty, ed.)

2013 *A Cheyenne Voice: The Complete John Stands in Timber Interviews*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Waggoner, Josephine (Emily LeVine, ed.)

2014 Witness: A Hunkpapa Historian's Stronh-Heart Song of the Lakotas. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Wagner, Frederic C.

2011 *Participants in the Battle of the Little Big Horn: A Biographical Dictionary*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Ltd., Publishers.

Winship, George Parker

1896 "The Coronado Expedition, 1540-1542." *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Wissler, Clark

1907 "Some Protective Designs of the Dakota." American Museum of Natural History, *Anthropological Papers*, Vol. I, Pt. II. New York City.

