

**Discordant Voices, Conflicting Visions:
Ojibwa and Euro-American Perspectives on the Midewiwin**

by

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**DISCORDANT VOICES, CONFLICTING VISIONS:
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MICHAEL R. ANGEL

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
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ABSTRACT

According to Anishinaabe tradition, the power to promote, restore and prolong life was a gift which had been given to their forefathers in times past by *Nanabozho* when he had taken pity on their sufferings. *Mide* elders with special healing powers passed on teachings concerning right living, the properties of special herbs and roots, and associated prayers, songs and dances to be used for ceremonies. Candidates were initiated into the *Midewiwin* society in a ritual drama which centred around the "shooting" of the initiate with a sacred shell or *miigis*. *Mide* leaders were respected and feared by other members of the Anishinaabeg since the powers thus obtained could be used both to aid and to harm other individuals.

Euro-American accounts of the *Midewiwin*, or Grand Medicine Society, have focused primarily on the initiation rituals of the ceremony itself. The earliest surviving written accounts were created to impress audiences with the exotic nature of the rituals, which were often felt to be inspired by demonic forces. Succeeding generations of Euro-Americans documented the ceremonies in more detail, believing that such "primitive" practices would shortly die out as the Anishinaabeg became acculturated. Most Euro-American studies have focused on the *Midewiwin* as practiced at a particular time and place, rather than considering the *Midewiwin* within the wider context of Anishinaabe culture.

This study demonstrates how the conflicting visions of Anishinaabe practitioners and Euro-American interpreters have resulted in widely divergent views of the same institution. The focus is on the *Midewiwin* as practiced by Ojibwa groups in the nineteenth century, since this was the formative period for Euro-American beliefs regarding the *Midewiwin*. However, the study also places the *Midewiwin* within the context of the broader Anishinaabe world-view, and traces some

of the changes to the *Midewiwin* that occurred both among the Ojibwa and their Anishinaabe neighbours.

Based on these analyses, it is clear that the *Midewiwin* is an Aboriginal institution, although over the years it has adopted some Euro-American concepts. These adaptations, along with other changes made to meet new situations, reflect new visions, and are consistent with the fact that its teachings have been non-exclusivist and oral in nature. Euro-American attempts to categorize only certain *Midewiwin* beliefs as "orthodox," or seek to identify some "true" *Mide* beliefs and practices, misunderstand the diversity that is at the very heart of the Anishinaabe world-view.

PREFACE

Few issues provoke as much passion as the question of religious beliefs. Even though there would appear to be many contemporary people who either have never given a thought to the meaning of existence, or having done so, believe it to be meaningless, most of us attempt to make some sense of existence, and to the best of our abilities, live our lives on the basis of these beliefs. Probably because these beliefs upon which we base our lives are at once so fundamental, and in many cases, so personal, communication with those who do not share our beliefs becomes difficult. We often fear that outsiders who do not share our beliefs, do not have our faith, will not understand, and thus will misconstrue our beliefs, or worse still, will heap scorn on them. Still others, believing so strongly in their own vision, will attempt to convince us that their views are the only correct views, and that ours are therefore false, or even evil.

Years ago, when I was a young Catholic boy growing up in a small, predominantly Protestant community, I remember trying to explain to my young friends what I did as an altar boy "serving mass." The Catholic service at that time took place entirely in Latin, and was accompanied by the wearing of vestments, the ringing of bells, and the use of incense. Each year, many members of a local Bible College would attend Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, and the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, sitting in the back rows, in order to observe our strange rites and customs, which they believed to be the work of the Anti-Christ. How I hated this desecration of what was for us, the holiest of times, and yet I knew equally little about their beliefs and ceremonies.

Years later, (and no longer a Catholic) I was to be occasionally invited by friends to participate in some of their religious ceremonies: Protestant, Jewish, Islamic and Hindu, and, in turn, have shared some of mine with them. It has been an opportunity to share some of their deepest feelings about our joint existence, and to realize, that beneath the external differences, we share a common belief in a transcendent reality, even though different traditions, conditioned by history and circumstance, may emphasize different means of acquiring knowledge of this ultimate truth.

Nevertheless, as history reveals, few religious groups have been consistently willing to grant that any beliefs other than their own are true. Christian groups have been particularly apt to adopt exclusivist positions and proselytize their neighbours, by force when persuasion failed. For this reason, and remembering my own experience as a youth, I've always been reluctant to attempt any study of Native American Indian religious traditions and spirituality.

Yet, I came to be increasingly fascinated by the incredible strength and resilience of the Ojibwa world view in the face of overwhelming odds during the past several centuries. Surely there was more to it than the lurid reports of Christian missionaries and the esoteric ethnographic studies of social scientists would suggest. Many Ojibwa are understandably reluctant to have others undertake to study them further. Nevertheless, I wanted to find out for myself; to give life to the "dry bones" of history from the perspective of a sympathetic outsider, who came not to judge, but to learn, and having learned, to share this knowledge with others.

Numerous people have given me assistance in my work; notably my colleagues at work who had to take up the slack while I was on leave; and my wife, who had to deal with my daily struggles with the material and with myself. She provided me with encouragement when my enthusiasm waned; and valuable assistance as a proofreader. My committee kept me on track, and gave me much needed advice; many colleagues who, knowing my field of interest, provided me with sources, or technical assistance; librarians, archivists, and ethnologists at various institutions helped track down elusive bits of information. A number of members of the Ojibwa community patiently tried to explain to yet another *wayaabishkiwed* their view of things.

To all, I say *miigwech*, while taking full responsibility for everything that is written. I am sure that there remain errors in fact and interpretation which I have inadvertently missed. I am equally certain that not all my interpretations will meet with acceptance by all people since I am dealing with a subject in which there are different ways of approaching reality. I have proceeded in good faith, and hope that others will do the same when reading what follows.

Finally, a word about orthography. Since most practitioners of the *Midewiwin* have been Ojibwe speakers, I have used Ojibwe terms wherever possible in referring to different aspects of the *Midewiwin*. However, Ojibwe speakers are spread over a wide geographic area and speak a variety of related dialects. Moreover, because there is no standard orthography for the language, past and present writers have used a number of different systems in an attempt to represent Ojibwe sounds, a number of which are not present in English.

I have, therefore, employed Nichols and Nyholm's Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe as my guide in spelling Ojibwe terms used in the dissertation. However, I have made a few exceptions to this rule. Thus, I have followed Peers (1994) and others in using the term "Ojibwa" when referring to the people. In a few instances, where words such as "manitou" have become part of the English language, I have used the English word rather than the Ojibwe term "manidoo." Where other authors have used variant spellings I have indicated the spelling they use, followed by Nichols' spelling in parentheses. Italics have been used for all words in languages other than English, except where the words have become a regular part of the English vocabulary. Ojibwe terms are explained in the text the first time that they are used.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND SOURCES

"My grandson," said he, "the megis I spoke of, means the Me-da-we religion. Our forefathers, many string of lives ago, lived on the shores of the Great Salt Water in the east. Here it was, that while congregated in a great town, and while they were suffering the ravages of sickness and death, the Great Spirit, at the intercession of Man-ab-o-sho, the great common uncle of the An-ishin-aub-ag, granted them this rite wherewith life is restored and prolonged...."

"This, my grandson, is the meaning of the words you did not understand; they have been repeated to us by our fathers for many generations" (Warren [1885] 1984:79-80).

Thus, in 1853, William Warren¹ retold in his own words, what was to become one of the best known accounts of the origin of the *Midewiwin* religion of the *Anishinaabe*² people whom he called the "Ojibway." The *Midewiwin*³ even today, remains shrouded in mystery and controversy. It is considered by contemporary Ojibwas Basil Johnston,⁴ Edward Benton-Banai⁵, and Nicolas Deleary⁶ to be the traditional religion of the Anishinaabe people, although many Euro-American scholars who have followed the lead of Harold Hickerson⁷ argue that it is a "crisis cult" or revitalization movement which originated as a reaction to Euro-American influences. The original meaning of the name in Ojibwe has been lost. While the most common English equivalent has been "Grand Medicine Society" or "Grand Medicine Dance," Ojibwa and Euro-American writers have come up with a host of possible etymological explanations. Nevertheless, it is the origin narratives which best provide a quick overview of the meaning of the *Midewiwin*.

Warren's version of the origin narrative contains the basic elements found in such narratives: migration from the land of Anishinaabe forefathers; the quest for a long life, free from hunger, sickness and enemies; the role of the mythic figure *Nanabozho*⁸ in establishing the rituals which conveyed "spirit-power" to adherents; and the teaching function of the elders in passing on the beliefs and ceremonies of the *Midewiwin*. While not all versions of *Midewiwin* origin narratives contain all these elements, the foregoing is a good description of the core of *Midewiwin* beliefs as they existed among the majority of nineteenth century Ojibwa who continued to follow traditional beliefs rather than adopting one of the many versions of Christianity practiced by their Euro-American neighbours.

The *Midewiwin* has never attracted the attention of Euro-Americans to the same extent as revitalization movements such as those of the Shawnee Prophet among the Algonquians, Handsome Lake among the Iroquois, or the Ghost Dance among several Plains groups. Yet, through a combination of circumstances which will be elaborated upon later, the *Midewiwin* did come to exemplify "Indian Religion" to many nineteenth century Euro-Americans. As a result of a selective emphasis on particular rituals, taken out of their broader context, the *Midewiwin* came to symbolize all that was strange, savage, evil, and potentially dangerous in Indians who had not become civilized and Christianized. *Mide* priests, as they were normally portrayed in words and pictures by Euro-American observers, became the ultimate "other."⁹

What was it about Ojibwa religious beliefs and practices that so fascinated Euro-Americans? How could popular Euro-American conceptions of these beliefs and

practices have been at such odds with how the Ojibwa conceived them to be? Before it is possible even to begin to answer such questions, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the Ojibwa and the *Midewiwin*. It is essential that we listen to how they viewed themselves and the *Midewiwin*, even when their perspective of what happened does not correspond with our own. At the same time, their versions need to be compared with the writings of various groups of Euro-Americans who have attempted to understand the Ojibwa and the *Midewiwin*.¹⁰

If pre-contact members of the Ojibwa had been asked how they identified themselves, they would have replied that they were Anishinaabeg, the "First or True People." As such, they shared not only a common linguistic base (Algonquian), but also many common beliefs and traditions, including a belief that, as Anishinaabeg, they were descendants of the original people, and therefore different from other human beings, to whom they gave specific, sometimes derogatory names.¹¹

If asked to identify themselves more narrowly, members of the Anishinaabeg would have referred to the small kinship or clan group to which they belonged, since this was the most significant social group in Anishinaabe society.¹² Perhaps they would also have referred to the name of the socio-economic unit or band to which they belonged. This name might be taken from the name of the leader, from the geographical location, or perhaps from the name of the clan in cases where all members were from the same clan. At the point in time when larger groupings began to develop, bands which occupied a general geographic area were usually given a name related to the area in which they lived (Cleland 1992:39-41). Thus, for instance, the Anishinaabeg who occupied the northern

shores of Lake Superior, were known as "*Sug-waun-dug-ah-win-in-e-wug*" (Men of the thick fir woods), whom the French were to call "*Bois Forts*" (Warren 1984:39). The term "tribe," which came to be used for the larger, socio-political units, only began to be used following contact with Euro-Americans, and even then, decision-making continued to be done at the band level. Nevertheless, by the nineteenth century, many Anishinaabeg were becoming aware of themselves as the Ojibwa tribe or nation, either as a result of internal or external forces. The formation of the tribes was explained in greater detail in the origin narrative recounted by Warren at the beginning of this chapter. According to this oral account, the Ojibwa, Ottawa and the Potawatomi were said to have migrated from the shores of the great water (Atlantic Ocean) and separated into three groupings or tribes at the Straits of Michilimackinac sometime within the last several hundred years (Warren 1984:81).¹³

From time immemorial, during the long winter months, the Anishinaabeg had listened to their elders tell narratives such as the one collected by Warren. These *aadizookaanag* or "sacred stories" were passed on orally from generation to generation precisely in order that the Ojibwa would always know who they were, where they had come from, how they fitted into the world around them, and how they needed to behave in order to ensure a long life. Since theirs was a world view which prized stability over change, any appearance of change was interpreted as a repetition of old themes (Cleland 1992: 32-34). These themes, told within the current context, formed the basis of the stories told by Anishinaabe elders.

The *aadizookaanag* explained the origin of the world, and the behaviour of all things, regardless of their outward form. They explained the birth of *Nanabozho*, and his role in helping to create a new earth. The Anishinaabeg learned of the birth of the first people, and how their descendants had been taught many things by *Nanabozho* so that they would be able to survive. They learned of the power of visions and dreams by which they could communicate with the *manitous*¹⁴ or spirits, and they learned to pay respect to their animal brethren with whom they shared their existence. Among the most important of *Nanabozho's* gifts to the Anishinaabeg was the institution of the *Midewiwin* since practitioners were promised a long life if they followed its teachings and precepts as taught by the *Mide* elders.

Other narratives told of their journey westward from the "shores of the great salt water," and of the separation of the original group at the Straits of Michilimackinac into the three tribes of Ojibwa, Ottawa and Potawatomi. Still others tell of the further division of the Ojibwa into two groups at Bowating (Sault Ste. Marie), one moving westward along the northern shores of *Kitchi Gami* (Lake Superior) and the other southwest along the southern shores (Warren, 19984:80-83). In these *aadizookaanag*, or formalized stories about the distant past in which the protagonists took both human and animal forms, what was important was not historical facts as conceived by Euro-Americans, but the truths which were implicit in the stories themselves.

The Anishinaabeg distinguished the *aadizookaanag* from *dibaaajimowin* which were chronicles or anecdotes of personal experience involving human beings.¹⁵ Examples of these can be found in the narratives that Warren (1984) collected of exploits of various

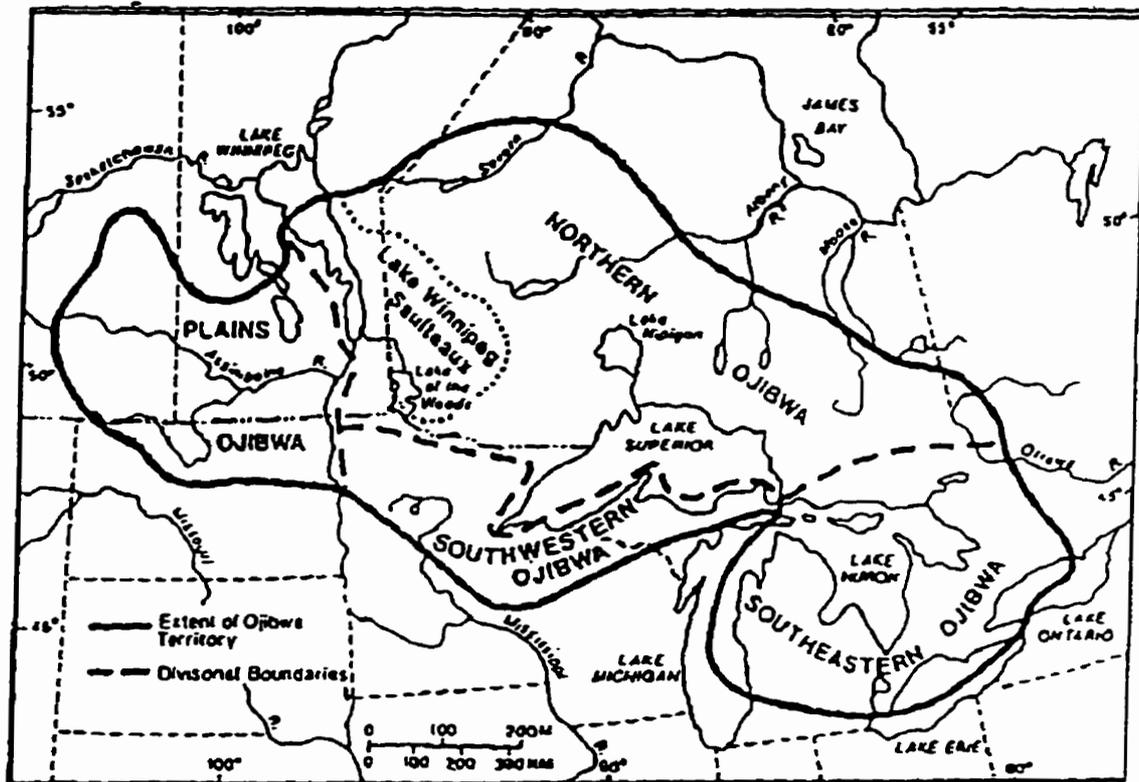
Ojibwa leaders in their wars with the Sioux and Fox. However, with the passage of time, the historical present and the distant past ultimately merged together, and historical facts were transformed into mythological truths (Clelland, 1992;4,10).¹⁶

Euro-Americans who encountered the Anishinaabeg attempted to describe and interpret the latter in terms of their own world view, and from whatever firsthand knowledge they were able to obtain. Originally this world view was primarily a literate one, Christian in nature, although there were numerous differences owing to the large number of Christian sects. Beginning in the nineteenth, and continuing into the twentieth century, the world view of many observers tended to have a scientific, rationalist orientation. As will be seen, this has meant that many of the ways of interpreting the Ojibwa and other aboriginal people have changed considerably over time. In contrast to the Anishinaabeg, one of the main characteristics of modern Western society has been the emphasis on change. The explanation that follows is a rough approximation of the current Euro-American interpretation.¹⁷

Although they were one of the largest Indian groups in North America during the nineteenth century¹⁸, the Ojibwa never achieved the same recognition from the nineteenth century Euro-American public as did their neighbours, the Iroquois and Sioux. As members of the Algonquian linguistic family, they formed part of a vast body of socio-political groups which extended roughly from the Atlantic seaboard on the east, to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains on the west, and from the sub-arctic regions of the Canadian shield, south to the Ohio Valley. Members of the northeastern divisions of this family, of whom the Ojibwa were part, shared not only a common language base, but also

a common culture, based to a large extent on the geographical region which they inhabited.

OJIBWA TERRITORY IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY



Courtesy of Dr. Wayne Moodie

Owing to the vast geographical area which they came to occupy, coupled with the changing political structure of their society, and changes in Euro-American terminology used to describe them, the Ojibwa, as they are generally known today, have had a variety of names applied to them by Euro-American observers. Early commentators generally made reference to clan names used by particular bands, or later used indigenous names for groupings of bands such as the Saulteurs or Mississaugas. Later the name Ojibwa

came to be more generally used, but in a variety of spellings: Ojibwa, Ojibway, Ojibwe, Otchipwe, or Chippewa. Moreover, sub-groups in the nineteenth century and beyond continued to be known as the Mississaugas, Saulteurs or Saulteux, and Bungi.¹⁹ To make matters more complicated, many present-day Ojibwa have begun once more to refer to themselves as Anishinaabeg, while others continue to prefer to use variants of the nineteenth century name. Since there is a strong historical component to this present work, I have chosen to use the term "Ojibwa" for those sections of the work dealing with the nineteenth and twentieth century. Nevertheless, two other variants (Ojibway and Chippewa) have equal validity for that period; and, I can understand, and sympathize with those who claim the right to name themselves Anishinaabeg.

Of course, in an area as large as this, there were, and continue to be, numerous variations in language and culture. This has created difficulties in establishing a common terminology for various aspects of Anishinaabe religious life, since spelling and pronunciation of names vary considerably from region to region. Nevertheless, it gradually became accepted that the Ojibwa shared many aspects of what anthropologists have generally termed the "Woodlands culture," which was characterized by a hunting, fishing, food gathering economy, with some horticultural practices. Like their more northerly neighbours they lived in small kinship groups, assembling in larger groups at certain times of the year, as part of the annual seasonal cycle. Similarly, they shared a common world view, which was expressed in the stories that their elders passed on to each generation, and which was lived in the rites of passage and ceremonies which were practiced with some variations by most of the Alonquian-speaking peoples. Although

these similarities have often caused commentators to lose sight of the differences that did exist among the different groups, it would be equally wrong to attempt to study the Ojibwa in isolation from their neighbours. In some respects the *Midewiwin* may have been a peculiarly Ojibwa phenomenon, but it grew out of a shared culture, and its Ojibwa manifestations were due in large part to the historical circumstances in which it emerged.

Euro-American scholars generally agree that the early Ojibwa²⁰ were most closely related to the Ottawa and Potawatomi, with whom they shared a very similar language, way of life, and geographic homeland in the region around the Great Lakes. However, the Ojibwa also had relatively close relations with the Winnebago who spoke a Siouan language, and the Huron, who spoke an Iroquoian language. The latter were particularly important to the Ojibwa, owing to their role in the trade with the early French settlers, and their wars with other Iroquoian groups--wars in which the Ojibwa became involved. Later the Ojibwa were to become involved in equally vicious wars with their Algonquian neighbours, the Fox (Mascoutens), and various groups of Sioux. With a few minor exceptions, however, they engaged in few wars with the French, the English or the Americans and Canadians, who first traded with them, and then occupied most of the lands that had been held by their ancestors. Owing to the crucial geographic location of their homeland in the unfolding of recent North American history, the Ojibwa have experienced numerous outward changes in their way of life during the past several hundred years. Nevertheless, their traditions have proven far stronger than was ever anticipated by nineteenth and early twentieth century Euro-American observers, who predicted the quick demise of the Ojibwa as a distinct people, and the replacement of

their religious beliefs and practices by Christian ones. Even many of those Ojibwa who have embraced Christianity continue to do so within the context of an Ojibwa world view, while an increasing number of other Ojibwa either continue to observe the tenets of the *Midewiwin*, or have returned to its practices (personal communications).

Warren was willing to accept the oral traditions of the Ojibwa regarding the *Midewiwin*, but most Euro-American scholars have been reluctant to give credence to the historical veracity of these narratives. Instead, most recent scholars have turned to the scanty historical accounts of Euro-American observers, in an effort to discover when the *Midewiwin* was first described, and thus could be said to have originated. Relying mainly on Euro-American sources, the majority have accepted Hickerson's conclusion that the *Midewiwin* was a nativistic movement or "crisis cult" which emerged in reaction to European contact (Hickerson 1963).²¹ Hickerson's article on the subject of the post-contact *Midewiwin* origins appears to have convinced the majority of scholars who have written on the subject in the past couple of decades. While Hoffman (1891), and Kinietz (1947) argued that it predated Christianity, and Densmore 1979 ([1929]) accepted Warren's account without comment, others such as Landes (1968), Dewdney (1975), Blessing (1977), Vecsey (1983), and Harrison (1984) generally accepted Hickerson's arguments, although Harrison and Vecsey (1984) did qualify them somewhat.

At least one scholar, Howard ([1965] 1977:133), continued to maintain that the *Midewiwin* was rooted in the aboriginal past. While acknowledging that Hickerson's argument might be valid for the 18th and 19th century, Howard accused Hickerson of

"throwing out the baby with the bath water" for failing to consider how the *Midewiwin* fitted into the Ojibwa worldview.

Recently, Schlesier (1990) has challenged several of Hickerson's assertions, although he continues to accept the post-contact thesis. Whereas Hickerson posited a harmonious period of change during which the Ojibwa profited from their middleman role in the fur trade, Schlesier (and to a lesser extent Harrison) see the seventeenth century as a catastrophic period in which Ojibwa and other Algonquian societies were shattered by Iroquois attacks and Euro-American diseases. Both authors see the *Midewiwin* primarily as a response to these catastrophes. Harrison views the *Midewiwin* in the context of "crisis cults" which developed in response to European pressures. According to Schlesier, the rise of the multi-clan villages was the result of depopulation, not the desire of the Ojibwa to be fur-trade middlemen. Moreover, villages such as Chequamegon were not simply multi-clan villages, they were multi-tribal refugee villages--an unlikely place for tribal identity or tribal religious ceremonies to develop. Finally, Schlesier suggests, the re-emergence of tribal villages in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the westward push of mixed multi-clan bands suggests that the Ojibwa had returned to patterns which had existed previously. In other words, the early Ojibwa that Hickerson saw as being small independent clan-based units, did in fact have a tribal identity, according to Schlesier. Recent historical studies such as White's Middle Ground (1991), would seem to substantiate many of Harrison and Schlesier's arguments that Indian societies in the Great Lakes region during the late seventeenth century were in a state of considerable upheaval. However, White himself does not take direct issue with

Hickerson's thesis regarding the origins of the *Midewiwin*. Of these recent authors, only Harrison has attempted to approach the question of the *Midewiwin* from an Ojibwa point of view. The question, therefore, is far from resolved.

The *Midewiwin* has been viewed, in another context, as representing a major shift in Ojibwa world view. Most of the scholars who have been mentioned, believe that the *Midewiwin* reflected a change from a reliance on dreams and visions, to a reliance on passed on knowledge, for the acquisition of power. Religious scholars such as Hultkrantz (1979:116-128), and Grim (1983) have argued that the *Midewiwin* is part of a larger cultic movement of secret societies among many North American Indian groups representing a shift from a shamanistic to a priestly tradition. However, Hultkrantz is careful to limit his observations to those individuals who attain the highest ranks in the *Midewiwin*. Since Hultkrantz is most interested in similarities among Indian religious movements, he unfortunately tends to over-generalize. Like many Euro-American commentators on the *Midewiwin*, he makes overly rigid distinctions and thus creates categories that do not exist in the Ojibwa world view.

Although Hickerson (1970) would no doubt have agreed with Hultkrantz's general observations regarding a shift in the Ojibwa worldview, his emphasis was different. From an anthropological perspective, the most significant fact is that the change took place because of a more sedentary lifestyle. For proof, Hickerson and others point to the "fact" that the *Midewiwin* was most active in the larger centres among the southwestern Ojibwa.

The majority of the aforementioned scholars have relied primarily on the written records of early missionaries, traders, government officials and travellers to determine when the *Midewiwin* originated, when and where it spread, and to predict its decline and eventual disappearance. This debate will be considered in more detail in subsequent chapters. Suffice it to say at this point that such efforts underline the difficulties of members of a literate culture attempting to understand an oral culture, using only the tools of the former. In contrasting orality and literacy, I am not making an judgement that one has evolved from the other and is thus "better." However, I will attempt to demonstrate that many of the difficulties in understanding the *Midewiwin* have been the result of the different approaches engendered by the spoken and the written word--and the failure of many Euro-American commentators to understand these differences.²²

There are, of course, a variety of other tools by which a scholar can attempt to understand a phenomenon such as the *Midewiwin*. The most obvious is to give more weight to the origin narratives of the Ojibwa. Following the ground-breaking work of Vansina (1971) on oral tradition as history, some scholars have begun to make use of origin and migration narratives as a legitimate source, while keeping in mind their limitations as far as chronological history is concerned. While most of the recent analytical work relating to Ojibwa sacred narratives (*aadizookaanag*)²³ such as that by Overholt and Callicott (1982), Vecsey (1984) and Smith (1995) has been concerned with world view and religion, Vecsey, in particular, demonstrates that narratives can also play a role in helping us to understand how the *Midewiwin* evolved.

Although nineteenth century observers were aware of the existence of such stories, they generally considered all Ojibwa narratives as fables, and therefore not historically valid. Schoolcraft, the earliest and most prolific nineteenth century collector of Ojibwa narratives, failed to see in them anything more than interesting fables, which illustrated the "savage mind" of the Ojibwa and other northeastern Indians (Schoolcraft 1839:31-43). Even Warren, who did quote them, was extremely careful to warn his readers that the narratives must not be taken literally, though he did give them limited historical credence, if they were interpreted correctly. As has been noted, Warren appended the "historical narratives" of the Ojibwa battles with the Sioux to his accounts of earlier myths, thus bringing the story of the Ojibwa as a people up to the present for his readers, and perhaps unconsciously linking the two into a common thread (Warren 1885).

Twentieth century scholars such Hallowell (1960) have analyzed the structure of Ojibwa narratives, and Overholt and Callicott (1982) and Smith (1995) have analyzed them in terms of Ojibwa world view, but scholars have been generally unwilling to accept the historical veracity of any of the Ojibwa narratives.

The origin and migration narratives also have visual and oral counterparts in the *Mide wiigwaas* (birchbark scrolls), and the *Mide nagamowin* (*Midewiwin* songs) both of which are sacred, but which, like the narratives have both religious and secular significance. Nineteenth century Euro-American observers such as Schoolcraft (1851-57), Hoffman (1888, 1894), and Kohl (1860 [1985]) were all intrigued with unlocking the clues to the mysterious symbols contained on the birchbark scrolls. However, the real significance of the *Mide* songs was not understood until the early part of the twentieth

century and the work of Frances Densmore (1910-13). It was well into the second half of the twentieth century before Selwyn Dewdney (1975) and Fred Blessing (1977) began to work on a theory that the pictographic symbols on the scrolls were a complex memory aid used by *Mide* officials. Not only did scrolls and songs contain information regarding the *Midewiwin* ceremonies per se, but they were also intimately connected with the *mide* songs and *mide* narratives. It remained for Thomas Vennum (1978) to bring together these components and illustrate how they contained historical and geographical information which could help to illuminate the Ojibwa past. And, in so doing, Vennum has provided one more example of how the sacred and secular were intimately connected in the Ojibwa world view.

Whether or not precise "facts," dates and places are totally verifiable is not as important in the end, as what these narratives, songs, and scrolls tell us about the Ojibwa conceptual system, and how these beliefs affected the lives of the Ojibwa people.

"Myth," after all, is nothing more than "an arrangement of the past, whether real or imagined, in patterns, that resonate with a culture's deepest values and aspirations. . . .

They are the maps by which cultures navigate through time" (Wright, 1992:5). We ignore them at our own peril if we want to understand Ojibwa beliefs and rituals.

Most nineteenth century Euro-Americans who left written descriptions of the *Midewiwin* had at least fleeting first hand knowledge of the ceremonies which normally took place in the spring and fall of the year. While only members and initiates were allowed to attend the full range of ceremonies, many were open to the entire community as well as outside observers. Nevertheless, most reports by casual observers provide only

cursory descriptions and few, if any, interpretations of value. *Midewiwin* ceremonies were highly complex affairs often lasting a week in length, and incorporating many different elements. Since many of these elements were common to other Ojibwa religious ceremonies, observers often had difficulty distinguishing them from one another. Dances, songs, and feasts looked and sounded similar, particularly to those who didn't speak the language, and to those who believed that they were the work of the devil.

Although Schoolcraft (1856) set out to provide more in-depth descriptions of *Midewiwin* ceremonies as part of his multi-volume work on American Indians, the first professional studies were completed by Hoffman (1891, 1896) for the Bureau of American Ethnology. Subsequently, a series of ethnologists such as Densmore (1910-13, 1929), Skinner (1911, 1915, 1920), Cooper (1928), Coleman (1929), Reagan (1933), Jenness (1935), Kinietz (1947), Ritzenthaler (1953), Kurath (1959), Barnouw (1960) and Howard ([1965] 1977) completed in-depth first person reports which focused on the *Midewiwin* among a wide range of Ojibwa, as well as Ottawa, Menominee and other neighbouring tribes. Their work was augmented by that of Blessing (1973) and Dewdney (1977), two non-ethnologists who also provided detailed information about aspects of the *Midewiwin*.

Most authors on the subject are certainly correct in emphasizing that the central ritual of the *Midewiwin* was a healing ceremony meant to protect the Ojibwa (and practitioners from neighbouring tribes) from disease and to promote long life. However, the ceremony clearly addressed not only the health needs of the community, but also the spiritual and social. In one sense, individual members of the society sought and received

"blessings" which gave them power to ensure that their well-being would be guaranteed.²⁴ While such power was personal, the communal nature of Ojibwa band society meant that the expectation was that it would also be used for the good of band members in general-- or it could be used for evil purposes. Thus, it was natural that individuals who had received considerable power through *Midewiwin* ceremonies, would also be seen as people with socio-political power. It is no surprise then that most of the Ojibwa political leaders such as Eshkebugechoshe (Flat Mouth), Pizhiki (Great Buffalo), Shingwaukonse (Little Pine) and Powasang (Powassan), were also *Mide* shamans, since the survival of the community depended upon the ability of these leaders to deal with the environmental and socio-political challenges which faced them. As will be seen, many *Midewiwin* rituals dealt not only with the acquisition of blessings, but also related how these powers had been used for the benefit of the people as a whole.

The rituals were also meant to provide an alternate world view to that of the missionaries which would permit the Ojibwa and other Indian groups to once again enjoy the "good life". As such, the *Midewiwin* as it developed in the nineteenth century can partially be seen as one of the many "revitalization movements" which arose among numerous Indian peoples as a means of coming to terms with the effects of Euro-American expansion. Like many revitalization movements *Midewiwin* beliefs and ceremonies cut across tribal boundaries in a common resistance to Euro-American ideas and practices, while at the same time they sometimes intensified divisions within local groups, as followers of the *Midewiwin* vied with other traditional religious figures such as

the *Jaasakids* and *Waabanos*, and with leaders of other revitalization movements such as the Shawnee Prophet, for authority.²⁵

The combative stance towards Christian missionaries and Christianized Indians may have contributed to many *Midewiwin* practitioners' adopting a code of secrecy vis-à-vis Euro-Americans. Secrecy codes normally surrounded dreams or visions, which could only be shared if they were purchased--thus ensuring that the manitous were not insulted. However, secrecy about the *Midewiwin* went much further than this. Many of the early descriptions of *Mide* rituals were the work of Christian converts such as Peter Jones, George Copway and Peter Jacobs, or of Euro-American missionaries, who were anxious to paint the ceremonies in the blackest possible terms. This, in turn, may have led to renewed efforts on the part of *Mide* practitioners to keep their rituals and beliefs secret, in order to actively oppose the efforts of Christian missionaries. Of course, as will be seen, members of the Anishinaabeg were usually reluctant to share their visions with anyone, and the Ojibwa were particularly noted for being suspicious of strangers until they were certain that they could be trusted.

As Euro-Americans encroached further on Ojibwa lands, and with the signing of land treaties in the second half of the nineteenth century, many Ojibwa were forced to come to terms with a new and potentially greater catastrophe than the one related in Warren's rendition of the *Midewiwin* myth. Increasing numbers of these Ojibwa again sought new ways of dealing with the new threats; new and elaborated *Midewiwin* ceremonies developed, many of them connected with what came to be known as "bad medicine," or sorcery. Other Ojibwa turned to alternative religious practices such as the

Waabanowiw, or later to the drum dance which was adopted from their former enemies, the Sioux. Still others at least outwardly embraced Christianity, fitting its teachings and practices into the context of their traditional world view. Some members of the *Midewiwin* society began to reveal some of the rituals, songs, and stories of the *Midewiwin* to a succession of outside Euro-American observers such as Hoffman, Densmore, Kinietz, Coleman, Ritzenthaler, Landes, Barnouw, Hallowell, Howard, Jenness, Blessing and Dewdney. Although a few of the informants were converts who were willing to share their former secrets, most were practicing *Mide* members who were concerned that there were no new initiates to whom they could pass on their knowledge. This willingness to have the oral scriptures written down is a familiar theme which has frequently occurred when a religious culture is felt to be threatened by outside forces.²⁶ Therefore, they were willing to share it with outsiders in the hope that their descendants would once again be able to make use of the *Mide* teachings.²⁷ It is this written material which now serves as one of the principal sources of knowledge for non-Ojibwa and Ojibwa alike.²⁸

Although the collected printed materials reveal a considerable variation in practices and beliefs, there is an underlying consistency in structure, themes and values. All the accounts look upon humans as spiritual beings who can and do communicate with the rest of creation. The chief *Mide* manitou may vary from *Bear*, to *Otter*, to *Nanabozho*, to the *Miigis*, but the important thing is that humans seek and receive assistance from manitous by participating in *Midewiwin* ceremonies. All the accounts present a ceremony which is composed of two elements, an initiation rite which includes

a ritual re-enactment, and a healing ceremony. Most ceremonies were public affairs in which new members were initiated, and which attracted large numbers of people over extended periods of time. Some were primarily healing ceremonies for ill or dying members.²⁹ *Ghost Midewiwin* ceremonies were also held so those who had already died could be initiated into the society or advance in it through the use of a proxy.³⁰ Initiates were taught about their common Anishinaabe ancestry, the requirements and rituals for living a good life, and the songs which were to be sung at healing ceremonies.

The number of historical accounts of the *Midewiwin* from the Ojibwa in present-day Minnesota would seem to give further credence to the belief that this area became the heartland of the *Midewiwin* following the dispersal of many Ojibwa from the region around Bowating and Chequamegon. Nevertheless, the existence of the *Midewiwin* is far more widespread and pervasive than scholars originally believed. It is possible that it was brought to Georgian Bay and Manitoulin Island, Walpole Island, and other locations by Ojibwa and Potawatomi from the lower Michigan peninsula, who took up residence in Upper Canada following the War of 1812, or perhaps it existed among them before. There are also frequent accounts of the *Midewiwin* among the Ojibwa ranging from Red River to Lake of the Woods, to Rainy Lake, to Lake Nipigon, to Garden River, to Spanish River. Greenberg & Morrison (1982) make the intriguing suggestion that as the *Midewiwin* spread from Lake Winnipeg into the headwaters of the Albany River it may have resulted in many of the different groups in the region beginning to call themselves Ojibwa. Just how far north the society extended is a matter of debate. It certainly existed as far north as Berens River, though in Hallowell's time (1930s) it was no longer

practiced by the Ojibwa in the region (Hallowell 1936). Likewise, the Plains Ojibwa or Bungi practised the *Midewiwin* (often alongside the Sun Dance) and records of it exist in various locations in Southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan as well as Montana.³¹

As Euro-American society exerted more and more pressure on the Ojibwa to give up their "traditional" beliefs, practitioners were increasingly forced to go underground in their activities. Gradually their numbers decreased as younger Ojibwa sought other means of taking control of their lives, and it became difficult to pass on the old lore. In many cases there was a blurring of boundaries between the *Midewiwin* and other Ojibwa ceremonies, particularly among groups living on the periphery of Ojibwa territory, while in some cases there was evidence of a merging of *Midewiwin* and Christian beliefs and rituals. As will be seen, this latter practice was often the result of adapting Christian beliefs to *Midewiwin* beliefs as part of a long-practiced strategy of adaptation practiced by many aboriginal people.

Nevertheless, the *Midewiwin* had become less important in the life of many Ojibwa communities by the end of the nineteenth century. Numerous scrolls, religious ceremonial objects and medicine bundles were either destroyed or lost during the *Midewiwin's* decline--largely as a result of the efforts of governments and Christian religious bodies to destroy all traces of aboriginal religion. Recently, however, there has been a revival in interest in the *Midewiwin* among many younger Ojibwa who are searching for a positive sense of ethnic identity. The works of early recorders such as Hoffman, and the recent works of Basil Johnston (1976,1982,1995) and Benton-Banai (1988) have contributed to the "reinvention" of this tradition. The word "reinvention"

here refers to the attempt to portray the *Midewiwin* in terms which nineteenth century Ojibwa would have viewed it, as opposed to the view which most Euro-American accounts have portrayed it. If nineteenth century Euro-Americans "invented" the Indian in their terms, it has been left to twentieth century Indians to "re-invent" themselves on their own terms. They have had to reclaim their identity.

Hultkrantz (1980), in his essay on the study of Native American religions states that ". . . It is essential that we try to understand Indian religions in their own right, as testimonies of the expression of the human spirit in existential issues." He goes on to point out that we know the myths, the rites, the outer shell, but we know little of their basic religious sentiments and beliefs.

My goal will be to develop an understanding of what the myths and rituals signified for the Ojibwa people in the nineteenth century. This work will begin by attempting to place the *Midewiwin* within its historical context in order to determine how it developed and changed over time. In order to accomplish this, some attention will be paid to the development of the Ojibwa nation, in relation to both their Indian and Euro-American neighbours.

My hypothesis is that the nineteenth century was a formative period for the development of the Ojibwa as a people, and the *Midewiwin* played a central role in this process. Moreover, it is my conviction that this ethnogenesis did not take place in a vacuum, but was influenced by events and ideas that affected the Ojibwa, their Indian and Euro-American neighbours alike. Since the Ojibwa were a geographically scattered and culturally diverse people, the changes and developments took a number of different

forms. Moreover, no single Ojibwa leader arose to lead a religious or political protest movement as happened with several other Indian groups in northeastern North America during the nineteenth century.³² This has resulted in their socio-political ideas not receiving the attention that has been given to other Indian religious movements which occurred during roughly the same time period, since Euro-American history is still largely based on individuals. I believe that the evidence points to considerable religious and political ferment among the Ojibwa people during this period. Although it did not manifest itself in open rebellion, their strong resistance to Christian missionaries, the complex theological and organizational structure of the *Midewiwin*, the systematic use of scrolls and charts to assist in the passing on of their traditions, are all evidence of a well-developed religious belief system which Euro-Americans could not penetrate. It is for these reasons that I have concentrated on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while at the same time, keeping my focus on the *Midewiwin* fairly broad.

A systematic study of relevant nineteenth century documents has enabled me to map the dates and locations of references to the *Midewiwin* more thoroughly and give a more accurate picture of its distribution, both among the Ojibwa proper and their immediate neighbours. Similarly, I have been able to identify a number of prominent *Mide* leaders who in many cases were active in socio-political events affecting the Ojibwa during this period. This information has helped to transform what hitherto has been a very abstract subject into a more concrete one anchored in time and place--and has enabled me to challenge several of the scholarly theories concerning the *Midewiwin* which have relied on isolated documents for proof.

The nineteenth century world in which the Ojibwa lived and practised the *Midewiwin* was a world in flux--at least from an Euro-American point of view. Too often it is a world which has been described from the viewpoint of the dominant ethnic group--the Euro-Americans, although more recently scholars have attempted to describe it from the viewpoint of various Indian groups.³³ However, as Richard White has argued, it had been a "joint Indian-white creation... and the final dissolution of this world came when Indians ceased to have the power to force whites onto the middle ground" (White 1991:xiv-xv). As White so rightly argues, the Indians in this drama "... asserted a separate identity, but claimed a common humanity in a shared world" (White 1991:xiv).³⁴ It behooves scholars examining this period to look at this world as a totality, rather than considering isolated aspects of it and over-generalizing from these segments.

If, as White and Greenfield have argued, nineteenth century Euro-Americans "invented Indians and forced Indians to live with the consequences of this invention" (Greenfield 1995: 252), then any understanding of the *Midewiwin* as it existed at that time must incorporate an analysis of the Euro-American documents which describe it. While it is necessary to have at least a basic understanding of the socio-political events which led to this appropriation, it is even more important to understand the world view of the Euro-American participants. Therefore, a considerable amount of attention will be devoted to analyzing the work of the Americans, Schoolcraft, Hoffman; and to a lesser extent, the Europeans, Nicollet and Kohl; as well as that of Warren, the person who best exemplifies those who attempted to maintain the middle ground.

Central to this analysis is the matter of how nineteenth century literate Euro-Americans attempted to interpret the oral traditions of the Ojibwa, since as Ong, Greenblatt, Greenfield and others have argued, language and the way it is conveyed has far-reaching implications for how humans express their thoughts, and how they behave. Euro-Americans, no less than Ojibwa, were aware of the power inherent in the written word, and much of the intellectual interaction between the two groups centred around "proving" whether or not the power of the written word was greater than the power of the vision and oral tradition.

One of the pitfalls into which ethnohistorians, historians of religion, and aboriginal scholars all face when studying the *Midewiwin*, is what has been variously termed "presentism" or "upstreaming." While there are differences between the two concepts, the problem arises from using ideas and practices of present groups as a means of reconstructing the nature of previous societies. Since eighteenth and nineteenth century original source materials are limited, there is a great temptation to rely too heavily on materials gleaned from twentieth century field research in reconstructing elements of the past. Although it is often impossible to reconstruct earlier beliefs and practices without making some use of contemporary source materials, every attempt will be made to place them in their proper context.³⁵

It is almost a truism to say that in attempting to reconstruct past history and past world views one can never accurately represent the society as it was. The very act of choosing or rejecting certain materials changes the character of the picture we try to compose, yet it is impossible to present a totally inclusive representation. The world

view of the writer, however one may try to be "objective," defines and shapes the final presentation. In attempting to explore the subject from a multi-disciplinary viewpoint, I have encountered differences in methodologies and world view as widely separated as the people being studied.

ENDNOTES

1. William Warren was the son of an American fur-trader, Lyman Warren who came to the Lake Superior region from New England in 1818, and Mary Cadotte, the daughter of a French trader and granddaughter of White Crane, the hereditary chief of La Pointe village. Warren was born in 1825, learned *Ojibwe* in early childhood, attended the missionary schools at La Pointe and Mackinaw, and later was sent to New England to attend the Oneida Institute where he received the beginnings of a classical education. Returning home to La Pointe, he served as interpreter there and later at Crow Wing and Gull Lake in Minnesota. He died in 1853 following a prolonged illness, and just shortly after completing his book (Warren [1885] 1984:9-20). See also the Densmore Papers, Minnesota Historical Society Research Centre which contains an historical account of the Warren family by Mary Warren English, William's sister, and a later study by Theresa Schenck.

2. Anishinaabeg (various spellings) is a term which has been used by Ojibwa to describe themselves and their forefathers. According to tradition these forefathers had consisted of the Ojibwa, the Ottawa, and the Pottawatomi, although other groups of Algonquian-speaking peoples are sometimes included. Several meanings have been given for the term: the most common was and is "original human, person" (Densmore, 1979:5; Warren, 1984:37, etc.) The term was and is also used by the Ojibwa to describe themselves as "Indian" in contrast to the Euro-Americans with whom they came in contact (Baraga, 1992:38; Nichols, 1995). See also the article by Treuer (1995 2(1):43-48).

3. While the word is spelled in a number of different ways, depending upon the dialect or language spoken, and the form of orthography used in printed works, *Midewiwin* would appear to be the most commonly used version.

4. Johnston is an Ojibwa from Cape Croker, Ontario, and was an employee of the Royal Ontario Museum who has done much to describe Ojibwa society from an emic perspective. See especially his works entitled Ojibwa Ceremonies (1982) and Ojibwa Heritage (1976).

5. Edward Benai-Benton, an American Ojibwa who resides in Minneapolis and is the author of The Mishomis Book: the Voice of the Ojibway, is a leading figure in the recent revival of the *Midewiwin* among some Ojibwa in both United States and Canada.

6. Nicholas Deleary is an Ojibwa scholar at Laurentian University in Sudbury who has written an M.A. thesis and an article on the *Midewiwin* from a believer's perspective.

7. Harold Hickerson was an ethnohistorian specializing in Ojibwa society and history, whose theories will be discussed in some detail in the chapter on *Midewiwin* origins since his ideas have influenced a wide range of Euro-American scholars writing about the *Midewiwin*.

8. Nanabozho is the name of the Ojibwe culture hero and trickster. It is transcribed in various ways: Wenabozho, Wenaposo, Man-ab-o-sho, Minabozho, Manabus, Nanabush, Nansb'oozoo, etc., and is related to other north-eastern Algonquian figures such as Gloscap (Gluskabe) among the Micmac and Penobscot, or Wee-suck-a-jock (Wisahkechek) among the Cree. I have adopted what seems to me to be a good compromise.

9. Early French Jesuits such as Allouez, fur traders such Perrot, clerical explorers such as Hennepin, all provided descriptions of Indian "jugglers," "sorcerers," "wizards," as did their English counterparts such as Alexander Henry, William Keating and others. It was only in the nineteenth century, with the "scientific" attempt to understand the Indian mind, that efforts were made to name and describe them using indigenous terms.

10. I am indebted to Charles Cleland (1992) for his excellent presentation of Ojibwa and Euro-American versions of history and culture in Rites of Conquest. While my interpretation differs in many respects from his, he demonstrated how it could be done.

11. For instance, the Iroquois were termed *Naudoways* or "Adders" and the Dakota (Sioux) were termed either *Naudowasewug* which again refers to adders, or *Aboinug* which means "roasters" (Warren 1984:83,36).

12. The controversy among contemporary scholars surrounding the possible origins of clans among the Anishinaabeg will be treated more fully in a later section of the dissertation.

13. Warren's rendition of oral history was echoed by various literate Ojibwa such as Andrew Blackbird (1887) George Copway ([1850] 1972) and Peter Jones (1861), but has generally been discounted by Euro-American scholars. Fixico (1994) has attempted to demonstrate that the three groups continued to maintain an alliance of Three Fires into the nineteenth century. His argument implies that Anishinaabe tribal identities existed in the early seventeenth century.

14. I have opted to use the common English spelling of the word, manitou, instead of *manidoo*.

15. The spelling of these two terms varies considerably in the various accounts, but the concept is relatively constant. Nevertheless, as will be seen, following contact with Euro-Americans, *aadizookaanag* among some groups blended with European fairy tales told to the Ojibwa. See for, instance, Densmore (1929:104-106). Jennifer Brown has a good, concise explanation of the two concepts of history in her article on the Northern Algonquians in Morrison and Wilson (1986:225-227).

16. Chute (1986:15), in her study of the Ojibwa leader, Shingwaukonse, relates that current elders make reference to him in their telling of *adisokan* (*aadizookaanag*)--thus

indicating how the historical and mythic past can come together.

17. My intention throughout my dissertation will be to examine and illustrate how previous and some current attempts to understand the Ojibwa and *Midewiwin* have been coloured by the world view of the authors.

18. Warren (1984:38) estimates that there were 9,000 Ojibwa in the United States in 1850. Schmalz (1991:176-8) cites a figure from a 1846 Gazetteer of approximately 2,400 in Southern Ontario south of Georgian Bay area where close to 2,000 more dwelt. While no figures exist for the numerous bands in northwestern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, they must have numbered at least several thousand more.

19. The most straightforward exploration of this plethora of names is given by Laura Peers in her The Ojibwa of Western Canada 1780-1870 (1994:xv-xvii). Other synonyms are provided in volumes 6 and 15 of The Handbook of North American Indians.

20. The whole question of the nature of these early Ojibwa, and the academic controversy surrounding it, will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

21. Interestingly enough, Brown and Peers, in their revised and expanded edition of Hickerson's The Chippewa and their Neighbours, which includes a chapter on the origin of the *Midewiwin*, question a number of Hickerson's arguments and suggest some alternate interpretations (Hickerson [1970] 1988:142-3).

22. The literature surrounding the concepts of orality and literacy is far beyond the scope of this work. Suffice it to say that Ong (1982) remains a standard work on the subject. Coward (1989) provides a good introduction to the spiritual power of both oral and written scripture, while indicating their differences. Illich and Sanders (1988) while writing about "the alphabetization" of the popular [Western] mind, present a more traditional evolutionary view of the differences between orality and literacy.

23. The Ojibwa language has a specific word for the type of tales or stories to which I am referring. This will be discussed at greater length in a later chapter.

24. Black's (1967) article on Ojibwa ontology and world view regarding the Ojibwa concept of "power" will be discussed in more detail in chapter two.

25. There are a number of first person reports of such conflicts, such as the one related by John Tanner in his autobiography (Tanner [1830] 1956). These will be dealt with in more detail in future chapters.

26. Harold Coward provides a good introduction to the different concept and powers of oral and written scriptures, and describes some of the reasons for the transition to the written in Coward (1989:122-123)

27. It is a hope that is being realized. Increasing numbers of Ojibwa from all walks of life have begun to return to the teachings of the *Midewiwin* during the last decade, following its nadir in the 1940s and 1950s when only a few elderly *Mide* priests remained.
28. In my own limited experience, I have shared Hoffman's account with a number of Ojibwa members of the *Midewiwin* since until recently there were few high ranking *Mide* elders who could pass on the knowledge.
29. Such as that held for Nigan'ibines (Flat Mouth Jr.), the nineteenth century hereditary chief of the Pillager band of Leech Lake Ojibwa (Densmore 1910:51-55).
30. Landes (1968:189-206) gives the most thorough exposition of this variation, although there are many references to it among later sources.
31. This can be substantiated by brief references found in accounts of early Euro-American observers, as well as from *Midewiwin* artifacts which date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See also Peers' (1994:148-53) comments regarding the reputation of the Ojibwa throughout the west for their strong "medicine" powers.
32. Although Harrison (1984) considers the *Midewiwin* a "crisis cult", few others have categorized it as such. Although it does have some common characteristics with other "revitalization cults," I will attempt to demonstrate that it does not fit within the same framework as other such cults that were prominent during the nineteenth century.
33. See, for instance, Gregory Dowd's *A Spirited Resistance* (1992) an excellent study of religio-political movements among the Delaware, Shawnee, Cherokee and Creek which he views in the context of a "religiously charged struggle" to renew the sacred sources of power.
34. White was speaking only of the area immediately around the Great Lakes, but his comments apply equally well to those Ojibwa who lived outside these geographical boundaries.
35. White (1991:xiv) provides a more complete discussion of the dangers involved in the ethnological technique of upstreaming. While he raises valid points, I believe that some forms of upstreaming are necessary in dealing with pre-contact oral cultures, as long as scholars remember that the people they are studying are not objects, but people.

CHAPTER TWO
ANISHINAABE RELIGION AND SOCIETY
IN THE PRE AND EARLY CONTACT PERIOD

Anishinaabe Narratives of Origin

The proto-Ojibwa,¹ or the Anishinaabeg² as they called themselves, had a number of explanations of how the earth came to be, how human beings were created, and the origin of death. In one such story told to Frances Densmore in the late 1800s, Odinigun, an elder from the White Earth Reservation, related the following account of the first earth:

The first earth was called Ca'ca. It was in this part of the country. The people who lived here were not wise. They had no clothing, but sat around and did nothing. Then the spirit of the creator sent a man to teach them. This man was called ockabe'wis [messenger, according to Densmore].... The first thing he taught them was how to make a fire by means of a bow and stick and a bit of decayed wood. Then he taught them how to cook meat by the fire. They had no axes, but he took a pole and burned it over the fire.... This was long before Winabojo [*Nanabozho*] (Densmore [1929] 1979:98).

Sacred stories such as this were told in order to instruct the listeners how humans learned to look after themselves. Other narratives might stress different aspects, concentrating on the creation story itself, or the actors might differ. The *Aadizookaanag* or original people in these narratives (often termed "Our Grandfathers") behaved like human beings, although they also performed extraordinary feats of spiritual power. It was also during this time that the story of the trickster/transformer figure emerges.³ For instance, in many creation stories, *Nanabozho* is the messenger referred to in the story by

Odinigun. Sometimes the point of the story might be easy to comprehend, but often it was difficult to determine, and it would be only with repeated tellings, sometimes with additions, that the story would begin to make sense.⁴

Although there are many different versions of the creation of the new earth (or earth-diver story as it is sometimes known), most of them approximate the following outline. In the first part of the story, *Nanabozho* went hunting with a group of wolves, one of whom was or became his grandson. *Chibiabos*,⁵ as he was called in many versions of this tale, stayed with him when the others went off. However, some evil serpents (water monsters) became jealous and decided to kill *Chibiabos*. *Nanabozho* had a dream, and tried to warn the young wolf not to cross a certain lake when he went out hunting. However, *Chibiabos* did anyway, fell in, and was murdered by the serpents. *Nanabozho* blackened his face and fasted for several days in mourning; then set out in search of his grandson. A kingfisher told him where the evil serpents came out of the lake to sun themselves. He went there, and shot the leader of the serpents. The others began to pursue him, so he headed for the highest mountain, where he climbed a tall tree. To his horror he saw that waters had covered the land and were gradually rising. He addressed the tree, telling it to stretch itself, which it did. Finally the waters stopped, just as they reached his chin:

He then cast his eyes around the illimitable expanse, and spied a loon. "Dive down, my brother," he said to him, "fetch up some earth, so that I can make a new earth." The bird obeyed, but rose up to the surface a lifeless form. He then saw a muskrat. "Dive!" said he, "and if you succeed, you may hereafter live either on land or water, as you please; or I will give you a chain of beautiful lakes, surrounded with rushes, to inhabit." He dove down, but he

floated up senseless. He [*Nanabozho*] took the body and breathed in his nostrils, which restored him to life. "Try again," said he. The muskrat did so. He came up senseless the second time, but clutched a little earth in one of his paws, from which, together with the carcass of the dead loon, he created a new earth as large as the former had been, with all living animals, fowls, and plants. (Schoolcraft Reprint 1991:77)⁶

Although the particulars of these origin narratives varied according to the circumstances of the teller, the basic story line, characters, and message of the narratives have remained remarkably constant up until the present day. Many folklorists and ethnologists have spent a considerable amount of time searching for "authentic, traditional" narratives which have been "uncorrupted" by Euro-American influences, so that they can uncover a "pure" Anishinaabe world view. However, I would argue that all narratives told by elders are authentic, for the world view expressed by the narratives results from an oral tradition whose texts are not locked in time in the same way as those of the religions "of the book." The Anishinaabe tradition was a living tradition which adapted the incidentals of the narratives to the new circumstances in which they found themselves. They adopted some versions from neighbouring groups of friendly Indians, and even former enemies, such as the Sioux. That they should adopt and adapt some Euro-American concepts (in the same way that they adopted and adapted material goods) into their world view is neither surprising, nor indicative that they were on the road to assimilation.

In this chapter, the emphasis will be on highlighting those elements of the narratives which appear to have remained constant; in the next chapter the emphasis will be more on some of the changes that have occurred in the past few centuries, particularly

with the introduction of literacy among the latter day Ojibwa, and the development of a canon of stories based to a great extent on stories collected by Euro-Americans.

While few of the collected narratives of the Anishinaabeg pre-date the early nineteenth century, it was clear to the early collectors such as Schoolcraft that such narratives were part of an oral tradition which had been handed down from previous generations of Anishinaabe elders. Passing references of earlier Euro-American observers to various Anishinaabe practices and beliefs also reinforce the argument that the beliefs exemplified by these narratives were an intrinsic part of the Anishinaabe world view long before they came to be collected in printed form by Euro-Americans. The real danger in using these narratives is in distinguishing which narratives have a modicum of authenticity in the sense that they represent Anishinaabe beliefs, rather than those of their interpreters. While Schoolcraft's versions are usually considered to be among the most reliable of the early compilations, there can be little doubt that he reshaped them to conform to his own literary style, sometimes distorting Anishinaabe beliefs beyond recognition (Clements 1990).

There is also a problem with interpreting these early narratives using versions which have come from contemporary Ojibwa. While such a process allows one to obtain the narratives first hand, there is a considerable danger that the narratives will have changed over time. Nevertheless, it can be argued that a remarkable continuity of essential concepts exists in the world view of Anishinaabeg and their Ojibwa descendants. Thus, for instance, not only do we find correspondences between the world

view of early twentieth century Ojibwa at Berens River, Manitoba (Hallowell 1960) and mid-twentieth century Chippewa (Ojibwa) in northern Minnesota (Black-Rogers 1977), but it is also possible to trace many of these concepts back to the earlier ethnographic work carried out in the nineteenth century in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan and Ontario. Selywn Dewdney, in his introduction to Norval Morrisseau's book, came to a similar conclusion from a somewhat different perspective (Morrisseau 1965:xx-xxi). He claimed that he found in his research that oral traditions could be similar as far apart as Lake Nipissing and Lac La Ronge, but vary considerably in the same community. In these, as in other instances, many of the characters, locations, and terminology in the narratives differ, but the world view remained remarkably similar.

Anishinaabe World View or Cosmology⁷

The world view described in these narratives is radically different from the world view held by secularized North Americans today since the Anishinaabeg believed that there was more to existence than the physical world of perception. Anishinaabe traditions, like the traditions of other religions, describe a reality which takes into account, but encompasses more than the material world. It was, above all, a "peopled cosmos", which as Hallowell (1934) has emphasized, was controlled by the actions of persons, human or otherwise, and which could be verified by empirical means. As such, the world view expressed in these early narratives, like those of many other North American Indian groups, was radically different from the world view of the Euro-Americans who first encountered them.

The most important categorical distinction made by the Anishinaabeg, and illustrated, not only in the narratives, but also in the grammatical structure of their language, was that between animate and inanimate, between living and non-living things. However, not only were the Anishinaabeg (human beings), animals, and plants alive, but so were some natural and man-made objects such as specific stones, locations, dolls, etc. All such beings or creatures, not just humans, were considered to have what in English is termed a soul, and thus to be alive, and have power.⁸ Also living in the universe were a group of spiritual beings which the Anishinaabeg called *manitous*. The word *manitou* has been the subject of considerable academic discussion and frequent misrepresentations, since, as William Jones long ago remarked, the term referred both to an object or spirit, and to a quality or property (Wm. Jones 1905). The Ojibwa, along with other Algonquians, appear to have used the term *manitou* to refer to certain manifestations of humans, other creatures such as animals and birds, natural objects such as the sun and moon, geographical locations, and even some technological objects of the Euro-Americans, which appeared to be suffused with mystery, wonder or power. This has led many Euro-American scholars to emphasize either the concept of spiritual beings (Vecsey 1983), or the concept of *manitou* as a type of "non-particularized form of power" (Black-Rogers 1977). However, contemporary Ojibwa scholars such as Basil Johnston (1992:x; 1995:xxi) have continued to use the word "manitou" to refer to both concepts. As Catherine Albanese remarks in her recent book on Nature Religion in America, the

problem occurs because scholars have tried to force Algonquian beliefs into European categories and definitions (Albanese 1990).⁹

Although the major world religions also acknowledged spiritual beings (in Hinduism there were many kinds of spirits such as *devas*, in Islam, they were called *jinnee*, and in the Judeo-Christian tradition they were known as angels or devils), among the Anishinaabeg, and the tradition of the North American Indians generally, these manitous or spirits usually took the outer form of animals rather than humans. Neither Catholic nor Protestant missionaries, who worked among the Anishinaabeg during the early period of contact, denied the existence of such spirits, nor their powers. However, they were convinced that spirits "worshipped" by the Ojibwas and other Anishinaabeg, represented the "demonic" rather than the "angelic" forces of the Christian cosmology--partly at least, it could be argued, since these latter spirits were considered to have animal forms. Some nineteenth century Christians, such as William Warren in his preface to his history of the Ojibwas, compared the Ojibwa belief in spirits to spiritualism, which he notes was then "making such a stir in the midst of our most enlightened and civilized communities (Warren [1885] 1994:27)." Many other nineteenth century Euro-Americans adopted Edward Tylor's use of the term "animism" to label the belief of the Anishinaabe and other "primitive" groups in a variety of forms of spirits which "more rational" and "evolutionary advanced" societies had come to reject.

Certainly the Anishinaabe had a more plural and more personal sense of the universe, than the increasingly mechanistic vision of the Euro-Americans with whom

they came in contact. No less than their Euro-American neighbours, they elaborated a cosmology in which all things were named and ordered. This is illustrated in charts such as the one drawn by the informant of William Jones in conjunction with some notes on the "mystic rite" (*Midewiwin*) (Jones 1919:322-323). In the accounts collected by Jones (1919) and Barnouw (1977:41) the informants describe a multi-layered cosmos, which both describe as being inhabited by manitous. However, as Theresa Smith has noted in her discussion of the subject, in this, as in many other aspects of their world view, the hierarchy of layers was somewhat fluid (Smith 1995:44-47).

In Anishinaabe cosmology, some of the manitous presided over the plants and animals as "masters" of the different species. Others dwelt at the four cardinal points of the earth and made their presence known in the form of brothers who were the Four Winds. In the sky above dwelt the *Animikiiwag*, often called the Thunderers; and in the waters below, particularly in turbulent water, were the *Mishibizhii* (*Misipisiwak*), the Underwater Panthers and *Missipkinepi*, the *Sea Serpents*.¹⁰ Anishinaabe narratives are full of accounts of the warfare of these two manitous; the Thunderers represented the sky, light and good, while the Underwater Panthers or Monsters represented the lower world, darkness and evil. As will be seen, observers were often quick to see this as a form of dualism, but the situation is not quite so simple. There was originally, for instance, no direct equivalent to the Christian dichotomy between God and Satan. While the Thunderers were generally considered to be good, and the Underwater Panthers were generally considered to be evil, this was not always the case. The Thunderers could, and

often did exhibit their destructive tendencies, while the Underwater Panthers provided knowledge of medicinal herbs, and, as such, functioned as the earliest patrons of the *Midewiwin* Society. In the Anishinaabe cosmology, the Thunderers and the Underwater Panthers represented the two sides of the whole, both of whom had to be placated so that things could be kept in balance. In a sense, it could be argued, that the *Amimikiiwag* and *Mishibizhii* were probably closer to the Taoist concepts of *yin* and *yang*, than the Manichean or Christian concepts of good and evil. Nevertheless, following contact with Christian ideas, the Anishinaabeg gradually adopted an approach in which good and evil came to be represented by *Kitchi Manitou* and *Machi Manitou* rather than the *Amimikiiwag* and *Mishibizhii*.

In Anishinaabe traditions there were a number of other manitous who took on terrifying forms such as *Wiindigoo*, the winter cannibal monster that fed on human flesh, and *Paagak (Pahkack)*, the flying skeleton. While neither was inherently evil, they both played an important role in the lives of people for whom starvation was always a distinct possibility. Like many other North American Indians, the Anishinaabeg also believed in more benign manitous, such as the hairy dwarf spirits who dwelt among the rocks or in the cutbanks along rivers. These *Memegwesiwag*, or little people, were sometimes encountered by solitary travellers or by children, and tobacco offerings were left in places where they were said to dwell.

Central to a major cycle of Anishinaabe narratives was the person of *Nanabozho*, who figures prominently in a number of manifestations in the cosmology of various

Algonquian peoples.¹¹ In most narratives *Nanabozho* was said to have been born of a human mother and a spirit, often the West or North Wind. As a result, he possessed greater powers than any human, but at the same time he had all the human frailties. *Nanabozho* was sometimes regarded as the messenger or helper (*oshkaabewis*) of the Great Spirit or Master of Life to the Anishinaabeg. The narratives tell of early life with his older brothers and his grandmother, *Nookomis*. They tell of his marriage, his wife and children, of hunting, going to war--all normal activities for a member of the Anishinaabeg. They also tell of his titanic battles with his father, and the Underwater Panthers, his survival of a great flood, and the creation of a new earth with the help of the muskrat. Still others tell of his capriciousness, his vain boasting, his deceitful tricks, and his sufferings. In the original, unsanitized versions of the narratives, he appears as a bawdy, lewd figure to Euro-American audiences, for there are numerous references to faeces, anuses, penises and other "private body parts." In actuality, *Nanabozho* represented the ambiguous nature of existence; he was capable of the most noble deeds, as well as the most stupid, even basest of acts. As a trickster figure, particularly among the more northern Anishinaabeg, he was often viewed as a buffoon-like figure, with a mixture of amused affection and respect. However, as a transformer figure, he was credited with helping to teach the Anishinaabeg how to use fire, to hunt, to practice horticulture, use medicinal plants, and most significantly, he was usually credited with bringing them the powers of the *Midewiwin*.

As such, *Nanabozho* played a much more significant role in Anishinaabe cosmology than the much more remote figure who has come to be known as *Kitchi Manitou* (Great Spirit),¹² but may have been known to them as the "Master of Life," since he was held to be known only through his creations.¹³ The most thorough study of whether or not the concept was pre or post contact was done by John Cooper (1978). As he noted, the ideas and practices associated with the Master of Life concept conform to non-Christian patterns. Moreover, there was, according to his old informants, a definite break at the point in time in which Christian beliefs did begin to influence Algonquian beliefs. Thus, they mentioned that previously their ancestors had spoken of manitous, but after the arrival of Christian missionaries, they began to speak of *Kitchi Manitou* instead of the Master of Life. Cooper's statements are corroborated to a point by those of Vernon Kinietz in his work on the Chippewa village of Katikitegan (Kinietz 1947). Kinietz relied on the statements of early Euro-Americans such as the fur-trader Peter Grant (Masson 1960) whose 1804 account of the Ojibwa in the Boundary Waters region dealt at some length with Ojibwa religious beliefs, deities and ceremonies. While Grant stated that the "*Kitchi Manitou*" or the Master of Life was considered to be the creator of the world, he was a distant figure who was never worshipped. Although Grant also mentioned "*Matchi Manitou*" whom he described as being the source of all evil, Kinietz correctly asserts that this latter belief was the result of Christian influence, and does not reflect pre-contact beliefs. It was also only after the advent of Christian missionaries that the idea of future reward and punishment in a heaven and hell developed. Although Cooper's archival and

field research was primarily concerned with the Cree, most of his conclusions apply equally to Anishinaabe beliefs as Kinietz confirmed.¹⁴

Like the Christian God, with whom he often came to be identified, the Master of Life or *Kitchi Manitou* was usually addressed through a host of lesser manitous. Sometimes the physical Sun was used as a symbol of Master of Life, the four rays, indicating "his" universal presence. At other times, the Sun and the Moon were seen as intermediaries between the Master of Life and the Anishinaabeg; while in still other cases, the Sun was said to be the father of *Nanabozho* (Speck 1915:28). Although some scholars such as Sam Gill (1987) have argued against a pre-contact concept of "Mother Earth" among North American Indians, there is some evidence that such beliefs may have been found among the Ojibwa by at least the late eighteenth century. John Tanner's captivity narrative described how songs used on occasions of "medicine hunts" were sung either to *Nanabozho*, or to "*Me-su-kum-mik-oakwi*," the earth, whom he terms the great-grandmother of all (James 1956:184). There are valid questions regarding James' translation of the term, but the possibility cannot be totally discounted, given the fluidity of Anishinaabe beliefs, and paucity of sources upon which to build a case either way.

The spiritual connection amongst all these living things created a universal bond, a kinship, which is sometimes termed *bimaadiziwad* from the Ojibwe verb "it lives." But *bimaadiziwad* signifies more than simply "living," it also signifies that the person has "power." In other words, those things which have power are considered to be living. (Black-Rogers 1977:143).

Hallowell (1960, 1967), through his work with Ojibwa informants near Berens River, worked out a complex taxonomy of categories or classes which make up the Ojibwa world. In creating this taxonomy, he attempted as far as possible to avoid Western categorization--although even he was not completely successful. In an effort to make sense of Ojibwa belief systems, Hallowell termed all living things "persons," some human, some other-than-human; terms which have been adopted by large numbers of Ojibwa scholars. Unfortunately, since the Ojibwa themselves have no such category of "persons," he was forced to argue that it is not necessary for the individual Ojibwa to understand the principles involved in creating this category. Similarly, his "other-than-human persons" category includes what in Western thought could be called spiritual beings, mythological characters and the elements--which have been considered supernatural by some other commentators--except that Hallowell did not believe that the Ojibwa made this distinction in their world view. Rather, as Black-Rogers (1977:95-7) argued, Hallowell created a class in his taxonomy which, while not human, was closer to human beings than to other parts of the universe. Unfortunately, as she goes on to suggest, he had to deal with numerous exceptions such as some animals, some trees, and some stones which fitted into the category of "other-than-human persons." As Black-Rogers argued, "he avoided imposing Western categories ("as far as possible") by imposing the structure of taxonomic categorization that his Western preconceptions assumed to be universal." (Black-Rogers 1977:93).

Hallowell's attempt to explain the Ojibwa world view was far more successful than the efforts of his predecessors, and it has now become commonly accepted in the literature. Unfortunately, many scholars speak of Hallowell's concepts of "human" and "other-than-human" beings as though these concepts were intrinsic to the Ojibwa world view, rather than as an attempt to interpret this world -view. Hallowell, himself, was aware of the difference between emic and etic viewpoints, and struggled to avoid the pitfalls which face outside observers, but he was unable to totally shed his background as an academically trained ethnologist. While this perspective provided him with some excellent insights, his description of the Ojibwa world view remains rational, lacking any sense of mystery, the spiritual, or the holy, since for him, the supernatural did not exist. Yet, many others would argue that Ojibwa narratives are infused with a sense of mystery, of the spiritual. This clash of Western world views has been debated vigorously in the literature.¹⁵

In her own attempt to understand the Ojibwa world view, Black-Rogers (1977:99-100) points out that the "Ojibwa [have a] preoccupation with *appearance, form, and perceptibility itself...*" Outward appearance is only an incidental attribute of being...." She goes on to state that "what is vital in defining living things is the soul." (The italics are Black-Rogers', the underlining mine) I would go even further to argue that the concept of soul or "life force" is the central concept in Anishinaabe cosmology, and that it plays a significant role in the *Midewiwin*.

Vecsey (1984:458), for instance, has further argued that if all living things share the same spiritual substance, and outward appearance is only an incidental attribute of being, then metamorphosis is possible--and does play an important part in the Anishinaabe world view. Creatures with great power, such as *Nanabozho*, the *Aadizookaanag*, and individual Anishinaabe who have received power from a powerful manitou, are believed to have the power to change the outward manifestation of their bodily shape while retaining their essential being. As a result the Anishinaabeg were and still are invariably suspicious of strangers since there is no telling who the person might really be. Evil manitous and evil shamans were even said to take the shape of bears at night in order to wreak havoc on their victims, both living and dead (Warren 1984:110-111; Hoffman 1891:236; Tanner 1956:343). Because these "bearwalks" were described by early observers of the *Midewiwin*, they have been commonly linked to *Mide* beliefs and practices, but as Hultkrantz (1987:17), Grim (1983) and others have pointed out, beliefs involving metamorphosis into the form of bears were common among northern peoples in North America and Siberia. Howard (1965] 1977:121-122) noted that the Turtle Mountain Métis believed in *Rúgarùs* (a possible corruption of the French *loup garou*) which Howard believed to be a European version of the "bearwalk."

Since the Anishinaabeg had limited control over many aspects of their lives, it was important for them to seek the assistance of living creatures that had more power than they did. As Odinigun explained in a story told to Densmore:

"The ockabewis [messenger] told them that they must fast and find out things by dreams and that if they paid attention to these dreams they would learn

how to heal the sick. The people listened and fasted and found in dreams how to teach their children and do everything. The young men were taught that they must regulate their lives by dreams..." (Densmore 1979:98).

Dreams, as this quote from Odinigun's story explains, were of great importance in the life of individual Anishinaabeg, since they served as the vehicle by which the teachings were passed on, or new teachings were revealed.¹⁶ Moreover, as the story suggests, visions seen in dreams, and messages received therein, were regarded as "blessings" from the manitous which gave them the power to survive in the world. These two factors were of immense significance, for they ensured that the Anishinaabe cosmology was an extremely flexible one wherein there was, in Christian terms, an on-going revelation which was constantly being tested for its efficacy.

This is not to imply that the fundamental structure of their world view was constantly changing, but rather that Anishinaabeg were open to new beliefs and practices as revealed to them through dreams and visions. This openness allowed them also to incorporate a variety of beliefs and practices from other people, including Euro-Americans. They borrowed, not only from the beliefs and ceremonies of their aboriginal neighbours, but also from the beliefs and ceremonies of their Euro-American Christian neighbours. Nevertheless, the Anishinaabeg found it impossible to completely adopt the exclusivist views of Christian missionaries who argued that their beliefs alone were valid, and thus demanded the total dismemberment of Anishinaabe cosmology.

Instead, many Anishinaabe adopted certain beliefs and religious figures from Christianity--which were then placed within the context of Anishinaabe cosmology.

When challenged, the claims of Christian missionaries were countered with visions of a segregated world view: with one set of beliefs for the Euro-Americans and another for the Indians. However, in attempting to protect themselves from the aggressive proselytization of the Euro-American missionaries, the Anishinaabeg were forced to relinquish a fundamental tenet of their own world view and become, in turn, exclusivist themselves.

Children were trained in methods of securing dreams in preparation for what has become known as the Vision Quest when a young man or woman reached the age of puberty. At this time the young person went into isolation, fasted, and meditated, while waiting for some manitou to appear in a vision. If and when this happened, there was usually some kind of test which the dreamer had to undergo. If successful, the manitou would explain to the person what must be done to lead a good life. It would then serve throughout the person's life as a guardian or dream spirit, a *bawaagan*, providing power when it was needed. For this reason, many Anishinaabeg kept in their possession some form of representation of the dream subject, so that the manitou could be called upon for guidance, or assistance (Densmore 1979:78-79).¹⁷

Landes (1968:30-31) noted that the Ojibwa distinguished between ordinary dreams and dreams in which power was conveyed. According to Schoolcraft the term *apowa* was used to specify such dreams. However, Baraga defined *apowa* as an ominous, unlucky dream, and Densmore defined it as an important personal warning received in a dream. This may indicate that the term really applied to an evil vision

which might be unsolicited, and in which a person was "blessed" with powers which could bring harm to others.

Among the Anishinaabeg, anyone had the opportunity, and was encouraged to seek out blessings bestowed by the manitous and most were successful in their quest, although some never secured dream visions, and were thus powerless for life. It is notable that some Christian converts reported not having received a visit from a manitou during their vision quest, thus perhaps creating a greater willingness in them to accept the Christian god. Others, like Peter Jacobs and Allen Salt, marked their conversion as a result of a vision in which the Christian spirit came to them, thus incorporating their traditional beliefs with those of their new religion.

Individual Anishinaabe who sought and received "blessings" from the manitous in the form of a dream or vision were recognized by their brethren as having received "power" by the changes in their behaviour and ritual obligations which they acquired (Landes 1968:31).¹⁸ The power aided the individual in being "in control" or "self-sufficient" in his or her daily activities. Moreover, the blessings of some were more plentiful or powerful than others, since their *bawaaganag* or spirit guardians were of higher rank or greater in number, some exceptional individuals being granted powers related to hunting, warfare and curing. Other individuals had received knowledge about which plants would aid in the cure of various illnesses, while others could use their power to undo any spells which might have been placed on individuals by evil shamans (Jones 1861: 145-7). The vision/dream experience helped explain why some individuals were

more powerful than others, and it could also serve as a means of sanctioning and encouraging actions which were used to benefit the group as a whole.

The Ojibwa leader, Chingwauk (Shingwaukonse) explained how this worked to the American Indian Agent, Henry Schoolcraft at Mackinac in 1839:

Chingwauk began by saying that the ancient Indians made a great merit of fasting.... What a young man sees and experiences during these dreams and fasts, is adopted by him as truth, and it becomes a principle to regulate his future life. If he has been much favoured in his fasts, and the people believe that he has the art of looking into futurity, his path is open to the highest honors.

The prophet, he continued, begins to try his power in secret, with only one assistant, whose testimony is necessary should he succeed. As he goes on, he puts down the figures of his dreams or revelations by symbols, on bark or other material, . . . If what he predicts is verified, the assistant mentions it, and the record is then appealed to as proof of his prophetic power and skill. Time increases his fame. His *kekkeenowin*, or records are finally shown to the old people, who meet together and consult upon them, for the whole nation believe in these revelations. They, in the end, give their approval, and declare that he is gifted as a prophet -- is inspired with wisdom, and is fit to lead the opinions of the nation (Schoolcraft 1851-57, I:114).

Normally, as the above quotation indicates, individuals never spoke of their visions, for such actions were considered boasting, and would also cause them to lose their power which had been gained from the vision. Visions, however, did have to be validated by the spiritual elders, before a person's power was accepted by the community. Nevertheless, some Christian converts were willing to speak of their previous experiences before they had become Christians. Catherine Wambose, whom Schoolcraft (1848:169;1856:391-6) termed the "prophetess of Chequoimegon" was one such individual. Her story explains the role played by dreams in the acquisition of power. She explained in some detail to Schoolcraft's wife (in Ojibwa) how at the time of her first

menstruation her mother helped her build a lodge, and she blackened her face and began to fast. After several days she had a number of visions in which she was given a name, plus one for her first son, as well as instructions and songs to sing. After the seventh day of fasting she was given the power of seeing into the future, which was to be used for her benefit and that of her relatives and fellow band members. She went on to explain that the first time she utilized her new powers was in response to the requests of her family and friends who were in danger of starvation and asked her assistance. The next day the hunters found and killed a moose where she had said it would be. "My reputation was established by this success" she concluded (Schoolcraft, 1851-57 I:391-4).

Such individuals came to be recognized and were respected for the power that they possessed since it often aided others. However, they were also feared, for the Anishinaabeg believed that this power could also be used for evil purposes. Expressed in western political terms--it means that they were aware that power corrupts. The first French and English who encountered the Anishinaabeg made no such distinctions. They normally lumped all such people together as "jugglers," "sorcerers," or "conjurers," the terms reflecting the Euro-American Christian belief that some individuals were both deceptive and evil, since many Christians believed that the powers of such individuals must have come from demonic forces. In other words, in the world view of Euro-American Christians, individuals who had such powers, owed their allegiance to the devil, not to Jesus Christ.

In the nineteenth century, Euro-American observers such as Schoolcraft and Nicollet made an attempt to understand the world view of aboriginal Americans, and began to use Anishinaabe terms or English translations of them, to describe Anishinaabe concepts and institutions to the degree that they understood them. Gradually, the older terms for traditional healers began to give way to new Anishinaabe ones, while the general term "medicine men," came to be used to refer to the group as a whole. Most Euro-Americans, nevertheless, continued to disparage the role and efficacy of these traditional healers, often treating all such individuals as charlatans, at best.

Anishinaabe Religious Leaders and Traditional Healers

An examination of the earliest post-contact, Euro-American primary sources clearly indicates that at least from the period of contact, Anishinaabe society distinguished a number of different types of people who had received special powers from the manitous through a dream vision. Although the Anishinaabe themselves never applied a collective noun to describe all such types of religious leader or healer, the term "shaman"¹⁹ will be used when speaking of these Anishinaabe individuals. It is hoped that the term shaman will avoid the negative connotations of earlier terms, while at the same time allowing one to make more generalized statements.

Among their fellow Anishinaabeg, shamans were viewed as dreamers, visionaries who used their power as healers, and ceremonial leaders who helped to keep the various forces of the universe in equilibrium. They were given a number of different names, depending upon the nature of their vision, and the types of power which they were given.

However, such names were not meant to be mutually exclusive since some individuals received more than one type of power, and could therefore be described in different ways. Moreover, these same individuals could also be described in numerous other ways, according to their particular skills as hunters or war leaders, or according to their roles in civil society. The desire of many Euro-Americans to attempt to impose mutually exclusive categories on Anishinaabe society has, as will be seen, led to considerable confusion. While such rigid distinctions produce a tidy method of classification which is easy for the outsider to understand, they do not accurately reflect the Anishinaabe experience.

Keeping in mind that individuals in Anishinaabe society were not distinguished primarily by their "occupation," but rather by the fact that they had received a vision in which they had been blessed by the manitous with varying amounts and different kinds of power which could be used for good or evil, it is possible to consider a number of ways in which this power was obtained and used.

The most commonly reported spirit-inspired "medicine man" or shaman singled out by Euro-Americans was known to the Anishinaabeg as a *jissakiiwinini* (*jaasakiid*).²⁰ *Jaasakiids* summoned their spirit helpers with whom they communicated by drumming and singing. The *Jiisakiiwinin*, or as it came to be known by Euro-Americans, the "Shaking Tent Ceremony" or "Conjuring Lodge Ceremony," has been well documented by Euro-American observers among northern Algonquian peoples.²¹ While reports of this ceremony were mentioned by a variety of observers going back to the time of Samuel de

Champlain, one of the fullest early descriptions among the Anishinaabeg is by the fur trader, Alexander Henry the Elder, who devotes a whole chapter of his 1764 Travels to a description of what he terms "Consulting the GREAT TURTLE." His account will be quoted in some detail since it is not only one of the earliest Euro-American accounts, but also demonstrates many of the misconceptions which Euro-Americans had regarding aboriginal religious figures and ceremonies.

Henry was at that time amongst some Ojibwa (as some bands of Anishinaabeg were beginning to be called by Euro-Americans) who had just arrived at Sault Ste. Marie, shortly after the fall of Michilimackinac to Indian followers of Pontiac in 1763. The occasion was an invitation by Sir William Johnson to all Indians who were peacefully disposed towards the British to meet with him at Fort Niagara. As various bands of Ojibwa had recently joined Pontiac in opposing the English, "the occasion was of too much magnitude not to call for more than human knowledge and discretion; and preparations were accordingly made for solemnly invoking and consulting the GREAT TURTLE" (Henry 1969:158). *Mikanaak* the turtle (as he was named by the Anishinaabe) acted as a messenger between the *jaasakiid* and the spirits or manitous. Like *Nanabozho*, *Mikanaak* is often portrayed as a figure of some derision, (an old gossip according to Schoolcraft), but at the same time he possessed unique powers of translation, which were vital to the Ojibwa, enabling them to speak with the manitous. Perhaps it was this power which led them to sometimes portray him as a sinister figure, since often he literally held their life in balance.

Henry went on to describe how the ceremony began with the preparation of the tent: "Five poles, or rather pillars, of five different species of timber, about ten feet in height, and eight inches in diameter were set in a circle of about four feet in diameter. The holes made to receive them were about two feet deep ... the pillars were bound together by a circular hoop, or girder. Over this edifice were spread moose-skins ..." (Henry 1965:159).

The ceremonies, he explained, did not begin until nightfall, when several fires were kindled around the tent. Once the village had assembled, the *Jaasakiid's* arms were bound, and he crawled into the tent. The tent began to shake and there was a cacophony of animal sounds emanating from it, followed by a period of silence and then the Turtle was heard, followed by a half hour of songs. Then the *Jaasakiid* addressed the multitude and declared the spirit's readiness to answer questions. The chief then took a quantity of tobacco and offered it to the spirit before he asked whether or not the English were preparing to make war on the Indians.

The tent instantly began to shake, and a terrible cry announced the departure of the Turtle. After a quarter of an hour of silence, the voice of the turtle was heard again, so the *Jaasakiid* translated. He explained that the Turtle had proceeded to Fort Niagara where he had seen no troops, but on proceeding further towards Montreal, the river was covered with boats full of soldiers, on their way up the river to make war. The Chief asked again if Sir William Johnson would receive the Indians who came to Fort Niagara

as friends. The answer was that he would fill their canoes with gifts and every man would be able to return home safely.

Henry related that after the questions of "public interest" had been answered, individuals were able to ask personal questions such as concerns about absent friends. Although Henry made no mention of it, the Shaking Tent ceremony was also used by individuals as a means of asking for a cure for themselves or others, as a means of finding game, and as a means of "finding" a mate. In a sense then, the ceremony was a form of "divination," since the object was to gain an insight into the future or the unknown through supernatural means. However, the power of the *jaasakiids* extended not only to providing such insights, but also in influencing events. Given the highly unpredictable nature of Ojibwa life, such ceremonies and their practitioners were useful in helping them to make important decisions.

Henry himself took the opportunity to ask whether he would ever revisit his native country, and was reassured that he would--so he made an extra offering of tobacco. The private questions continued until about midnight, at which time, everyone returned to their own lodges. Henry concluded that he made every effort to "... detect the particular contrivances by which the fraud was carried on; but such was the skill displayed ... that I made no discoveries... (Henry 1965:162).

Henry's description parallels the brief 1804 description of an Ojibwa ceremony by North West Company fur trader, Duncan Cameron (Masson 1960:264) at Lake Nipigon; the more clinical description given by the French scientist, Joseph Nicollet (1970:216-

218)²² of a similar Ojibwa ceremony held at Leech Lake in 1836; and Hudson's Bay Company fur trader, George Nelson's more sympathetic description of a Cree ceremony at Lac La Ronge in 1823 (Brown & Brightman 1988:39-44;102-107). The Shaking Tent ceremony continued to be described in some detail by a variety of ethnographers throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. The most notable of these is the monograph by Hallowell (1942) based on his work among the Berens River Saulteaux (Ojibwa). The work also contains an excellent overview of the Shaking Tent as seen through the eyes of a long line of Euro-Americans.

Henry's testimony is important, both for what it tells us about the ceremony, for what it omits, and for what it reveals about the world view of many Euro-Americans during that time. The book was probably written years after the trader's experiences among the Ojibwa, but it has an immediacy which is lacking in many other travelogues which were intended for the growing market of readers who longed for accounts of "wild Indians." Henry made no attempt to understand the world view of his Ojibwa companions, but as befitting a Euro-American businessman, he stuck to the practical details, coloured with a few vivid descriptions which illustrate just how exotic the ceremony must have seemed to Euro-Americans. But what intrigued him, along with Cameron, and Nelson, is that despite everything, no evidence of deception could be found in the performance; all of these observers were forced to admit that the answers given were correct, though they could not explain how they were obtained. Only the scientist

and devout Roman Catholic, Nicollet, was not totally convinced, although in many other ways he was more sympathetic to the ways of the Ojibwa than were the fur traders.

Both Henry's and Nelson's accounts not only describe some of the basic ingredients in the ceremony, but Henry's, in particular, illustrates the context, the role that the ceremony played in Ojibwa society. In a sense, Henry's rough-hewn account is appropriate, for the proceedings were often carried out in a very ribald way, and the ceremony had an entertainment value as well as a serious intent. Nevertheless, as they all make clear, the Ojibwa believed implicitly in the power of the *Jaasakiids* to do what they claimed to be able to do, in a way that few Christians believed in the powers of the Christian clergy--yet there were suspected charlatans among *Jaasakiids* too.

Although Henry did not make any attempt to explain the origin of this power, and in fact confused the messenger (*Mikinaak* the turtle) with the manitou source of the power, most other Euro-Americans were more ready to provide explanations. Devout Christians,²³ who shared the Ojibwa belief in immaterial spiritual beings, were convinced that it was the devil, while more rationalist ethnographers such as W. J. Hoffman (1891) attributed any appearance of "power" to the deceptive practices of the *Jaasakiids*. Few observers appear to be actually aware that the power they were witnessing could be used not only for good but for evil purposes, depending upon the circumstances.²⁴

The dramatic nature of the *Jiissakiwiwin* and *Jaasakiid* attracted the attention of Euro-Americans, but they were not the only people among the Anishinaabeg who possessed power to heal. Individuals received a variety of different types of power in their vision

quests which could be used for healing purposes. However, the difficulties in classifying such individuals is apparent in the confusion surrounding the terms used to describe those Anishinaabeg who received powers to heal. Sometimes referred to as *Mashkikiwininiwag* and at other times as *Nenaandawiiwejig*,²⁵ they were frequently confused with each other, or with *Jaasakiids*, particularly since the same individual often acted in several different capacities. Thus, for instance, Lahontan, as quoted in Hoffman (1891:151), refers to the practices of Algonquians who lived around the Great Lakes:

When they are sick, they only drink Broth, and eat sparingly; and if they have the good luck to fall asleep, they think themselves cur'd: They have told me frequently that sleeping and sweating would cure the most stubborn Diseases in the World. When they are so weak that they cannot get out of Bed, their Relations come and dance and make merry before 'em, in order to be able to divert 'em. To conclude, when they are ill, they are always visited by a sort of Quacks, (*Jongleurs*); of whom 't will now be proper to subjoin two or three Words by the bye.

A *Jongleur* is a sort of *Physician*, or rather a *Quack*, who being once cur'd of some dangerous Distemper, has the Presumption and Folly to fancy that he is immortal, and possessed of the Power of curing all Diseases, by speaking to the Good and Evil Spirits (Lahontan 1703: 2:47-8).

Lahontan then went on to describe part of the Shaking Tent ceremony, followed by part of the rituals usually ascribed to the *Nenaandawiiwejig*, and concludes by describing the *Mashkiki* or medicines used by individuals who were termed *Mashkikiwininiwag*.

Despite being far less judgemental than Lahontan, Nicollet and Hoffman provide little assistance in clarifying the problem. While Hoffman (1891:159) mentioned only the *Mashkikiwininiwag*, whom he terms "herbalists," as examples of "non-shamanistic" healers, the illustration in his work is that of a *Nenaandawiiwed*, whom many Euro-

Americans termed a "sucking bone doctor." Later (Hoffman (1891:254-55) described a person whom he calls a *Jaasakiid* performing a ceremony which is attributed in most cases to the *Nenaandawiiwejig*, although Densmore (1979:45-6) relates a similar incident in which a *Jaasakiid* uses sucking bones to cure a patient. Nicollet (1970:218-221) either compressed the powers of both types of healers in his description of what he termed the *Nenaandawiiwed*, or perhaps the person whom he encountered possessed both types of power. Baraga, in his 1853 Ojibwa dictionary, described each of them as "doctors," but made no distinction between them.

Evidently, the *Mashkikiwininiwag* were individuals who had received the power to use certain herbs which could be employed in the treatment of ailments which Euro-Americans believed to be the result of "natural" causes. However, it should not be assumed that there was no "spiritual" aspect to the treatment, as Hoffman and most others seem to contend. On the contrary, the healing properties of the specific herbs being used had been bestowed on them by the manitous, and these powers had then been revealed to the individual *Mashkikiwinini*. Each healing ceremony was in actual fact, also a "religious" ceremony. Therefore, it was also carried out in conjunction with appropriate offerings of tobacco and songs to the manitous, along with dances. This is illustrated in the song used by Chiahba, a "celebrated Ojibbeway medicine man" as he cured a patient who had fallen victim to "bad medicine." He began by invoking the power of black snakes, then he sang "*Ne-man-i-to-we-tah hi-you-che-be-kun-na on-je-man-i-to-wee-yaun we-ug-usk*" -- "I am Manito, the roots of shrubs and herbs make me Manito." He went on

to sing that the snakes and the Underwater Panther were his "friends," while exhibiting his medicines (Tanner 1830: 376-78). Following such a ceremony, gifts of food would be offered by the family of the ill person, in order to show proper deference and gratitude to the manitous involved.

Powerful herbs, roots, and other *mashkiki* or medicines, could be used for purposes other than treating the sick. Every Anishinaabe youth had a *biinjigossan* or "medicine bag" containing herbs, "charms," and an "effigy" of his *baawagan* or guardian spirit which he carried with him. Depending upon what powers the individual had received, his medicines might well include medicines which could be used during a *Nah-gitch-e-gum-me* or "medicine hunt" when starvation was faced--or he might be able to purchase some from someone who had them. Tanner ([1830] 1956:164) recounted such an instance in which medicines were offered to be applied to the images of the animals to be killed.²⁶ "Love potions" were also used in a similar way to gain the affections of some woman who had ignored the advances of her suitor.²⁷

Nenaandawiiwejig received different powers from the Manitous and therefore were able to treat different types of ailments. *Nenaandawiiwejig* were what Euro-Americans often termed "sucking bone" doctors since Euro-Americans observed that they cured patients by sucking through a couple of small bones in order to draw the cause of the illness out of the patient. This "act of deception" as Euro-Americans usually saw it, probably contributed to the *Nenaandawiiwed* being considered one of "the class of conjurers" along with the *Jaasakiid* and *Mide*, as opposed to the *Mashkikiwinini* who

used medicines.²⁸ The actual purpose of this practice was that, like many Indians in both North and South America, the Anishinaabeg believed that sicknesses were often caused by a foreign object in a person's body, which may have entered by "natural" means, or more often as a result of the practices of evil shamans who wished to harm the patient. In order to cure the patient, the cause of the illness had to be removed.

Before attempting to cure patients, *Nenaandawiiwejig* fasted, and having purified themselves, they then beseeched the manitous for help by making an offering of smoke. This was followed by singing and drumming rituals during which they again asked the manitous for help in locating the source of the illness. Once this source was located, they symbolically removed the offending object by using the sucking bones, and placed it on a dish for everyone present to see. In the meantime, the family of the individual would prepare gifts of food for the manitous who were being invoked. The success of the cure, where "bad medicine" was involved, depended upon the respective power of the individual *Nenaandawiiwed* and the person who had caused the illness.

These three types of individuals were not, of course, alone in having power given to them by the manitous, nor were these the only ceremonial occasions in Anishinaabe society. By the early nineteenth century, there was an increasing number of Euro-American references to *Mide* and *Waabano* shamans, and what the writers believed to be their "esoteric" ceremonies.

The *Mide* shamans will be discussed at some length in subsequent chapters, but passing reference needs to be made to the *Waabano* shamans at this point, even though

the *Waabanowiwini* is likely a post-contact ceremony. Nevertheless, Euro-American accounts which describe the *Midewiwini* often make reference to *Waabano* shamans and the *Waabanowiwini* so it is important to consider the similarities and differences before examining these accounts in detail.

The *Waabanowiwini* was another ceremony by which the Anishinaabeg sought and acquired *mashkiki* or powerful "medicine" as the Euro-Americans termed it. It would appear that the *Waabanowiwini* arose as a reaction to the more institutionalized *Midewiwini*. According to one of Frances Densmore's informants, an elderly female *Mide*, a young Ojibwa man had wished to join the *Midewiwini*, but was opposed by his father who felt that the son did not have a sufficient appreciation for the solemn ritual. Therefore, the young man undertook a vision quest on his own and he was visited by a manitou from the East. Although Densmore's informant did not mention the name of the manitou, the slight information that exists would appear to indicate that *Waabanos* gained their power from either the morningstar or the sun. The young man was promised a new medicine by the manitou, which it was said would either cure or kill all those who took it. He and a group of young men accepted the medicine and used it in an unscrupulous fashion (Densmore [1929] 1979:).

The majority of descriptions of the *Waabanowiwini* concentrate on the spectacular acts by which the *Waabano* demonstrated his power, rather than on the powers themselves. The earliest recorded Euro-American account was by the fur trader, David

Thompson, who in 1798, described a ceremony in the region between the Lake of the Woods and the Red River:

I learned that of late a superstition had sprung up, and was now the attention of all the Natives. It appeared that the old songs, Dances, and Ceremonies by frequent repetition had lost all their charms, and religious attention . . . some novelty was required and called for. . . Accordingly two, or three crafty chiefs, contrived to dream . . . they saw a powerful Medicine . . . they were to call it the Wah-bin-no . . . (Thompson 1971:178).

Thompson's account would appear to agree in principle with the oral tradition recorded by Densmore more than a hundred years later, although some of the specifics differed. His account is reinforced by similar accounts made at the same general time by Thomas McKenney and John Tanner.

In 1826 McKenney recorded two versions of a *Waabanowiwini* ceremony, one which took place at Sault Ste. Marie, and the other at Fond du Lac. According to his account the ceremony began in the evening with the beating of a drum, to which a large number of individuals began to dance. Suddenly, he recounted:

". . . an unusually tall Indian with a cap of skins on, and a covering of the same, entered with a wild and fierce countenance, blowing, and looking around the tent, and uttering at every expiration of his breath, an *eh-eh-eh*;--when presently, a younger Indian entered, and seized him by the arms, and being disengaged by the force of the other, caught at his body, as if his object was to make him surrender something (McKenney 1972:170-171).

Presently an older Indian took the drum, and after making a round of the tent with the drum, commenced to make a speech. Shortly after he was approached by someone else begging for some whiskey, which was distributed to those present. McKenney noted that he went to bed at midnight, but upon rising at four o'clock the next morning, found that

the ceremony was still proceeding. At that point in time, two boiling kettles containing mush-like soup had been brought in, one of which contained a dog. McKenney did not stay for the feast.

However, he did witness another *Waabanowiwini* ceremony at Fond du Lac.

Although it commenced the same:

"All at once, and by throwing dirt and ashes on them, the remains of the fires were extinguished, when for a moment everything was still. Then the drums beat louder and quicker, and the song broke out from a hundred mouths In the midst of this, three or four Indians went around the circle blowing fire from their mouths, emitting thousands of sparks, and lighting up, by means of them, their faces, whilst their distended cheeks looked like lanterns (McKenney 1972:265).

McKenney's account focused on the exotic, but it captured the essential elements of the ceremony, as can be seen by comparing it with Tanner's account.

Tanner's parents were Euro-Americans, but he was culturally an Ottawa/Ojibwa, since he had spent most of his youth and adulthood among them. On the whole his account is much more matter of fact, although he too, makes some judgements regarding the *Waabanos*:

At this time the Waw-be-no was fashionable among the Ojibbeways, but it has ever been considered by the older and more respectable men as a false and dangerous religion. The ceremonies of the Waw-be-no differ very essentially from those of the Metai, and are usually accompanied by much licentiousness and irregularity. The Ta-wae-e-gun used for a drum in this dance, differs from the Woin Ah-keek or Metikwaw-keek, used in the Me-tai, it being made of a hoop of bent wood like a soldier's drum, while the latter is a portion of the trunk of a tree, hollowed by fire, and having skin tied over it. The She-zhe-gwun, or rattle, differs also in its construction from that used in the Metai. In the Waw-be-no, men and women dance and sing together, and there is much juggling and playing with fire. The initiated take coals of fire, and red hot stones in their hands, and sometimes in their mouths. . . Sometimes one of the principal performers at the

Waw-be-no, has a kettle brought and set down before him, which is taken boiling from the fire, and before it has time to cool, he plunges his hands to the bottom, and brings up the head of the dog . . . (Tanner [1830] 1994:122).

Tanner went on to explain that the shamans apply the medicine from the yarrow plant to protect themselves from burns, but he provided no explanation of the purpose behind these ceremonies.²⁹ Nevertheless, his explanatory details fill in some of the background left blank by Thompson and McKenney. Together with the oral narrative regarding the origin of the *Waabanowiwîn*, they provide a brief introduction to the ceremony. Whether or not it was part of pre-contact aboriginal culture is beyond the bounds of this study. Certainly, it would at first glance appear to be a more recent development, although similar ceremonies were common among the Huron neighbours of the Anishinaabeg. It is also possible that Warren was referring to *Waabanos* in his description of the dark days at Chequamegon in the early 1800s when the Ojibwa ". . . fell entirely under the power of their Satanic medicine men . . . (Warren [1885] 1984:109).

Certainly there does seem to have been a connection between the *Midewiwîn* and the *Waabanowiwîn*, in that the two ceremonies were often celebrated in conjunction with one another. There are frequent references to *Waabanos* who were engaged in power struggles with other shamans who were usually *Mides*. Nevertheless, there are few references for what purposes *Waabanos* used their power, although it would appear that they were diviners whose power to see into the future would have helped them in hunting, and war (Skinner 1915). Certainly, it is true that one of the major supporters of

Tecumseh, the Potawatomi military leader, Main Poc, was reported to have been a *Waabano*. However, it is likely that most *wabaanos* simply used their powers for the same purposes as other Anishinaabe shamans. As an informant of William Jones indicated: they performed their *Waabanowiwinn* ceremonies so that they might live a long time, kill sufficient game for food, that the berries might be plentiful, and that things would go well (Jones 1919:317-318).

Although it would appear from many of the sources that the *Waabanowiwinn* was essentially a society of evil shamans, *waabanos* appear to have functioned independently rather than as members of a society. As will be seen, both they and *Jaasakiids* could, and did become high ranking members of the *Midewiwinn*. And, as with most other aspects of Anishinaabe culture, the fact that they possessed great power appears to have been the reason that they were feared, since such power could be misused. Nevertheless, there were instances in which their powers were used for good in contrast to evil *Mides*. As usual, nothing was as it seemed in the Anishinaabe world!

While shamans were individuals who had received extraordinary amounts of power from the manitous, every individual in Anishinaabe society had the potential to receive blessings during his or her vision quest, and almost all Anishinaabe actions had a ceremonial aspect to them. From the birth and naming of a child to the ceremonies for the dead, individuals pleaded with the manitous for "pity," and gave thanks for any blessings received. Like most other North American Indians, they fasted, and cleansed themselves in sweat lodges in order to purify their bodies and souls, before attempting to

any special communication with the manitous. Tobacco and music were two other essential elements in successful communication. Tobacco offerings were left when roots and herbs were obtained for medicines, beside certain locations which spiritual beings were said to frequent, thrown on the waters when harvesting wild rice, or when encountering rough waters. The tobacco was smoked in pipes, after *kinnikinnick*³⁰ had been added in order to make it more pleasing to the manitous, for ceremonial purposes connected with divination and curing ceremonies, as well as more "secular" purposes connected with trade and politics. Music, in the form of drumming, singing and dancing also formed an essential part of Anishinaabe ceremonies. Dream songs acquired during a dream or vision, were believed to assure the recipient of aid from the manitous, and as such were used whenever communication with the manitous was desired--for instance in curing ceremonies or war preparations. Melody, not words, was the important element (although it will be seen that early observers concentrated on the words) in ensuring the power of these songs, and ultimately the power of the individual who owned them (Densmore 1910;1913).

In the case of all these Anishinaabe ceremonies, early Euro-American observers concentrated on the external aspects, believing them to be in many cases, deception on the part of charlatans, or devotions to numerous false gods. While most members of both societies believed in the existence of spiritual beings, early Euro-Americans as a general rule understood them only in Christian terms. Thus, they often attributed any power to the devil, particularly since many of the ceremonies took place at night, to the

accompaniment of music which they did not understand, and secretly feared, particularly the "incessant" beat of the drum. Nor did they initially understand the Anishinaabe ceremonial use of the pipe, or the concept of providing gifts to the manitous in return for their assistance.³¹ Moreover, in a society which made radical distinctions between the responsibilities and power of the clergy and physicians, the apparent inter-relationship between these two was totally incomprehensible.³²

In more general terms, Euro-Americans subsequently used the Anishinaabeg term *mashkiki* in order to create an English term "Medicine Man" to refer to a range of practitioners who made use of specialized "medicine" powers obtained through visions. While Euro-Americans tended to see "medicine power" as being a single entity, contrasting "good" and "bad" shamans, the Anishinaabeg distinguished three major kinds of *mashkiki*: "curing medicine," "protection medicine," and "bad medicine." Curing medicine helped the individual to regain control which had been lost, either as a result of an illness, an accident, a wound, or the effects of bad medicine which had been used by an enemy. Protection medicine, as its name implies, was used to protect a person, whether from dangers in battle, or as a defence against potential evil such as being made helpless or out of control. Bad medicine was used to render other people helpless, or out of control, or to kill them.³³

It might be thought that "good" medicine would be obtained only from "good" manitous and vice versa, but this was not the case. The three types of medicine were parts of a single whole; the distinction was mainly on how the power was used. Even so-

called "evil" manitous such as the Underwater Panthers provided power which could be used for good as well as bad purposes. What each individual had to do was to ensure that the proper spirits were placated, and kept in balance.

Moreover, it was often difficult to tell from outward appearances, whether a person might use power for good or evil purposes. Individuals who were believed to be selfish, uncooperative, or, who in other ways threatened the corporate life of the community, were often suspected of practising bad medicine, as were strangers, or members of other tribal groups. This sometimes resulted in power contests between "good" and "evil" shamans--which usually depended upon one's perspective. In other instances, community sanctions including banishment and, in the most extreme cases, even death might be applied against the offender or offenders. In some instances, such as the situation at Chequamegon, described by Warren, evil practices might even take over an entire community for a period of time (Warren [1885] 1984:109-111).³⁴ Warren merely suggests that the problem was resolved when the Ojibwa once again resumed their migration.

It does not seem that pre and early contact Ojibwa undertook the type of "witch hunts" that characterized some neighbouring groups such as the Iroquois who often sought out and put to death suspected numbers of evil shamans.³⁵ Wallace has argued in his studies of revitalization (Wallace 1956) and religion (Wallace 1966:177-187), that the fear of witchcraft served as a means of ensuring a level of individual compliance. This, in turn, allowed leaders such as Handsome Lake to use "witch hunts" as an instrument of

social control in societies where there had been a breakdown in traditional procedures following a period of rapid, enforced acculturation (Wallace 1966:180-181).

Since pre-contact Anishinaabeg lived in small groups or bands for the greater part of the year, individuals who had received power, and were able to "practice medicine," were important to the daily life of the band. The successful wielding of their power could mean the difference between starvation and plenty, particularly in times of adverse weather conditions. Dreams or visions experienced by individuals--either unsolicited or as part of ceremonies such as the *Jissakiiwinini*, were important to both individuals and band members as a whole. However, such power was two-edged in Anishinaabeg terms, since individuals could practice not only curing and protective medicine, but also bad medicine. In such cases their power could be disruptive, even dangerous to the community. Rather than a dualistic universe clearly divided between good and evil as many Christian observers thought it to be, the Anishinaabe world was thus a more complex one in which good and evil were fused together, differing only in what form they took. Thus, "powerful" individuals were both respected and feared, since they could both help others to maintain their autonomy, or cause them to lose control of their lives. It was natural then that such powerful individuals would begin to assume leadership roles among their fellow Anishinaabeg beyond the spiritual or even medical spheres.

Anishinaabe Socio/Political Organization and Leadership

At some period in the seventeenth century, prior to contact with the first Europeans, the Anishinaabeg lived mainly in the area drained by Lakes Huron and

Superior.³⁶ Small groups ranged from the area around Georgian Bay west along Lake Huron and north to Lake Superior and the upper peninsula of present-day Michigan. Around this time, the Anishinaabeg around *Bowating* (which the French named Sault Ste Marie) appear to have begun to move outside their original territory. Anishinaabe narratives such as those collected and written down by Warren, Hoffman, Densmore and others speak of the migration which has been previously described, but they give us little idea of the actual experience of the participants.

Scholars are generally divided into two schools of thought as to what characterized the social organization of these "proto-Ojibwa," as the ancestors of present day Ojibwa have become known to scholars. One school, represented by Hickerson (1962) and Bishop (1982, 1989) believes that groups such as the *Noquet* (Bear), *Awasse* or *Marquet* (Catfish), *Amicoures* (Beaver), and other groups noted by early French missionaries and traders, were clan-based groups. By clan in this context, Hickerson meant "a corporate unilineal descent group with a fictitious ancestor" (Hickerson [1970] 1988:45). Hickerson based his argument on a theory that the fisheries at Bowating supported village life, and on a belief that the word totem is derived from the Ojibwa word *odena* which means village.³⁷ Similarly, other writers such as Cleland (1982) and Dawson (1983) have postulated the theory that village life could have developed in this area as a result of the fisheries. While Hickerson was of the opinion that these groups were originally egalitarian in nature, Bishop later disagreed, arguing that the leaders of these patrilineal totemic groups were lineage chiefs, since group identity was expressed in

relationship to other groups. He argued that "the role of chiefs in matters of trade is paramount in explaining the origin of the patrilineal totemic clan system" (Bishop 1989:56).

James G. E. Smith (1979) and Rogers (1969a;1983) disagreed with the claim that new patrilineal clans emerged among the proto-historical Ojibwa. They argued that the proto-Ojibwa were in fact composed of egalitarian, patrilocal, and patrilineal migratory bands, who returned to fish and plant gardens at Bowating on a seasonal basis. They refused to limit the proto-Ojibwa to the few named clan groups, arguing instead that they were part of a culturally and linguistically similar population in the Upper Great Lakes region.

Callender (1962) also doubted that clans existed among the Ojibwa prior to the 1600s. He speculated that they may have originated among the Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi when they encountered the Memomini who were already established in sedentary villages in what is now Wisconsin. Callender pointed out that while all three groups shared a common terminology, the Ojibwa clans had fewer corporate features than their neighbours. Supernatural power among the Ojibwa was an individual possession, comparable to private property, as were sacred bundles and sacred songs. Naming, which was a clan function among the Memomini, was carried out in connection with private visions among the Ojibwa.

According to Smith and Rogers, population movements among the proto-Ojibwa at the smallest social unit were common in the region of the Upper Great Lakes in the

1600s and 1700s as a result of war with neighbouring Iroquois and Sioux and the search for game. These movements increased as these proto-Ojibwa encountered Euro-Americans and became engaged in the fur trade. As can be expected, there was some fission and fusion among these bands. Nevertheless, according to Smith and Rogers, there was little change in the essential makeup of these bands until the middle of the eighteenth century.

It would seem most probable, that if clans arose, they did so around the time of early Euro-American contacts, as the Ojibwa moved south and west into an area of more diverse and abundant resources, and encountered related groups who already had a clan structures. The rise of alliance chiefs at this time, as Bishop suggested, would certainly have been an additional reason for clan development at this time. Regardless of when the Ojibwa clan structure arose, it certainly facilitated increased movement during this period since it provided a means of friendship and support from fellow clan members in various villages throughout the region. As will be seen, such movement among small groups of Ojibwa was common until the period in which they were confined to reservations, although they did not necessarily remain clan-based, so that the term "band" is probably a more accurate descriptor during much of the contact period. Also, none of the above debates alter the generally agreed upon fact that large semi-permanent villages did develop at Bowating, Chequamegon and Michilimackinac, Green Bay and elsewhere-- probably as a result of a combination of climatic conditions and an abundance of natural resources. These, it is argued, served important trade and ceremonial functions even prior

to the coming of the Euro-Americans, and later became "service centres" for the fur brigades (Waisberg 1977:162-8). Certainly there was an extensive pre-contact system of lake and river trade routes in the Upper Great Lakes region, which facilitated the seasonal migration of large numbers of people to these villages each year in the early summer.

More recently, White (1991) and Schlesier (1990) have argued that the world of the Anishinaabeg was shattered by the twin blows of epidemics and Iroquois attacks beginning in the 1640s and reaching into the 1660s. The large village centres identified by earlier scholars were in fact peopled by refugees from a variety of different Anishinaabe groups, ranging from hunting bands of proto-Ojibwa, to the more socially structured Miamis, to the remnants of the once powerful Huron confederacy. While the different groups of refugees maintained their separateness to some degree, cultural forms were borrowed from other groups, and intermarriage and adoption fostered new bonds between different cultural groups. The dissolution of some old social units and the birth of new ones made social relations extremely complicated. To make matters even more difficult for the historian, the early writings of ethnologists who studied these tribes and codified them, are full of internal contradictions since they sought to freeze and codify what was in a fact, a world in flux (White 1991:16).

What is important to keep in mind is that most Ojibwa continued to live in small, temporary villages for most of the year. Even a semi-permanent village such as Bowating in the seventeenth century is estimated to have had no more than several hundred permanent residences, although it increased considerably in size during the

summer months. While centres such as Chequamegon and Green Bay may have had mixed populations numbering in the thousands, many of these would have been migratory as well. Total population of the Anishinaabeg at the time of Columbus's arrival in the Americas is almost impossible to determine; estimates range from 3,000 - 4,000 up to 25,000, although Mooney (1928) doubles this latter figure. Even if one accepts this latter figure, it is still a very small number for the large area that they occupied, and indicates a low population density.³⁸

The role of leaders in Anishinaabe society is an even more contentious issue than that of the nature of clan structure. If one accepts Smith's and Roger's thesis that the early Anishinaabeg formed groups of patrilineal bands, then leadership of these bands probably centred around the senior male in the group. At some time in the past, these leaders began to be called *ogimaas* by the Anishinaabeg. When several bands came together at different times of the year, senior *ogimaa* performed a number of civil and ceremonial duties. At the time of contact Euro-Americans began to apply the name chief to those individuals who appeared to be in charge, although the term was applied rather haphazardly.³⁹

It is important to remember, however, that leadership in the Euro-American sense was absent from all Algonquian groups, with the possible exception of the small group of Miamis. Leadership, in the Anishinaabe sense, was consensual, based largely on respect and reputation, so that it appeared to be almost non-existent to the hierarchically inclined Euro-Americans. Moreover, well into the nineteenth century, the Anishinaabeg, or the

Ojibwa as they were beginning to be called, still spent the majority of their time in small groups, coming together at particular times of the year, or for specific purposes. This meant that the ratio of ogimaas compared to the population was large. Furthermore, their responsibilities were limited since the Anishinaabeg selected other ogimaas to take responsibility for war expeditions, perhaps leading Schoolcraft, Warren and later writers to make a distinction between "civil chiefs" and "war chiefs." It is also probable that other individuals took responsibility for leading large hunting parties, and even for overseeing the harvesting of wild rice (Vennun 1988:183-94).

It is difficult to establish precisely when those who became known as "alliance chiefs," because they took responsibility for dealings with outside groups, began to function, though there is considerable evidence that their role was firmly established during the "French Period" (Bishop 1986). Some scholars such as Keesing ([1935] 1971:774) argued that Anishinaabe/Ojibwa leaders began to emulate Euro-American models of descent in order to facilitate the transferral of property and status, in the immediate post-contact period. While others such as Chute (1986) argue that "native values were not substantially altered during the French regime....," it would seem that the growth and expansion of the Ojibwa, coupled with their growing participation in the politics of the Great Lakes region did lead to at least an elaboration of band leadership structures.

There is one particular type of "functionary" in Ojibwa society who deserves further attention. The roles played by the *oshkaabewis*, as such individuals were termed,

included both civil and religious functions. Thus, while Baraga ([1880] 1992:335) defined the "*oskkabewiss*" as "the waiter or attendant of an Indian Chief," Nicollet (1970:155-8;211) used the term to refer to the person who sent out invitation sticks for both councils of war and the *Midewiwin*, and Grant (Masson 1960:354;358) termed the agent of *Kitchi Manitou*, and the person who served food at a feast preceeding a warparty, "*Michinawois*." Kinitz (1947:189-90) termed the person who carried the invitations for the *Midewiwin* a "*ouskadawis*," while Howard noted that among the Plains Ojibwa the person who conducted the *Midewiwin* was termed a "*skabewis*." Skinner, in his studies of the Plains Ojibwa, discovered that the term "*skaupewis*" was used to denote the servant of the *Okitchita* who maintained order in camp. Kohl ([1860] 1985:85) referred to a person whose duty it was to fill the bowls of pipes as a "*skabewis*" or "*dresseur*," as he explained the Canadians called such a person. Densmore ([1929] 1979:98), as has been seen, used the term messenger as a gloss for "*ockabewis*" in her rendition of Odinigun's origin narrative, but she also used it to describe the *Mide* official who sent out invitations for the *Midewiwin* ceremony.

This integration of religious and political terminology and practice was a common feature of Anishinaabe life which cannot be ignored.⁴⁰ As will be seen in the next chapter, many of the individuals who began to be noted by Euro-American observers as being religious leaders also were ogimaas, who in many cases served as war chiefs in the battles with the Sioux, trade chiefs in their relations with fur traders, and alliance chiefs in their dealings with the various Euro-American government officials.⁴¹

In summary, it must be reiterated that Anishinaabe forms of leadership bore little resemblance to those of the Euro-Americans whom they encountered. Rather than being based on the direction of a single individual, Anishinaabe leadership was more consensual in approach.⁴² Individuals who had received "blessings" from the manitous which gave them power, knew the narratives of their people, and had lived through numerous experiences in their lifetime were generally revered as "elders"⁴³ whom others relied on for advice when important decisions concerning the entire band had to be made. Gatherings of all those concerned were held, the participants smoked their pipes so that their thoughts would mingle with those of the manitous, and all present were given a chance to speak, although weight was given to the opinions of the elders. As in other aspects of Anishinaabe life, religious concepts and ceremonies played an integral role in socio-political organization and leadership.

ENDNOTES

1. I have not limited the term to a few named clan groups, but rather extend it to the larger groups of linguistically and culturally similar people who lived in the region around the Great Lakes--in other words, the Anishinaabeg.
2. I propose to use this term to apply to those Algonquian people who had not as yet begun to conceive of themselves as groups with a corporate identity of "Ojibwa," but who did consider themselves as Anishinaabeg since I believe that it is more meaningful than the more technical term "proto-Ojibwa." It should be noted that the singular and adjectival forms are written as Anishinaabe, while the plural form is written Anishinaabeg.
3. Stan Cuthand (Brown and Brightman 1988:190) provides one of the best explanations in ordinary English of how these concepts are all connected.
4. This process of a gradual unfolding has been well told from a personal perspective by Fred McTaggart, a young folklorist working among the Fox or Mesquakie in a book entitled Wolf that I am: In Search of the Red Earth People (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1976). When he had gone searching for beautiful Indian stories, he was rebuffed because, as he was told (in a very indirect way), "Our stories have a definite purpose; they are teaching stories."
Similarly, Janet Chute, in her PhD. dissertation on Shingwaukonse and his Heirs (McMaster University, 1986), relates how the information she was seeking was given to her in piecemeal fashion. It was, as one elder explained, like a seed which had to go through a process of testing (like a pine cone goes through fire) before its "power" was released, and growth could occur.
5. Chibiabos also figures prominently in Potawatomi tales as the messenger to the Land of the Dead (Ritzenthaler 1983:130). Among contemporary Ojibwa, he is associated with ghosts (his name is closely linked to *jeebi/cheebi*, the soul which leaves the body after death and seeks the land of the dead/souls). According to Johnston (1995:49) he taught the Ojibwa about dream quests, music and communicating in general with the manitous. Usually he is considered to be *Nanabozho's* younger brother, but in this tale, he is called his grandson.
6. Neither Schoolcraft nor Mentor Williams, the editor of this edition of Schoolcraft's "Indian Legends" provide any indication as to the origin of this particular version, although Schoolcraft does provide a lengthy introduction to his original collection of "Algic Researches," and a more specific introduction to the "Manabozho cycle." V. Barnouw, in his 1940s collection of Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales, included a

series of "Wenebojo" tales, part of which contains a passage which is remarkably similar to Schoolcraft's tale collected in the previous century.

7. I am using Robert Redfield's definition of world view as "the way a people characteristically look outward upon the universe." The Oxford Dictionary defines cosmology as "the science or theory of the universe," so I employ these terms synonymously.

8. Densmore (1979:14) gives *o'djicag'* as the Ojibwa word meaning soul or spirit of a person, *djibe* as spirit, and *odjib'* as meaning ghost or shadow. Baraga: my soul=*nin tchitchag*. Nichols: my spirit=*injichaag*. It is generally thought that the Ojibwa believed that people had two souls. The *djibe* (jeebi/cheeby) at death leaves the body following a four day journey to the Land of Souls. *Jeebis* were sometimes seen near the graves of the dead, particularly if the proper rituals had not been performed and the *jeebi* was unable to reach the other world. The *odjicag* remained with a person's body while the person was alive, although it was free to separate itself from the body for short periods, allowing powerful individuals to take on different forms, to make journeys to distant places to gather information.

9. Albanese, in turn, refers to Neal Salisbury's work: Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643 (1982), which describes the earliest encounters between groups of the Algonquian people and early Euro-Americans.

10. See Brightman (1988:108-110) for a good explanation of the various forms that these figures take.

11. Among some groups of Northern Ojibwa/Saulteaux, and to some extent among the Bungi or Plains Ojibwa, *Nanabozho* is known as *Wisakedjak*. While it has been commonly believed that the figure of the rabbit had been replaced by that of the Canada Jay or "Whiskey Jack," Brown and Brightman argue that the name goes back to the Proto-Algonquian parent language and is unanalyzable (Brown and Brightman 1988:125-126). In neither instance, however, do the Anishinaabeg literally picture *Nanabozho/Wisakedjak* to be an animal/bird for in both cases, the people identify with him precisely because he has so many human characteristics.

12. While the standardized spelling for this using the Nichols and Nyholm orthography would be *Gichi Manidoo*, I have chose to use the form which was and continues to be used by most writers. Similarly, I have used *Matchi Manitou* rather than *Maji Manidoo* to denote the Ojibwa counterpart of the devil.

13. Brown and Brightman (1988:107) suggest that the term was shared by the Ojibiwa and Cree.

14. There is still considerable scholarly controversy as to whether or not a supreme being was part of the original

Anishinaabe cosmology, or was an adaptation from Christian beliefs. Skinner, for instance, was convinced that all such beliefs were post-contact. My own belief is that such a figure did exist, but has become completely intertwined with the concept of the Christian God.

15. There are few areas in which the clash of world views becomes as obvious as the question of the terms "natural" and "supernatural," "sacred" and "profane," or "transcendent" and "immanent" in describing concepts of reality, with anthropologists and scholars of religion often taking opposing sides since their own world-views differ. In this conflict of interpretations, my own view is that rather than there being an absence of the supernatural in the Ojibwa worldview, or a distinction between the natural and supernatural, there is a continuity, with the sacred conceived of as manifesting itself in the natural world as well as transcendentally. As Theresa Smith has remarked, such characterizations need not be seen as disparaging "for the failure to discover the sacred in one's environment is less a product of sophistication than of alienation" (Smith 1995:23). Smith goes on to note that the Ojibwa with whom she has worked on Manitoulin Island gave the impression that it was the white people who were the simple ones--see, for instance, Hultkrantz (1983:231-253) and Morrison's (1990) response. Smith concludes that if we are to understand the Indian [Ojibwa] experience of religion, we must begin by using a heuristic definition of religion which does more than describe the role of religion in society, and steers free of judgements regarding the content of the religious experience. This is what I have attempted to do.

16. Hallowell (1992:84-92) has a good description and a chart illustrating the role of dreams in Ojibwa life, based on his work at Berens River.

17. The Ojibwe for "I dream," *nin bawadjige*, is also the term used for "medicine," as is the term *inabandumowin*, "the vision seen." However, it appears that the Ojibwa did make a distinction between ordinary dreams which had value as a communication link with the manitous, and those received during the vision quest.

18. Black (1977) in an article on the "Ojibwa Power Belief System" attempts to summarize her findings regarding contemporary Ojibwa ideas related to power and control. According to her, they began by speaking of the classes of *bimaasdiziwad* or "living things," then of the "manitou" or "powers" possessed by each of the different classes. I have reservations as to whether or not her complex taxonomy is not a western-inspired version of Ojibwa thought processes, and if it is accurate, can it be generalized to other groups of Ojibwa and particularly to those living hundreds of years earlier?

19. Shaman is a term which is often reserved for those who experience altered states of consciousness. The classic definition is given in Mircea Eliade's book entitled

Shamanism. Increasingly, shamanism has come to be equated with forms of religion which believe in spirits which cannot be known by people who remain in ordinary states of consciousness (Michael Harner in Nicholson 1987:3-5).

20. This term has an unbelievable number of spellings in *Ojibwe* depending upon the orthography used, and how the noun is formed. Others include: Baraga: *Tchissakiwin*; Nicollet: *Jisakan*; Schoolcraft: *Jessakid*, *Jossekeed* (person); Hoffman: *Jessakkid* (person); Densmore: *Dja'sakid* (person). *Jaasakid* is the gerund form of the *Jissakiwinini*, and is the form most commonly used, although the spelling varies considerably.

21. While almost all commentators have described versions of the Shaking Tent ceremony, the most comprehensive study is by Hallowell (1942) who provides a good historiographic review in addition to describing the Berens River ceremonies in some detail.

More recently Brown and Brightman (1988:146-158) have discussed the Shaking Tent ceremony in relation to the descriptions of George Nelson. Hultkrantz (1967:32-68) looks at the ceremony from a religious perspective among a number of North American Indian groups, while Grim (1983) compares similar ceremonies among North American Indian and Inuit with Siberian shamanism.

22. Schoolcraft's description is lifted almost verbatim from Nicollet without any indication as to its source. The main thing that he adds is the time and location of Nicollet's observation.

23. Many Ojibwa who became Christians continued to believe in the powers of jaasakids but like Euro-Americans believed that the source of the manitou power was, in fact, the devil. The ceremony thus became the epitome of evil. (See, for example, the papers of Norval Morriseau p.11-12)

24. Norval Morriseau, a 20th century Ojibwa from the Lake Nipigon region, explained that if the jaasakid was asked to use the ceremony for evil purposes, and given gifts, he had no choice but to comply or he would lose his powers (Morriseau Papers:11-12. Glenbow Museum Archive, Calgary).

25. Both terms are given in Baraga. The first is formed from the *Ojibwe* noun *maskiki* for medicine, which originally appears to have referred only to dry or herbal medicines. The second is formed from the *Ojibwe* verb *nanandawia* to take care of or administer medicines. Densmore refers to a practitioner as a *Nenandawiwed* since she forms the title from the infinitive of the verb (in the same way as *Jaasakid* is formed).

26. As Tanner explains: "A drawing, or a little image, is made to represent the man, woman, or animal, on which the power of the medicine is to be tried; then the part representing the heart is punctured with a sharp instrument, if the design is to cause death,

and a little medicine is applied. The drawing or image ... is called *imuzzi-ne-neen*." Tanner declined, in this case, since the medicine included *onaman*, which was associated with "bad medicine."

27. Hoffman reported the case of a neighbouring Scandinavian who, possessed of strange desires concerning a young Ojibwa woman, discovered some objects under his bed, which he believed had influenced his affections.

28. Hoffman (1891:254-255), in his description of the third degree *Midewiwin*, had a number of descriptive notes on the *jaasakid*, including a curious description of the ceremony used by the *nanandawiiwewinini* or "sucking bone" doctor which he attributes to the *jaasakid*. Whether he confused the two, or the people at White Earth at that time had integrated the two ceremonies, is impossible to determine.

29. It is possible that the moralizing reflects the influence of Tanner's editor, or Tanner's own retrospective judgement on his past life.

30. This term was usually used to describe a blend of European tobaccos and the dried bark of red willows, although in at least one narrative which recounts the origin of tobacco, there was a distinction between *bakwécpakuzigunen* (which his informant termed wild kinnickinnick), *gekádugnugèkwukin* (a sweet kinnickinnick which was difficult to find around Lac du Flambeau), and *memiskwákwakin miskwabímizin* (a kinnickinnick made from red bushes). (Barnouw 1977:29-30)

31. While Catholics were often equally at a loss in this regard, perhaps the Catholic use of external signs such as the use of incense, and crosses, the understanding of the Catholic mass as a reenactment of a meal, and even the old Catholic concept of paying for indulgences, facilitated some sort of understanding, which was impossible with Protestants whose religious beliefs and practices focused on the Word.

32. This is not to say that the Anishinaabeg must not have been equally confused by the ideas and actions of their Euro-American neighbours, particularly since the religious ideas of those Euro-Americans who were Christian were exclusivist, and represented a multitude of different versions of what was perceived as being the truth, while the Ojibwa initially had no exclusivist tendencies, accepting whatsoever was proven to have power.

33. Black's (1997:149-50) informants thus "classed" love medicine, hunting medicine and gambling medicine as bad medicine since they caused others to lose their autonomy. Morriseau (Papers:12) uses the word "conjuring" to describe bad medicine, though by this, he means only those types which were used to harm people.

34. Warren suggested that the sudden outbreak of these evil practices, including cannibalism, may have been the result of a combination of a failure of crops, and the inability to hunt as a result of being hemmed in by enemies. Various writers have

speculated that the evil shamans were renegade Mides or Wabenos. Since Warren's sources appear to have been his Metis ancestors, the tradition may simply be their interpretation of events--which would have been strongly coloured by a Catholic belief that the power of any Ojibwa shaman was a manifestation of the power of the Christian devil.

35. A vivid example of these "witch hunts" occurred in the post-contact period in connection with the rise of the Handsome Lake revitalization movement, in which Handsome Lake carried out a "witch-hunt" against rivals such as Red Jacket, as well as a number of neighbouring Delaware Christians, several of whom were killed (Wallace 1958). Landes, in her studies of the Midewiwin (1965) and the Prairie Potawatomi (1970) described similar situations, though the final outcome was not as dramatic. It is interesting that the Rev. Peter Jones, who spent some of his early years living among the Iroquois, devoted a section to witchcraft in his book on the Ojibwa (Jones 1861:145-15). Jones' account described what others have termed "shamanistic duels." He attributed the power used by the "conjurors" as he termed them, to the evil spirit.

36. Bishop (1989) in his paper on the question of Ojibwa clans gives a good overview of the controversy regarding the geographical location of the proto-Ojibwa, as does Janet Chute in her 1986 dissertation on Shingwaukose. Since this is not a primary focus of my work, I have not gone into any detail on this or related discussions.

37. Hickerson too readily accepts Schoolcraft's assertion that the original *Ojibwe* word for totem was *dodaim*, signifying family mark or armorial bearing. This, in turn, was supposedly a derivative from *odanah* meaning town or village. Hence *nin dodaim* really meant "my townsman" or "my kindred mark."

38. Population estimates during the pre-contact period rely either on archaeological evidence, attempts to reconstruct what the carrying capacity of the land would have been at that time, and what the average family size might have been. Population estimates during the French, English and American/Canadian periods prior to the reservation era continue to be notoriously inaccurate, due in large part to the mobility of the people being surveyed. See Bishop's comments (1989:49-51).

39. Baraga (1992:48) gives *ogima* as the name for chief, indicating that assistant or second chiefs were called *anikeogimia*; *anike* signifying futurity. A war-chief or captain was called a *maiaossewinini*, from the word *Maiaosse* "to march forward at the head of a band." *Ogimaa* is still used today to denote a chief, boss, or leader (Nichols, 1995:105).

40. Warren (1984:99-100), in his discussion of the early Ojibwa occupation of Chequamegon, made this very point. While his intention, at this point, was to stress the role of the *Midewiwin* in the development of nascent Ojibwa nationalism, the obverse is

equally true--that the leading *Mide* priests were also important political leaders.

41. Shingwaukonse, in his previously quoted explanation of how "prophets" obtained powers through visions, concluded with the statement that: "Such ... was the ancient custom, and the celebrated old war-captains rose to their power in this manner" (Schoolcraft 1851-57 I:111).

42. Perhaps this was a means of group regulation of those who possessed special powers from the manitous. Unfortunately, Anishinaabe tales which speak of this period do not go into details regarding their organizational structure.

43. I have used the English word here as it has become so widely used by contemporary Indians. Baraga (1992) gives no translation for "elder" as such, but does indicate that *kitchi aiaans* refers to "grown folks" or "great noble folks."

CHAPTER THREE
MIDEWIWIN ORIGINS:
ANISHINAABE & EURO-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

Anishinaabe Perspectives: Midewiwin Origin Narratives

Among followers of the *Midewiwin* there was no question as to its origin. Midewiwin origin narratives such as the one published in William Warren's work, were (and still are) recited by *Mide* elders each time *Midewiwin* ceremonies were performed (Vennum 1978:753-791). While such narratives vary according to time, place, occasion, and the person telling the tale--like Warren's rendition, they all share certain common assumptions concerning the nature and purpose of life. This is not surprising since as Dewdney (1975:23) has rightly commented: "... the central concern of the *Mide* oral tradition was with origins: the creation of the world and of man, the origin of death, the introduction of the *Midewiwin*, and the ancestral origins of the Ojibwa people." As such, the *Midewiwin* origin narratives share similar themes and functions with the origin myths of other indigenous people throughout the world.

Euro-American scholars have long studied such narratives, or "myths" as they are often termed.¹ The popular connotation of the term myth contains the implication that such narratives are divorced from "reality." However, many twentieth century social scientists have been more willing to view myths within the context of the local environment and local social processes, often seeing in them a legitimization of social institutions. Other scholars have used the study of myths to analyze the study of the

human mind, seeing in them examples of how humans have attempted to deal with the ambiguities of the universe and society.² Nevertheless, until relatively recently scholars virtually ignored them as sources of factual evidence. Yet, such narratives, as the Africanist, Jan Vansina (1985) and others have shown, can often provide useful clues to the historical past, if certain precautions are taken.³

In the case of the *Midewiwin*, since we are dealing with *aadizookaanag* or sacred narratives which are not concerned with the western linear notion of time, we should not expect to find anything approaching a date when the *Midewiwin* began, nor whether or not the ceremonies predated contact with Euro-Americans. While it may be possible to make connections between various allusions to what could be historical events, and thus date the "founding" of the *Midewiwin* in this way, such connections are tenuous at best.

First and foremost, it must be remembered that these sacred narratives were part of the oral tradition of the people, and as such followed certain conventions which distinguished them from ordinary communication, and from the written word. Moreover, the oral nature of the narratives had far-reaching ramifications as to how these texts were interpreted by the Ojibwa, and the role that they played in Ojibwa society.⁴ The telling of these narratives by Ojibwa elders was first and foremost a "verbal art" which took place in a social setting. The "story-teller," to use contemporary terminology, was a "performance artist" who transformed the story to meet his and his audience's needs, even while keeping within certain prescribed formats. Thus, a short version was considered sufficient in the training of a candidate for the first degree, but more elaborate narratives were used in the ceremonies related to higher degrees (Dewdney 1975:23; Vennum

1978:754). The primary function of the narratives was a didactic one of illustrating the process through which the *Midewiwin* arose, and how it could benefit individuals and the Anishinaabe people as a whole, so exact wording was not essential. What was of primary importance was the process. Nevertheless, as Vecsey (1988:21) asserts, despite these variations, the core elements of the narratives remain relatively stable.

Most Euro-American scholars agree that there appear to be two relatively distinct traditions: the first in which the agent who brings the *Midewiwin* to the Anishinaabeg is a manitou or *Nanabozho*, and the second, in which the secrets of the *Midewiwin* are revealed to a human, who then passes on his knowledge to his/her fellow Anishinaabeg. In actual fact, the Ojibwa themselves would not have made such distinctions since the gift of the *Midewiwin* to the Anishinaabeg was always traced back ultimately to either *Kitchi Manitou* or *Nanabozho*. What changed are the details: some versions concentrated on the reasons the *Midewiwin* came into being, while others appear to have concentrated more on how it was transmitted to the Anishinaabeg, and who the messenger or *oshkabewis* was.

As was illustrated in Warren's version of the *Midewiwin* origin narrative, many of the narratives which have been written down and published, attribute the origin to *Nanabozho* alone, or in conjunction with *Kitchi Manitou*, or some other manitou. This usually occurs toward the end of a cycle of narratives concerning *Nanabozho*, a version of which was related in the previous chapter. To recapitulate, in these narratives, the *Underwater Manitous* kill a wolf who is *Nanabozho's* brother (cousin, son, grandson), so *Nanabozho* seeks revenge and kills their leader.⁵ The surviving *Underwater Manitous*

then flood the world, but *Nanabozho* escapes by climbing a tree or building a raft, and sends down an animal (usually a muskrat) to bring back mud and re-create the world, after which he creates the Anishinaabeg.⁶

It is at this point in the cycle of narratives that *Nanabozho* usually becomes involved in founding the *Midewiwin*, having created the Anishinaabeg from earth and placed them on the island which he had fashioned from the mud brought up to him by muskrat. In some versions *Nanabozho* himself brings the *Midewiwin* to the Anishinaabeg (Jones 1919:547-559); in others the manitous meet in council and try to appease *Nanabozho* by offering him the *Midewiwin* for the Anishinaabeg (Barnouw 1955:41-43). In what may be the earliest extant version circa 1800 (Tanner 1830:185), *Misshipeshi* (*Mishibeshu*), the *ogimaa* of the *Underwater Manitous*, initiates the peace-making gesture himself.⁷ In some other versions such as Jones (1917), the first humans disappear after they have been created, so *Nanabozho* realizes that he must ensure that the Anishinaabeg learn to live with other beings in the cosmos, if they are to survive. In particular, the Anishinaabeg must learn how to seek assistance from the manitous, and how to make offerings to them.

Two of the most widely cited versions of the *Midewiwin* origin narratives which have survived from the nineteenth century are the one transcribed by Warren from his informant in the 1830s or 1840s, and another transcribed by Hoffman in the 1890s, whose informant goes back to at least the 1830s. While these two versions have come to represent *Midewiwin* origin narratives, there is no evidence that they were ever the

dominant versions. It may well be that they have been preserved in print form as a matter of chance.

Warren's version is as follows:

While our forefathers were living on the great salt water toward the rising sun, the great Megis (sea-shell)⁸ showed itself above the surface of the great water, and the rays of the sun for a long period were reflected from its glossy back. It gave warmth and light to the An-ishi-in-aub-ag (red race). All at once it sank into the deep, and for a time our ancestors were not blessed with its light. It rose to the surface and appeared again on the great river which drains the water of the Great Lakes, and again for a long time it gave life to our forefathers, and reflected back the rays of the sun. Again it disappeared from sight and it rose not, till it appeared to the eyes of the An-ish-in-abau-ag on the shores of the first great lake. Again it sank from sight, and death daily visited the wigwams of our forefathers, till it showed its back, and reflected the rays of the sun once more at Bowe-ting (Sault Ste. Marie). Here it remained for a long time, but once more, and for the last time, it disappeared, and the An-ish-in-aub-ag was left in darkness and misery, till it floated and once more showed its bright back at Mo-ning-wun-a-kaun-ing (La Pointe Island), where it has since reflected back the rays of the sun, and blessed our ancestors with life, light, and wisdom. Its rays reach the remotest village of the wide spread Ojibways (Warren 1984:78-79).

This tale, as the narrator went on to explain, traced the movement of the Ojibwa people from their original homeland somewhere along the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, up the St. Lawrence, through the Great Lakes to Bowating, and then to Chequamegon (La Pointe or Madeline Island). The migration is explained in the context of the *Midewiwin* having been granted to the Ojibwa in order to protect them from illness and misery. A full explanation of this tale is given in the quote at the beginning of the introductory chapter. While this is the most common explanation, there is at least one alternate explanation given in Jones' collection of Ojibwe texts. According to the editor (Truman Michelson), the *Midewiwin* was equated with life itself, and the otter's path was the path of life: each

time a lodge was put up, he left the gift of life to all who become members (Jones 1919:570-571).

Warren's source for his version was possibly Flat Mouth, the Pillager Chief from Leech Lake, who also provided Nicollet (and thus Schoolcraft) with much of his information on the *Midewiwin*.⁹ Flat Mouth's family origins are not known,¹⁰ but the Pillagers seem to have originated from among the northern bands of the Boundary Waters area, who pushed south and west against the Sioux, eventually occupying the area around Red Lake and Leech Lake. Although Warren and Hickerson disagree regarding the specifics, both place the Pillagers among what Warren calls the "Northern Ojibwa," although Warren, in his description of the major clans, listed the Bear clan as one of those whom he designated as being southern. It is likely that there was intermarriage between the two groups. At the same time, other bands under such leaders as Biauswah and his son, Catawbedai (Flat Mouth's contemporary), had pushed south and west from La Pointe to the regions around Fond du Lac and Sandy Lake.

Whether or not Flat Mouth was part of the northern or southern groups, he nevertheless would have still seen himself as a participant in the westward migration of the Ojibwa. In fact, it would appear that Flatmouth and the Pillagers saw their village as the next stopping point of the *Midewiwin*, and indeed in later tellings of the tale, the last stopping point is Leech Lake, established by the westward moving Ojibwa. Perhaps they even felt that they were approaching yet another period of "darkness and misery," since they continued to be attacked by Sioux to their west and were increasingly pressed by the Americans to the east. The supply of big game animals had diminished, the fur trade no

longer provided them with goods that they had come to depend upon, and epidemic diseases had taken a toll on their people. Many of them, including Flat Mouth himself, had temporarily abandoned the teachings of the *Midewiwin* and embraced the teachings of the Shawnee Prophet, while as Tanner's narrative (Tanner [1830] 1994:168-9) indicates, other minor prophets were active during this period.

The prophets and their prophecies reflect the growing sense of powerlessness that many Ojibwa felt at the time--particularly in relation to the increasing number of Euro-Americans, and no doubt for this reason, they often incorporated portions of the Christian message and symbols in hopes of obtaining some of the power that was associated with them. Yet they were also strongly rooted within the ancient visionary tradition, and whatever such prophets borrowed from Christian sources was placed within the traditional Anishinaabe world view.

The Pillagers and other bands of western Ojibwa, despite growing pressures on them in the nineteenth century, were considerably more independent than most of their more easterly brethren who had already borne the brunt of Euro-American advances. Despite the problems that the western bands faced, and despite some attempts to look for new paths to follow, most of them continued to place their faith in the power of the *Midewiwin* and the *Mide* elders, at the time that Warren's tale was recorded.

Warren mentioned in his book that there was another tale told by the *Mide* elders of Fond du Lac which was remarkably similar to the one mentioned, except that instead of the *miigis*, it was the otter who is said to preside over the *Mide* rites (Warren 1984:81). The following account from a *Midewiwin* origin narrative is Sika'ssige's explanation of a

Mille Lac chart (Hoffman 1891:155), but it is probably quite similar to the tale mentioned

by Warren:

When Mi'nabo'zho descended to the earth to give to the Ani'shina'beg the Midew'wiwin, he left with them this chart, Midew'wigwas'. Kit'shi Man'ido saw that his people on earth were without the means of protecting themselves against disease and death, so he sent Mi'nabo'zho to give to them the sacred gift. Mi'nabo'zho appeared over the waters and while reflecting in what manner he should be able to communicate with people, he heard something laugh, just as an otter sometimes cries out. He saw something black appear upon the waters in the west which immediately disappeared beneath the surface again. Then it came up at the northern horizon, which pleased Mi'nabo'zho, as he thought he now saw some one through whom he might convey the information with which he had been charged by Ki'tshi Man'ido. When the black object disappeared beneath the waters at the north to reappear in the east, Mi'nabo'zho desired it would come to him in the middle of the waters, but it disappeared to make its reappearance in the south, where it again sank out of sight to reappear in the west when Mi'nabo'zho asked it to approach the center where there was an island, which it did.

Then Ni'gik [the otter] asked Mi'nabo'zho, "Why do you come to this place?" When the latter said, "I have pity on the An'shina'beg and wish to give them life; Ki'tshi Man'ido gave me the power to confer the means of protecting themselves against sickness and death, and through you I will give them Mide'wiwin, and teach them the sacred rites."

Then Mi'nabo'zho built a Mide'wigan in which he instructed the Otter in all the mysteries of the Mide'wiwin. The Otter sat before the door of the Mide'wigan four days, sunning himself, after which he approached the entrance where his progress was arrested by seeing two bad spirits guarding it. Through the powers possessed by Mi'nabo'zho he was enabled to pass these; when he entered the sacred lodge, the first object he beheld being the sacred stone against which those who were sick were to be seated, or laid, when undergoing the ceremonial of restoring them to health. He next saw a post painted red with a green band around the top. A sick man would also have to pray to the stone and to the post, when he is within the Mide'wigan, because within them would be the Mide spirits whose help he invoked. . . . (Hoffman 1891:175-6).

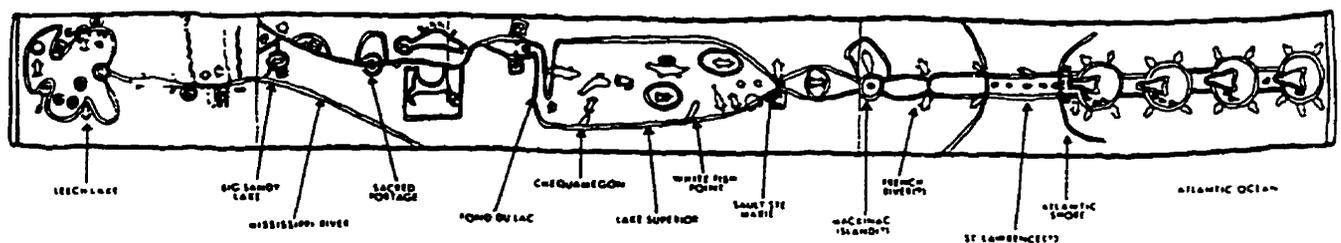
Sika'ssige had received a copy of the migration chart, upon which the tale is based, from the senior *Mide* at Mille Lacs in 1830, when, as a young boy, he had been

received into the first degree of the *Midewiwin*.¹¹ Since the tale undoubtedly was originally told for instruction purposes, it provides a better context than the previous tale about which Warren had indicated he had only transcribed that portion which had struck him most forcefully. The direct appearance of *Kitchi Manitou* in Sika's version might at first appear to indicate a later Christian influence, since *Kitchi Manitou* came to be identified with the Christian God, but this is not necessarily the case since there are good arguments that the concept could have been either pre-contact or post-contact. This is not to say that some origin narratives do not adapt some aspects of Christian theology. Loonfoot's account to Kohl (1985:195-199) in the 1850s has *Kitchi Manitou* creating a garden in which the first man and women eat the forbidden fruit, albeit in a uniquely *Midewiwin* context. Many later versions such as Redsky's (1972) interwove *Midewiwin* and Christian beliefs to a considerable degree.

Nevertheless, despite their similarities, and some possible Christian influences, there are significant internal differences in the two versions transcribed by Warren and Hoffman. Most obvious, as Warren ([1885] 1984:81) noted, is the fact that the *miigis* in the second version was replaced by the otter. Since the *miigis* was symbolic of the *Midewiwin* in general, while the otter represented the first degree, it is possible that the second tale was specific to the initiation ceremony for the first degree. However, Hoffman (1891:184) declared that the northern bands used the Otter as their guide and the southern bodies believed in the *miigis*. Dewdney (1975:158), makes yet another division. Taking into account some twentieth century sources, he suggested that in the southern Mide tradition the Otter acted as the messenger of the *Midewiwin*, while among

northerners this role was filled by the more dangerous Bear. In the twentieth century narratives such as those related by Redsky (from the Boundary Waters region), intermingled the *miigis* and the otter (*nigig*), and added in the bear (*makwa*) as important figures in bringing the *Midewiwin* to the Anishinaabeg (Redsky 1972:100-106). It would appear that the different accounts are variations on the same theme, rather than indicating significantly different traditions.

While Sika'ssig's version of the origin narrative appears to neglect the westward migration of the *Midewiwin* and the Ojibwa people, the migration is spelled out in more detail in the migration chart which served as a mnemonic aid to the elders who recited the tale. This particular migration chart simply represented the resting spots of the *Midewiwin* as dots on a line, but Sika'ssig was able to explain to Hoffman the geographical locations of each of these "dots" in the westward migration of the Ojibwa. While not totally comprehensive, Sika'ssig's commentary provides the earliest and most complete listing of place names available. Sika'ssig's commentary has been corroborated and supplemented by migration charts found in the Mille Lacs papers interpreted by Vennun in his article on the migration songs of the *Midewiwin* (Vennun 1978:752-74).



Red Sky's migration chart. (Drawing by B. Nemeth. Courtesy of the University of Toronto Press, Glenbow Museum.)

In his analysis of these and other migration charts, Vennum makes the point that the locations vary considerably since the *Mide* elder who compiled them invariably made his own village the final (western) resting point. In this way, the *Mide* elders "establish certain local manitous (spirits) as intercessors in the curing rites as well as endow nearby landmarks with sacred attributes (Vennum 1978:762). The relative scarcity of names in the eastern portion of the migration no doubt reflects the fact that no migration charts exist for areas to the east of La Pointe, but this should not lead us to believe, as Dewdney (1977) argued, that La Pointe was thus the actual site where the *Midewiwin* originated. Dewdney appears to have based his argument mainly on Loonfoot's chart that he had shown to Kohl. As Blessing (1977:107) has pointed out, other charts made it even clearer that La Pointe was simply seen as one stop (albeit an important one) where the *Midewiwin* was made known in the Ojibwa's westward migration.

The relative scarcity of origin narratives among the more eastern Ojibwa may reflect how little anyone knows (Euro-American and Indian alike) about the early history of the Anishinaabeg, and specifically, the people who were to become known historically as the Ojibwa. It also may be the result of the fact that many of the more eastern Ojibwa (or Mississauga as they were often known in Upper Canada and the lower Michigan peninsula) found themselves uprooted, and in many cases were converted to Christianity much earlier than their western brethren. The leaders and many band members in these regions were adherents of one of the many Christian denominations which undertook missionary work among the Indians of the Great Lakes region. At a time when the

Ojibwa of the southwest were beginning to identify themselves as Ojibwa in the context of *Midewiwin* narratives, many of the eastern Ojibwa converts such as Jones, Copway, Jacobs and Salt, were in the process of writing about the "Ojibwa nation" within a Christian context.¹² While the *Midewiwin* was still practiced by the eastern Ojibwa during the nineteenth century, its adherents no longer played a central role in the affairs of most bands, as they did among those bands who lived in the Upper Michigan peninsula and further west. Although some descriptions of the *Midewiwin* in the former areas exist, there are no transcriptions of any of their narratives, nor do any of their written records from the nineteenth century match those found for other areas.¹³

In another cycle of *Midewiwin* origin narratives, two new and seemingly unconnected elements are introduced into the origin narratives. Most, although not all of these narratives, have been collected in the boundary waters area of Minnesota in the twentieth century. This may account for some of their variations, since both the region and the time are different from previous narratives. Certainly, there are implicit or implied elements of Christianity in some of the most recent narratives. Nevertheless, the essential message continued to be that sickness and death would always be with the Anishinaabeg, but their effects could be mitigated through the *Midewiwin*, so that people could have a long and good life.

Whereas, in the earlier narratives, it was either the *Miigis*, or Otter who was responsible for bringing the *Midewiwin* to the Anishinaabeg, in many of these narratives *Kitche Manitou* and the *Migiis* ask Bear to be the messenger or *Oshkaabewis*. The first portion of these particular narratives describes the journey of Bear westward with the

mide pack, stopping at various points to establish the *Midewiwin*. As with the previous versions, the last stopping point is usually the locality in which the *Midewiwin* is being performed. In some versions, Bear is forced to "break through" a barrier or barriers, prefiguring portions of the *Midewiwin* ceremony as it was enacted. Various *mide* manitous join him in order to help create new *mide* ceremonials, and show how the ceremonies are to be carried out.

The second portion of this cycle of narratives involves a human intermediary in the process. Although the person is not identified in the version given to Densmore, the narrator does perhaps provide an explanation as to why there were human intermediaries in this cycle:

So the East Manido was selected to go among these Indians and teach them. Before he left the others he told them that they must get everything ready and decide how the *Mide* should be taught to the Indians. Of course the East manido could not approach the Indians in his spirit form, so he was born of an old woman who had lived with her husband all her life but had no children. (Densmore 1910:21)

In other versions of this cycle, a young boy who is usually called Cutfoot (Reagan 1933:516-517; Landes 1968:95-113; Redsky 1972:80-81); or sometimes Odaemin (Heartberry or Strawberry according to Johnston 1976:81-84), receives instructions regarding the *Midewiwin*. In Johnston's version, for instance, he has died from a deadly disease, and has been restored to life by *Nanabozho*. He is then given instructions on how to make use of herbal remedies for healing. Odaemin, himself, grows old, and passes on his power and skills to a young man so that the Anishinaabeg would always have the gift of life. In Redsky's version, the young man is taken across the ocean by

Nanabozho. There, the teachings are imparted to him, he returns, and transmits his powers to other Anishinaabeg.

In most earlier versions, Cutfoot is given credit for having received these "blessings" in a vision, and passed it on to his fellow Anishinaabeg. One of Landes' versions focuses on this aspect:

A certain Indian was the only one to be taught Earth midewiwin by a manito. [The manitou] was Shell, and he sent for [Cutfoot]. The Indian, then six or seven years old, was playing on the beach with his elder brother. At night the little boy did not return to the lodge, so the folks asked the elder brother. . . . They sought him many days. . . . Four years the old folks remained at the same place. One afternoon they saw someone walking down the beach. . . . They recognized him immediately. They fed him, of course, and asked him where had been. He said he had been visiting, but would not say where. . . . Finally his father understood [that the boy had a mystic experience not to be divulged], quit questioning him, and told his wife to do likewise. . . .

After a time, he married and told his wife where he had been, what he had seen and heard. And he said, "I am going to do it. It is called midewiwin." No Indian had heard of it before. . . .

His elder brother became ill. . . . The boy said, "Oh, we'll put him through midewiwin." . . .

When he finished with him [the elder brother], the boy was up and around, well as ever, except for being a little thin.

From then on, he [the visionary] taught the old men [the shamans] how to perform it. They claim that this is how midewiwin was started among Indians. It is a true story. The man's name was Cutfoot. He and his family lived at Yellow Hammer Beach [Madeline Island]. He had two children. (Landes 1968:110-11)¹⁴

Landes described another variation wherein Bear cured a woman using the *Midewiwin*, but there was no hint that she was the original intermediary who brought the *Midewiwin* to the Anishinaabe. Landes attributed this to the "fact" that this was because women generally were not visionaries, but it is more likely due to regional variations in the narratives. It is, for instance, possible to document a number of female *Midewiwin*

leaders, beginning with Schoolcraft's example of Catherine Wambose. More recently, a collection of narratives from the 1890s includes a tale related by Jacques LePique about a young orphan girl who was taken across the water by *Mishi Ginabig* (Big Snake), where she received the power of the *Midewiwin* from an old woman and her sons who were the *Four Winds* (Kidder, 1994:52-54). In yet another twentieth century version, a young man was taken across the ocean to some other land by *Nanabozho* where the teachings were imparted to him. He then transmitted his power to other Anishinaabeg (Dewdney 1975:34-45).

Although there are numerous variations, all of these narratives include a human intermediary who introduced the *Midewiwin* to his or her fellow Anishinaabeg. In some instances, the person had been sick, was physically impaired, or even dead and raised to life. In most, but not all cases, the teachings and power appeared to the person in a vision. In most of the versions there was considerable emphasis on rules and regulations for joining the *Midewiwin*, instructions about the ceremony itself, and rules for living a good life.

Most commentators have tended to focus on the visionary aspect that was present in most of these narratives. Vecsey suggests that this group of renditions of the origin narrative may represent a connection between the *Midewiwin* and the visionary tradition as represented in the vision quest. In Vecsey's view, the *Mide* myths as he terms them, are "stories about the gods coming to individual Indians with the promise of guardianship through the *Midewiwin*. Unlike traditional visionary patterns, however, in the *Midewiwin* myths the visionary is able to pass on the gift of the vision of the *Midewiwin* itself to the

immediate community, and ultimately to all the Ojibwa people." (Vecsey 1984:461-2).

Vecsey's interpretation suggests that at some time in the past, the *Midewiwin* began to supplant visionary experiences as a means of obtaining "blessings" or power from the manitous--presumably when some individual received a vision empowering him to pass on his knowledge to other members of the community. While in normal circumstances such actions were forbidden, there are other occasions when this appears to have happened. Thus, for instance, the *Waabano*, which is sometimes considered to be an offshoot of the *Midewiwin*, in some traditions, is said to have been started by a young man who had a dream after his father had refused to allow him to join the *Midewiwin*. While it is impossible to date this occurrence, it may have been during the eighteenth century. Similarly, the Drum Dance, which appeared in the late nineteenth century at a time when the *Midewiwin* was declining in influence, arose when a young Sioux girl had a vision regarding the power of the drum to revitalize the Indian people, and was taken up in large numbers by the Ojibwa as well--despite the fact that the Dakota were still their enemies (Vennum 1982:44-47). It would appear more likely, therefore, that visionary experiences continued to play an important role in Ojibwa society, and within the *Midewiwin* for that matter.

Dewdney (1977:157-8) has also argued that the introduction of the *Midewiwin* represented a reaction against an abuse of power by visionaries. Dewdney theorized that the practitioners of the *Midewiwin* attempted to harness the power of the more dangerous spirits by absorbing them into *Mide* rites and ceremonies, thus giving themselves more

power. However, according to Dewdney, they were too successful, since powerful *Mide* officials perverted *Midewiwin* rites by relying more on their visionary powers. Dewdney envisaged a situation wherein the *Midewiwin* among the more southerly Ojibwa became increasingly corrupted as it moved northwards where a visionary tradition had persisted.

Like many other observers Dewdney subscribed to the view that there was an "orthodox" *Midewiwin* (which he believes developed out of La Pointe/Chequamegon and spread southwestward) while deviant forms developed among other groups of Ojibwa. Orthodoxy, however, is a concept more applicable to Euro-American religions than to those of the Anishinaabeg. I would argue that any ideas of orthodoxy only developed when the *Midewiwin* was already in decline and had begun to adopt Christian concepts as a weapon which could be used by the *Mides* in their struggle against further assimilation

Dewdney's explanation ignored several important aspects of the role of visionaries in Ojibwa society. Unlike western society in which spiritual power is often used for self-aggrandizement, visionaries who had had their power demonstrated and verified by the elders were bound to use it when asked. Since visionaries received their power from a particular tutelary spirit, some of whom were believed to confer the power to do both "good and bad medicine," they had little choice in how this power was used if they accepted the guardianship of a manitou such as *Mishibizhiii*. Thus, they were obliged to use "bad medicine" when asked--even if they did not want to do so. If they did not, they risked losing all their powers. The two-edged nature of this "power" is indicated by the myth related to Kohl (1985:423-425) and quoted by Smith (1995:109-110), in which a shaman gained the power to perform marvellous cures from *Mishibizhiii*, only to have his

own wife and children die. It was understood as a condition of life that power gained through visions could have both good and bad effects.

It must also be understood that candidates for the *Midewiwin* were initially required to have a vision, or in the case of children, the sponsor would have a vision indicating that the manitous were open to their candidacy and would ultimately confer on them the required power. Nicollet (1970:199) noted in his discussions with Flat Mouth in the 1830s that this system had become open to abuses, and that Flat Mouth himself had been one of those responsible for instituting reforms--which required more than a single person having a vision. By the 1880s when Hoffman was doing his research, the reforms would appear to have been no longer in effect (Hoffman 1891:163-4), since Hoffman suggested that the applicant could ask the *Mide* officials for permission to purchase a *migiis*, and if this was successful, then the procedures were the same for both types of candidates. In later accounts, however, there are numerous references to visions being important for anyone who wished to gain sufficient power to function as a *Mide* shaman.

Even in the 1930s when Landes was doing much of her field research, visions were considered essential if one wished to be a "genuine" *Mide* official. The visionary experiences of these *Mide* officials no doubt help explain some of the continuing variations in both the origin narratives and ceremonial rituals. As Landes observes, "It seems reasonable to infer that the Ojibwa divergences from their older recorded forms were expedited by the people's devotion to visions . . . [even if] the Indians always said they were transferring faithfully the teachings of past times" (Landes 1968:112). What the foregoing examples indicate is that there was an on-going creative tension between

the visionary tradition, and the formal tradition of passing on knowledge through the institution of the *Midewiwin*. As with all things in Anishinaabe life, the two need not, and should not, be seen in dialectical opposition. Rather they existed side by side, providing complementary ways of obtaining knowledge and ultimately, power.

It could also be argued that origin narratives in which human intermediaries played a major role may represent an adaptation of the concept of the Christian saviour. However, while there was undoubtedly a growing knowledge of Christian beliefs among the more easterly bands of Ojibwa, it must also be remembered that the role of *oshkaabewis* as messenger was well established in other aspects of Anishinaabe society. It is more likely that *Mide* visions during this period occurred in the context of the vision experiences of the leaders of revitalization movements such as that of the Shawnee Prophet. So strong was the appeal of some of these movements that even some Ojibwa *Mide* leaders such as Flat Mouth temporarily renounced their belief in the *Midewiwin* and threw away their *biinjigoosan* (personal medicine bags) in order to follow the teachings of one of the "prophets."¹⁵

A *Mide* origin story collected by Schoolcraft appears to fall into this category since it contains elements common both to Christian beliefs and those of several of the revitalization movements:

About this time, a person in the shape of a human being came down from the sky; his clothing was exceedingly pure and white. . . . This divine messenger then gave to the Indians laws and rules, whereby they should be guided: first, to love and fear Kezha Monedo, and next that they must love one another. . . He then instituted the grand medicine or metay we win dance: this ceremony was to be observed annually, and with due solemnity, and the Indians, said Nabinoi, experienced much good

from it; but unfortunately the foolish young men were cheated by Mache Monedo who caused them to adopt the Wabano dance. . . and this was finally introduced into the metay we wining (ie. medicine dance) and thereby corrupted it.

(Mash-kwa-sha-kwong -- a tale reprinted in The Indian in his Wigwam. 1848:114-115)

The above tale, Schoolcraft tells us, was originally collected from an old Ojibwa chief, Nabinoi, from the Sault Ste. Marie (Bowating) region, by Schoolcraft's brother-in-law, George Johnson¹⁶ in the early part of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, no further information is given about Nabinoi. Many of Johnson's and Schoolcraft's informants were Christian converts, but in this case we are not told if this was so. We also have no way of knowing whether it was originally related in Ojibwa, although this is probable since Johnson was part Ojibwa himself, and was employed as an interpreter. Presumably Johnson translated it into English, although Schoolcraft may still have altered the text. It is almost impossible to determine to what extent the narration was altered by Johnson and/or Schoolcraft. Although Ojibwa freely adopted Christian concepts in their narratives when they were felt to be useful, it is difficult to determine when the allusions are Schoolcraft's glosses and when they are the work of the original story tellers. Schoolcraft professed to do everything possible to maintain the structure and content of the original narratives, but in fact, his versions betray his own literary aesthetics and philosophical beliefs (Clements 1990).

Schoolcraft's version of the origin of the *Midewiwin*, although it could be one of the earliest recorded, is interlaced with Judeo-Christian themes. To begin with, Ojibwa visions usually took the form of animals, not humans, and even messengers would not

normally be dressed in white. However, the vision had many features that were similar to one received by Neolin, the Delaware Prophet in 1762, particularly its emphasis on the renewal of rituals. Dowd (1992: 33-34; 128), in his study of Neolin and several other prophetic leaders, makes the argument that this call for ritual renewal was because Indians believed that their sufferings were the result of their spiritual failures. Ritual was of importance precisely because, along with visions, it made possible the assistance of the manitous.

It is possible that Nabanoi had come into contact with the Delaware Prophet's message, or had heard the version from someone who had. However, since Neolin's vision was well known to Schoolcraft, having been translated by Schoolcraft for inclusion in Algie Researches, his collection of Indian legends, it is also possible that Schoolcraft altered Nabanoi's tale to make it conform more closely with that of Neolin. Certainly, the glosses about *Kezha Monedo* and *Machi Monedo*, and the excesses of the *Waabano*, all point to the hand of Schoolcraft who was anxious to highlight what he considered to be the dualism of Ojibwa religion.

There is another cycle of origin narratives, collected by William Jones (1919:547-609) at Garden River from an undisclosed informant around the turn of the century, which differs substantially from any of the ones recounted so far¹⁷. The cycle begins with *Nanabozho* and his brother creating human beings and then manitous to whom the Anishinaabeg could turn for help. Since the people must eventually die, it was decreed that *Nanabozho's* younger brother would die, so that he could look after the souls of those who had died. Thus far the themes are relatively similar. However, the main tale centers

around a mythic contest of powers between *Mighty One* (A Potawatomi of the Eagle Clan) and *Black Tail of a Fish* (An Ojibwa of the Bullhead clan). *Mighty One*, who was said to be one of the first humans, received his power from the *Underwater Manitou*, while *Black Tail*, was said to be an *Underwater Manitou*. In the contest, *Black Tail* used his mystic power to kill *Mighty One's* wife and children, but then made peace. The manitous of four directions, and those of above and below, hearing of the contest, came to learn about the *Midewiwin* and gain its medicines. Coming to *Black Tail*, they gave him goods and tobacco, saying:

"Pray, do you give us of your medicine and songs, that you may impart to us knowledge of everything we desire of you."

Now said Black-Tail-of-a-Fish: "Thus shall it be as long as the world lasts, from a great distance shall (the people) go to ask for medicine and songs, in just this way as you six have come."

Now, therefore, was Nanabushu nearly ready to complete the various forms of the mystic rite that were to be

Thereupon did Black-Tail-of-a-Fish set to work giving away the medicine; and in a while the kettle-drum and the (bear-hide) case (for the drum) did he give the men; when he given them everthing, it was then that he began sing to them. And when they had learned (the songs), he then spoke to them, saying: "You shall not go back home. You (are the ones who) shall go forth to carry the mystic rite [*Midewiwin*] into different places. . . .

Truly went they into the four directions from whence blow the winds, and to the other side of the underworld, and yonder into the sky. It was then that thence departed Black-Tail-of-a-Fish to go to where *Mighty-One* was. In a while he went into where he was. Lo, he was smiled upon by him. Black-Tail-of-a-Fish was told by him: No longer do you anger me. How could you anger me, when you really did not kill those children of mine? Simply to another land have they gone. After a while I shall go to where those children of mine are. And the same thing shall happen with you as with me when we leave this world. In after-time it shall come to

pass that till the end of the world the people will sometimes strive against one another, with their children up for a wager" (Jones 1917:569-73).

In another tale in this cycle, *Mighty-One* died and, as predicted, his body became "magic paint," which provided his grand-daughter with great power. She later conceived a boy child, to whom *Black Fish*, (before he, too, died and became "magic paint") passed on the knowledge of the *Midewiwin*, including numerous *Mide* songs which are spelled out in detail. The young boy in turn grew old as a result of singing the songs. And he spoke to the people, saying:

Such is the length of time that the world shall last. O ye people! I too shall soon depart hence. Off over this way from whence comes the morning shall I (go to) harken to the people. And in future time, while the babe is yet bound to the cradle-board, is when I shall be the first to be called upon by them that wish to perform the mystic rite. And by them whose child has died shall I be called upon. This is all that I have to say to you, O ye people! I am the Red-looking-One, according to the name that I have been given. It is now for you to go back home. This, no doubt, shall suffice the people as long as the world shall last. From no other place shall magic medicine ever be derived" (Jones 1917:608-9).

Perhaps the most significant element in this particular tale, is the fact that it centres around a power duel between two rival shamans. Power struggles were an integral part of Anishinaabe life. However, they appear to have become increasingly common in a ritualized form towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century when Ojibwa society was under stress from a number of different quarters. In one part of this tale there is even a hint that the *Midewiwin* itself had become engaged in a duel with the religion of the whites. *Black Tail* explained "that whites will exist one day, and they will live by manitous' directions in a way different from the

Indians. If they speak ill of *Mide*, making fun of it, the *Thunderers* will be angry and destroy towns. All people should regard the mystic rite as manitou" (Jones 1919:571).

However, the duel also prefigured parts of the *Midewiwin* ritual itself--for *Mighty-One's* wife and children die, but are revived into another life. And, it was through a similar death and resurrection ritual that new initiates were welcomed into the *Midewiwin*, and later demonstrated their own mystic powers. This theme of birth, death and resurrection occurred in another form in the tale of the old man who is replaced by the young boy who then grows old, and in the end of the final tale which reminds the listeners, that he (the old man), will return when he is called upon to perform the "mystic rite" for their newly born or recently deceased children. While it might be tempting to attribute this theme to Christian influences, since some references in this cycle of narratives can be clearly attributed to Christian influences, it would appear much more likely that the theme is indigenous. Not only is it a common theme world-wide, but it fits perfectly into the cyclical world-view of the Anishinaabeg, which permeated all aspects of their existence.

Recapitulation

Although the number of versions of *Midewiwin* origin myths is endless, most of them share a core narrative and a core message. All are deeply rooted in an Anishinaabe worldview in which manitous and visions play an important role in providing the Anishinaabeg with the blessings or powers to live a long life. Generally speaking the *Midewiwin* origin narratives form part of a larger cycle of narratives which explain the

creation of the world and the creatures (including humans) in it; attempt to explain the existence of sickness, suffering and death; and explain the *Midewiwin* as both a guide for correct living and a method of healing.

Gradually, over time, it is possible to trace some significant shifts in how the narratives portrayed the role of specific manitous, the concepts of good and evil, and the question of the afterlife, although none of these affected the fundamental nature of the *Midewiwin*. Nevertheless, there are a number of ambiguities in the narratives. Some of these, such as the great variety in comprehensiveness, are easily explainable. The degree of detail, and the focus of the tale could and did vary depending upon the intended purpose of the narratives. Those connected with initiation rites for higher levels of the *Midewiwin* contained additional information not found at lower levels. Most significantly, individual visions of *Mide* officials personalized the telling of the narratives.

There is no denying that with the coming of the first Euro-Americans, the visions of Anishinaabeg began to change in order to take into account this new reality. When the Anishinaabeg first came in contact with the *Wemitigoozhiwag* (French), they had believed the newcomers possessed great power as a result of their firearms, and their ability to speak across great distances with special markings. As a result they had sought aid from these "powerful beings," causing the French to believe that they (the French) were being treated as manitous or could help the Anishinaabeg against their enemies, save them from illness and provide them with food to eat (White 1991:7). Perhaps this was so, but within a very short time the Anishinaabeg had altered their initial opinion, particularly with

regard to the *mekadewikonayewiniwag* (missionaries/priests) who began to appear among them. Never before had they encountered people whose view of the world was so different from their own--and who demanded that the Anishinaabeg adopt their own beliefs and ceremonies. While these *mekadewikonayewiniwag* appeared at first to be powerless, and objects of ridicule, they were also viewed as potential evil shamans who might be hiding their real identity in order to work their evil more effectively. Anishinaabe suspicions seemed to be confirmed when people who had become ill during epidemics were baptised just before dying.

Anishinaabe shamans received visions which indicated which Christian deities, symbols and ceremonies could be incorporated into the Anishinaabe narratives and cosmology, but the Anishinaabeg as a whole were impervious to appeals of the missionaries to renounce their own beliefs and practices. As a result, Christian allusions were incorporated into some *Midewiwin* narratives, but the basic belief structure of the *Midewiwin* remained intact. As time went on and conditions worsened for the Anishinaabeg, prophets arose who had received visions, telling them to renounce the ways of the *Wayaabishkiiwed* (White People) and return to their former life style. While there was no single revitalization movement among the Anishinaabe, large numbers of them at least temporarily became followers of such leaders as the Delaware and Shawnee prophets. Even when the political expression of these movements had failed in their goal of repulsing the newcomers, vestiges of their beliefs remained. Like the prophets, some Anishinaabeg received visions which explained that the religion of the Christians was meant for the *Wayaabishkiiwed*, while the *Midewiwin* was intended for the Anishinaabeg.

Narratives of Indian converts to Christianity who had died and been refused entry into the Christian heaven since separate heavens existed for Indians and Whitemen, circulated widely throughout the nineteenth century among the Anishinaabeg¹⁸.

The incorporation of new figures and beliefs (from other Indian tribes and later from Euro-Americans) into Anishinaabe cosmology was a well-established method of dealing with change¹⁹. However, as a result of the new visions which made distinctions between the Anishinaabeg and *Wayaabishkiwed*, *Midewiwin* beliefs and practices began to take on a more exclusivist form which was alien to traditional Anishinaabe cosmology. This growing emphasis on the exclusivist nature of the *Midewiwin* (which was more closely akin to the revitalization movements than to traditional Anishinaabe beliefs and practices), and the acceptance of an exclusivist Christianity by other portions of the Anishinaabe community, ultimately helped set the stage for the development of factionalism in Ojibwa society. There are other ambiguities in the *Midewiwin* narratives which have continued to perplex succeeding generations of Euro-Americans. Simply put, the origin narratives appear to imply that an institution which was established in order to assist the Anishinaabeg to lead the "good life," was done so with the assistance of the forces of evil. In many versions, the narratives tell how *Mishibizhii* (the *ogimaa* of the *Underwater Manitous*) stole the first humans, so that *Nanabozho* decided that he would create the *Animikiig* (Thunderers) in order to watch over them. However, as Theresa Smith (1984:184-5) explains, in some accounts, the first humans had been created by the *Underwater Manitous*, and in others by the *Underwater Manitous* in conjunction with the *Thunderers*²⁰. In at least one tale, (Kohl 1985:195) they were

originally formed like man, but had the scales of a fish. Although Kohl's tale has strong Christian overtones (including a Garden of Eden episode), there is no denying the connections between the *Midewiwin* and Underwater Manitous and other water creatures. In one sense, it is conceivable that the tale of the Anishinaabeg originally living along the shore of the great salt water might also refer to their mythic origins in the distant past when they lived in the sea. Certainly this would tie in with those narratives in which the original humans had scales. There might even be, as Smith speculates, "a rather unsettling kinship between the [underwater] monsters and the Anishinaabeg" (Smith 1995:184). This is certainly suggested in the tale about *Mighty One* and *Black Fish*, who is named after a creature from the water, and is sometimes termed an *Underwater Manitou*.

What we have in these narratives is the description of a very ambiguous relationship between *Mishibizhii* and the *Underwater Manitous* who were responsible for the death of *Nanabozho's* brother, and the first humans, on the one hand, and the institution of the *Midewiwin* which, on the other hand, came into existence in order to bring the means of life to the Anishinaabeg. Surely it would have been more "logical" in western terms for the *Thunderers* to have been associated with the gift of the *Midewiwin*, since *Nanabozho* had created them in order to protect the Anishinaabeg from the *Mishibizhii*. But it is precisely this ambiguity of existence which permeates all aspects of the Anishinaabe world view. Nothing is what it seems at first glance: that which may help you survive, may also result in your death, if used in the wrong way, or if used to excess. The evil shaman whom everyone fears, may have the power to cure you, while

the seemingly friendly stranger may bring death along with his gifts. So it is with all things in life, including the *Midewiwin*.

Perhaps our inability to understand these ambiguities is that many *Wayaabishkiiwed* persist in seeing things in dualities: us and them, good and evil, here and there, now and then. *Mishibizhii* and the other manitous of the waters, such as snakes, had the potential to do evil, but they were not "evil incarnate" in the same terms as the Christian devil. *Mishibizhii* cannot be confused with "*Matchi-Manitou*" whom the Christian missionaries equated with the devil. Not only was he one of a number of manitous who were considered to be "evil manitous," but, as has been indicated, he also possessed the capacity for good. Nevertheless, in Smith's words, "he acted as a kind of cosmic bully" who often used his great power to disrupt things and throw creation out of balance (Smith 1995:104-6), causing the Anishinaabeg to feel "out of control." They were then left with the option of "begging for pity" and making him offerings of tobacco, or of turning to the Thunderers and begging for assistance from *Mishibizhii's* greatest foe. The important thing was not that one side would ever be the victor, but that everything would remain in balance--and they would feel "in control." In times such as the pestilence which visited them in the east, the time of evil practices at La Pointe described by Warren (1984:109-110), or the time when they were forced to give up their lands and settle on reservations, the world was out of balance and the Anishinaabeg felt very much out of control and at risk. Nevertheless, gradually the balance always returned, and with it, the *Midewiwin* in its positive aspects. Viewed in this way, *Mishibizhii's* role in the

Midewiwin from the perspective of the Anishinaabeg is not so anomalous as it may seem at first.

What I have attempted to do up to this point is consider the *Midewiwin* from the vantage point of the *Midewiwin* origin narratives in order to provide an Anishinaabe perspective. Seen within the context of the Anishinaabe world view discussed in chapter one, there can be no question that the *Midewiwin* is an integral part of this world view rather than an appendage grafted from an alien culture. From the perspective of these narratives, contact with the *Wayaabishkiwed* was important, but it was not world shattering--whatever the effects of disease, alcoholism and the loss of their land may have been. Euro-Americans, along with some of their goods, and some of their views, were gradually incorporated into the Anishinaabe world view. It is therefore not surprising to find that gradually over time, explanations of the *Midewiwin's* origin and purpose began to take on some accretions from the *Wayaabishkiwed*, but these accretions never altered the fundamental Anishinaabe underpinnings of the *Midewiwin*.

Euro-American Perspectives: The Search for Certainties

As was noted briefly in the introduction, early Euro-American observers represented a wide variety of beliefs concerning the nature of the world they lived in. Although many of them professed to be Christians, few of them, other than the missionaries, practised their beliefs with any diligence since there were extremely few priests and ministers in the Great Lakes region up to the mid and late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, most Euro-Americans would have probably had a better knowledge of

basic Christian beliefs than the average nominal Christian today. While these beliefs varied considerably, depending upon the nature of the denomination, most Euro-Americans believed in a personal God, who was both creator and the source of goodness, and a devil, who was the source of evil. Most believed in the natural sinfulness of humans, and the need to achieve "salvation" here on earth, so that one could reside for eternity in "heaven" after death.

Christians believed themselves to be the "People of the Book," for their beliefs were said to be contained in the writings of what was termed the Bible. And while all knowledge about how to lead a good life and achieve salvation could be found in the Bible, there were many disputes over the correct interpretation of what had been written. Each group who believed themselves to have found the true interpretation was anxious to convince all others of this "good news." Unlike Anishinaabe religion which was open to a progressive revelation, and was non-proselytizing, the adherents of different branches of Christianity each believed that theirs was the only true religion, and therefore that only they would be spared the eternal fires of damnation in hell.

Upon meeting Indians in the "new" world, Euro-Americans were faced with the need to integrate them into their world view, just as the Anishinaabeg attempted to integrate the *Wayaabishkiiwed* into theirs. Most Euro-Americans regarded these new people as "heathens" since the Indians appeared never to have heard of the Christian gospel, and they appeared to be "savages" since they lived in forests which Euro-Americans found frightening, practiced customs common to "wildmen," and appeared to have neither laws nor morals according to Euro-American standards.²¹ With the passage

of time, many Euro-Americans began to believe that originally the Indians had possessed a more highly developed civilization. Some, such as William Warren, suggested they were part of the lost tribes of Israel, who had been banished. For Christians, Indians represented a constant reminder of the work that had yet to be accomplished in bringing God's word to the world, and what could happen to those who repudiated the gospel. But the task of conversion was difficult. Indian languages were unintelligible to most, so communication was at best, second-hand through an interpreter. Those who did speak Indian languages were seldom interested in religious questions. It must also be remembered that Euro-Americans viewed Indians on the latter's own territory, in an alien natural environment which was potentially dangerous, so that while they might have outwardly held on to a belief in their inherent superiority, many were no doubt frightened by the world in which they found themselves.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that early Euro-American descriptions of the Anishinaabeg and their religious ceremonies such as the *Midewiwin* were strongly coloured by their own world view. They were, therefore, hardly accurate portrayals of Anishinaabeg religion and religious practices--particularly since most were brief references to some external feature which may have caught the eye (or ear) of the observer. It would have been as difficult for Euro-Americans to comprehend the *Midewiwin*, manitou, the sweat lodge, and the *Thunderers*, as it was for the Anishinaabeg to grasp the meaning of "divine," "atonement," "trinity," or the significance of baptism or communion (Hinsdale 1926:21).²²

A major problem in using Euro-American reports of the *Midewiwin* is that they usually referred to only a single aspect of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies which the observer may have witnessed, or was particularly impressed with. Thus, what was described simply as a White Dog Feast, or a sweat lodge ceremony, may well have been part of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies--or it may have been a separate ceremony, depending upon the context in which it occurred. Since *Midewiwin* ceremonies usually took place over a period of several days, most observers would have had only brief glimpses of the total ceremonies. Moreover, since observers often disapproved of "Indian" dancing and drumming in particular, they seemed often to choose an arbitrary generic term and used it to cover all reported occurrences. In a number of instances, for instance, what was described as loud drumming at "*Waabano*" ceremonies, most likely took place at *Midewiwin* ceremonies, since the *Mide* water drum would have carried much further than the hand held "tamborine" form of drum used at *Waabano* ceremonies. On the other hand, some ceremonies were described as *Midewiwin* simply because a payment of fees occurred. However, they could well have been Shaking Tent ceremonies since *Jaasakids* were also "paid" by people who wanted their assistance in communicating with the manitous. Even more crucial to how we use these sources is the fact that few of them looked beyond the external ceremonies they were describing in order to attempt to understand why the Ojibwa and their neighbours were performing these ceremonies.²³ Clothed in the righteousness of their own beliefs, they preferred to view such ceremonies as representing the work of primitive minds, when, in fact, the *Midewiwin* was more complex in structure than many of their own Christian ceremonies. Scholars, therefore,

would do well to be as critical of Euro-American sources as they have been of Anishinaabe narratives when trying to understand the *Midewiwin*.

Was the *Midewiwin* an Indigenous Institution?

Writers on the subject of the *Midewiwin* generally were not concerned as to whether or not it was a pre-contact or post-contact institution before the publication of a number of pioneering and controversial works by the ethnohistorian, Harold Hickerson. Hickerson believed that the disruptive effects of European contact were significantly different than previous contacts between Aboriginal peoples. Therefore, the issue of dating had special importance for him. Using a historiographic technique called "negative evidence," he concluded that the *Midewiwin* could not have existed prior to European contact, because it had not been mentioned in any of the earliest documents (Hickerson [1970] 1988:51). Hickerson's conclusions have been accepted by many Euro-American ethnohistorians--although not all would entirely accept all of his arguments. Many Ojibwa, however, consider his theories to be culturally arrogant as well as inaccurate.²⁴

Brown and Peers (1988:) have observed in the critical review attached to the revised edition of Hickerson's The Chippewa and Their Neighbours, that negative evidence omits much and is always subject to new data. This is particularly true with respect to the study of the *Midewiwin* if one broadens the concept of data from written sources to include scrolls and other artifacts. For instance, *Mide* artifacts from the Glenbow Museum strongly suggest that the *Midewiwin* was practiced as far west as

Saskatchewan during the nineteenth century, despite the fact that there are only scattered written references to this fact.

Even in the eighteenth century when the first documents mentioned the *Midewiwin* by name or implication, most Euro-Americans had little comprehension of what they were trying to describe, and constantly confused or conflated the various Ojibwa ceremonies. Moreover, Hickerson was obliged to recognize that some of his nineteenth century sources such as the Rev. Boutwell were rather biased with regard to their views about Ojibwa religion (Hickerson 1970:55). It is interesting to note that even though Boutwell and his colleagues lived in the middle of what has been described as the "*Midewiwin* heartland," they made only a few references to it. If our history of the *Midewiwin* in the nineteenth century were based solely on these sources, the ceremony would have received only a passing notice! Yet we know from Ojibwa narratives and *Mide* scrolls, as well as other Euro-American sources, that it was regularly practiced and formed an integral part of their lives.

Moreover, there is still room for further interpretation of the old sources that do exist. For instance, Hennepin (1689), in his "A Continuation of the New Discovery" (as quoted in Hoffman), mentioned in passing that the people around the Great Lakes:

"believe that there is a Master of Life, as they call him, but hereof they make various applications; some of them have a lean Raven, which they carry always along with them, and which they say is the Master of their Life; others have an Owl, and some again a Bone, a Sea-Shell or some such thing;" (Hoffman 1891:152)

The *miigis*, in the form of a sea-shell, as has been seen, played a crucial role in both the oral traditions concerning the *Midewiwin* and the ceremonies themselves--and is not connected with any other Anishinaabe ceremony, so it would seem likely that this chance remark indicates that some form of *Midewiwin* ceremonies were being practiced at that time--just as a remark concerning a use of a bone probably referred to a healing ceremony involving one of the other traditional Ojibwa healers. Conversely, Hennepin's comments could well have been referring to the medicine bundles used in the *Midewiwin*. The skins of birds and animals were used for the different degrees, and the bundles contained several sacred objects including bones and a *miigis*.

Hennepin then went on to note that:

"As for their Opinion concerning the Earth, they make use of a Name of a certain *Genius*, whom they call *Micaboche*, who has cover'd the whole Earth with water (as they imagine) and relate innumerable fabulous Tales, some of which have a Kind of analogy with the Universal Deluge" (Hoffman 1891:154).

In his work on the *Midewiwin*, Hoffman rightly made the connection in this quote with the *Midewiwin* origin myths in which *Nanabozho* gives the *Midewiwin* to the Anishinaabeg.

Hickerson dwelt at length on another description (from Marquette) which

Hoffman had quoted:

When I arriv'd there, I was very glad to see a great Cross set up in the middle of the Village, adorn'd with several White Skins, Red Girdles, Bows and Arrows, which that good People had offer'd to the Great *Manitou*, to return him their Thanks for the care he had taken of them during the Winter, and that he granted them a prosperous Hunting. *Manitou*, is the Name they give in general to all Spirits whom they think to be above the Nature of Man (Hoffman 1891:155).

Hoffman had noted (correctly again) that, while Marquette appears to think that the cross was a Christian one, it really was a *Midewiwin* medicine pole of the fourth degree, which had been erected for entirely different reasons. This is discounted out of hand by Hickerson, who attempts to "prove" that the cross was, in fact, Christian, having been left there by previous French missionaries. The cross was later adopted by the Ojibwa as "a distinguishing mark for one of their degrees . . ." (Hickerson 1988:34). Perhaps the cross was left by some French missionaries since it was their practice to erect them in prominent places, while members of the *Midewiwin* who had been initiated into one of the degrees, normally placed their medicine poles in secluded spots known to them. Nevertheless, the practice of garlanding them with skins, ribbons, and painting them in different colours, is definitely related to all degrees of the *Midewiwin*. Moreover, there is another ancient tradition of erecting medicine poles beside houses in which the occupant had had a dream and the strength of the vision was in him or her. In the spring the owner would hold a feast, and the guests who wished a long life would come, bringing tobacco and a garment which they would tie to the pole (Densmore 1910:248). The erection of decorated poles, in the form of crosses, or otherwise, was hardly new to the Anishinaabeg. At the very least, Hickerson made far too much out of this reference; at the worst, he is guilty of cultural myopia.

The third reason that Hickerson gave for considering the *Midewiwin* to be a post-contact institution was that "the payment in goods of non-Indian production as fees for instruction and initiation" (Hickerson 1988:54) was an indication that the money economy had influenced the conduct of the *Midewiwin* ceremony. This argument is

certainly in keeping with his interpretation of the "Feast of the Dead" that the Ojibwa shared with the Niipissing and Hurons for a period of time. As an economic determinist, Hickerson either ignored or made little attempt to understand the Anishinaabe world view. Instead, he concentrated his analysis on the economic significance of gift giving in the context of the fur trade. Such an interpretation completely ignores the fact that such gift giving was integral to the Anishinaabe world view prior to the contact with Euro-Americans, and extended beyond the *Midewiwin* to all aspects of Anishinaabe life that involved contact with the manitous, including Shaking Tent ceremonies. That such a wasteful attitude should have shocked the more materialist Euro-Americans is hardly surprising, but it should not cause us to interpret the documents in terms of "fees for service." While continued contact with growing numbers of Euro-Americans may have caused some Ojibwa gradually to adopt some of the more individualistic behaviours and to hoard material goods, there is no concrete evidence that early *Mide* (or other) shamans kept for themselves all the presents that were presented to them. If anything, as we will see when we examine the ceremonies in detail, they allowed for a sharing of goods. The question of whether or not the goods were aboriginal or Euro-American is seldom mentioned in either Anishinaabe or Euro-American sources. It would appear to have been less of a concern to members of the *Midewiwin* than followers of the such revitalization cult leaders as the Delaware and Shawnee Prophets.

The next reason Hickerson cited is the fact that "there were occult practices in the performance" (Hickerson 1988:54). What he precisely means by this is uncertain. However, he was probably referring to the "shooting" and reviving of the candidate by

the *Mide* officials during the initiation portion of the ceremonies, or he may have been alluding to an earlier part in the ceremonies when the *Mide* officials showed the candidate the contents of their medicine bundles, and explained the properties and merits of the various articles. They then employed a couple of "tests" which demonstrated the power of the *Mides*, and assured everyone that the candidate was worthy. These tests usually involved a series of beads which were made to roll by themselves, as if animated, and small figurines were made to move by themselves, as if possessed of a life of their own. (Hoffman 1988:204-205) Even as sympathetic an observer as Hoffman believed the latter, in particular, to involve trickery which was used to deceive regular members of the *Midewiwin* and visitors, alike. Few Euro-American observers, no matter how sympathetic or objective, have been willing to accept the possibility that inanimate objects could be possessed of a life force, or barring that, that the actions could be taken as symbolic. Nevertheless, despite his feelings about this, what is puzzling is why Hickerson should have singled out such practices in the *Midewiwin* as evidence of outside influences since almost all Anishinaabe ceremonies used similar practices to demonstrate the power of the manitou(s).

Hickerson's final point was that "the very existence of an organized priesthood seems improbable as an aboriginal institution" (Hickerson 1988:54). Leaving aside the question of whether or not the *Mide* officials should be termed priests or shamans in Euro-American terminology, there was an implication that "primitive" aboriginals could never have "developed" to such a stage on their own. Hickerson, himself, earlier in his book, placed himself firmly in the evolutionary tradition of Morgan and Service which

classified cultures into evolutionary levels or stages (Hickerson 1988:23). Certainly this ties in with his belief that the *Midewiwin* occurred as a result of more complex forms of social organization which, in turn, were the result of the Ojibwa's central role in the fur trade. While Hickerson's "fur trade" thesis is one possible explanation of the larger, more sedentary concentrations of people, there are other equally plausible ones which need not be repeated at this point since they have been dealt with in chapter one. Suffice it to say at this point that the organizational structure of the *Midewiwin*, including the roles of various officials was tightly interwoven into the fabric of Anishinaabe society and world view.²⁵

There is, of course, the considerable danger stated by Hickerson, that in using nineteenth century sources to understand pre-contact forms of Anishinaabe life and world view, we become guilty of "upstreaming," for our sources may reflect a much changed institution. However, if this were to be the case, the entire structure of the Anishinaabe world view would have changed, not just the *Midewiwin*, since as I have demonstrated, the two are so tightly interwoven, that it is difficult to separate one from the other. This is not to suggest that changes in the *Midewiwin* have not occurred, since the Anishinaabe world view was based on an oral tradition and visionary experiences. However, changes were incorporated into the basic structure; the structure was not completely altered as Hickerson and others would have us believe.

The arguments of Karl Schlesier (1990) and Richard White (1991) concerning the world of the Anishinaabeg and the *Wayaabishkiwed* in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are much more convincing than those of Hickerson. Looking at the

same documents as Hickerson, Schlesier and White saw in them the description of a society of refugee villages under great stress, rather than Hickerson's view of a strong, vigorous society of large, stable villages (Hickerson 1963:72-75). The villages that the documents describe, they argue, were composed of a diverse group of people fleeing the attacks of the Iroquois, or the ravages of epidemics. Their old world had been destroyed: most of their old hunting and fishing territories were forfeited, numerous of their kin had lost their lives, and now they were forced to seek new lives in conjunction with strangers whom they neither knew nor trusted.

While Schlesier and White may overstate their case, there is no doubt in my mind that the world the documents describe was closer to their version of what happened than the version offered by Hickerson.²⁶ The period following the destruction of the Huron Confederacy in the southern Ontario peninsula in the 1650s by the Iroquois witnessed the flight of the few surviving Huron. Along with their neighbours from southern Michigan, they fled to the relative safety of northern Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and eastern Lake Superior. However, even there they continued to be harassed by the Iroquois. The arrival of the French provided only limited protection from the Iroquois, and while they provided the Anishinaabeg with new improved trade goods, they also brought a new danger. The epidemics which had helped to destroy the Huron nation, now threatened to wreak equal havoc on the refugees from the Iroquois. Moreover, the new Great Lakes environment forced changes on the refugees, for not only were horticulture and large scale fishing limited to a few locations, but the concentration of large numbers of people in these locations put severe strains on large game resources in the surrounding area.

Nevertheless, the Saulteurs (Ojibwa), along with their Ottawa (Odawa) and Huron (Wyandot) neighbours did survive, and by the 1670s were actively engaged once more in trading furs to the French, and by the next decade they had begun to act as middlemen with the Sioux.

By 1700 the tide had definitely changed and after several disastrous defeats, the Iroquois had been forced to sue for peace, and at least some of the refugees had begun to return to their former lands. Nevertheless, historians are now generally agreed that the period of the diaspora contributed to the disintegration of many of the affected tribal groups.²⁷ Most severely affected were the Huron, Winnebago, and to a lesser extent the Menominee,²⁸ Ottawa, and Potawatomi. To a large extent their traditional political and social structures were destroyed. Although most of these groups did emerge with new forms of social integration, many of their traditional cultural institutions disintegrated. Other groups, such as the Sauk, Mascouten and Miami were more able to continue functioning according to traditional ways. The Ojibwa probably were least affected by the tremendous upheaval since their society had been the least structured, and their numbers had been widely dispersed--thus giving them more flexibility in dealing with the situations that faced them. Nevertheless, the experiences which they had faced, and would continue to face in the decades to come, placed considerable strain on their society and the individuals in it. In some important ways, they, too, emerged from the experience a different people than before.

If one accepts that the world which the Anishinaabeg lived in during the late seventeenth, and eighteenth century was torn asunder, it is tempting to look at the origin

of the *Midewiwin* in terms of a "revitalization movement" as Schlesier (1990) has done, or as an example of a "crisis cult" as Harrison (1984) did several years earlier. However, such definitions imply that the Anishinaabeg were not only reacting to new and external problems facing them, but that they drew the majority of *Midewiwin* beliefs and practices from outside their own tradition.

As will be seen more clearly in the succeeding chapter on "*Midewiwin* Ceremonies," the essential elements found in the *Midewiwin* were clearly elaborations of traditional Anishinaabe beliefs and practices. What seems likely is that the role of traditional healers and diviners took on a greater importance, and healing ceremonies became more complex as the Anishinaabeg attempted to deal with those forces which threatened their existence. Gradually over time, the *Midewiwin* healing ceremony in response to specific illness of individuals was transformed into a communal ceremony in which all those who had been initiated demonstrated their power to overcome the increasing number of maladies which confronted them.²⁹ Through this "renewal" of their powers, the Anishinaabeg were reminded of the obligations placed on them, and they were reassured that the powers received from the manitous could and would allow them to survive any new assaults on their way of life.

Any "revitalization" that occurred was within the context of traditional Anishinaabeg beliefs, unlike revitalization movements such as the Delaware and Shawnee prophets whose teachings represented a major shift from traditional beliefs, often placing them in opposition to traditional religious practices such as the *Midewiwin*. Nevertheless, it should be noted that *Mide* elders also began to distinguish Anishinaabe

society from that of the *Wayaabishiikiwed* in response to the increasingly aggressive stance of the latter.

Although the *Midewiwin*, as it was described by early Euro-American observers, had begun to lay stress on the knowledge of rituals used in obtaining power, the visionary aspect of obtaining power on the part of individuals continued to be an essential element of the process. There was far less difference between the role of *Jaasakiids* and *Mides* in Anishinaabe society, than there was between that of Catholic priests and Protestant ministers in Euro-American society. While the difference between traditional religious leaders and the leaders of revitalization movements was more pronounced, even these figures functioned within the context of traditional Anishinaabe beliefs regarding the transferral of knowledge and power from the manitous to the Anishinaabeg. This is evident in Tanner's description of Manito-o-geezhik, a minor Ojibwa prophet who preached a newly revealed message from the "Great Spirit." Tanner explained that, while he was sceptical, such messages were received with great respect by his Ojibwa and Ottawa colleagues. The prophet called upon his brethren to give up war, thievery, defrauding, lying and drinking alcohol, which Tanner observed, had a salutary effect on their conduct for several years (Tanner [1830] 1994:169). It would appear that contemporary observers and later scholars have both tended to emphasize what appear to be the differences, rather than looking at how these differences developed out of traditional beliefs which continued to serve as the basis of the Anishinaabe world view long after they had appeared to adopt Euro-American beliefs and institutions.

Before leaving the problem of the origin of the *Midewiwin*, we also need to consider the question of among whom and where the *Midewiwin* may have originated. There is almost unanimity among scholars that the *Midewiwin* originated among the Ojibwa or the clan-based groups which preceded them. Such beliefs are based on the fact that the earliest Euro-American records refer to the ceremony as practiced among the Saulteurs³⁰ (Ojibwa), and the fact that other Algonquian tribal groups that practiced the *Midewiwin* appear to have considered the Ojibwa as having given the rites to them. Nevertheless, given the fact that at the time that the *Midewiwin* appears to have become more institutionalized, neither the Ojibwa nor most of the other Algonquian groups had strong tribal identities, it is much more likely that the *Midewiwin* was originally an Anishinaabe healing ceremony.

It is certainly possible that the establishment of the ceremony may have first developed among the Saulteurs, and spread from them to other Algonquians who considered themselves Anishinaabeg. However, we should not assume that because the society developed a strong tribal component to its teachings in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that this was always the case. It is much more likely that various refugee groups which came together in large "multi-tribal" villages viewed the *Midewiwin* ceremonies as a reaffirmation that together they would survive their trials.³¹ While each of the disparate groups of refugees were bound together by family ties and social structures which differentiated them from other groups, most of the groups shared a common language base and world view. Most of them, from time to time, participated in various forms of loose alliances, in which intermarriage was encouraged.³² All of them

had similar beliefs regarding the relationship between themselves and other creatures including manitous. All of them also believed in the culture hero and trickster figure, *Nanabozho* (although his name and characteristics varied somewhat), and had similar earth-diver narratives regarding the creation of the world. Since they also shared similar ideas regarding the origin and cure of disease, it should not be surprising to find reports of the *Midewiwin* being practiced by the majority of these groups, plus several neighbouring tribes during the late seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

However, since the *Midewiwin* died out more rapidly among many of those groups, it is from the Ojibwa of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that most of the surviving documents are found. Many of the Ojibwa materials (narratives, migration charts, etc.) which have been collected, plus Warren's published history of the Ojibway, suggest that the place of origin was Chequamegon (La Pointe). At least one modern scholar (Dewdney 1975:172-174), came to the same conclusion. While Chequamegon certainly became an important centre in the early growth of the *Midewiwin*, and in what appears to have been the gradual development of the concept of the "Ojibwa nation" during the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but it cannot be singled out as the birthplace of the *Midewiwin*. In most of the origin and migration narratives, the origin of the Anishinaabe and the birth of the *Midewiwin* began at a point far to the east. Therefore, we must look farther back in the Ojibwa past than their first settlement at Chequamegon--regardless of the pivotal role that it may have played in early Ojibwa history.

In fact, it could be argued that it makes little sense to look for a precise place of origin, or a single historical event which dates the origin of the *Midewiwin*. While most Ojibwa origin narratives are agreed that the origin took place in the east, most make no attempt to locate it geographically, and note only that it occurred "in the time of our Grandfathers." In other words, it must be remembered that the origin narrative was an *aadizookaan* rather than a *dibaajimowin*. As such, it dealt in eternal truths rather than geographic or historical truths. Even though the narrative might employ geographical or historical references for contextual purposes, these changed with the telling of the narrative in different locations and at different times.

ENDNOTES

1. Vecsey (1988) has presented an extensive historiographical review of the various schools of thought by which a long train of scholars have approached the study of myths, and, in particular, the assumption that myths do not reflect reality.
2. Vecsey (1988:1-26) in his study of the mythic narratives of North American Indians, begins with a much more detailed survey of the way "myths" have been employed and interpreted throughout the ages, although he acknowledges that he has barely begun to deal with the subject.
3. In a recent article Moodie, Catchpole and Abel (1992:149-171) have demonstrated that Northern Athapaskan oral traditions can be transmitted for many hundreds of years, and still be of historical value.
4. Bruce Greenfield (1995:243-259), in a recent article on the writings of Louis Hennepin, explores some of these different ways of knowing, and their implications for understanding the interaction between Indians and Euro-Americans.
5. This tale is widespread among all the divisions of the Ojibwa including the northern bands and their Cree neighbours, where the figure of *Nanabozho* has been replaced by *Wisakedzak*. See the version of this tale collected by Skinner (1911:173ff). Brightman in part III of The Orders of the Dreamed (Brown and Brightman 1988) provides a good explanation and comparison of the Cree and Ojibwa narratives involving *Nanabozho* and *Wisakedzak*.
6. Scholars have interpreted these tales in a variety of ways. For instance, Vecsey (1988) provides a structuralist, and Smith (1995) provides a hermeneutical analysis of the tales.
7. The difficulty of making any definitive statements with regard to dating is illustrated by the fact that the other version of an origin tale which features Mishipeshu is one related by Norval Morrisseau in the 1960s from around Lake Nipigon (Morrisseau 1965:55). It appears to be similar to Tanner's circa-1800 version from around the Pembina Valley, despite the differences in time and geographic location--and despite the fact that most of Morrisseau's other tales show strong Christian influences!
8. The *miigis* or cowrie shell, as it has been termed by Hoffman (1891) and others, was one of the central symbols of the *Midewiwin*. While many Euro-American observers made great efforts to provide a precise scientific description of it, its importance lies in the power which it possessed, not in its biological classification. Twentieth century versions of the *Midewiwin* provide descriptions of a wider variety of shells.
9. J. Fletcher Williams, in his Memoir William W. Warren, in the 1885 edition of Warren's work, speaks of the elderly Flat Mouth coming to talk with Warren, whom he

called "his grandson" (Warren 1984:17). It is also possible, that Warren's source was Pizhiki (Great Buffalo), the senior chief at La Pointe, with whom Warren also had many dealings.

10. Flat Mouth's father was Yellow Head, which might lead one to speculate that either he or his grandfather were Euro-American or of mixed ancestry. Regardless of his precise background, culturally Flat Mouth was definitely Ojibwa.

11. Hoffman relates that while Sika'ssigé never advanced beyond the second degree, he later became a Mide official at White Earth Reservation where Hoffman met him. Since his charts originated in Mille Lacs, he would have been part of the more southerly tradition. A full explanation of *Midewiwin* degrees is given in Chapter Five, pages 228-230 of this dissertation.

12. Salt never published his work, but the mss. for the beginnings of his "Ojibwa History" can be found in the National Archives of Canada.

13. The description of the large Midewiwin ceremony at Walpole Island in the 1830s by the Methodist missionary, James Evans, would appear to be an exception. The American Methodist missionary, E. H. Day (1890) and other missionaries also mention Midewiwin ceremonies among the Saginaw Ojibwa in lower Michigan during the nineteenth century.

14. All inserts are Landes' except the last, which is mine.

15. Tanner ([1830] 1994:179-80) reported an incident in which *Esh-ke-bak-ke-koo-sha*, whom he represented as the messenger of *Manito-o-geezhik* (a local prophet), called upon Tanner's party to throw away their medicine bags, except for the ones used for war and hunting, and showed them new remedies.

16. John Johnson, George's father was an Irishman who became active in the fur trade, spending time at Mackinac Island and La Pointe on Chequamegon Bay. George accompanied Schoolcraft on several of his expeditions as an interpreter, and was similarly employed at La Pointe and Sault Ste. Marie agencies. George's sister, Jane, became Schoolcraft's wife.

17. Johnston (1982:95-100) has the only other printed version of this tale.

18. Berkhofer (1965:107) describes this phenomenon in some detail and gives examples from a wide range of tribal groups.

19. See Axtell (1987:282) and Dowd (1992:18) who both argue that traditional Indian societies had a flexibility which allowed them to adopt new ceremonies and practices which had been borrowed in a traditionally sanctioned way.

20. While I arrived at these conclusions independently, I later discovered that Smith (1995) had expressed similar ideas in her study; except that her mode of expression was superior to my own.

21. Axtell (1985) and Jaenen (1976) provide good overviews of the early attempts of English and French cultures to come to terms with their aboriginal neighbours, and the new land in which they lived. Roderick Nash's Wilderness and the American Mind is a classic exposition of the intellectual history of American attitudes towards nature and, by extension, the original inhabitants of North America.

22. I admit to having turned Hinsdale's quote on its head, but the implications are the same for both groups.

23. Even Day, who spent several pages describing the Midewiwin, makes only passing reference to one of the "medicine men" who makes a speech "about something or nothing," or chants a monotonous song. . ." (Day 1890:213) Yet Day had a very capable Ojibwa interpreter in Marksman, who could have put the ceremonies into context for him.

24. A few contemporary Euro-American scholars such as Howard (1977:133-134) have taken issue with Hickerson's arguments. Deleary (1986) is, so far as I am aware, the only Ojibwa scholar to use Anishinaabe oral tradition to critique Hickerson's arguments.

25. This will be explained in some detail in the following chapter.

26. All historians are forced to rely mainly on a limited number of documents such as the multi-volume Jesuit Relations (1899), plus the documents collected in the works of Margry (1879), Blair (1911-12), Thwaites (1896-1901) and Kellogg (1925).

27. While neither would appear to fully subscribe to White's thesis, both Cleland (1992) and Bieder (1995), in their respective historical studies of Native American communities in Michigan and Wisconsin, describe the period as one of social disintegration for the groups involved.

28. As with most aboriginal names, there are numerous variations in spelling. This is the spelling that appears to be used now by scholars and the Menominee themselves. However, both Hoffman and Skinner used the spelling "Menomini."

29. Grim (1983:71-73) argues that the Midewiwin grew out of traditional Ojibwa healing rituals in response to the crises of the late 17th century.

29. The French term for Anishinaabe bands who lived around Bowating. Later, a variation of the name (Saulteaux) was applied to the Ojibwa residing in the region which later became Manitoba.

31. Schlesier (1990:10) makes a similar statement regarding the communal binding function of the Midewiwin among the disparate groups in the multi-tribal villages, although he implies far greater differences among the different groups than probably existed.

32. The most common of these was the Alliance of the Three Fires which existed between the Ojibwas, Ottawas and Potawatomies from the mid-1700s (Fixico 1994:1-25). However, there were others such as the alliance formed by the above three tribes plus the Wyandotts (Huron-Petuns) against the Sioux in the 1720s, and the Confederacy which the British formed in conjunction with Shawnee, Delawares, Wyandotts, Miamis, Ojibwas, Ottawa, Potawatomies and others in the late 1790s (Forsyth in Blair 1911 v.2:188-192).

CHAPTER FOUR

MIDEWIWIN CEREMONIES:

DOCUMENTARY FRAGMENTS FROM EURO-AMERICAN OBSERVERS

Written descriptions of *Midewiwin* ceremonies by Euro-Americans were limited for some time to brief, enigmatic references in documents. Although the references become fuller and more frequent in the nineteenth century, they are still no more than partial and disjointed fragments, which by themselves provide only glimpses of the ceremonies as seen and interpreted by a range of observers. Few of these observers were familiar with the Ojibwa world view or language, and fewer still were disinterested observers. Nevertheless, by viewing these fragments within their historical and social context, while at the same time using what we already know about Ojibwa religion and Ojibwa sacred narratives, it is possible to piece together the various descriptions and identify the essential components of the *Midewiwin*, while providing some tentative explanations for the variations in the ceremonies described.

An Account of the Midewiwin during the French Regime

The earliest existing in-depth description of what commonly became known as the *Midewiwin*, is contained in a 1710 letter of Antoine Denis Raudot, Intendant of New France.¹ Since Raudot had only second-hand knowledge of the Indians of the Great Lakes, it is generally believed that he relied on the memoirs of the soldier, Louis de la Porte de Louvigny for his information. Some of his letters were published by Margry in his *Découvertes* (1876-86), while an English translation can be found in the appendix of

Kinietz's The Indians of the Western Great Lakes 1615-1760.² Raudot was writing for a French audience so his descriptions were couched in terms and set in a context with which his audience would be familiar. His description is important since both the language which he used to describe the Saulteur (Ojibwa) Jugglers, and the structure of the ceremony which he described, prefigure most of the descriptions which follow up until the present day.

Raudot began by differentiating the Saulteurs from neighbouring tribes:

Besides the dreams, dances, sacrifices, and other superstitious notions which these Saulteurs have, like the other tribes of which I have already spoken, they go further and act like our charlatans in France who travel through the towns. They distribute medicine and, so they say, they cause the people who are not friends of theirs to die by their spells; this is believed by the other Indians, for, among all these tribes, there is not a single old Indian man or woman who does not have some secret of medicine, real or pretended.

The Saulteurs learn how to make people fear them by their talk, and, to convince still others more easily, they arrange with one or more persons to play the part of a dying man, a dead man, and a living man, according to what may be necessary to prove their powers.

Then they make known to the public, by a harangue, that they will dance the medicine dance³ in the hut of such and such a person and that the jugglers will show the amazing effects of their knowledge and powers. Long before the time and to the sound of the drum and with invocations to demons, they prepare the remedies or magic arts which they pretend to employ. Then, on the appointed night, they get ready their paraphernalia, consisting of a number of small bags or packets made of bark, in which there are powders and the bones of animals, and the skin of an otter, which they cause to move or jump in accordance with the movements of their bodies and their chichigoues [rattles].

When all the people are assembled, one of the jugglers begins a great speech in their praise, boasting of their knowledge and their power over the life and death of men. The others applaud him; and to begin to prove what he has said, they cast some of their powder on the persons who are devoted to their interests, who immediately fall and throw themselves about like men possessed, foaming at the mouth and uttering cries. The jugglers, for their part, augment their own cries and throw more powder

upon them. The dying man pretends to be dead; they carry him, they turn him over, but he seems unconscious and motionless. Then it is that the jugglers, triumphing in the surprise they see on the faces of everybody, shout that it is nothing; that life and death lie in their hands; that although they have taken his life, they are about to give it back to him with their remedies. During this time a dead silence is observed by all, and they watch intently. To effect this, they blow upon him with another medicine, and, invoking their Manito, they call upon the dead man, who is only dead because he is willing to be, and who, to finish the performance, gradually revives as he was before this trickery. He raises himself and then sits down and tells the assembly tales and fables about the other world, which he has seen. (Kinietz 1972:372-4 - Letter # 47)

Raudot and his source or sources seem to have been impressed by the power that the Saulteur "jugglers" enjoyed among their own people and neighbouring tribes. While using "medicine" to cure or kill would have been common among the other Indians that the French encountered, Raudot placed more emphasis on the Saulteur "jugglers" than he did on similar religious figures in other tribes. Yet he gave no indication that their "medicine dance" was a new phenomenon; in fact it can be argued that since no comment was made as to the ceremony being a recent phenomenon, Raudot believed it to have existed prior to French contact.⁴

It should also be noted that Raudot in an earlier letter (#31) had also described what came to be known as a shaking tent ceremony in which he claimed "jugglers" spoke to the devil in order to be able to forecast the future--something he reluctantly agreed that they sometimes did quite well. These same "jugglers," he explained, were usually physicians who were much feared since they could also use witchcraft and spells to cause injury and death. We are left with no indication as to the connection between the descriptions of the two types of "jugglers" though it would appear that there was no

competition between them as is sometimes inferred by other observers. It is likely that they co-existed, or, in some cases, were the same individuals using different powers, and performing different roles.

The "medicine dance" ceremony that Raudot described appears to have had more of the characteristics of a curing ceremony intended to help a sick or injured individual, when other forms of curing had failed, rather than the complex communal ceremony for the initiation of new members as was often described by subsequent observers.⁵ As such, the rituals that Raudot described are more limited than those found in other documents. In fact, the description is limited even if the ceremony was a healing ceremony intended for a single individual. Densmore's description of such a ceremony, for example, included the administration of brewed medicine to the sick person, and emphasized the significance of the medicine pole which was placed in the lodge. Such details may have been left out by Raudot's source, or by him, or they could reflect an earlier form of the ceremony.

Nevertheless, Raudot's descriptions are surprisingly complete. They include the "shooting, death and revival" of the sick person or initiate--which was a central ritual of the *Midewiwin*.⁶ And Raudot's descriptions also include the use of medicine bags, including an otter skin bag which was usually employed by first degree *Mides*. It is difficult to say whether Raudot's explanation of the actual "shooting" ritual described an earlier, less complex form, or whether this simply reflects the writer's own interpretation of the ritual, based on the explanations of his informants. Two points are worthy of note: first, the powerful ingredient in Raudot's description appears to be the medicine powder,

rather than the medicine bag or the miigis shell. This would seem to place Raudot's version closer to the method in which powder is applied in other Ojibwa medicine ceremonies. Secondly, Raudot appears to have combined the "shooting" ritual which was limited to participation by the *Mides* and the patient or candidate, with a later "duelling" ritual in which all members of the *Midewiwin* society demonstrated the power of their medicine bags to kill and cure.

Like most Euro-American observers, Raudot believed all the participants to be charlatans who were attempting to deceive their fellow Saulteurs, so he may have simply been emphasizing those aspects which appeared to support this interpretation. While the description regarding participants is unclear, it is likely that the only observers would have been members of the sick person's family and perhaps close clan members, since the ceremony (as Raudot indicates) took place in the sick person's lodge rather than in a large, specially constructed *Midewiwin* lodge. The "speech" by the recovered person following the rituals would have been quite unusual. While the Ojibwa had theories regarding life after death, unlike Christians, their beliefs and the *Midewiwin* ceremonies were primarily concerned with life in this world. Normally speeches in communal *Midewiwin* ceremonies were made by a *Mide* official early in the ceremony. He would explain how Nanabozho had given the *Midewiwin* to the Ojibwa people so that they might learn how to overcome the obstacles that faced them, and live a long and productive life. Since medicine ceremonies for individuals were often held for people who were expected to die (and thus were intended to help the survivors and the ill person make the transition into the next world) speeches might well be made, but they would

have more closely resembled Euro-American funeral elegies, within the context of *Midewiwin* beliefs and practices.⁷ Thus, it would appear that Raudot either confused the two ceremonies and combined portions of both into one, and/or added elements to serve his own purposes.

Certainly, by the time of Duncan Cameron's and Peter Grant's 1804 accounts (Masson [1889-90] 1960:261-2;361), the emphasis was on the communal ceremony with various degrees of membership. In this form of the *Midewiwin*, both the victory over death symbolized by the "shooting" ceremony, and the passing on of knowledge of the healing properties of plants, continued to play a central part in the ceremonies described by Euro-Americans.

This initial description of the *Midewiwin* (as yet unnamed) by Raudot was written during a period which some writers have designated as a "golden age" for the Ojibwa. Iroquois forces had been repulsed at *Bowating* (Sault Ste. Marie) and the Ojibwa and their allies had signed a treaty with the Iroquois in 1703. Groups of Ojibwa and/or Ottawa began to re-occupy Manitoulin Island, as well as the Saginaw area around Detroit, and parts of southern Ontario. Previously a number of bands had returned to the region southwest of the Great Lakes following an alliance with the Sioux in the mid-1680s which granted them access. While the Ojibwa had lost some of their numbers to the wars, and many more to diseases and alcohol brought by the French, it must have appeared to them that the power of their spiritual leaders was indeed strong, and that *bimaadiziwin* or a long life which they sought, could still be obtained by those who

followed the precepts and obtained the powers granted them through the rituals of the *Midewiwin*.

Challenges to the Ojibwa way of Life

Such, of course, was not to be the case. In the following years, the world of the Ojibwa was to undergo a number of dramatic changes which would challenge their cosmological beliefs and practices, as they struggled to survive as individuals and as a people. Hostilities again broke out with their Algonquian neighbours, the Fox (Mesquakie), who were disrupting the lucrative French trade with the Sioux. The brutal war eventually ended, with French assistance, in the virtual destruction of the Fox as a separate people some thirty years later in 1740. There is fleeting reference, in written documents, to the fact that the Fox and their immediate allies, the Mascouten, along with the Sauk and Miami, two other allied Algonquian groups, also practised the *Midewiwin*.⁸

Before the end of this struggle, the truce with the Sioux was broken in the 1730s and hostilities resumed. Angered by the opening of the French-Cree trade in the Boundary Waters area, the Sioux murdered a son of Pierre La Vérendrye and a number of colleagues at Fort St. Charles on Lake of the Woods. In response, northern bands of Ojibwa joined the Cree, and began to move against northern Sioux communities such as Red Lake, from villages on the northern shore of Lake Superior, from Rainy Lake, and from the Lake of the Woods region. While there is still disagreement among academics, it seems likely that the Monsoni and Muskego were, in fact, Ojibwa groups allied with the Cree. In addition, other bands of Ojibwa had begun to spread out from the

Chequamegon region to the Fond du Lac region. Following the St. Louis river, they attacked the Sioux in their villages in the Mille Lacs region, and they began to hunt and trap in the lands drained by the St. Croix river which the Sioux claimed as their own. Since the struggle was to last well into the nineteenth century, it serves as an important backdrop for any study of the *Midewiwin*. Even though there are few surviving documents related to the *Midewiwin* during the eighteenth century, nineteenth century migration scrolls provide a record of how the Ojibwa remembered these years in which they had gradually pushed the numerically superior Sioux westward.

Although hostilities with the Sioux played a central role in the life of many Ojibwa who lived around Lake Superior and the Boundary Waters, they were but one of the events that affected this widely dispersed people. Other more easterly groups of Ojibwa in the Michigan peninsula became involved in the colonial wars of the French and English in the 1750s. Charles Langlade, a Métis trader from Michilimackinac, led contingents of Ottawa, Ojibwa, Pottawatomi, and Menominee into battle against English positions in regions ranging from the Ohio Valley to Upper State New York. It was in a losing cause, however, as the English triumphed in the end, and English traders and officials began to replace some of the French, who had lived among and intermarried with the Ojibwa for generations. The *mekatewikwanaie* (black robes) or French priests who had lived among the Indians in the region, also left at this time. Although they had not been particularly successful in their efforts at converting many Indians to their worldview, some of their beliefs seem to have made an impression. Kurath (1959) in an article entitled "Blackrobe and Shaman" believes that the fact that most of the priests were fluent

in native languages contributed to their success (limited though it was), and accounts for the fact that even after their departure, many of their ideas continued to form part of the Anishinaabe world view.

It was under these trying circumstances that in 1762 a Delaware Indian named Neolin from the village of Tuscarawas⁹ had a vision wherein he journeyed to the spirit world and met the Master of Life who commanded him to exhort his people to cease the use of English goods, drunkenness, wars, polygamy and medicine songs. Word of his vision spread beyond the Delaware proper to other Algonquian groups. While few Ojibwa actually took up his message directly, many of them were alienated by the state of cultural disruption that existed, and began actively to search for new approaches to the path of life.

Thus, when shortly after, an Ottawa war chief named Pontiac began to rally a multitude of Algonquian and Iroquois tribes against the English, large numbers of Ojibwa joined his forces. Despite Pontiac's eventual defeat, most of the Indians in the regions of the Great Lakes, the Ohio Valley and Upper State New York continued to resist intrusions by Euro-American colonists onto their lands.¹⁰ During the American War of Independence, many of them fought as allies with the English against the revolutionists. In the period after the war, the influence of the Iroquois Confederacy declined, and the locus of power shifted to a western confederacy of Algonquian tribes who attempted to forestall the advance of Euro-Americans into their territories. The majority of Ojibwa were not directly involved, but it would have been clear that their lands too would soon be threatened.

Once again, in the early years of the nineteenth century, the Indians in the region around the Great Lakes rallied around religious and political leaders in an attempt to stem the tide of American expansion. On this occasion, it was two Shawnee half-brothers who provided the leadership.¹¹ One of them, Tecumseh, was a chief who demonstrated great skill as a political and military leader, inflicting a series of defeats upon the American forces. His half-brother, Lalawethika, spent much of his life as an alcoholic. However, after experiencing a series of revelations, he gave up his old ways and adopted the new name of Tenskwatawa, meaning "Open Door," although he became popularly known to Euro-Americans as the Shawnee Prophet. Tenskwatawa's message called upon all Indians to give up not only alcohol and Euro-American material culture, but also their traditional dances and medicine bundles. At first he was successful in attracting large numbers of Algonquians to his new beliefs, including many of the Ojibwa among whom Nicollet was to live.¹² However, when Tenskwatawa attempted military actions against American forces, he was defeated, and gradually his followers began to drift away.

Meanwhile, the War of 1812-1814 between Britain and the United States erupted and Tecumseh, along with many followers, took up the cause as allies of the British. The Ojibwa, however, found themselves divided, as most of the northeastern bands supported the British, while the more westerly bands remained neutral or supported the Americans. The more westerly bands were more concerned about their struggles with the Sioux than the battles of the Euro-Americans, while those to the east were already beginning to face the influx of American settlers, and believed them to be the more important enemy. When the war ended, the Indian allies of the British had no reason to feel that they had

"lost" the struggle, but they soon found themselves abandoned by their British allies, and powerless to stop the American juggernaut of soldiers and settlers which was slowly pushing westward. In both Upper Canada, where the British Indian Department became involved in establishing reserves where Indians could be "civilized," and the United States, where the movement to remove all Indians to lands west of the Mississippi was beginning to be implemented, colonial agencies and missionary groups made vigorous efforts to radically change the life style of the Ojibwa and other Indian peoples so that they could be assimilated.

Meanwhile, the struggle between the Ojibwa and the Sioux continued unabated despite the efforts of American authorities to broker a peace settlement. Small bands of Ojibwa continued to engage the numerically superior Sioux in a series of skirmishes. While they frequently were the victors, life on the "frontier" between the two Indian nations was particularly precarious since they had to be constantly on guard against a possible attack, while at the same time attempting to trap furs and feed themselves during a period of ever-decreasing resources.¹³

Nineteenth Century Euro-American Accounts of the Midewiwin

It was, therefore, an unsettling time for the Ojibwa who lived along the shores and to the southwest of Lake Superior. They must have felt that their world was getting "out of control." In such a case they would have been most anxious to secure the protection of manitous who would give them the power to once again attain their goal of the "good life." These concerns are clearly evident in a speech made by Flat Mouth

(Eshkebagecoshe), the Head chief of the Pillager band of Ojibwa, and Mide leader, to the French geographer, Joseph Nicollet on the occasion of the latter's visit in the 1830s. In it Flat Mouth gave vent to his feelings that his people were losing control of how they lived:

We are endlessly told to bury the war hatchet, and if we dig it up we are threatened with rods and ropes, or with being placed under the ground, we the *Missinabes*,¹⁴ the Eagles, the Bears [totems], free in our own forests. . . Thus the Americans plan to treat us as they treat their black people. . . I am not an animal. I am not like those in the East whom they call their children and whom they treat like three or six-year-olds, rod in their hand. They purchased their lands, and now they hold them prisoner and treat them as slaves (Nicollet 1970:114).

Certainly, by the time that Nicollet was to live among them in the 1830s, the Pillagers and neighbouring bands of Ojibwa felt threatened by an array of circumstances. Nevertheless, they were a resourceful people who in the past had proven their ability to balance their military and negotiating skills.¹⁵ The 1825 Treaty of Prairie du Chien, while not putting an end to hostilities with the Sioux, did recognize the Ojibwa claim to large sections of territory that had been occupied by the Sioux. Although many of the Ojibwa were suspicious of the American promises, they had eventually agreed to sign the treaty. While the American presence was thus recognized, the Ojibwa had not yet given up hope that they, too, could be resisted. Since it appeared that few human allies would come to their aid (though Flat Mouth did try to get Nicollet to serve as an intermediary to the French,) their main hope must have been in obtaining "blessings" from powerful manitous which would give them the power to persevere against their enemies. The *Midewiwin* and its component parts continued to be the principal means by which such

power was secured. While the *Midewiwin* was primarily concerned with helping individuals achieve *bimaadiziwin*, the Ojibwa also used it as a means of helping to strengthen their collective health as a people. Nicollet, for instance, noted Flat Mouth's invitation to *Mide* members to a special sweat lodge ceremony before he embarked on a journey to obtain ammunition from the British trading posts for use in their on-going struggle with the Sioux.

The prime purpose of Nicollet's American travels in the 1830s had been to search for the source of the Mississippi River, and later to carry out cartographic surveys for the American government. These brought him into the middle of the territory contested by the Ojibwa and Sioux--and gave him the opportunity to live among them for a number of years.

Educated by the Jesuits in mathematics, and a devout Catholic, Nicollet was at first glance an unlikely individual to take an interest in Ojibwa religious ceremonies. Nevertheless, he appears to have been able to suspend his intellectual preoccupations, and enter into the life of the Ojibwa with more ease than most Euro-Americans. Martha Bray, the editor of Nicollet's works, has suggested that Nicollet's acceptance by the Ojibwa was because they recognized that he was sincere, and that perhaps they saw in him a possible messenger to their old ally, the French king (Nicollet 1970:21). However, neither of these explanations is likely. The local missionary William Boutwell, in a letter to the ABCFM secretary, described how Nicollet had reported some hostile remarks made by a group of Ojibwa about Major Taliafero, the Indian Agent. Taliafero confronted Flat Mouth the next time he visited, and refused to give him ammunition as a result of the

remarks. The Ojibwa were furious with the missionaries whom they believed at first to have spread the rumour.¹⁶ Such an incident cannot but have weakened Nicollet's relations with Flat Mouth, although he did maintain close personal relations with other Ojibwa individuals.

Nicollet stayed for a period with William Boutwell at Leech Lake where he met Flat Mouth. He also encountered Matchi Gabow (sometimes called Stirring Man or Great Speaker) who served as Flat Mouth's attendant or *oshkaabewis*, who was responsible for calling together the Pillagers for civil and religious functions, and who often acted as a spokesman in their dealings with Euro-Americans.¹⁷

It appears it was also during this time that he began his friendship with Chagobay (Shagobai), one of the members of Flat Mouth's band. Chagobay was to serve as his main informant on the *Midewiwin*. It was quite unusual for Euro-Americans to be taken into such confidence regarding the *Midewiwin* ceremony since such knowledge was available only to members and candidates awaiting initiation. The appearance of missionaries such as Boutwell was greeted by the majority of Pillagers and other bands with considerable hostility. ABCFM reports are full of incidents wherein members of the *Midewiwin* forced "praying Indians" to join in the ceremonies, trampled crops, and killed their cattle.¹⁸ It is not surprising therefore, that Nicollet noted that Chagobay had to undergo a special ceremony to be relieved of his breach of trust (Nicollet 1970:19). The incident was no doubt much more serious than Nicollet implied, although Chagobay's discipline could have been more severe.¹⁹

Nicollet's notes on the customs of the Ojibwa carry the mark of his scientific training, particularly with regard to his attention to detail, and his concern regarding the accuracy of his terminology. While he was not a trained linguist, and while his transliterations were sometimes idiosyncratic, he was, nevertheless, among the first Euro-Americans to attempt to use Ojibwa terms, rather than English or French ones when describing Ojibwa culture and religion.²⁰ With the exception of a few brief accounts such as those by the Nor'wester, Peter Grant in 1804, and the brief description and songs in John Tanner's captivity narrative, which were first published in 1830, Nicollet's extended study was the first in-depth description of the *Midewiwin* by a European since Raudot's description of the *Midewiwin* in the early eighteenth century.²¹

Although Nicollet had intended to publish the results of his scientific and ethnological research, he unfortunately died before he was able to prepare his papers for publication. The unedited ethnological portions were later published by his American counterpart Henry R. Schoolcraft as part of the latter's massive work on American Indians--with no indication as to who was the original author.²² It was only in 1970 that Nicollet's original manuscripts were edited and published under his own name. As a result, none of the early ethnologists who wrote on the *Midewiwin* refer to Nicollet or his work. This is unfortunate, since the approaches of the two men were very different, both in their methodology and their empathy with their subject.

The *Midewiwin* ceremonies described by Nicollet took place over a period from ten to fourteen days.²³ While he does not make any claims to having attended all of the ceremonies, Shagobai, his Ojibwa informant, was usually able to place the rituals within

their proper context for him.²⁴ Thus, for the first time, we have a document which describes the initiation rituals which new candidates underwent before becoming members of the *Midewiwin*. Nicollet's description allows us to identify a number of distinct elements which can then be compared with subsequent accounts in order to determine the extent to which the ceremony changed over time and from place to place.

Before an initiation ceremony could be held, the prospective member had to be sponsored by a relative or friend who had had a dream or vision indicating that "the person was not well, that something was opposing his or her existence" (Nicollet 1970:199).²⁵ The proposed candidate (or his surrogate in the case of the very young or very ill) then prepared a feast and invited four *Mide* officials, stating his wish to become a member.²⁶ The following three days were taken up by sweat lodge ceremonies which were attended by a further four *Mides*. If the individual was accepted by the *Mides* as a candidate, a date was chosen several months hence for the ceremony proper (if the person's condition was not too serious), thus giving time for the individual to begin his or her instructions.

Nicollet was the first person to take account of these sweat lodge ceremonies (*madodiswon/madoodiswan*) which played an important part in a number of Ojibwa "medicine" ceremonies. He described the construction of the lodge, the laying out of branches which serve as seats, the bringing of the hot stones which are sprinkled with water. Nicollet was also aware of the religious significance of the ceremony, noting that the celebrants smoked, sang and prayed each time they participated in it. And each sweat

lodge was held in conjunction with a feast which was hosted by the person who had called for the *madodiswon*.²⁷

The second stage of the person's induction into the *Midewiwin* usually began in the spring when the Ojibwa were gathered in large groups to fish and make maple sugar, following their dispersal into small groups during winter to hunt for game. At this time of the year ceremonies such as the *Midewiwin*, *Waabanowiwin*,²⁸ and *Jiisakaan* were held. These "religious" ceremonies were held in conjunction with other ceremonies, dances and games. While serving quite different functions from a Euro-American perspective, all of these activities were intimately connected in Ojibwa society. All of them had a "religious" aspect in that they were concerned with improving the chances of achieving *bimaadiziwin*. All had developed originally from a vision or dream, in which a powerful manitou had promised assistance to those who followed the proper ways. Moreover, all these activities provided a social outlet through which the Ojibwa could renew old ties and forge new ones, and they offered various means of redistributing goods, so that the strong and the skilled would not have a unfair share of the goods required for survival. The major way in which the *Midewiwin* differed from other celebrations was that it had become a "society within a society." While some of its activities were open to anyone, many others were open only to those Ojibwa (or other tribes) who were members of the *Midewiwin*.

During the next stage, the prospective candidate for the *Midewiwin* built a new sweat lodge, and using invitation sticks, invited eight *Mide* elders who would officiate at the ceremony, to share in the sweat lodge rituals. Two individuals were designated to be

responsible for conducting the ceremonies, but Nicollet doesn't provide us with any clue as to how they were chosen.²⁹ During the next three days, private ceremonies and ritual duties were performed in the individuals' lodges, while each night men, women and children went from lodge to lodge, singing and dancing, and being giving food to eat. On the fourth night, the candidate or candidates met with the *Mides* again, in order to show the goods which were to be "paid" to the officials³⁰ and to rehearse the initiation ceremonies which took place the following day. Meanwhile the *Midewigam* (*Midewigaan*) or *Mide* lodge was being constructed by *mizhinaweg* according to prescribed requirements. Although Nicollet did not give a specific description of the *Midewigam*, he did indicate that it was a large rectangular structure with two entrances facing east and west. Nicollet noted that inside were two fires and a painted post called a *Midewatig*, both of whose significance he missed, but which later observers have explained.

The next stage in the ceremonies was what is usually termed the initiation or "shooting" rituals. Nicollet described these in some detail, noting that while they varied considerably "among nations," this did not alter the basic principle of the celebration. While he did not state that this part of the ceremonies was open, it would appear from his description that at least other members of the *Midewiwin* were present besides the presiding *Mides*. During this part of the ceremonies the candidate brought his gifts of goods and food into the *Mide* lodge suspended on a pole, entering through the east entrance and making two revolutions around the interior of the lodge. Then the candidate and the eight *Mides* declared "*Kanagakana*" and the audience answered "*Na*."³¹ Nicollet

then described several songs which were sung by the *Mide* which spoke of the power of their medicine bags, which he termed *pinjigoosan*³² made of the skin of a bear, and which contained the *miigis* shell that could cause or cure illness.³³ Nicollet continued:

The candidate kneels down on a spread-out blanket. The eight [*Mides*] rotate around the lodge passing south and saying "*Nikanug, nikanug*--My colleagues, my colleagues,"³⁴ hailing with their hands until they settle on the west side. Then they turn around and face the candidate. From this point, the eight start a series of eight revolutions around the lodge passing south, west, etc. They follow each other in line, but the revolutions are performed especially to demonstrate the power of the medicine to kill through testing it on the candidate. The leader, as he starts the first round, holds his medicine bag like a rifle, marches forward threatening the candidate with a shot he is about to fire with the bag shouting, "*Hohohoho! hohohoho--hoho! hoho! ho!*"³⁵ The candidate trembles, but he is only wounded by this blow. Whereupon the faculty [*Mides*] move to the north end, at its appointed place, and the candidate sits down before the faculty. . .

Looking south and vis-à-vis the faculty are singers with the drum *mittigwakik*, and the *shishigwan* for accompaniment, and a little mallet for beating the drum called *pagakookwan*.³⁶ One of the eight delivers an oration on the power of the manitous, their power to heal or to weaken, power passed down to the *Mide* after having been transmitted from generation to generation. . . (Nicollet 1970:203-204).

Nicollet went on to describe how the *Mides* continued to take turns in leading the rounds in which they "shot" the candidate with their medicine bags.³⁷ Each time he was wounded, but when it came the turn of the eighth and final *Mide*, the candidate was killed.

The one who is to kill the candidate makes an oration before starting the eighth round: "Here is a medicine bag handed down to me from my grandfather by my father. My father said unto me that I could never miss my mark when using it. But I am old, my colleagues, help me that I may find the strength to blow, to fire upon this man over there on his knees! There is a red mark upon his heart. I shall strike there and my medicine bag shall not fail me. And he begins to threaten, "*Hohohoho! Hohohoho!*" He moves gradually toward the candidate, followed by the other seven

members. As soon as he is within reach, he fires saying, "*Ho!*" and the candidate falls dead. . .

Now has come the time to prove by the candidate, that if the medicine has the power to weaken and kill, it can also heal and resuscitate. When the candidate collapses, a frenzy seizes the assembly and the people. The singers move over to the pole and dance around it playing the *shishigwanun* and the drum. Every assistant of the *Mide* rises to beat the rhythm, and the members of the faculty [*Mides*] stand around the dead one covering his body with their medicine bags. A few moments later, they try to lift his body carefully, hoisting it on its feet, punctuating its gradual return to life with shouts, "*Ya-ha! Ya-ha!*" The candidate is now up on his feet--revived! So they give him some medicine to drink and there he stands, in perfect health. He is now initiated. He has the power of medicine, a fact the remainder of the ceremony is about to prove. (Nicollet 1970:204-205)

Nicollet then described how the new member received his own medicine bag.

Having thanked the *Mides* for having taken pity on him, the new member took from the bag a *miigis* shell which he swallowed. He was seized by convulsions, but using his new power, and aided by the *Mides*, he overcame the convulsions and restored the *miigis* to his bag. Then, he was ready to share in a feast with the eight *Mide*, consuming eight spoonfuls of "the food of the *Mide*." Following this the candidate distributed his presents to each of the *Mide*, thanking them again for having had pity on him. Then it was time for him to demonstrate his newly acquired power by "shooting" in turn each of the *Mide* officials and the singers who assisted in his initiation. As he was shot each *Mide* collapsed, but recovered instantly, thus proving the power of the new member and their own power to recover.

When all of the *Mide* officials had been "shot" and recovered, there was what Nicollet described as a grand finale wherein everyone became involved:

Inside the lodge, the whole assembly is in a turmoil. The faculty members have kept the instruments and go on singing. In the course of this commotion or frenzy, the medical body is splintered into groups, each group being characterized by a certain type of medicine bag. To accomplish this, some began by going around the lodge depositing their bags in a certain place on the ground. . . Then each member stands beside the pile containing his bag, and the sections are now formed. . . The object of this dividing into sections in the course of the melee is to demonstrate that the various kinds of medicine all have the power. They now prove it by blowing each other out in a long-lasting and most entertaining squabble. (Nicollet 1970:207)

This portion of the ceremony was followed, in turn, by a banquet, which brought the public portion of the ceremony to an end. The following day the new member prepared a sweat lodge and invited the eight presiding *Mides*. Originally this last part of the ceremony lasted eight days, but could be reduced to four if two sweat lodge ceremonies were held daily. During this time the *Mides* chose a number of medicines and explained their properties to the new member so that he could add them to his bag. "Finally, the novice offers a banquet that will mark the close of his medicine bag." With this act, the *Midewiwin* ceremonies came to an end.

Nicollet's description is a vast improvement over any previous efforts by Euro-Americans, and of many that were to follow. It was much more informative than his American contemporary Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's writings on the subject, and much more complete than the writings of his fellow traveller from Europe, the German geographer, Johann Georg Kohl. Not only did it explain the sweat lodge ceremonies and the feast in context, but it also gave the first complete description of the "shooting ritual" and the role of the *miigis* shell, which together were central to the *Midewiwin* ceremonies.

It is, of course, not only possible, but probable that Nicollet's document described a more fully developed ceremony than did Raudot's. If Raudot's document described what was basically an individual curing ceremony, then Nicollet's described a more communal ceremony in which individual "patients" were initiated into a society. There was also an element of an annual renewal ceremony since the ceremony was held in the spring of the year. Members of the *Midewiwin* gathered each spring to initiate new members and renew their own powers by which they were able to attain *bimaadiziwin*.³⁸ To what extent these changes occurred in the period following Raudot's publication is difficult to say for certain since the accuracy of Raudot's description is questionable. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that what was happening was a gradual development of the *Midewiwin* into its present form during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Despite being a great improvement over previous descriptions of the *Midewiwin*, Nicollet's description is by no means without faults. While he described all the basic ceremonies, his descriptions practically ignored the central role played in them by music and dance. Although he occasionally attempted to translate a phrase or two of songs used in the initiation rite, Nicollet appeared to have no understanding of their integral importance to the ceremonies as a whole. Similarly, while he noted the importance of tobacco to the Ojibwa, he believed it to be merely a secular habit, failing to understand its spiritual significance as a link with the manitous. Curiously, since he devoted a fair amount of his observations to Ojibwa "picture writing," he made no mention of any type of *Mide* scrolls or charts, although as will be seen, these also played an important role in *Midewiwin* ceremonies. It may be that his particular informants kept this aspect from him

since they were both secret and powerful medicine. However, this is unlikely since many of these scrolls did become common knowledge to many Euro-Americans just a few years later. A similar lacuna is his total lack of reference to the content of the information that was passed on to the candidates. Nicollet made no attempt to record anything of the speeches that were made on various occasions by *Mide* officials. His account contains nothing regarding the origin tales, or about the larger context of how the *Midewiwin* fitted into Ojibwa life.

Nicollet, in keeping with his scientific profession, was best at describing those aspects of the *Midewiwin* which were subject to direct observation and precise description. However, along with his romantic characterization of Indians as "noble savages," Nicollet shared the common Euro-American belief that Indians were incapable of complex intellectual thought. In another fragment of his notes, he makes the casual comment that "like other native nations they have no notion of a creator, no religion, no notion of immortality" (Nicollet 1970: 255). While Nicollet was probably referring to the fact that Ojibwa beliefs were quite different from the Christian ones to which he subscribed, it could be argued that such beliefs ultimately prevented him from even considering that the Ojibwa might have a totally different way of viewing the world--and that the *Midewiwin* ceremonies that he had so laboriously described were predicated on this world view.

Nicollet's American contemporary, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, was to spend much of his prodigious energy on the major area that Nicollet had neglected-- attempting to discover how and what Indians thought. Born in New England in 1793, Schoolcraft

obtained only a rudimentary education before apprenticing in his father's glassmaking factory, while he continued his own self-education. In 1818 he set out to achieve fame and fortune on the American frontier as a member of a number of exploring expeditions. It was while on these that he came to the attention of Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan, whose influence enabled Schoolcraft to obtain positions as Indian Agent at Sault Ste. Marie, and later at Mackinac.

While still mainly interested in work as a mineralogist, Schoolcraft used his position as Indian agent to begin collecting massive amounts of data on all aspects of Indian culture and life, from Indians with whom he came in contact and interviewed, and from other individuals who had lived with and written about Indians. In doing this, Schoolcraft was following his scientific inclinations, and the example of his mentor, Lewis Cass, who had developed a questionnaire regarding Indians which was distributed to everyone working amongst them. However, Schoolcraft went far beyond answering Cass's elaborate questionnaire.

In 1823 he had married Jane Johnson, the daughter of John Johnson, an Irish trader active in the Great Lakes fur trade, and Oshaw-guscoday-wayqua (Green Prairie Woman), who was herself the daughter of Waubojeeg (White Fisher), an Ojibwa *ogimaa* (leader) from the Chequamegon region. Both Jane and her brother George were brought up speaking Ojibwe, and participated in Ojibwa ceremonies in their youth, although they were later educated in Christian Euro-American schools. Both assisted Schoolcraft extensively in his studies of Ojibwa culture and language.

Upon Cass's request, Schoolcraft took the opportunity afforded by his position and connections with the Johnson family, to teach himself Ojibwe, compiling a vocabulary, declension tables of Ojibwe verbs, and the beginnings of an Ojibwe grammar. At first he felt that this would be an easy task since he considered it to be a simple language, corresponding to the Ojibwas' stage of development. However, Schoolcraft lacked a solid basis in classical European languages and philology, so that he found the task much more daunting than he had anticipated, even with the assistance of George and Jane Johnston. While he publicly boasted of his fluency in Ojibwe, and while many people of his day believed him to be fluent, Schoolcraft never did finish his projected works on the Ojibwa language, although he continued to believe that the study of Indian languages would reveal how the "Indian mind" worked.

Gradually, his interests shifted from strictly philological studies to the study of how language affected the "mind" of the Ojibwa and other Indians. In his introduction to Algic Researches (1839:585) Schoolcraft explained why he had begun to collect and publish the oral narratives of various Indian tribes: "It was found necessary to examine the mythology of the tribes as a means of acquiring an insight into their mode of thinking and reasoning, the sources of their fears and hopes, and the probable origin of their opinions and institutions. . . ."

As a result of the new focus of his studies, (and probably as a result of his own conversion to Presbyterianism in 1831), Schoolcraft began to stress that, "the most powerful source of influence, with the Red Man, is his religion" (Schoolcraft 1848:66). Schoolcraft argued that Indian religion had never been comprehended by Euro-

Americans, their ways and actions had long been misunderstood, while they, in turn, had never been able to understand why Euro-Americans thought and acted as they did. He believed that his position as Indian agent and his family connections gave him a unique opportunity to provide a true picture of Indian culture to the Euro-American public. Both Cass and Schoolcraft were anxious to provide an antidote to the English literary establishment of the Eastern United States who had created an image of blood-thirsty "savages."

It was this image that Schoolcraft set out to counteract, with a "true" one based on firsthand knowledge. Schoolcraft claimed that the two reasons why Indians had continued in their state of "barbarism" despite their interaction with Euro-Americans was due to their false religion and false ideas of government (Schoolcraft 1848:67-8; 1851-57 v.1:412). If they could be persuaded to give up these ideas, they would quickly become assimilated into American society. However, it should be noted that in some of his writings, he also argued that Indians thought and acted as they did as a result of their environment. The ideals of savage life were based upon the "hunt and warfare," and therefore could not be judged by civilized standards (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.1:xiv). While at first glance this would seem to contradict his belief that religion was the main factor, they are closely tied together since according to Schoolcraft, their religion had grown out of their life style.

The most complete, although by no means systematic, discussion of the *Midewiwin* by Schoolcraft occurs in his chapter on "The intellectual Capacity and Character of the Indian Race" in which he attempted to explain the nature of the three

major religious ceremonies: the *Medawin (Midewiwin)*, the *Jeesukawin (Jaasakawin)*, and the *Wabeno (Waabanowiwin)* (Schoolcraft 1851-1857 v.1:259).³⁹ Although he never provided a clear explanation of who his sources for this information were, it appears that they were Catherine Wambose, Chuzco, the individuals that were mentioned as Schoolcraft's informants in Chapter One, plus Shawunipennais and Shingwaukonse. Schoolcraft claimed that all four were members of the *Midewiwin*, but the first three were already Christian converts when they spoke to him. Shawunipennais or South-bird as Schoolcraft translates it, was a Baptist convert who provided Schoolcraft with some of his information regarding pictographic writings, and words to the songs which were sung to accompany them. Shingwaukonse or Chingwauk as Schoolcraft called him, was a prominent Ojibwa political and *Mide* leader who may have still been active in the *Midewiwin* when he met with Schoolcraft since Shingwaukonse only converted shortly before his death. It was this same Shingwaukonse whose sacred scrolls Johann Kohl was later to try unsuccessfully to view since they had been destroyed at the time of Shingwaukonse's death. Chute (1985) argues that Shingwaukonse was a *Mide* and a *Waabano* as well as a war chief of a band of Ojibwa who originally lived in what is now northern Michigan near Sault Ste. Marie. It is almost certain that his father was not aboriginal, although he was brought up by his mother's people.

Since Schoolcraft was primarily concerned with mental concepts and religious rituals, which supported his own preconceptions, his description of the ceremonies left much to be desired. Most of his work concerned the role of the *Mides*, and their use of picture writings, rather than the ceremonies themselves. Unfortunately, he did so with his

intended audience in mind, so that he fitted his descriptions within a structure which would be understood by his audience, rather than one which reflected the Ojibwa world view which he claimed to portray. Nevertheless, the certainty with which he expounded his opinions, and the dramatic tenor of his writings, led others to give them more authenticity than they deserved.

Schoolcraft set out first to explain the distinction between the "*meda* priests who gather together in societies, [and] the '*muske-ke-win-in-ee*' [*mashkikiwini*] or [Ojibwa] physician." According to him both made use of certain animals and plants to gain power, but the former were primarily interested in supplicating spirits, rather than in teaching the art of healing. He argued that since there was no physical application of the mineral and animal matter in their medicine bags, and their power to perform happened at a distance or in secret, they were not "medicine men" as they were sometimes termed, but more properly "necromancers, or medical magii or magicians" (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.6:366). By this he implied that they relied on magic, rather than on any "natural" properties of their medicines. Furthermore, he noted, they were called upon to use magic to heal the sick only when the *mashkikiwini* had failed, indicating, he implied, that the Ojibwa who employed them had turned to supernatural means. This desire to probe the future and influence it through the use of demons (ie. vicious spirits) is almost as old as mankind, he continued. Even during the best phases of human history societies have been "fettered with witchcraft, sorcery and magic;" thus, Schoolcraft suggested, it is not surprising that we should find these practices among Indians.

"We must call this class of men [the *Mides*] a priesthood," he insisted, since "they profess to administer holy or mysterious things--things that pass the ordinary comprehension of their listeners" (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.4:640). Their power, whether for good or evil, was not merely human, but "spiritual," in that it was the result of a spirit, or manitou. The Indians believed, Schoolcraft continued, that these priests had powers to foretell events, cure or inflict diseases, and influence life and death, and thus all other Indians lived in hope and fear of the priests. Schoolcraft would appear to be the first person to apply the term "priest" to *Mide* officials, although he gave the term a different connotation than most writers. On the one hand, he appears to have wanted to give them greater status than previous writers who had often dismissed them. However, he obviously wanted to picture them as dangerous adversaries who used the superstitions of ordinary Ojibwa in order to exercise power over them, and maintain the status quo.

Schoolcraft provided only a sketchy description of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies despite the fact that he boasted he had observed them personally, and indeed claimed to have been initiated into the society itself in 1823 (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.1:861; v.5:71). Given the fact that *Midewiwin* members showed an extreme reluctance to allow Euro-Americans even to observe their ceremonies at this point in time, most commentators have totally rejected Schoolcraft's claims, although Walter J. Hoffman's claim later in the century has been never contested. Janet Chute (1986:110,248), in her dissertation, discovered that Little Pine (Shingwaukonse) and several others did demonstrate a truncated form of a *Midewiwin* ceremony in Schoolcraft's office.

However, while he briefly mentioned the occasion, Schoolcraft appears to have kept no notes of what he observed during the visit. Since Schoolcraft was aware of the complicated requirements which governed the acceptance of initiates, and since he knew how reluctant members of the society were to share anything with non-members, his own statement regarding his initiation may well be a typical case of bravado to impress his readers as to the extent to which he had been accepted by the Ojibwa.

In his description of the *Midewiwin*, Schoolcraft dealt with the ceremonies in a peremptory manner since his main motive was to demonstrate the general principles of the society, in order to illustrate how the *Mides* exercised their power. According to him "the object [of the *Midewiwin*] is to teach the higher doctrines of spiritual existence, their nature and mode of existence, and the influence they exercise among men. It is an association of men who profess the highest knowledge known to the tribes" (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.5:420).

Schoolcraft declared that admissions to the *Midewiwin* society were always made in public ceremonies, though he later qualified this by indicating that non-members could only watch (the initiatory rituals) from the outside of the *Mide* lodge. He understood that the consideration of candidates was dependent upon a dream or vision, after which if it "boded good," he was told to begin his preparations, and if these were approved, he was told to prepare a "steam-bath" where Schoolcraft correctly claimed the *Mides* exchanged objects which were said to have magical or medicinal virtue. The candidate was, at this time, also initiated in the arts of healing, hunting, and the power of resisting witchcraft in others. This latter power, Schoolcraft claimed, was known as having "the power of

throwing, or resisting the power to throw, bad medicine." Schoolcraft appears to have confused the purpose of the initial sweat lodge rituals with those at the end of the *Midewiwin* ceremony. He also appears to have confused the "public" initiation rites of the person who was applying for membership with the more private curing ceremony which was performed for members of the society who were ill. While it is true that the two could be incorporated together, it is highly unlikely that the type of ill person mentioned by Schoolcraft would have been well enough to have undergone the lengthy initial period of instructions that he had previously outlined.

Schoolcraft described an elongated *Mide* lodge which was specially constructed by assistants of the *Midewiwin* society from newly cut poles and foliage in an open space. He noted that there was no roof on the lodge so that the heavens could be seen, since, as he correctly observed, fair weather was taken as a good sign for the future. When the work was complete:

the "master of ceremonies . . . proceeds to it, taking his drum, rattles, and other instruments of this art. He is met by other members of the *meda* who have been invited to be present and participate in the rites. Having gone through some of the preliminary ceremonies, and chanted some of the songs, the patient is introduced. If too weak to walk, the individual is carried in on a bed or pallet, and laid down in the designated position. The exactness and order which attend every movement, is one of its peculiarities (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.1:360).

Just when one would expect Schoolcraft to describe the initiation rituals in detail, he went off on another track and thus never did describe the "shooting" ritual which most other observers judged to be central to the *Midewiwin* ceremonies. This is particularly curious, since Schoolcraft had just previously explained that the *Mide* lodge was built

specifically "to exhibit the power of the operator, or officiating priest, in the curative art" (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.1:360), yet he gave virtually ignored it. Nor did Schoolcraft mention the gifts that were made to the *Mides* during the ceremony, although most other commentators have taken this as a sign of the *Mides'* power.

Instead, Schoolcraft turned his attention to understanding the meaning of the pictography employed in what he termed the "music boards," or *kekenowin* (instructions), which were used during the *Midewiwin* ceremonies.⁴⁰ In fact, his discussion of the *Midewiwin*, *Jiisakaan* and *Waabanowiwin* served mainly as background to understanding these "*kekenowin*," for despite his statements regarding the importance of religion, he appears to have still been mainly interested in the means by which people communicated. According to Schoolcraft, pictographic writing was divided into two types: *kekeewin* which were pictographs which could be read and understood by everyone in the tribe and *kekenowin*. The first type of pictographs were commonly used by travellers to leave messages, as well as on grave markers to provide information about the dead person, and on rock paintings, or as he termed them, *mussinabiks*. The other type of pictographs, *kekenowin*, were the teachings of the priests and prophets called *mides*. These could be read only by those who had learned them after paying the priests for the knowledge. According to Schoolcraft, *kekenowin* were used in a wide variety of circumstances related to the three ceremonies, plus hunting, love, war and the history of the tribe.

Although these may seem at first to be an unlikely combination of circumstances, with the possible exception of tribal history, they all involve instances in which individuals or groups of Ojibwa would be anxious to acquire more power in order to be

able influence events and thus, gain better control of their lives. Although Schoolcraft might have agreed with the basics of such an explanation, since he did understand the role of manitous in Ojibwa society, he, nevertheless, preferred to denote the acquisition and use of extraordinary powers as "magic or prophecy." Like most of his fellow Christians of the time, he believed that any spirits that operated outside the boundaries of Christian theology must be agents of the Christian devil who were engaged in magic--regardless of whether or not the end result was good or evil. The secretive nature of the contents of what Schoolcraft termed the *kekenowin*, and payment of fees for the knowledge, whetted his interest in what appeared to him to be devilish rites which he was determined to expose, not attempt to understand.

Schoolcraft had obtained what he called a song board from one of the participants of the *Midewiwin* "ceremony" who performed for him in his office. According to him, the mnemonic symbols on it were called *Nugamoonun* (*nagamoon*) by the Ojibwa, meaning songs. They reminded the singers of a particular song or chant, the words of which were fixed and not variable, as were the notes to which they were sung. Words had to be learned before one would recognize one of the mnemonic symbols and know what to sing (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.1:261). Thus, while Schoolcraft recognized that the melodies were repeated, he virtually ignored the role played by the melodies, and concentrated on the words themselves.

In doing this, Schoolcraft was probably speaking from the viewpoint of a literate Protestant for whom "the word" was the essential element of religious belief. After all, Christians had argued for centuries over the exact wording and meaning of passages from

the Bible. However, for the Ojibwa, the melody was at least as important as the words. As Frances Densmore, a trained musicologist, was later to explain, *Midewiwin* songs were the expression of religious ideas in which the words were forced to conform with the melody (Densmore 1910, v.1:14-15). Densmore further pointed out that many of the words were archaic forms whose meaning was no longer understood precisely by the singers, along with ejaculations such as *ho, ho, ho*, used at the end of a song. *Mide* singers could readily recognize melodies of *Mide* songs, and translate them onto music boards or song scrolls, which in turn would be clear to other *Mides* who could reproduce the melodies and words which would express the same idea.

Schoolcraft provided his reader with explanations of examples of *Mide* songs which the mnemonic symbols on his song board demonstrated. Unfortunately, the songboard in question is highly suspect as a *Midewiwin* instruction scroll, and as an example of Ojibwa pictography. Subsequent writers such as Walter Hoffman and G. Mallery accused Schoolcraft of adding colours to the pictographs to make them more dramatic and attributing metaphysical concepts to the symbols which could not be substantiated (Hoffman 1891:287-88). Given his overweening ambition, it is indeed possible that Schoolcraft may have added the colours to the illustration, and made the meanings of the mnemonic symbols more elaborate than they really were. It is also possible that his informants, having an idea of what he wanted, "created" one specially for the occasion, thus avoiding breaking the taboos associated with revealing the secrets of the *Midewiwin*. He certainly would not be the last investigator to be told by aboriginal people what he wanted to hear.

Schoolcraft does provide a cursory explanation of each song, sometimes apparently placing them in context of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies, but his main object appears to have been to demonstrate how they illustrated the "strong power of necromancy" of the *Mides*. Although the ceremony was called a "medicine dance" and the *Mide* were often called "medicine men," Schoolcraft argued that the word "*muskeke*" (*mashkiki*) did not appear in the ceremony, and there are few allusions to it. The officials were not "*muskekewininee* or physicians, but *Meda-wininee* or *Medas*. They assemble, [he concluded] not to teach the art of healing, but the art of supplicating spirits" (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.1: 366). It was these *Medas* (*Mides*), plus the *Jossadeeds* (*Jaasakiids*), the *Wabenos* (*Waabanos*), and their counterparts in other tribes, who, Schoolcraft argued, had to be directly attacked. It was this class of people "who rise up in every tribe, with pretence of superior wisdom or skill. It is this class of impostors, who are too lazy to hunt, and too wicked to be usefully industrious, that keep the Indian mind in a turmoil . . . it is this class of men, who are mere demoniac agents of Satan" (Schoolcraft 1851-57 v.4: 637,640). Although it can be argued that Schoolcraft's feelings regarding the Ojibwa religious leaders became more pronounced following his own conversion and active participation as an evangelical Christian layman, it is possible to see the seeds of his later beliefs in his earliest writings.

Given his beliefs, it is not surprising that Schoolcraft made no effort to record any of the "speeches" of the *Mides* in which they explained the gift of the *Midewiwin* to the Ojibwa people. Even though Schoolcraft had been among the first to collect Ojibwa narratives, he failed to place *Mide* origin narratives in relation to the *Midewiwin*

ceremonies themselves. Schoolcraft's goal was simply to attack the superstitions and deceptions of the *Mides*, not to attempt to understand them--no matter how much he might protest that this was his intention. Coupled with his tendency to embroider his findings (whether they were narratives, instruction scrolls, or descriptions of rituals), this has made his work highly suspect to most scholars. Nevertheless, it did not prevent his works from being read and believed by a large number of Euro-Americans during the nineteenth century.

Schoolcraft's ideas concerning Ojibwa religion and the *Midewiwin* were shared by many Euro-Americans, including many of the increasing number of missionaries who were attempting to convert the Ojibwa to Christianity. Many of them, like Father Baraga, seldom bothered to describe Ojibwa religious ideas or practices, deeming them unworthy of their attention. Baraga was a multilingual Catholic priest from Slovenia who established missions among the Ottawa and Ojibwa at Arbre Croche in 1832 and La Pointe in 1837. Although his Ojibwa dictionary and grammar were remarkable achievements, he made few efforts to understand anything about Anishinaabe cosmology since he believed it to be the work of the devil. Others, like the Rev. Boutwell, who lived from 1833-1846 at Leech Lake and the neighbouring mission at Pokegama as a representative of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, recounted only some of the more extreme examples of "charlatanism," such as the one used by Hickerson in his discussion of the *Midewiwin* (Hickerson [1970] 1988:55). Still others, such as the Rev. Peter Jones who was a driving force in the Methodist evangelization of the Ojibwa in southern Ontario, charged that the reason *Mide* leaders opposed Christian

missionaries was because the *Mides* had become wealthy as a result of charging for their work as shamans (Jones 1861:143-145). Jones, and other Ojibwa converts from southern Ontario, resented the amount of goods that individual Ojibwa were willing to pay in order to be initiated into the *Midewiwin*--since they believed that the people were being fooled by impostors, and because such actions conflicted so dramatically with their new Methodist beliefs concerning the virtues of hard work and thrift.

Nevertheless, some missionaries were surprisingly free of the most blatant prejudices, although even their ideas often sound prejudiced to our ears. Among these was E. H. Day, who remembered his life as a Methodist missionary among the Ojibwa at Fond du Lac during the 1840s for a meeting of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society in 1889 (Day 1890:205-232). This places his posting at Fond du Lac just after Nicollet's stay among the Pillagers band at Leech Lake, and just before Kohl's visit to the Ojibwa at La Pointe. Unlike his Protestant predecessors at Fond du Lac, and his Catholic contemporaries who occasionally visited there, Day evidently showed an active interest in the religious character of the Ojibwa at Fond du Lac, whom he termed "a very religious people," despite the fact that most of them were heathens, having not yet accepted Christianity. And the few Catholics among them, he noted, could not be distinguished from their "heathen" brethren except for the dirty beads they occasionally counted.

These Catholics, Day might have added, were mainly kinsmen of French-Canadian traders who had married into the Ojibwa community, and while adopting many features of Ojibwa society, continued to practice a diluted form of their fathers' religion. In some communities, such as Fond du Lac, they formed a fair portion of the total

community. Although Euro-Americans, as yet, formed but a tiny proportion of the permanent population in the Fond du Lac region, their presence was increasingly felt as steamers regularly visited the region, bringing with them Euro-American fisherman, miners and adventurers in addition to the fur traders, government officials and missionaries. Thus, like their kinsmen at Leech Lake, the Ojibwa at Fond du Lac found their search for the path to the good life had become increasingly difficult following the arrival of large numbers of outsiders who shared few of their values.

Day's interpreter at the time was Peter Marksman (*Ma-dwa-gwun-a-yaush*), a young Ojibwa convert whose uncle had been a "conjurer" (Day 1890:219).⁴¹ Marksman, who was born on the St. Croix River, appears to have been much more readily accepted into the Fond du Lac community than most missionaries, whether they were Euro-American or Anishinaabe. Certainly, he continued to demonstrate respect for his Ojibwa brethren at Fond du Lac and their religious beliefs and practices, even though he had accepted Christian beliefs himself, and he appears to have passed on some of this respect to the Rev. Day.

In his talk, Day proceeded to give a brief description of the manner of worship in which the "grand medicine dance," as he termed the *Midewiwin*, was conducted. According to him the *Midewiwin* was conducted when a person became sick and the Ojibwa were not able to cure him by regular means:

As a preliminary, all the prophets (we had four among us)⁴² must fast for three days, and during that time they must not close their eyes in sleep at night. They might sleep all day, but at sundown they must commence drumming and singing, which must not stop on any account until sunrise next morning. The drum was simply a hollow log . . . The drum stick

(they had but one) was in the form of a cross, with which a regular tum, tum, was kept up, and could be heard all over the village. To a stranger, sleep was impossible. On the fourth morning all the village was astir. The women were all busy, bringing in long, withe-like poles, out of which a wigwam was to be made, perhaps sixty feet long and twelve feet wide. These poles were firmly set in the ground, and the tops bent over in the form of a bow and fastened together. When this was done, all but two ends were fastened with mats and blankets. Inside, in the center, near each end, a post was set firmly in the ground. These posts were painted with different colours. About four feet from the walls on the inside was a path . . . Back of the path, on either side, was the place for the seating of the audience. This completed the wigwam. (Day 1890:212)

Day went on to explain that the next "requirement" was a feast, the most acceptable form of which was that of a white dog, which was cooked in a kettle near the *Mide* lodge. When this was ready, a "loud whoop," answered from all parts of the village, brought everyone together. Each person had his face and body painted, and were "naked to the loins." They came with blankets thrown over their shoulders, and a dish and pipe in their hands. Soon the entire lodge was full of smoke. Meanwhile the sick person was brought in and put on the blankets near one of the posts:

. . . and around him are laid the offerings that he offers to the Great Spirit for his recovery. It may be blankets, kettles, sugar, guns, or whatever he may have: and I have known an Indian to give away the last thing he had as an offering. These things, though offered to the Great Spirit, become the property of the medicine men or conjurers. Everything being ready, the feast cooking, each one comes, bringing with him his medicine bag in which he keeps his charm. The bag may be an otter skin, or a snake skin, or anything that will hold his "mon-e-do [manitou]." These are . . . spiral shells about an inch long. The Indians silently smoking, one of the medicine men arises . . . and commences a speech about anything or nothing, or chants a monotonous song for, perhaps two minutes, and with his medicine-bag in his hands, pointing to the sick one at the other post, starts towards him in a light trot, and with every step utters the explanation "who-ah! Who-ah! and as he nears him, suddenly brings the bag very near the sick one, who falls over quivering, as though struck a severe blow, while the doctor trots around the patient and comes back on the other path

with a satisfied grunt of "Ho-ho." Then another takes his place . . . This continues until all of the conjurers have passed around the sick man . . . when they make the final charge. The sick man lies as though dead for some time, but finally arises and presents, or, if unable to arise, a friend presents the offering that lay around him, to the medicine men, and the patient is *supposed* to be cured. (Day 1890:213)

Day theorized that the spirit in the shell enters the sick person to grapple with the disease, and with the final charge, the disease is driven away, so the person recovers.

Even if the patient didn't recover, the "medicine men" kept their fees, and he noted, their reputation did not appear to suffer.

This "shooting" ritual as it is often designated, or "curing" ritual, as perceived by Day, was followed by the feast in which all partook. Then, he suggested "the fun begins:"

The drum is brought in and one is seated by it to give the music. This consists of a monotonous chant, with regular strokes on the drum. Every Indian now brings forth his medicine bag, and a row stands on each side of the path that was made around the posts, the rows facing each other. Men, women and children . . . stand ready to begin the dance. . . each one with his medicine bag in hand. Presently one raises his medicine bag and pointing it at one opposite him utters the exclamation "Wah," and at the same time punches it at him, when the one at whom it was pointed drops as if shot and lies quivering on the ground for the space of perhaps a minute, and then gets up and joins the dance again, or take his seat back of the dancers and takes a smoke. Meanwhile the fun waxes furious. . . Occasionally a shout is heard, until, as day closes, wild confusion reigns, and men, women and children burst from the wigwam and the dance is done. (Day 1890:214)

Here we have yet another version of the *Midewiwin* ceremony. Given that close to fifty years had passed since Day had witnessed the ceremony and almost as many since he had worked actively among the Ojibwa, Day's description was surprisingly detailed.

While he used many commonly held stereotypes to describe the proceedings and

participants, the picture that he paints is still more representative than most nineteenth century descriptions.

Much of what he describes is similar to Raudot's and Nicollet's version of events though some new elements have been added, and several others dropped. Since the location is different, and the ceremony took place one to two generations after Schoolcraft's and Nicollet's accounts, it could be argued that what we see here are variants. Certainly, since the Ojibwa were not concerned with absolute ritual consistency, (despite the statements of Schoolcraft and others), this might be the case. However, I would argue that while this may be true with respect to certain minor aspects, such as the construction of the lodge, that in most cases, the differences are the result of the differences in perception and understanding of the observers, as filtered through their respective informants.

Day was probably most typical of his times in his reaction to the ceremonies, singling out as he did the incessant beat of the drum, the monotony of singing, and the frenzied "dancing" which followed the "shooting" ritual and the "orgy" of the dog feast. The writings of Euro-Americans during this period were full of brief references to such occurrences--and almost all showed a similar misunderstanding about the role that drumming, singing and dancing played in the *Midewiwin* and other Ojibwa religious ceremonies. Men as widely apart as the American government official Thomas McKenney, in his book Sketches of a Tour to the Lakes (McKenney [1827] 1972:170-173), and a remote Hudson Bay Company factor at Michipicoten on the northern shores of Lake Superior (HBC Archives, Michipicoten Journal, June 11, 1830), both commented

on what they considered to be the infernal goings on of the Ojibwa.⁴³ In many cases, their knowledge of Ojibwa culture was limited, so they often confused the ceremonies they described, and even when this was not the case, they viewed the ceremonies through their own cultural filters. In the back of everyone's minds was the fear that there was some connection between these "Medicine dances" and "war dances." After all, they reasoned, the Ojibwa, like other groups in both the United States and Canada, were gradually being asked to give up their lands and make significant changes to their lifestyle. Might not the "war chiefs" use their influence to incite the young men to drastic action, as some of their neighbours had done or were about to do? These fears were played upon by newspaper accounts of an increasing number of Indian gatherings and all-night ceremonies accompanied by drums. Just how different the viewpoints of relatively open observers such as Day were from those of the Ojibwa can be seen in the two views regarding the role of the *Mide* drum. To Euro-Americans it was monotonous at best, and sinister at worst. To some members of the *Midewiwin* the drum beat represented the heartbeat of the "Creator."⁴⁴

Although Day was somewhat more moderate in his statements than Schoolcraft, he too believed that there was a connection between the religious beliefs and practices of the Ojibwa as exemplified in the *Midewiwin*, and what both considered the "savage" lifestyle of the Ojibwa people. It was these aspects he tended to highlight in order to contrast them with those Ojibwa who had converted to his version of Christianity.

The differences between Day's description of the "shooting" rituals and those of Nicollet can probably best be attributed to the passage of time since Day had made his

observations--with the concurrent tendency to collapse the events described. However, his interpretation of the ritual's meaning is also quite different. Nicollet had explained that when the patient/initiate was "shot" with the *miigis* he was injured and died, and was then revived through the power of the medicine bags of the *Mides*. According to Day, it was the power of the *miigis* which cured the patient. As will be seen, similar explanations were given by subsequent observers who explained the power of the shell, as a sort of "inoculation" which caused the patient to temporarily succumb, only to rise again more invigorated than before.

Day's version of the public duelling which followed the "shooting" or "initiation" ritual is more common than the one described by Nicollet in which members of different degrees appear to form "teams," in order to demonstrate their different powers. While both men stress the "fun" aspect of this portion of the ceremony, Landes (1968:163), in her detailed description of a 1930s *Midewiwin* ceremony, perhaps captured the spirit of what they were trying to express. She suggested that it had mystic overtones similar to that of a Catholic Carnival, noting that it allowed people to "let off steam" in a socially acceptable fashion. Certainly, the *Midewiwin* was a series of rituals which had multifaceted functions, both religious and social.

Although Day's description of the *Midewiwin* continued to highlight some of its more sensational aspects for the benefit of his audience, there was no demonizing of the participants. And although he made little attempt to understand what was happening, the description does give an indication that the *Midewiwin* was a complex series of rituals. Gradually, and however imperfectly, some of the Ojibwa's Euro-American neighbours

were beginning to understand that there was much more to the *Midewiwin* than first impressions would have had them believe.

It remained, however, for another European visitor to dig below some of these impressions, and write perceptively about the *Midewiwin*. Johann Georg Kohl was a German geographer who spent six months in the latter part of 1855 among the Ojibwa along the shores of Lake Superior in what is now northern Wisconsin and northern Michigan. Although he was there only a short time, he was a keen observer of human nature, with a fine eye for detail, and he did not let his own preconceptions cloud his efforts to understand Ojibwa stories, ceremonies, music or picture writing. Thus, while his writings took the form of a travelogue more than that of an ethnographic report, they often provide insights which many of the other descriptions do not.

One of the three locations that Kohl was to spend most of his time was at the village of La Pointe on Madeleine Island in Chequamegon Bay. La Pointe had long been an important centre for the Ojibwa; however, by the 1830s the number of Ojibwa in the vicinity had dropped to approximately 40 families or 200 people. Nevertheless, by the time that Kohl visited, the community of La Pointe had become primarily a small trading community to which the American government had attached a sub-agency of the Department of Indian Affairs, and Rev. Sherman Hall had established a mission (church and school) there which served both the Euro-American community and a few Ojibwa. In the mid-1830s Father Baraga established a Catholic Church which primarily attracted mixed Ojibwa and French families, plus a growing number of Ojibwa. The Ojibwa community at La Pointe was considerably reduced from its peak in the late seventeenth

and eighteenth century, but it continued to be visited by remote bands of Ojibwa who had originally come from La Pointe, and now returned there each year in order to collect their annuity payments. The agency had been closed in 1850 when the U.S. government attempted to force the bands to move to Minnesota. Close to 400 Ojibwa had perished while attempting to collect their annuities at Sandy Lake. The next year the government rescinded the order and annuities were once again paid at La Pointe. For this reason, it still served as a natural gathering point, in much the same way that the bands had gathered together in earlier times to fish, gather berries or make maple syrup--and it allowed Kohl to meet Ojibwa from a number of the bands who decades earlier had migrated southwest, taking with them the *Midewiwin*.

Thus, for instance, he met Mongazid (Loon Foot), a chief from Fond du Lac, who had been present when Rev. Day had witnessed the *Midewiwin* ceremonies there, and he also met two *Mide* elders from Leech Lake. While the latter two refused to provide Kohl with any information since his "gift" of sugar had been too paltry, considering the nature of the information he wanted, Loon Foot and several other *Mides* were more accommodating. Moreover, he was able to witness a *Midewiwin* ceremony for himself at La Pointe, since the gathering of Ojibwa people following the government payments proved a good time to hold the *Midewiwin* ceremonies. Not only were large numbers gathered together, but candidates could use government annuities to help meet the costs of their initiation.

Nevertheless, in the few years since Rev. Day had witnessed *Midewiwin* ceremonies at Fond du Lac, the position of the Ojibwa in the region had continued to

deteriorate. The American government had established military supremacy in the region of the western Great Lakes following the defeat of the Sauk and Mesquakie under their leader Black Hawk in the early 1830s. During the late 1830s, and early 1840s, they, along with groups of Potawatomi, Menominee and Winnebago, were forced to cede more of their lands in order to accommodate the demands of American lumbermen and farmers. This was followed by yet more treaties in the 1840s which called for the Ojibwa along the south shore of Lake Superior, including those at La Pointe, to give up their lands. Lumbering, mining and railway interests were increasingly interested in exploiting the resources of the area, and actively campaigned to have the Ojibwa and Ottawa removed. Almost alone among Indians in the northeastern United States, they resisted removal, without resorting to armed conflict. However, they found it difficult to adjust, when they were forced to take up permanent homes on reservations set aside for them by the American government (Bieder 1995:166-67).⁴⁵ On the northern shore of Lake Superior, in Canada, treaties took longer in coming, but mining interests in particular were becoming increasingly active. Thus many Ojibwa leaders such as Shingwaukonse, who had elected to take his people into Canada rather than submit to removal, were faced with similar ill treatment there. Some Ojibwa in the Great Lakes region refused to surrender their lands, even though it meant foregoing their annuity payments, which since the decline of the fur and fish trade, served as one of their few means of obtaining Euro-American goods, upon which they had become dependent. They preferred to eke out a living as best they could on unclaimed lands, following traditional beliefs and ways.

It is no wonder that many looked back with nostalgia to "the good times gone." More and more of the eastern Ojibwa or Mississauga, however reluctantly, and however nominally, became Christians at the same time as they searched for ways to survive--as a people, and as individuals. As Yellowhead, the Ojibwa chief at Lake Simcoe, explained at a gathering in 1832:

When we embraced this religion [Methodism] it made us happy in our hearts, and we were no longer lying drunk in the streets, but lived in houses like the white men, and our women and children were comfortable and happy (Pitezel 1901:198).

Granting the Methodist tenor of the quote, many of Yellow Head's fellow Mississauga did make the decision to change their way of life.

Since revitalization movements such as those of the Shawnee Prophet had become discredited, most of those who wished to keep their traditional beliefs and ways, followed either the ways of the *Midewiwin*, the *Waabanowiwin*, or *Jaasakaan*--or a combination of the three. While it is difficult to say precisely, it is likely that the majority of Ojibwa believed that by continuing to follow the tenets of the *Midewiwin* they would be able to live a good life. Granted that some of the more northerly Ojibwa may have never practiced the *Midewiwin*, those in the Boundary Waters region definitely did, as the writings of Jacobs, Salt other missionaries and furtraders all attested. Landes' (1968:177-78) comments (based on her informants' information) that the *Midewiwin* was only brought to the Manitou Reserve in Ontario from Red Lake in the 1933, contradicts the reports of Peter Jacobs in particular who described the Rainy Lake area as the

"Headquarters of Heathenism" in the surrounding country, where "conjuring" ceremonies were attended by Ojibwa from hundreds of miles away (Angel 1986:136-140).

While the village of La Pointe contained Protestant and Catholic churches which included a growing number of Ojibwa members, Kohl was still able to attend a *Midewiwin* ceremony about two miles from town, where, as he explained, "a father would present his boy for reception into the order of the *Mides*." "*Midewiwin*," he went on, "is the Indian term for what the Canadians call '*la grande me´decine*,' that is, the great fraternity among the Indians for religious purposes. '*Midé*' (*Mide*) is a member of the fraternity, while '*gamig*' is a corruption of wigwam, always used in composition. Hence, '*Midewi-gamig*' may be translated 'temple wigwam' or, 'house of the brethren" (Kohl 1985: 40-41). Kohl went on to describe the construction of the long, rectangular *Mide* lodge with doors at the east and west ends, and commented on the fact that he recognized several of the *Mide* elders as people with whom he had become acquainted at La Pointe. Surrounding the initiate, who was a young baby still in a cradle board, were the father, and members of his family, all with faces painted a fiery red. He noted also the big drum in the centre of the lodge, which was beaten with a little wooden "hammer," and a large stone which lay in front of the east door (which one of his informants told him had been placed there for the Evil Spirit). At length, he continued, they were allowed to take their place as spectators after having left an offering of tobacco. Kohl gave no indication whether he was only being allowed to witness the public element of a series of ceremonies which must have been going on for some days, or whether the ceremony he witnessed differed from the ones previously described--perhaps because the initiate was

an infant. For instance, Kohl made no mention of any sweat lodge ceremonies, and his description of the "shooting" ritual in which the candidate received the powers being sought, appears to be different from either Nicollet's or Day's versions.

Kohl disavowed any attempt to give a critical description of the ceremony he witnessed, since it was extremely complex and he was forced to rely on interpreters.

However, he did attempt to give some impressions:

In the first place, my old prophet . . . made a speech. I noticed that he spoke very glibly , and now and then pointed to the heavens, and then fixed his eyes on the audience. He also made a movement several times over their heads, as if blessing them, just as priests do in all nations and churches. His speech was translated to me much in this way. He had addressed a prayer to the Great Spirit; then he shortly explained why they were assembled, and that a member of the tribe wished his infant to be received into the order of the Mides. He concluded by welcoming all the assembly, the high Mides and brothers, all the "aunts and uncles," the "sisters and cousins," and gave them his blessing.

After this address a procession was formed of all the Mides, while the father of the child and the guests rose and leaned against the sides of the wigwam. The priest walked one after the other, with medicine-bag in the right hand.

These medicine-bags, called "pindjigossan" in the Ojibbeway language, were made of the skins of the most varying animals . . . They were all filled with valuable and sacred matters, of course not visible. The Indians image that a spirit or breath is exhaled from these varied contents of the skin-bag possessing the power to blow down and kill a person, as well as to restore him to life and strength again. (Kohl [1860] 1985:43-44)

Kohl went on to describe the "shooting rituals" noting that the French Canadians, who have generally best translated the Indian terms, call this operation "tirer," or "souffler." In Kohl's description the *Mides* took turns shooting members of the public. They later used their medicine bags to revive those who were shot. At this point in the proceedings, the initiate was not involved. While Kohl noted that "it was a very comical

sight, and some behaved with considerable drollery," everyone took the whole affair very seriously (Kohl [1860] 1985:45).

After the conclusion of this part of the ceremony, the father presented his child to the *Mide* elders, making a short speech which was answered by longer ones from the *Mides*. This was, in turn, followed by some dancing, and then the entire audience was involved in what others have termed the "ritual duelling" in which everyone became involved using a wide variety of medicine bags. All this had taken place in the morning. That afternoon everyone gathered again in the *Mide* lodge to continue the ceremonies.

Kohl noted that there was a number of branches covered with a cloth in front of the large stone. The *Mides*, followed by all other members of the order, danced slowly around the cloth looking at it; gradually they began to stop and he noted that they began to appear to have convulsions, and after much effort, expelled some small object from their mouths. When all the shells had been produced they appeared to recover. Later each person took a shell from the pile and placed it in his medicine bag. The shells, he was informed ". . . typify the illness and wickedness which is in man, which he is enabled to expel by zealous exertions, and due attention to his religious duties" (Kohl [1860] 1985:49).

Following this, each person took a short turn at the drum, singing a song which Kohl was told expressed his joy in being a member of the society. Meanwhile, he noted, the men continued to smoke their pipes, which he explained was part of every solemn rite. At sunset, a huge kettle full of maize broth was brought in and the *Mides* received their presents. In turn, the *Mides* presented the father of the child with various medicines

and foods for the child which would "guide him through life." The presiding *Mide* made a final speech, and the simple broth was served to all those present. It was, as Kohl, observed, "an unpretending banquet after a whole day's fatiguing ceremonies" (Kohl [1860] 1985:52).

Kohl's description of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies differed from those of his predecessors in a number of ways. Like Schoolcraft and Day's descriptions, the ceremony appears to have taken place in a single day, although it is possible that the rituals concerned with the sweat lodge portion could have taken place on preceding days. While the order of some of the rituals also varied from other observers, all of the descriptions do contain certain common elements: the initiation or shooting ritual, coupled with a demonstration of the power which had been conferred which involved swallowing and regurgitating the *miigis*, the duelling ritual, the presentation of gifts, and final banquet. Taking into account the distinct possibility that the observers were so confused by the complexity of the ceremony that they later got the order mixed up, it is also possible that such variations were not important as long as the essential rituals were carried out.

However, as almost all observers noted, the Ojibwa made extensive use of pictographs in the ceremonies which served both as training aids for initiates, and memory aids for *Mide* officials precisely so that the ceremony would follow certain prescribed formats. Kohl, himself, made considerable efforts to obtain copies of these pictographs, along with their interpretations, since he was aware of their importance to the ceremonies that he had described. Since the ceremony described by Kohl contained

individuals who no doubt had been present at the ceremonies witnessed by Schoolcraft, Day and possibly even Nicollet, it would seem that either the ceremonies were, in fact, closer in form and content than described, or that they were familiar with such variations.

Certainly, it is possible that some of the variations may have crept in following new revelations by higher degree *Mides*. While Dewdney (1975:158-160;172-174) has argued that a struggle continued to exist between the *Mide* and vision traditions, it is more likely that they co-existed within the *Midewiwin* itself. Certainly the *Midewiwin* never replaced visions as a means of communicating with the manitous, although, as we shall see, younger generations of *Mide* in some communities no longer always received them. While the *Midewiwin* may not have been practiced in its elaborate forms as widely among the northern bands of Ojibwa, the *Jaasakaan* (Shaking Tent) and other allied ceremonies continued to be regularly practiced in those areas where the *Midewiwin* was strongest. Observers such as Nicollet, Schoolcraft, and Kohl made as frequent references to them as they do to the *Midewiwin*, just as Jacobs, Evans and others referred to the *Midewiwin* among northern bands of Ojibwa. The one area where it may not have been practised was among the most northerly Ojibwa who lived alongside the Cree, near the present Manitoba/Ontario border in the vicinity of the Severn River.

There may also have been more pragmatic reasons for the changes in the duration and complexity of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies. As the Ojibwa became more closely integrated into the rhythms of Euro-American society, the timing of multi-band ceremonies became more closely tied to annuity payments which took place in the fall-- which then could be used to purchase the goods needed for entry into higher degrees, and

as a means of redistributing goods among the community. While one can only speculate, it would seem that the communal aspects of the *Midewiwin*, during times such as these, would have become even more important, as the participants shared the increasingly meagre resources during the long winter months. Mallery (1974:508), at a somewhat later date towards the end of the nineteenth century, made an interesting observation that the spring *Midewiwin* ceremonies welcomed the return of the good spirits, while "those in the fall were in lamentation for the departure of the beneficent and the arrival of the maleficent spirits."

Kohl mentioned in his writings that the initiation of the young baby into the society reminded him of Christian baptism, and it is quite possible that those Ojibwa who retained their traditional beliefs felt increasingly pressured to ensure that their children received protection of the manitous at an early age. It is unclear from Kohl and the remarks of others, how the *Midewiwin* ceremony he described tied in with long-standing Ojibwa naming ceremonies. Certainly it would have set them apart from their brethren who had their children baptised by Christian missionaries--at least from the viewpoint of the latter.

Nevertheless, while the Roman Catholic missionaries had begun to make some inroads, particularly among Ojibwa families connected by marriage to French-Canadian Catholics and their descendants, the success of Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries in making converts was at this stage in time still quite negligible in all areas except some of the Ojibwa villages in southern Ontario and the Saginaw region of Michigan.⁴⁶ As long as they remained free, the majority of the Ojibwa continued to resist the call of the

missionaries to embrace their religion, and of government officials to embrace the life style of their Euro-American neighbours.

ENDNOTES

1. As we shall see in Chapter Six, there were other, though briefer accounts of the *Midewiwin* among other Anishinaabe groups such as Jacques de Sabrevois' account of the "medelinne" among the Potawatomi.
2. Raudot's compilation, though second-hand, provides one of the earliest and most complete descriptions of Ojibwa life. His series of letters describe everything from the homes, dress, the food they ate and how it was obtained, their form of government, marriage and mortuary practices, as well as their religious ideas and practices. While he displayed most of the prejudices of his time towards Indians, his sources appear to have been keen observers.
3. While only a portion of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies were devoted to dancing, Euro-American observers seemed to be particularly disturbed by the appearance of dancing in what was supposed to be a religious ceremony--perhaps because dance was considered to be a profane activity among Christians.
4. In an earlier letter (323), Raudot said that he would explain for his readers the dress, customs and religion of the "savages," and "of the way of things before the arrival of the French in this country." (Kinietz 1972: 341) It is also worthy of note that in another letter (#40) Raudot remarked that "Feasts of the Dead" were held every three years by various nations, thus indicating that the *Midewiwin* had not replaced the Feast of the Dead as Hickerson has suggested.
5. Subsequent accounts such as Hoffman (1896) and Densmore (1907) do make a distinction between public *Midewiwin* ceremonies which were generally held during spring and/or fall gatherings at which time individuals or their surrogates would be initiated into one of the degrees of the *Midewiwin*, and private healing ceremonies which were held for very ill individuals who normally were already members of the *Midewiwin*.
6. Note that I use the word "ceremony" to describe the *Midewiwin*, although in some senses it is closer to what might be defined as a religion since it is in many ways, all-encompassing. However, I have chosen to use the term ceremony since this is the term most commonly used when speaking of the *Midewiwin*, or when comparing it to the *Wabaano*, Shaking Tent etc. I use the term "ritual" when referring to parts of the larger ceremony (such as the sweat lodge rituals, the "shooting" ritual, etc.) which appear to form discrete parts of the larger whole.
7. The best description of such a ceremony is by Densmore (1979 [1929]:74-75) in which she describes the *Midewiwin* ceremony held at the time of the impending death of a *Mide* elder and chief of the Pillager band of Ojibwas. This individual was the son of another famous chief and *Mide* leader of the same name.

8. Comparisons of these ceremonies, along with those of the Menominee, Winnebago (a Siouan group), and other groups who practiced the *Midewiwin*, will be made as the ceremony is discussed in greater detail in a following chapter.

9. Tuscarawas (not to be confused with the Iroquois site) was located just south of Lake Erie in the Ohio Valley. The Delaware were an Algonquian people who were known as the "Grandfather of all Tribes," due to their supposed antiquity. They had suffered much from wars and continuing encroachments on their lands, which had caused them to move several times.

10. Dowd (1992) provides a good overview of this struggle, including its spiritual underpinnings in the series of revitalization movements that developed in the latter half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

11. The Shawnee were a southerly group of Algonquian speakers who had been harried by American settlers for some time. Faced with frequent moves and battles, their society had slowly begun to disintegrate.

12. Flat Mouth had spent part of his youth as far west as Red River, working for a time as a member of Alexander Henry the Younger's fur trade party along the Pembina River before taking up residence at Leech Lake, which had been recently wrested away from the Sioux. John Tanner (Tanner [1830] 1994:143-147), in his autobiography, writes of groups of Ojibwa in these regions who had taken up the teachings of the Shawnee Prophet.

13. The documents of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions contain letters from Ely, Boutwell and others describing raids of the Sioux on Ojibwa villages.

14. The italics are those of Nicollet. "Missinabes" in this context probably refers to *Anishinaabeg* which Nicollet mis-transcribes. Flat Mouth made it clear that he believed that the land was theirs, and that he would not give it up at any price, since his people would then lose their autonomy, which as has been seen, was especially important to the Anishinaabeg.

15. Flat Mouth, in particular, proved to be very adept at manoeuvring amongst the various competing Euro-American factions. He neither rejected nor embraced Euro-American society outright.

16. Letter of W.T. Boutwell to David Greene Dec 21, 1836. ABCFM MSS. 74, no.91.

17. Matchi Gabow (various spellings) is mentioned by such diverse sources as Schoolcraft, Boutwell and Kohl as threatening, antagonistic--an evil person who personified Euro-American images of a *Mide* shaman. He was a huge man, had five

wives, and was reputed by numerous sources to have killed Governor Semple during the Battle of Seven Oaks.

18. See letters from Boutwell, Ayer and Ely in the ABCFM Mss.

19. *Mides* could and did use a number of means to discipline those who had strayed from the path of the *Mide* Lodge. Christian missionaries often related how their converts were being "harassed" in different ways by *Mides*. Two common methods which were reputed to be used were causing the victim to develop a facial distortion, or administering poison to the victim in order to cause death.

20. Since Nicollet used French phonetics to transliterate Ojibwa, I have chosen the more common spelling by which they are known.

21. Grant's description was published in Masson's compilation of original documents in 1889-90. John Tanner was a Euro-American who was raised by Ottawa and Ojibwa families. While he had the opportunity to provide an insider's view, his account contains only a brief description of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies as such, and these show the editorial influence of Edwin James who helped prepare the manuscript for publication. Where Tanner is useful, is in his compilation of a number of *Mide* songs. There were numerous other brief references to the *Midewiwin* during this period by a variety of fur traders, missionaries and government officials. Whether this indicates that the *Midewiwin* was becoming more active, or, as is more likely, that the number of Euro-Americans in the area had increased substantially, is difficult to say.

22. While Schoolcraft's massive multi-volume compilation of "knowledge" regarding North American Indians is filled with un-edited fragments from the writings of many people, including an article by William Warren on the Ojibwa, this appears to be the only instance in which Schoolcraft fails to give credit to the author. It is unclear whether Nicollet intended that his account be published by Schoolcraft, or whether he sent a copy as information and intended to publish it later himself.

23. Nicollet notes that the ceremonies he attended were for the initiation of Obiygouaden's (Chief of the Land) daughter (Nicollet 1970:80;200). Obiygouaden was another Pillager chief.

24. In this he was quite unlike his Euro-American counterpart, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who claimed on a number of occasions to have been inducted into the *Midewiwin* himself.

25. Nicollet indicated that because of abuses, Flat Mouth had reformed the system and required that at least two people have such a vision before the candidate would be considered.

26. It is noteworthy that most of the Euro-American descriptions during the nineteenth century describe ceremonies in which children are initiated into the first degree of the *Midewiwin*. Later, when they were old enough to make choices of their own, they might decide to advance further in their knowledge and acquire more powers.
27. Nicollet outlined a number of circumstances for which the *madodiswon* (sweat lodge) ceremony was carried out, first among which was initiation into the *Midewiwin*. In each case the desired object was to communicate with the manitous in order to derive power to be able to carry out some action, be it a desire by an individual to be cured, or the desire of a chief to win the approval of his people for a foray against an enemy.
28. The *Waabanowiwin*, which was also quite prevalent during this period, was considered by many to be a deviant offshoot of the *Midewiwin*, but it was also concerned with acquiring "blessings" from powerful manitous for its adherents.
29. Elsewhere (Nicollet:211) he uses the term *Oshkabewis* to refer to the *Mide* elders that he had encountered among the Sioux.
30. Nicollet indicates that the goods were comprised of blankets, fabric, kettles, rifles, traps, etc. in quantities large enough to make a package for each of the eight *Mide* elders.
31. Nicollet does not give a translation of this term which he quoted as being used in other Ojibwa ceremonies, and it is not found in any of the accounts of Ojibwa ceremonies by other observers. "Na," according to Baraga is a particle denoting interrogation - is it so?, will it be so?
32. This is the same term used by Baraga and Kohl for medicine bags in general, but most other observers have used the more specific term *midewayaan* to refer to the medicine bags used by *mides*. Similar bags or bundles were considered sacred sources of power by many other aboriginal groups, although most were owned communally (by clans) rather than individually. A fuller discussion of the topic will follow.
33. While Nicollet does not comment on it, the use of a bear *pinjigoosan* was usually a sign that the *mide* was of the fourth degree and thus was possessed of considerable power to do good and evil. As later commentators were to note, each degree was distinguished by the bag of a different animal or animals.
34. *Nikanug* or *Niikaanag* (Nichols) was a ritual term which was usually translated as "brothers." It was used specifically to designate other members of the *Midewiwin*, and is still used as such today.
35. This ejaculation which most Euro-American observers found merely amusing, was, in fact according to Deleary (1986), an essential part of the *Midewiwin* ceremony. While the word does not have any "meaning" as such, the words were believed to convey power

from the person who uttered them. See also the article by Klostermaier on The Creative Function of the Word (1978) regarding similar traditions among the peoples of the Indian sub-continent.

36. While Nicollet's spelling is idiosyncratic according to today's standards, the Ojibwa words that he uses are the ones commonly given in most accounts. The *Mide* or water drum was termed a *mittigwakik* (*Mitiwakik*--Nichols) by Nicollet. It was usually a hollowed out portion of a tree trunk with deerskin at both ends and was partially filled with water so that the pitch could be changed. The *pagaakookwan* (*baaga'akokwaan*--Nichols) was a carved mallet used to beat the drum and was considered more sacred than the drum itself. However, according to Nichols, a *baaga'akokwaan* was used with a hand drum. The *shishiigwan* (*zhilshiigwan*--Nichols) was a rattle, originally made out of a gourd, or hollow piece of wood and filled with pebbles, seeds or shot in order to create different pitches. Later ones were made from tin cans.

37. As Nicollet (1970:206) explains, the Ojibwe verb which described the act of "blowing" or "shooting" with the medicine bag was the same one (*bimojige*) used to describe shooting with a bow and arrow. (The verb to shoot with a gun was *pashkisige/baashkizige*). Blessing (1977:114) is the only person to provide an Ojibwe word for the ceremony, which he gives as *ah-pah-gee-TAH-ah-GAY* which may be *aabaakawizi* (Nichols - revive, to come to).

38. Annual renewal ceremonies were practiced by other Algonquian tribes such as the Delaware whose Big House ceremonies were carried out each fall. See, for example, Ives Goddard's article on the Delaware in volume 15 of the Handbook of North American Indian (1978:231-232).

39. Schoolcraft used different spellings for these three ceremonies, but since his spelling varied within his own writings, I have chosen to maintain my standard spelling even when writing about his ideas.

40. Baraga listed *kikendamiwen* as the verb to publish, make known, to announce, and *kikendassowin* as the noun indicating knowledge or science. He gave the word *kikinawadakwaigan* as indicating the mark on a tree used by travellers, and *kikinawadjitchigan* as any sign or mark. Given Baraga and Schoolcraft's relative knowledge of Ojibwe, it is probable that the latter was doing a bit of creative word-smithing, when he claimed that the Ojibwa had specific terms for the two types of pictographs. I have used Schoolcraft's spelling since his use of the term is unique.

41. John Pitezel, in his biography of Marksman (1901), related that Marksman had told him that his father was a "medicine man" (*Mide*) and one of the hereditary chiefs at Mackinac before he moved west, while his mother was a "half-breed" and also a "professor of medicine." He was trained in the rites of the *Midewiwin* until the age of fifteen, but later converted to Christianity.

42. Almost certainly these included the head chief Shingoup, and Mongazid (Loon-Foot), a secondary chief, both of whom Day mentions later on in his address. The latter individual was to become a main source of information on the Midewiwin for Kohl in the 1850s. They were both contemporaries of Flat Mouth and Maji Gabowi in Leech Lake, of Shingwaukonse from the area around Sault Ste. Marie, of Pizhiki (Great Buffalo) at La Pointe, and Gogubunuga, a Rainy Lake chief--all of whom were prominent *Mide* elders.

43. McKenney was appointed a treaty commissioner for the United States government, and was present at Fond du Lac in 1826 for the re-affirmation of the Treaty of Prairie du Chien. While he had actively supported the cause of Indians, this was his first trip west, so that his daily journal provides a first hand example of how they appeared to Eastern officials. While he did not witness a *Midewiwin* ceremony as such, he did witness and describe two *Waabano* ceremonies.

44. Blessing (1975:76) and Johnston (1982:95) both suggested that the origin of the name *Midewiwin*, in fact, may be linked to the sound of the heart and/or drum.

45. The papers of Sherman Hall, the Protestant missionary at La Pointe and later at Bad River Reservation provide details of many of the sufferings of the Lake Superior Ojibwa during this period (Minnesota Historical Society Research Centre, Sherman Hall Papers).

46. The ABCFM and Methodist Society missionaries were quite frank in their reports, often detailing how both they and potential converts were harassed by Midewiwin members in order to discourage people from becoming Christians. While the Catholic missionaries were more glowing in their reports about their success, there were large traditionalist factions even in such long-standing Catholic communities as Arbre Croche.

CHAPTER FIVE

MIDEWIWIN CEREMONIES:

ETHNOGRAPHIC RECORDS OF A SOCIETY UNDER SIEGE

In the mid-nineteenth century the influx of Euro-American lumbermen, miners and farmers began to displace almost all of the Ojibwa from the land that they had occupied for varying amounts of time. Most of the Ojibwa in the upper American midwest now began to find themselves in similar situations to their brethren in southern Ontario, Michigan and Wisconsin. So did many of the bands in northwestern Ontario and Manitoba, although the treaty process there was slower than in the United States. It was only a matter of time until the remaining Ojibwa were also be affected--although some maintained their isolation for a considerable length of time. American and Canadian governments claimed to protect the Ojibwa from the abuses inflicted upon them by many of these new arrivals through the establishment of small blocks of land reserved for them, while at the same time placating the new arrivals by freeing up former "Indian lands" for exploitation by Euro-Americans. It was felt that this concentration of the Ojibwa within small areas would also hasten their "civilization" since they would be forced to give up hunting and fishing and concentrate on farming and various wage occupations. It was expected that they would also give up their "heathen" religious practices and adopt Christianity. Thus, the government's efforts were supported by various missionary groups whose object was to bring the Christian gospel to "heathen" such as the Ojibwa.

However, up to this point missionary efforts had been largely ineffectual. Rev. Sherman Hall, the Protestant missionary at La Pointe, lamented the fact that:

Few are desirous to learn anything of the religion of the Bible. Most seem to have the impression that the white man's religion is not made for them. His religion, mode of life, and learning are well for him; but to them they are of no use. They would not make them any more successful in hunting and fishing. Their habits are best for them. They say they are a distinct race, and the Great Spirit designed them to be different. They live different and go to a different place when they die. (ABCFM Mss. 141 no.122; Hall to Greene 24 Oct. 1838)

Initial schemes for the removal of the Ojibwa had also failed in both Upper Canada and the United States. It was feared by many that if the Ojibwa continued to live as they were they would soon be overwhelmed by the waves of Euro-Americans that were moving into the lands that they occupied. Government officials and Christian groups alike were anxious to establish the Ojibwa on reserves and reservations¹ as quickly as possible, since there were fears that otherwise the Ojibwa (and other Indian groups) would face extinction as a people.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 had established British recognition of the land rights of the Great Lakes Indians living in British North America. Within a little more than one hundred years these same people had surrendered almost all of their land and were confined to small reservations (Smith 1981; Schmalz 1991). The surrender of portions of these lands began almost immediately after the proclamation, as the British looked for land to compensate Loyalists, including Iroquois, who had fought for the British during the American War of Independence. Originally the Mississauga (Ojibwa) had accepted the land settlements with few qualifications, but as Smith notes, by the 1790s they

recognized that the land surrenders meant just that, and began to resent them--but were unable to mount any effective opposition (Smith 1981:74-82). Following the settlement of the War of 1812, the British government no longer felt a need for their Indian allies as Euro-American settlers began to outnumber Indians. What they did require was more land for the new settlers. After a series of land surrenders in the southern regions of Upper Canada, an ill-fated attempt was made in the 1830s by the lieutenant-governor, Sir Francis Bond Head, to move all the Indians "away from the corrupting influences of civilization" to a homeland on Manitoulin Island. Because of the opposition of the Wesleyan-Methodist missionaries and the Aborigines' Protection Society in England, the government was compelled to stop its forced surrenders of land, although the Ojibwa in the southern parts of the colony continued to relinquish lands in the Saugeen peninsula and seek new reserves throughout the 1840s and 1850s, despite the fact that they had begun to establish themselves as successful farmers (Schmalz 1991:130-146).

The early impact of Euro-American settlers had devastating effects on the Ojibwa of southern Ontario, with the result that many of their leaders had been willing to sign treaties with the British. In the 1820s and 1830s many Ojibwa had converted to Wesleyan Methodism, following the example of emerging leaders such as Peter Jones who became both a Methodist minister and a tireless advocate of Ojibwa rights. During the next several decades, Ojibwa such as Peter Marksman, George Copway, Peter Jacobs, Henry Steinhauer and Allen Salt showed considerable aptitude for western learning, and for defending the rights of their people. They formed a cadre of native missionaries who worked among the Ojibwa throughout the Great Lakes region and westward. While they

met with varying degrees of success, the growing presence of their followers among Ojibwa communities was a sign that the seamless nature of Anishinaabe society had begun to crumble. The world view of members of the Christian factions differed radically from that of those who followed the teachings of the *Midewiwin*, even when they consciously or unconsciously retained many of their former beliefs.

These differences went beyond a simple transferral of allegiance from the teachings of *Nanabozho* to those of Jesus Christ. The Methodist version of Christianity preached a gospel in which thrift, industry, discipline, punctuality, and abstinence were as much tenets of faith as the original ten commandments. Although the Ojibwa were not overly concerned with the other-worldly message of Christianity, they were concerned with *bimaadiziwim*, the good life in this world. And it seemed obvious to Jacobs, Salt and many other converts, that while Euro-American Christians were prospering, the material life of most Ojibwas was getting substantially worse. Having seen their relatives and friends succumb to alcohol, lacking the means to survive in a world in which their traditional sources of subsistence were no longer available, feeling abandoned by the spirits which had protected them in the past, and seeing the apparent ease with which their Euro-American neighbours prospered, many bright young Ojibwa such as Peter Jacobs, David Sawyer, and Peter Marksman turned from their parent's religion to that of Methodism.

While the Ojibwa were more individualistic than many of their close relations such as the more highly structured Menominee and Potawatomi, they had always lived by an ethic of generosity, reciprocal sharing and of consensual decision-making which was

closely bound together by the seasonal rounds of existence, and their close affinity to nature. Many, if not all, of these values conflicted with the values promoted by the Methodists as solutions to the problems faced by the Ojibwa. This often led to numerous problems between Methodist converts and so-called traditionalists who remained faithful to the teachings of the *Midewiwin*. For many of the converts, the transition was too great, with the result that they reverted to their former life style even if they did not actually practice the *Midewiwin*. Many other converts became nominal Christians at best, accepting the material benefits and following the outward rituals, while holding on to their traditional ethics and values. There were other problems too, for Anglican missionaries began to compete with the Methodists for Ojibwa souls, while the agrarian experiments proved less successful than expected, thus lessening the early enthusiasm that many Ojibwa had shown for the combination of "Christianity and civilization."

To further compound the problems, many of the newly established reserves in southern Ontario found themselves taking in very large numbers of Potawatomie and Ottawa refugees from the United States who were attempting to avoid being moved west of the Mississippi River. Among them were a fair number of Roman Catholic converts, whose arrival caused many of the Ojibwa communities in Ontario to become even further fragmented (Schmalz 11991:200-204). While groups of traditionalists continued to exist on many of the eastern reservations in Ontario, most, but not all of the community leaders were at least nominally Christians. Traditional ceremonies, where they did exist, had largely been forced to go underground (Rogers and Smith 1994:368-370). It was only among the Ojibwa at Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, and in the country further to the

north, that traditional beliefs remained dominant into the twentieth century. There, Ojibwa leaders such as Powassan and Mawedopenais carried on a long struggle with Indian agents and missionary groups over the right of the Ojibwa (as set out in Treaty #3) to be educated in government schools with no Christian religious instruction (Waisberg 1984:258-262). They also demanded the right to practice their own religion, as E.

McColl, the Manitoba Inspector of Indian Agencies noted in one of his reports:

. . . They object to mission schools being established on their reserves, as they did not wish their children influenced to forsake the religion of their fathers (Canadian Sessional Papers, A1882, No.6:98).

Further west at Red River, Anglican missionaries had begun to make some inroads among the Cree and to a lesser extent among the Ojibwa or Saulteaux, as they were known there. Like their eastern brethren they were being taught to read and write, and to farm--and to renounce their traditional religious beliefs in favour of Christian ones. However, the early successes of such missionaries as Georges-Antoine Bellecourt, John West and William Cockran did not last, and later missionaries turned their attention further north or west (Grant 1984:102-107). As a result, Hallowell was able to observe that some groups of Ojibwa such those at Roseau River Reserve "remained outright pagans until the beginning of the present century" (Hallowell 1936:40).

In the United States, government agents' efforts to force the Ojibwa to move from their traditional lands had more tragic consequences. The Ojibwa were suspicious of the government's motives and they determined to drive a hard bargain for themselves and their kin. At the 1842 treaty deliberations, Shingoup, the head chief from Fond du Lac (and a high ranking *Mide*) answered the speech of Commissioner Stuart as follows:

My friend we now understand the purpose you have come for, and we don't want to displease you. I am glad there are so many people to hear me. I want to know what our great Father will give us for our lands. You must not tell a lie, but tell us what our great father will give us for our lands. I want to ask you again, my father, I want to see the writing and who it is that gave our great father permission to take our minerals. . . . I want to see the Treaty which authorizes Government to take away our minerals. (L. H. Wheeler to David Greene, May 3, 1843. Box 3. ABCFM. Minnesota Historical Society Research Center, St. Paul, Minnesota)

White Crow (Waubishgaugauge), the elderly chief of the Lac du Flambeau band (southeast of La Pointe), added that:

You told us there was nothing wrong on paper. . . It does not appear that our Father wants to buy our land except the Mineral country. I have raised the half-breeds, and I want you to provide for them, we all eat out of the same dish, we are all like one family (Wheeler to Greene, May 3, 1843. Box 3. ABCFM).

Despite their suspicions, and their inability to have all their conditions met, most of the Ojibwa did finally and reluctantly agree to sign the treaties, seeing in them the best hope for their continued existence as a people.

The fears of leaders such as White Crow were to be realized shortly, for attempts were made by the government to remove all the Ojibwa to the west of the Mississippi. It was a move that would be successfully resisted, but only after considerable suffering and many deaths. The missionary, Sherman Hall, related the tragic story of how the Ojibwa who had ceded their lands were forced to travel to great distances to Sandy Lake to collect their annuities in the late fall. Many refused, while those who made the trip were forced to wait for the agent to obtain the money. Sickness broke out in the camps and many died. The survivors were then forced to use most of the payments which finally

arrived in December to purchase provisions to return home. This meant walking 300 miles back since their canoes were useless in the winter (Hall to Treat, Dec 30, 1850. ABCFM). Although Hall had believed that the treaties were the only way to save the Ojibwa as a people, he later argued strongly against the forced removal of the Ojibwa in Wisconsin.

By the 1850s, the efforts of the American government had shifted from an emphasis on removal to one of allowing them to remain permanently, on reservations, in their traditional territories. In Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, many of those Ojibwa and Ottawa who had refused to move were accommodated in 1854 and 1855 with new treaties in an effort to undo some of the worst abuses of the previous era. The treaties distinguished between the Lake Superior Ojibwa, whose resources the Americans desired, and the Mississippi bands whose lands were not immediately wanted, while the Red Lake and Pembina bands were ignored for the time being. Those Ojibwa who agreed to take up reservation life attempted to make it work, but they had few resources with which to control their own destiny. Increasingly control was exercised by the new dispensers of resources: the government agents and missionaries. However, despite the determined efforts of local Methodist and Catholic missionaries, many of the Ojibwa (and to a lesser extent, Ottawa) continued to hold their traditional world view, follow the teachings of the *Midewiwin*, and follow their traditional seasonal rounds. Many of these traditionalists refused to accept the individual allotments of land since they continued to view property as a source of resources that served the common good (Cleland 1992:242).

On the other hand, there was a feeling among many government officials such as Alexander Ramsey,² and missionaries such as Sherman Hall,³ that unless there was prompt action to protect them, the Ojibwa would face extinction as a people. Ramsey, Hall, and others like them, warned that the Ojibwa would succumb to the evils of alcohol provided by unscrupulous traders, European diseases for which they seemed to have no protection, and starvation, as a result of not being able to hunt and fish. Only by providing them with the means to farm, by teaching them the virtues of hard work and the Christian gospel, and by destroying their traditional culture and religion, would they avoid the fate of many of the wild animals in the region (U.S. Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Annual Report 1850).

Ojibwa leaders in Minnesota were divided as to how to meet these new challenges. The number of Euro-Americans was increasing, and with them came epidemic diseases, land speculators, and whiskey traders, all of which threatened to wreak havoc among them, though few were able to resist the temptations of the latter. With them also came a new type of missionary in the person of John Johnson (Enmegahbowh), an Ojibwa (Mississauga), who, as a young man was initiated and educated in the teachings of the *Midewiwin* before becoming a convert to Methodism. He left his home in southern Ontario, in order to become one of the native missionaries who came to the United States in the 1830s. There he married the niece of Hole-in-the-Day the Elder and his brother Strong Ground, two important Ojibwa chiefs from Sandy Lake, thus establishing strong bonds with them and their bands, although he later opposed the confrontationist policies of Hole-in-the-Day the Younger. Unlike many of the previous

missionaries in the area (and unlike some of his fellow Ojibwa converts), Enmegahbowh retained his Ojibwa ethic of generosity and mutual sharing. In the 1850s, he transferred his allegiance to the Episcopalians, while retaining his influence with a large segment of the Mississippi Ojibwa who followed him in removing to the White Earth Reservation in 1868. There, numerous other Ojibwa, who were anxious to maintain many of their traditional cultural values, became Episcopalians as a result of Enmegahbowh's influence and his program to establish subsistence farming. In this way, they believed that they might be able to re-invigorate their communities, while maintaining control of their own destiny (Meyer 1994).

Among the Pillagers and neighbouring bands, many chose to live a traditional existence as far as they could outside the pale of the dominant culture. The majority of this latter group continued to practice the *Midewiwin*, although some turned to the Drum or Dream Dance, a new ceremony which was introduced in the 1860s and 1870s.⁴ This ceremony was based on the visions received by a young Sioux woman, following a battle between the Sioux and the Euro-Americans. The cosmology nevertheless resembled Ojibwa beliefs, in that the sacred drum and the rituals attached to it were used by members to petition the manitous for "blessings." Membership in the society which developed was open, and the ceremonies were more frequent than the *Midewiwin*. Whereas the *Midewiwin* existed to help individuals secure a healthy and a long life, the Drum religion's role was broadened to include social concerns including peace between peoples. While some Ojibwa belonged to both the *Midewiwin* and Drum Dance, most believed that the latter replaced the *Midewiwin* which had been corrupted. It was

believed by many traditionalists that the Drum Dance rituals were a better means of providing the strength and power needed to resist the ever-increasing advances of Euro-American society.⁵

Although most of the original signatories of the treaties such as Flat Mouth and Loon Foot remained members of the *Midewiwin* until their deaths, Loon Foot's sons were sent to Church schools where they became Methodists. Others such as Great Buffalo finally converted to Catholicism just before their deaths. Shingwaukonse became an active Anglican before he died, and his sons continued their father's Anglican tradition. Despite the fact that they had chosen different paths, each hoped that his way would ensure the survival of their way of life in so far as it was possible.

Most of the reserves and reservations provided for the Ojibwa were located on marginal land distant from Euro-American centres of population, so that even those who had agreed to live on them, made efforts to retain their old style of life. However, this was seldom possible given the natural resource bases of most reservations, and the failure of the government to live up to their obligations. Moreover, bands with different histories were brought together in large, artificially created reservations such as White Earth in the United States, while in Upper Canada, bands of Ojibwa, Ottawa and Pottawatomi, many of them refugees from the United States, were lumped together in reserves. These people brought with them a variety of different backgrounds, feuds, and expectations, which in the close quarters of their new existence tended to flare up in factionalism. These reservations and reserves had some similarity to the refugee centers of the late 17th century since they both contained an assembly of diverse groups.

However, whereas the *Midewiwin* would have served as a cohesive force in the refugee villages, it now helped to accentuate the divisions, since it was but one of several paths to the desired good life.

The Ojibwa and their Métis "cousins" had co-existed together, and in many cases, reservations contained many families who had a mixed heritage. When the Ojibwa had signed the treaties, they had endeavoured to secure assistance for the mixed-bloods since, as White Crow had argued, they were all of one family. Later, however, divisions began to develop between those who continued to follow the culture and religion of their Ojibwa ancestors, and those who followed the Catholicism of their French or English ancestors, and made efforts to adapt to Euro-American society. Many of the Métis made their living as traders, whiskey peddlers or Indian Affairs officials, while at the same time claiming the right to be added to the annuity rolls of the Ojibwa. Among those who formed part of this larger community was the Warren family.⁶ William Warren and several sisters all continued to be associated with the Ojibwa people at several of the Minnesota reservations. Nevertheless, despite his obvious sympathy for the plight of the Ojibwa, Warren and his sisters were all Protestant Christians, who also lived in the dominant society (Densmore Papers. Notes on the life of Mrs. Julia Warren Spears. MHSRC).

Ethnographic Scrutiny of the Midewiwin

It was about this time, towards the end of the nineteenth century, that the first of a new breed of professionally trained ethnographers began their mission to record the cultures and languages of the aboriginal peoples in North America for posterity.⁷ In the

final years of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century, a steady stream of ethnologists visited a range of communities among the Ojibwa and their Algonquian neighbours in order to study their "traditional" beliefs and practices. Among these visitors was the American physician, ethnologist and linguist, Dr. Walter J. Hoffman. Hoffman had begun his studies researching the folklore of the Pennsylvania Germans, but later joined the staff of the U.S. Bureau of Ethnology, where he became involved in a number of major field work studies of the Ojibwa and Menominee.⁸ Hoffman began his work on the Ojibwa as an assistant to Colonel Garrick Mallery, who had published a number of articles on the picture writing of the North American Indians. During 1887-88 he spent three months on the reservations at Red Lake and White Earth, concentrating primarily on the pictographic records used in the *Midewiwin*, while Mallery was carrying out similar research at Bad River⁹ and Red Cliff reservations in the Chequamegon Bay region. The research was prompted by a desire of the Bureau of Ethnology to review the reliability of the work on Ojibwa pictographs carried out by Schoolcraft.

Mallery, himself, found that his research garnered only limited results which he attributed to the "stronger influence of civilization" in the latter two communities. By the late 1880s the members of the La Pointe band that remained had moved to the Bad River Reservation located near Odanah, Wisconsin at the south end of Chequamegon Bay, where some attempted to farm under the tutelage of the Presbyterian missionary while others worked in various small industries. Mallery was only able to find a few elderly Ojibwa there who were still familiar with the *Midewiwin* ceremonies and had *Mide* charts that they were willing to show him.¹⁰ Since he was primarily interested in a comparative

study of pictographs, it was this aspect which dominated his writings. He devoted only a few comments to the *Midewiwin* itself, which are a combination of commonly known facts and equally common misconceptions.¹¹

Hoffman appears to have been more fortunate in finding a more active *Midewiwin* society functioning at White Earth and Red Lake. Moreover, he apparently took a much broader view of his research activities, going far beyond collecting examples of pictographic records. This was no doubt due to the fact that most of these records were provided to him by *Mides*--leading him to pursue this area of research more closely. While Hoffman provided his readers with a cursory historical background to the *Midewiwin*, plus the names and background of his informants, he devoted little attention to the situation faced by the Ojibwa at the time he collected his information.

Although the situation of the Ojibwa at the two reservations that Hoffman visited was considerably different from that at Bad River, there were also differences between Red Lake and White Earth. The reservation at White Earth, which had been created in 1867, became the home of a number of previously autonomous and culturally distinct groups of Ojibwa who formed factions in the new reservation. In addition to the original Mississippi River bands, the reservation later accepted a band of Pillagers, and some Plains Ojibwa from along the Pembina River. The majority of the Pillagers had settled on other reservations at Leech Lake, Cass Lake and Lake Winnibigoshish. The divisions at White Earth were exacerbated by the fact that the former had largely become Episcopalians, the Pillagers continued to practice the *Midewiwin*, and those from Pembina were mainly mixed-blood Roman Catholics (Meyer 1994:118-125). The

American government's practice of providing individual allotments of land rather than allowing them to practice communal ownership further increased the fragmentation of the reservation, and the alienation of many of its inhabitants.

At Red Lake the the inhabitants of the reservation were much more homogeneous. The bands of Ojibwa who made up the population there were more closely connected to the northern bands from Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods and Pembina. Unlike other reservations, Red Lake was granted permission to maintain communal land ownership. While missionaries had been working among them since the early nineteenth century, the missionaries had been effectively marginalized by the practitioners of the *Midewiwin* who continued to be the dominant religious group until the twentieth century.¹² Among other things, Christian missionaries were accused of being responsible for acting as evil shamans or witches who used their "evil powers" to cause the pulmonary disease which caused a great number of deaths at Red Lake. Both Protestant and later Catholic missionaries made unsuccessful attempts to establish schools among them. The Red Lake Ojibwa also steadfastly refused to take up agricultural pursuits as long as they were able to hunt buffalo--to the dismay of the missionaries. These factors, and the relatively isolated location of the reservation, meant that there was far less cultural upheaval than at White Earth, and far less assimilation of individuals than on the reservations located in Wisconsin and Michigan.

Despite these differences between the reserves at White Earth and Red Lake, those Ojibwa who wished to maintain the old ways generally feared the future, and for good reason. Everywhere, it seemed, they were in retreat. Their lands were being lost,

and with them, the ability to provide for themselves, the rights of hereditary chiefs were being usurped by government officials or government-appointed leaders, while teachers and ministers had taken over many of the teaching roles and ritual functions of the *Mide* elders. Increasingly the Ojibwa were losing even more control of their lives to government officials and missionaries, as both groups had begun to take steps to prohibit the celebration of Indian ceremonies and practices of Indian "medicine men."

In 1889 President Harrison of the United States promulgated the Dawes Act which demanded that Indians be absorbed into national life as American citizens, giving up their tribal relationships and conforming to the ways of the dominant society. Traditional religious rituals and secular amusements were strongly discouraged by the Office of Indian Affairs. The principle of severalty resulted in most of the lands which had been retained for the Ojibwa being sold off since speculators were able to convince individual landholders to sell. By the early twentieth century only 20% of the lands that they had been ceded still remained. When the Sioux protested the loss of their lands and continued to dance the Ghost Dance, the U.S. Army was called in, massacring over one hundred, including women and children in December 1890 at Wounded Knee.

Hoffman's conclusion to his work was thus prophetic:

". . . [the Ojibwa] tribal ties will be broken and their primitive customs and rites be abandoned.

The chief *Mide* priests, being aware of the momentous consequences of such a change in their habits, and foreseeing the impracticability of much longer continuing the ceremonies of so-called 'pagan rites,' became willing to impart them to me, in order that a complete description might be made and preserved for the future information of their descendants." (Hoffman 1891:299-300)¹³

The resulting three hundred page document is the most comprehensive account ever produced on the *Midewiwin*.¹⁴ The major part of the document provided detailed information on the preparation and initiation of candidates for the four degrees, as well as information on the Ghost *Midewiwin*. Other sections provided background information on the *Midewiwin* in general, on the role of shamans, a description of the *Mide* lodge, plus supplementary notes on pictographs, music, dress and ornaments.

As one would expect of a trained ethnologist and linguist, Hoffman's study was at once comprehensive and detailed. Despite the fact that his information had been gleaned from a number of sources and informants, he provided, for the first time, a general overview of the ceremonies, the officials who conducted them, the religious objects that were employed, and something of the teachings that were imparted. Surprisingly, although he provided meticulous translations of *Mide* songs from the original Ojibwa, in which he noted the archaic nature of many of the words, Hoffman failed to supply Ojibwa terms for the *Mide* officials, or for many of the artifacts that were used in the ceremonies. Although he gave both an Ojibwa name and a scientific name for the *miigis* or cowrie shell used in the *Midewiwin* ceremony, he created the impression that this particular shell had a vital significance, although other types of shells were used by various groups of Ojibwa. Similarly, he failed to explain that such objects were used by a wide variety of aboriginal groups in both north and south America as a powerful means of either causing or curing illness.

And, despite his attempts to be "objective," Hoffman was a creature of his own time, as much as any of his predecessors. For, while his work was relatively free of

Christian bias, he continued to view the Ojibwa as "primitives," and the *Mides* as "charlatans." Indeed, despite his claim to have been initiated into the society himself,¹⁵ in his introduction to the work, Hoffman stated that the purpose of the *Midewiwin* was twofold: "first, to preserve the traditions [which he had just mentioned], and second, to give a certain class of ambitious men and women sufficient influence through their acknowledged power of exorcism and necromancy to lead a comfortable life at the expense of the credulous" (Hoffman 1891:151).

Thus, for all his academic credentials, and his participation in both the *Midewiwin* of the Ojibwa and the "*Mitawit*"¹⁶ of the Menominee, Hoffman's work continued to exhibit a definite Euro-American bias. Like many nineteenth century social scientists, Hoffman sought to classify everything he studied, using a combination of Euro-American concepts and categories, and information from his informants. For instance, he followed Schoolcraft's depiction of three classes of shamans, one of which was the *Mide*. Unlike Schoolcraft, who saw all classes of shamans as evil, Hoffman depicted the *Jes'sakkids* (*Jaasakiids*) as "invoking and causing evil, while that of the *Mide* is to avert it" (Hoffman 1891:157-158). Unfortunately, the example he used of a person averting evil was that of a person who was usually termed a sucking-bone doctor, but whom both Hoffman (in another section of the work [p254]) and Densmore (1979:44-45) equate with a *Jaasakiid*. Such examples of confusion (which occur several times throughout the work) are indicative of the difficulty that Euro-Americans experienced in attempting to make sense of the Ojibwa world view. Despite their best efforts, the Ojibwa world could not be divided up into discreet classes and categories which were mutually exclusive.

In a later portion of the work (Hoffman 1891:164,184ff), Hoffman explained that from his experience there was considerable variation in "the dramatization of the ritual." He implied that some of the differences which he encountered could be attributed to the division of the Ojibwa nation at Sault Ste. Marie into northern and southern divisions, which had limited intercourse. In addition, he explained, individual *Mides* operated independently, with the result that pictographic inscriptions on *Mide* charts could not always be interpreted by other *Mides*, which could and did cause erroneous interpretations to be made--as he proceeded to illustrate with an example. While Hoffman was no doubt correct in his explanations of some of the variations he encountered, he failed to address such fundamental problems as the relationship of *Jes'sakkids* (*Jaasakiids*) and *Wabeno's* (*Waabanos*) to the *Midewiwin*, or the relationship of "good" manitous or *Mides*, and "evil" manitous or *Mides*.

However, these are quibbles about a work which has allowed insight into an institution, and into a world view which might otherwise have been lost to posterity. Where his work has been invaluable is in his meticulous transcription of the words, music and pictographs used in the *Midewiwin* ceremonies. So accurate are his transcriptions of some of the instructions, origin and song charts, that present day Ojibwa have turned to his work in their attempts to revive the *Midewiwin* after it had all but died out. Rather than attempting an in-depth analysis of Hoffman's work, which is far beyond the scope of this present work, an attempt will be made to highlight some of the major concepts which he brought to light for the first time, and place them in context.

Hoffman was the first observer to provide a comprehensive explanation of the four levels or degrees of the *Midewiwin*,¹⁷ along with their corresponding initiation ceremonies and subsequent powers. It was this hierarchical aspect of the society which caused many Euro-Americans to assume that the *Midewiwin* had been influenced by Freemasonry, since it was felt that aboriginal hunters and gatherers could never have conceived of such a complex structure on their own. Hoffman's account illustrates just how complex the *Midewiwin* was, but there are no hints of Freemasonry ideas or rituals, other than that both were based on a progressive acquisition of knowledge and power, which was symbolized by different levels or degrees.

As several other observers had noted, candidates for the first degree had first to satisfy *Mide* officials that their vision was legitimate and appropriate. Hoffman (1891:164) does seem to suggest that individuals who had not received a vision could, at this time, "purchase a *miigis*." This would tie in with Mallery's statements that visions were no longer common, so that some people tried to stimulate them through the use of alcohol. It would have also meant that those individuals such as *Jaasakiids* who continued to have visions would have been considered even more powerful and perhaps more feared.

The acceptance of a candidate was followed by a sweat lodge ritual in which the candidate received instruction, and the *Mides* demonstrated their supernatural powers by causing strings of beads to roll and effigy figures to move unaided. In his description of the initiation ceremonies, (which were described in some detail), Hoffman transcribed parts of the "*Mide* sermon" and a number of the songs sung by the candidate and officials.

Following the initiation rituals and the payment of the required fees, both of which were similar to those described by previous observers, the new member had the power to remove or expel evil spirits, and to administer a limited number of cures using specific plants, but his or her power was still relatively limited. One important power which was both sought and taught was the "hunters' medicine" which has been described in a previous chapter. In addition, he noted that they were taught a few additional magic remedies including one which could be used to produce paralysis of the mouth in rivals or enemies--or could be used to counteract the evil intentions of bad *Mides*, *Jaasakiids* or *Waabanos*. He mentioned that he had personally seen the results of this being employed, and that the resulting disability usually lasted several weeks. No satisfactory explanation had been found for the paralysis (Hoffman 1891:226-7).

Whereas previous observers had made reference to the huge quantity of presents which candidates were required to offer, Hoffman explained the reason for these presents, and the payments for knowledge or power of any sort. "This practice is not entirely based on mercenary motives, but it is firmly believed that when a secret or remedy has been paid for it cannot be imparted for nothing, as then its virtue would be impaired, if not entirely destroyed by the manido or guardian spirit under whose special protection it may be supposed to be held or controlled" (Hoffman 1891:221).

According to Hoffman's account, the second, third and fourth degree ceremonies were mainly repetitions of the first. He implied that the main addition was the power of the tutelary manitou for the particular degree (Hoffman 1891:225-6). Unfortunately, Hoffman did not indicate what manitous were connected with the second degree, but

other informants suggest that the *Mide* bag for this degree was the Sharp-tailed Hawk. In a later portion of the work, Hoffman stated that those who had been admitted to the second degree (after making the required offerings, receiving the appropriate instructions and going through the initiation rites) acquired some additional supernatural powers, allowing them to see into the future, and hear what was happening at great distances, as well as to leave his or her body in order to accomplish tasks (Hoffman 1891:236). Hoffman implied that *Mi'tsha Mides*" or "Bad *Mides*", who employed these powers for evil purposes assumed the form of an animal (often a bear) in which guise the *Mide* might kill his victim. Such persons, he suggested, were called witches (Hoffman 1891: 168-9).¹⁸

Few members of the *Midewiwin*, in Hoffman's experience, ever proceeded beyond the second degree, partly due to the high cost of initiation. However, those who received the required instruction, made the offerings, and were initiated, received even greater supernatural powers, under the tutelage of the bear manitou.¹⁹ Their powers of exorcism were greater, their knowledge of medicines expanded, and they had greater powers of prophecy (divination). It was at this point, Hoffman seemed to suggest, that their powers became equivalent to those of *jaasakiids*, who received their powers directly from a manitou in a vision. Hoffman suggests elsewhere that *jaasakiids* could and sometimes did become members of the *Midewiwin*, but he provided no indication as to whether or not they were required to go through the three degrees or simply began at the third level.

Those few who attained the fourth degree were believed to have powers that were beyond belief. Hoffman's informants suggested that their powers came close to those of

Nanabozho, and such individuals alone were able to communicate directly with *Kitchi Manitou*. However, these powers were two-edged for there were great temptations to use these powers for evil purposes or personal aggrandizement. *Waabanos* of this degree were especially feared because of their power to inflict injury, and their astounding performances with fire.²⁰ The only time that Hoffman mentioned a particular tutelary spirit for a specific degree was for the third degree, although the candidate for the fourth degree impersonated the bear manitou during the initiation rites. Malevolent spirits including *Mishibishi* (*Mishibizhi*), the panther, and *Makwa*, the bear, and *Meshike* (*Mikinaak*), the turtle, guarded the *Mide* lodge and attempted to resist the candidate's entrance during the rites for the higher degrees, and had to be driven away by good manitous. The appearance of these spirits would appear to add to the sense that the power gained by people who entered these degrees had the potential for evil as well as good. The fact that these spirits served both as tutelary spirits and malevolent spirits added to this sense of uncertainty, as did the fact that individuals who attained this rank could act as *jaasakiids* and *waabanos*.

Hoffman included a special section in his work on variations of the *Midewiwin*, including something he termed the "Ghost Lodge" or *Dzhibai* (*Jiibay*) *Midewigan*. Hoffman noted that the Ghost Lodge differed from the regular *Mide* Lodge in that the openings were on the north and south axis, rather than the east and west. Some observers have suggested that since the fourth degree lodge also had north and south entrances (in addition to east and west ones), this added to its sinister reputation since the Ojibwa feared the afterlife, and the spirits that the Ghost Lodge was named after. This is the first

recorded use of the term "Ghost Lodge," although it would appear that variations of the rituals described had been present among the Ojibwa for some time. It is tempting to try and connect this variation of the *Midewiwin* with the Ghost Dance revitalization movement which swept across the mid-west in the 1890s, but there is no connection. Despite the similarity of the name, the relative proximity of the Lakota (western) Sioux to the Minnesota Ojibwa, and the mutual acceptance of other ceremonies, there is no evidence that Ghost Lodge and Ghost Dance ceremonies had anything in common, other than some shared concerns.

The Ghost Lodge *Midewiwin*, according to Hoffman, was conducted for those children who had died before reaching the age of puberty, and thus were unable to be initiated into the *Midewiwin*. Such children, Hoffman explained, had been "dedicated" to the *Midewiwin* at their naming ceremony shortly after their birth. At this ceremony a *Mide* elder had been chosen to name the child from a vision that he or she had received. If, in this vision, the elder's vision indicated that the child would become a *Mide*, initial instructions would begin as the child grew older, but the initiation ceremony only occurred following puberty. If the child died before then, the father would announce his intention of acting as a substitute for the child, and becoming a member of the society. Such membership would ensure that the deceased child would then be freed from the "Ghost Gambler" who held his victims under his power in a world of shadows, and the deceased would then be guided on its journey to its new abode in the afterlife which was peopled by members of the *Midewiwin* (Hoffman 1891:278-81).

Several aspects of Hoffman's account provide insights into what he believed to be the gradual evolution of the *Midewiwin*. Most notable is his statement that its members were not admitted until puberty, although two and possibly all three of the previous observers described ceremonies in which young children, even infants were admitted, with their parents serving as proxies during the initiation ceremonies. It is uncertain whether the young girl described in Nicollet's account was pre-pubertal, but the children in both Kohl and Day's accounts definitely were.

It is possible that Hoffman's account indicates a developmental change. However, it is more likely that Hoffman was generalizing from a single incident, or misunderstood his informant, since this is the only record of such a prohibition. Regardless, the development of the Ghost *Midewiwin*, and special funeral ceremonies for members of the *Midewiwin*, does indicate a further development away from a simple curing ceremony into a ceremony which gave members strength to cope in both this life and the next. Anishinaabe beliefs included a belief in the soul, in fact in two souls, one of which wandered around burial grounds and old haunts, while the other pursued a path which led to its final resting place. However, the Anishinaabeg were more interested in the life of this world than in the after life. Belief in an afterworld which was reserved for members of the *Midewiwin* society, added an exclusivist element which was not present in the earlier Anishinaabe world view--and which would appear to be a reaction to Christian concepts of a "heaven" reserved for those who believed in Christian salvation.

Another aspect of the Ghost Lodge ceremony which had practical applications for this world was touched upon by a Protestant missionary at Red Lake in the 1840s. David

Spencer, in a short description of the "Medicine Dance" at Red Lake, explained that when an individual died the nearest relative made up an image of the departed to which were added various valuables, along with a dish, spoon and food so that the deceased would have sustenance on his journey. Thus far Spencer's account is standard; however, his next statements are very revealing: "thereafter, other valuables were added as they become available." After a year or so, the relative would hold a *Midewiwin* for the purpose of redistributing these valuables to the most distant relatives of the deceased (Minnesota Historical Society Research Centre. Grace Lee Nute Papers. Box 14).²¹

Although Hoffman made no mention of initiation by substitution for young children, he did for sick persons. He explained, that in cases where the patient could not be successfully treated by a *Mide* in the patient's own lodge, and his family could afford the fees for initiation into the first degree, the patient was carried into the specially constructed *Mide* Lodge. It was believed that the evil manitous could be expelled in this sacred structure, "at which place alone the presence of Ki'tshi Man'ido may be felt," if the ceremonies were performed and the patient promised to devote his life to the teachings and services of the society (Hoffman 1891:281). Outwardly this too would appear to be a response to Christianity, and it could be. However, despite Hoffman's language, his illustration of the songs employed suggest that the message of Otter, and the power of the *miigis* shell which brought life and power to the patient, were presented in terms of the Anishinaabe world view and are comparable to regular first degree ceremonies.

Since Hoffman's account is so exhaustive, it is difficult to highlight any aspects of it as being particularly significant. Unlike previous Euro-American observers who picked

out several aspects which appeared important to them, Hoffman integrated everything into the whole. Thus, he carefully explained the structure of the *Mide* Lodge, as well as describing the sacred posts, the sacred stone, the pole upon which the presents are hung, plus the *Mide* drum, drum-stick and rattle which are used by the *Mide* officials. Hoffman described and illustrated the facial decoration of the participants, and the decoration of the sacred poles as used in each of the four degrees, noting the variations in colour.²²

Hoffman was also the first observer to take the "sermons" of the *Mide* officials seriously. He noted how they explained the origin of the *Midewiwin* and how it had aided the Ojibwa in their migration westward. Their oral narratives which comprised these sermons were recorded, and the origin and migration charts were carefully copied and explained. As Dewdney (1975) and Vennum (1978) were later to show in more detail, it was these migration charts which detailed the various migrations of different bands of Ojibwa westward over a period of approximately two centuries. As such, they recorded not only the westward progress of the *Midewiwin*, but Ojibwa settlements which had been established during this time.

They also provide insight into the development of the concept of the Ojibwa as a people, still part of, but separate from other members of the Anishinaabeg. Whereas the *Midewiwin* during the period of the refugee villages had served as a trans-tribal connecting force, the western groups of Ojibwa later adopted it as their own as they pushed westward. However, those Ojibwa who continued to live in Wisconsin still continued to participate in joint celebrations with the Menominee and other Aboriginal groups with whom they had close contact (cf. Chapter Six). Although the Ojibwa

continued to speak of themselves in terms of local groupings, and while there was no central political figure to which they owed allegiance, the existing narratives and migration charts of the tribal historians or *kanawencikewinini* (Vennum 1978:753) appear to have described a people with a common heritage and a sense of a common homeland won on the field of battle. It must be remembered, nevertheless, that these records refer to only one of several groups of Ojibwa who lived during this period. What documentary sources we have, though, suggest that a similar sense of self-awareness did exist among other groups as well as those studied by Hoffman.

Tribal historians of the *Midewiwin* may have been the ones most involved at the local level in attempting to preserve the heritage of the Ojibwa people. Nevertheless, they were not alone in considering themselves responsible for preserving the heritage of their people. The History of the Ojibway People by the mixed-blood, William Warren, and The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation, by the Ojibwa Christian convert, George Copway, and even Rev. Peter Jones' History of the Ojibway Indians are all indicative of this growing sense that the Ojibwa were a distinct people. It would, however, be a mistake simply to equate tribal historians with the published historians. Not only was the latter group composed of Christianized and westernized Ojibwa writing for a largely Euro-American audience, but they most likely were applying western socio-political concepts to the Ojibwa people whom they described. Thus, for instance, it is doubtful if the geographically scattered bands of Ojibwa envisioned themselves as a unified society in any sense of the word. Nevertheless, together with the *Mide* tribal historians, writers such as Warren, Copway

and Jones serve as examples of the different ways in which individual Ojibwa were defining themselves and their communities. It is important, however, that we realize that they presented quite different visions of what it meant to be Ojibwa.

As he had done with the migration charts, Hoffman carefully copied many of the *Mide* songs which formed part of the ceremonies, and explained the meaning of the symbols which acted as memory aids for the *Mides*.²³ The *Mides* did not, he pointed out, employ mnemonic symbols which always meant the same thing as Schoolcraft had maintained. A bear, for instance, might refer to the guardian manitou of the society, to a singer impersonating a bear manitou, to the exorcism of a malevolent bear spirit, or to the desired capture of a bear. The only way to know was to be told by the person who owned the chart. Moreover, he explained, *Mides* prepared their own songs and often did not sing them twice in the same manner. Although he did attempt to notate several songs, he felt that the words were the important element, believing that the melody would be unrecognizable without the words. While he was later proven incorrect in this respect, by Francis Densmore (1910-13), this does not diminish the immense value of this aspect of his work, for his explanations have provided unique insights into the workings of the *Midewiwin* and the Anishinaabe world view.

So inclusive is Hoffman's work that it is easy to forget that he was describing the *Midewiwin* as it existed at a particular point in time (the 1880s) on two Minnesota reservations. While several of the charts presumably went back at least to the early nineteenth century, and the narratives which he recorded traced their own origin far further back, the *Midewiwin* had not been a static institution. What Hoffman's work did,

at least in the minds of the Euro-Americans, is fix it at a particular place and time. Inadvertently, in documenting the *Midewiwin* so thoroughly, Hoffman created an orthodoxy against which all other examples have been judged.

Yet, it is arguable to what extent Hoffman's informants were representatives of a "pure" form of the *Midewiwin*, if indeed such a concept was valid. Like Nicollet's informant Chagobay, two of the informants mentioned by Hoffman, Sikas'sige and Skweko'mik, were lower level *Mides* who did not have any socio-political status in their communities. As such they were considerably less influential than Flat Mouth, Loon Foot or Shingwaukonse had been during the previous generation. Although this does not necessarily mean that their information is less reliable (since Sikas'sige was able to rely on his fourth degree wife for backup information, and Hoffman's third informant was Ojibwa, a fourth degree *Mide* formerly from Sandy Lake), it may indicate that the more powerful members of the *Midewiwin* were not in favour of providing the information to Hoffman. It must also be remembered that what Hoffman recorded was not the flowering of the strong, vibrant religion that was observed by Nicollet, Schoolcraft, Day and Kohl. Particularly at White Earth, but also at Red Lake, Hoffman would have encountered a beleaguered religion whose dwindling adherents looked back to a better past, while they continued to seek blessings which would help them to deal with an increasingly uncertain future.

This is not to say that the *Midewiwin* as it continued to be practiced at Red Lake, White Earth, and surrounding reservations, was not more vigorous than it was in other Ojibwa communities which had become more acculturated.²⁴ Despite the fact that

Dewdney (1975) and Blessing (Blessing 1977) both argued that the most "orthodox" forms of the *Midewiwin* could be found among adherents who lived among the Minnesota Ojibwa (although they disagreed as to precisely which groups), it must be remembered that at the time Hoffman was recording his material, it was precisely these groups who would have been viewed as being on the outer fringes of Ojibwa society. They were further from what they saw as the centre in Chequamegon (or perhaps Bowating), and also further from those regions which had started to become part of the larger American society.

It could be argued that it was because of this relative isolation, that they were in a better position to maintain a separate world view. Nevertheless, if contemporary scholars use the views and practices of Hoffman's informants as the norm, then we risk judging future descriptions in terms which would have been antithetical to the Anishinaabe world view in which the *Mides* sought to interpret the *Midewiwin* to its members in terms of the local situation.²⁵

Francis Densmore,²⁶ the ethnographer whose work both complemented, and to some extent corrected Hoffman, made this point when she observed that ritual exactness was not obligatory in the *Midewiwin*. She explained that while the ceremony had a general outline which was universally followed, the details varied in different localities (Densmore 1910:13). The problem remains as to which elements of the *Midewiwin* were fundamental and which were details which might vary.

Densmore began by stating that the chief aim of the *Midewiwin* was to "secure health and long life to its adherents" and she added that "music forms an essential means

to that end." A long life, she argued, was coincident with goodness, and evil inevitably reacted on the offender. There was, she went on, no reference to war or enemies in the ceremonies, and propitiation was absent from its teaching and practice.

Although Densmore's description of the main aim of the *Midewiwin* agreed with Hoffman and most other observers, her understanding of the society differed in several fundamental ways from the others. Not only was she the first to understand the fundamental role of music in the ceremony, and in Ojibwa society in general, she was the first to paint a positive picture of the society and its adherents. According to her, the "good life" that its members sought was one free from evil, and, she suggested, from war and revenge. It is significant, therefore, that Densmore played down any aspects of the *Midewiwin* which dealt with the temptation to use their power for evil purposes that higher degree *Mides* faced, and she made a conscious decision not to include any examples of "bad medicine" in her descriptions. Her denial that the *Midewiwin* ceremonies were attempts to appease the manitous marked a complete turn-about from the once popular views of Schoolcraft. Since Densmore was the first woman to write extensively on the *Midewiwin*, and since she makes use of many female informants, it is tempting to attribute her new perspective to this fact. However, the only other study of the *Midewiwin* by a woman concentrates almost exclusively on all the aspects that Densmore avoided, and once more presents a picture of a society in which evil predominated. The views may well be a reflection of the liberal beliefs of Densmore's family who had brought her up to accept that the neighbouring Indians had customs different than our own (Densmore 1979:[p.1 of introd by Nina M. Archabal]). Whatever

their origin, Densmore's observations, even though they were not focused on the *Midewiwin* itself, represent a new level of understanding on the part of Euro-Americans.

Born in Red Wing, Minnesota in 1867, Densmore received a traditional musical education with emphasis on piano, but became interested in the music of North American Indians through her close contact with the neighbouring Sioux and Ojibwa, and through reading the work of Alice C. Fletcher, a pioneer in the field of ethnomusicology.

Although she later departed from Fletcher's ideas about the structure of Indian music, she followed Fletcher's idea that "music envelopes like an atmosphere, every religious, tribal, and social ceremony as well as every personal experience."²⁷ Early in her life, Densmore decided that she wanted to devote her life to the study of Indian society, and particularly Indian music. She set about educating herself by reading everything that had been written on them. Following a 1905 visit to Grand Portage, on the north shore of Lake Superior in Minnesota, where she witnessed a *Midewiwin* ceremony,²⁸ she became determined to describe Indian music on its own terms, rather than arranging it to suit Euro-American sensibilities. Shortly afterwards she began her work in earnest, with the financial assistance of the Bureau of American Ethnology in the Smithsonian Institute.

Twenty years had passed since Hoffman had spent time with a number of informants at Red Lake and White Earth reservations, during which period the traditional life style of the Ojibwa, including the *Midewiwin*, was constantly under attack.

Densmore's sources for songs were men and women singers from the White Earth, Leach Lake, Red Lake and Bois Fort reservations. Despite the fact that Red Lake continued to be a stronghold of traditionalism (or perhaps because it was), she did not obtain any

Midewiwin songs from there. Thus, most of her songs are representative of a more southerly tradition. Her informants on other aspects of the *Midewiwin* also came from the Otter Tail, Mille Lacs and Fond du Lac bands, although most of the explanations were given by two elderly men and one woman from White Earth, Main'ans (Little Wolf), Gage'win and Na'waji'bigo'kwe. All three were high degree members of the *Midewiwin*, though she does not make clear what their position was in socio-political life of the reservation.

Given her background and training, it is not surprising that Densmore's analysis of the *Midewiwin* was, to a large extent, from a musical perspective. Songs, she believed, represented the musical expression of religious ideas. However, unlike those before her, for whom Ojibwa melody and harmonics were boring, Densmore argued that rhythm and melody were the essential elements since they expressed the idea of the song; words were forced to conform with the melody (Densmore 1910:2; 1979:95). Like Hoffman before her, she noted that many of these words were archaic forms which were difficult for contemporary Ojibwa to translate exactly, or meaningless syllables which filled out the measures of melody. She had been informed, she explained, that the words might change slightly as long as the idea remained the same. This idea was expressed in the transcription of the songs on birchbark song charts--which could be understood by members of the *Midewiwin* (Densmore 1910:14-16). Densmore tested out her theories concerning melody by playing a song and having members of the *Midewiwin* from a different reserve draw a picture to represent it, and by showing some mnemonics and having them play the song.

Densmore believed that music was of such importance, that the *Mides* exerted their power through a combination of music and medicine. For a cure to work, it was necessary to use both the proper medicine and the proper song. She noted that in some of the *Mide* songs, the medicine bags (or more properly, the manitou) were sometimes represented as speaking. It was the song which made the charm effective. Densmore noted that rhythm was most peculiar in songs intended to produce "magic," including those which dealt with providing success in hunting and healing (Densmore 1979:20).

Densmore explained that the *Midewiwin* was a multi-level society which was open to both men and women. It had eight levels or degrees which could be attained after receiving the appropriate instruction and bestowing the required gifts. She went on to explain that meetings were held each spring, and could also be held in the fall. Since fair weather was symbolic of health and happiness, efforts were made to begin the ceremony on a sunny day. Members were required to attend one meeting a year so as to restore their "spirit power." Smaller gatherings could also be held in order to treat the sick. *Mide* officials were members holding high degrees, and were chosen for the office at each meeting.

Densmore did not go into the same detail regarding the eight degrees as Hoffman had done for the four which he described, but she did provide explanations for some aspects that Hoffman had neglected. Thus, she noted that when a candidate had chosen a *Mide* to lead the ceremony at which he or she was to be initiated, they together then chose four others (who were normally not as high degree as the leader) to assist them. Although Densmore did not provide a name for the leader, Landes later described him as

Gitchi Webid or chief person, while the remaining officials were called *webids* or assistant chiefs. The first of those chosen was the *oshkaabewis*, whose duty it was to announce the ceremony and invite members to attend. He carried tobacco for them to smoke and announced the names of the officers to the people. Throughout the remainder of the ceremony the *oshkaabewis* acted as the general director of the events. Following the completion of the sweat lodge ceremonies, the remaining officers were chosen. These included the *ne'mita'maun* (whom Landes later termed the *naganid* or Bowsman) and the *we'daked'* (whom Landes termed the *wedaged* or Steersman), both of whom played important roles in the initiation or shooting ritual.²⁹ She also distinguished a small group of specially appointed singers whom she termed the *zagimag*. While many *Mide* songs were sung by the candidate or other officials as part of individual rituals, the *zagimag* were responsible for singing the *nimiwug* or dancing songs which were sung at those points in the ceremony when anyone could get up and dance.

Densmore went on to compare this form of the *Midewiwin* ceremony (in which members were initiated into various degrees), with another form which was more specifically devoted to curing. According to her informants, when traditional curing methods failed, the *Midewiwin* curing ceremony was employed. As such, it was used as a final attempt to prolong life, and if this attempt failed, the ceremony was used to make the patient's last hours more comfortable. Densmore was fortunate in being present at such a ceremony for Niganibines, the hereditary chief of the Pillager band, and son of Flat Mouth (Densmore 1910:51-55). In such cases the leader, *oshkaabewis*, and eight other *Mides* were selected to carry out the ceremony. A special *Mide* lodge was

constructed, along with a medicine pole. The patient was carried to the lodge where mide officials, relatives and friends gathered. Medicine songs were song, sometimes the patient was given a medical brew to drink, and the *Mides* 'shot' their medicine bags at him. If, as in the case of Niganibines, the patient died, a form of "funeral ceremony" was held at which the *Midewiwin* beliefs were reviewed for the benefit of the family, and the spirit of the deceased was given instructions to help him on his journey to the land of the spirits.

This curing ceremony was contrasted with what Densmore termed the *Djasakid* (*Jaasakiid*) curing ceremony. The latter name, she explained was applied to both "jugglers" and doctors. These *jaasakiids* were distinguished from *Mides* in that the latter obtained their supernatural power and songs from a vision which had been obtained through fasting. Densmore then went on to describe how the person she termed a *Djasakid* treated the patient by swallowing and then regurgitating bones. Many Euro-American observers have treated this type of curer as a distinct class from the *jaasakiid*, although both used different methods than the *Mide*. The fact that almost every observer comes away with a slightly different interpretation of the categories and names of the different healer/shamans is indicative of the difficulty in arriving at an "authentic" version. It is next to impossible to determine whether these differences indicate misunderstandings on the part of the observers, or were simply variations on a theme.

Densmore's description of the main *Midewiwin* ceremony was fundamentally the same as Hoffman's except that she focused more on illustrating the significance of music and songs in the rituals. Thus, for instance, she provided numerous examples of songs

used in various *Midewiwin* rituals. Although Densmore's training as a musician enabled her to gain new insights into the melodic structure and function of *Mide* songs, her interpretation of the songs continued to be lacking in some instances. Thomas Vennum, who is a trained musicologist, and linguist, attributed some of this to Densmore's difficulties in correctly translating some of the Ojibwa words. Moreover, while he agreed with her that the melody was important, and the words were not fixed, Vennum agreed with Hoffman that the melodies of the same *Mide* song text could vary with individuals. What was important was the idea which was expressed by the words (even though these too might vary slightly).

In his article on the *Mide* origin songs, Vennum describes how both Densmore and Hoffman grasped part, but not all of the significance of the symbolism of the tree pictograph. Taking as his example some of Hoffman's explanations of song pictographs as made by Little Frenchman, and Densmore's explanations of several songs in which the pictograph incorporates a tree, Vennum takes issue with their interpretations. Although they were aware of the tree pictograph as representing the tree climbed by *Nanabozho* during the deluge, Densmore and Hoffman appear not to have made a connection with other meanings. Kohl had noted that the Ojibwa *mides* also saw the tree as the "path of life" and made a connection with the *pagaakokwan* or drum stick. In the *Mide* Lodge the tree was represented as a degree post. The tree/degree post stood for the restorative power of the *Midewiwin*; planting the tree represented establishing the *Mide* religion as a way of life, the trunk symbolizing the proper path and the branches as dead ends. At other times it was used to symbolize the spread of the Ojibwa people from their place of

origin (Vennum 1978). Vennum might have added that a tree, the white pine in particular, because of its height and straightness, had a special significance as a name which could give power to its holder. Shingwaukconse, the noted leader and *Mide* was named Pine or Little Pine.

Thus, the tree pictograph, which is found throughout Ojibwa sacred scrolls in various forms, and which Densmore used to illustrate several of the songs that she had collected, has a number of different meanings depending upon the context (Vennum 1978:769-74). It is important to keep in mind the variability of meaning in Ojibwa symbols, songs, and narratives. Too often, observers have seized on one interpretation and tried to apply it to all occurrences. The efforts of several generations of scholars to unlock the meaning of the origin and migration song charts (and words) is not just a case of scholarly detective work. From the Ojibwa viewpoint the process of achieving understanding can be seen as a case of removing the various layers of meaning so that the kernel or seed of the story finally becomes apparent. As the layers are removed, our understanding of the *Midewiwin* (and the Anishinaabe world view) becomes clearer, so that formerly meaningless acts gradually can be put into context and a picture of what is happening begins to emerge. As this happens our own biases and preconceptions break down and we can approach the beliefs and ceremonies with a more positive attitude.

Densmore devoted extensive notes to the context in which the song was sung, but Vennum argued that her interpretation of the meaning of the accompanying pictographs (song pictures) failed to capture the idea that she correctly judged to be so important. Although Vennum may be correct that Densmore's explanations of the song pictures

sometimes simply state the obvious (and at other times is lacking entirely), it must also be remembered that Densmore's work can not be considered entirely authoritative in that she sometimes recorded the song at one reservation and had the song picture drawn at another. Moreover, as she noted, the *Mides* themselves would often gather to debate the precise meanings of the song pictures and other sacred pictographs.

If Hoffman, and to a lesser extent, Densmore believed that they were describing a dying ceremony, they underestimated the *Midewiwin's* strength and resilience. Almost forty years later, in the 1930s and 1940s in northern Michigan, near the Wisconsin border, the anthropologist Vernon Kinietz made the observation that at Lac Vieux Desert (Katikitegan) the *Midewiwin* was unopposed. In fact, he noted, some of the villagers who had been Christians had recently joined the *Midewiwin* (Kinietz 1947:175). Kinietz and his fellow anthropologists, Victor Barnouw, who studied Ojibwa culture at Lac du Flambeau, and Robert Ritzenthaler, who carried out field work at Lac Court Oreilles, together provide us with yet another glimpse of the ceremony itself, and the role that it played in three Ojibwa communities in northern Wisconsin during the first half of the twentieth century. And, they provide us with another opportunity to see how certain elements of the Euro-American view of the *Midewiwin* remained remarkably constant, despite the increasing willingness of the participants to allow outsiders to view the ceremonies.

The Ojibwa in these three communities formed part of the Lake Superior Chippewa (Ojibwa) who had signed the 1854 Treaty with the American government. The Lac du Flambeau and Lac Court Oreilles bands had been allotted small areas of

reservation lands in regions which made the continuation of traditional subsistence patterns or adaptation to the money economy equally difficult. A combination of government and church-run schools attempted to teach the students English, as well as American values and vocational skills. Most Ojibwa began to take on the outward characteristics of their Euro-American neighbours, although reservation life brought with it a general deterioration of living conditions as the inhabitants struggled unsuccessfully to make a living for themselves. A combination of poor housing, alcoholism and disease led to a health crisis which continued to grow worse with passing years.

A minority of "traditionalists" attempted to separate themselves into autonomous villages in which they continued to speak Ojibwa, and practice the *Midewiwin*, while attempting to eke out a subsistence living. At the time of the 1854 treaty, a number of Ojibwa at L'Anse (near Keewenaw Bay) elected to leave that relatively acculturated community and establish a new village (Katikitegan) at Lac Vieux Desert where they could continue to live their lives as their ancestors had done. Likewise, a small number of Ojibwa at Lac Court Oreilles established a separate village (Old Village) where they attempted to live according to the old ways.

The three anthropologists, along with A. Irving Hallowell (who spent some time among the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwa in order to compare his work at Berens River, Manitoba) were representative of a new group of anthropologists interested in studying the acculturation of native people.³⁰ While each of them approached the question from somewhat different perspectives, all of them were interested in the implications that acculturation had with regard to the Ojibwa world view. Moreover, they investigated not

only areas of Ojibwa life in which there had been change, but also those in which there had been stability. As a result, they exhibited a special interest in those communities which showed elements of persistence in values and practices. Thus, Kinnietz and Barnouw concentrated their efforts on the geographically and socially isolated communities of Katikitegan and Old Village, rather than on more acculturated Ojibwa communities. From the perspective of someone studying the *Midewiwin*, their efforts provide concrete evidence that despite the dire predictions of an earlier generation of Euro-Americans, the *Midewiwin* had not completely died out.

Ritzenthaler entitled his study of the Ojibwa "Chippewa Preoccupation with Health." Although he began the work with a statement indicating that the Ojibwa were approximately eighty percent acculturated at the time of his study, and that Catholicism had made substantial inroads into the community at Lac du Flambeau, Ritzenthaler nevertheless maintained that they continued to demonstrate an inordinate interest in health and healing. His study concluded that this preoccupation was demonstrated in their ceremonies, such as the *Midewiwin*, their traditional concepts of disease, the curative and preventative techniques employed by healers, and the prestige which these healers were accorded by other band members (Ritzenthaler 1953:228-229).

Unfortunately, Ritzenthaler was vague as to what extent these views were shared by the acculturated members of the community. However, given the nature of his thesis, it must be assumed that many of the otherwise acculturated Ojibwa continued to maintain traditional views regarding health and disease. Ritzenthaler found that there were many concrete reasons for their health concerns at the time of his studies, but he argued that

these concerns had been present among the Ojibwa for some time. In fact, he maintained that the Ojibwa preoccupation with health had its origins in the pre-contact period, although he did acknowledge that the concerns had intensified in the post-contact period due to serious health problems which had arisen as a result of contact and then the establishment of reservations (Ritzenthaler 1953:229). Even though Ritzenthaler did not make it explicit, the implication was that the preoccupation with health concerns was at least in part a result of what Hallowell termed their personality structure--which caused them to feel responsible for their own situation.

Ritzenthaler argued that the *Midewiwin* as it existed among the Ojibwa at Lac du Flambeau was dominated by its curative functions. Not only was sickness the main prerequisite for membership, but the curative functions employed were primarily supernatural rather than based on medicinal knowledge. Ritzenthaler contrasted this with the situation which had existed at Hoffman's time when, he argued, the entrance into the *Midewiwin* was "a natural, routine part of a person's life, and candidates spent a considerable amount of time and paid huge amounts in goods in order to gain medicinal knowledge" (Ritzenthaler 1953:185). According to Ritzenthaler, the twentieth century Ojibwa had retained only the most essential or useful parts of the ceremony--that is, those parts which helped them deal with the medical problems which they faced.

Kinietz also believed that the *Midewiwin* had undergone many changes since earlier times. However, his interpretation of what had happened varied somewhat from that of Ritzenthaler. According to Kinietz, many of the changes in the ceremony took place as a result of borrowing from Christianity, until now ". . . the native ceremony

[*Midewiwin*] may well be called a church denomination" (Kinietz 1947:175). Kinietz went on to explain that at Lac Vieux Desert Ojibwa called the ceremony "our church" and indeed a number of former Catholics had become members of the *Midewiwin*. Whereas in previous times the *Midewiwin* had many characteristics of a secret society, at Lac Vieux Desert almost all the village belonged, and only Euro-American visitors were barred.

Nevertheless, according to both Kinietz's informant, John Pete, and Barnouw's informant, Tom Badger, the main purpose of the *Midewiwin* was to regain health, or to ensure its continuance. The *miigis* continued to play a central role in both their versions of the *Midewiwin* ceremony, but a new element had been added to the ceremonies at Lac Vieux Desert and Lac Court Oreilles. When other remedies failed to heal a sick person, the shaman fastened a *miigis* on the patient (called "borrowing life"), indicating that a *Midewiwin* ceremony would have to be held before a cure could "clear up the account."³¹

No doubt, it was this aspect of the ceremony which led Ritzenthaler to believe that at Lac du Flambeau the "old ritual, meaning, and accoutrements of the *Midewiwin* had been sloughed off within the last fifty years, and in this condensation process the religion has withdrawn into and seized upon the curative aspect as the important one ..."

(Ritzenthaler 1953:185). However, the more detailed accounts of the *Midewiwin* at the neighbouring communities of Lac Court Oreilles and Lac Vieux Desert suggest that the functions of the ceremonies remained broader than Ritzenthaler (or Barnouw and Kinietz) believed them to be. As will be seen, many of the rituals varied more in form than in substance.

The main ceremony itself, particularly those parts which involved the *miigis*, was much closer to the ceremonies described by earlier observers than Ritzenthaler believed. However, Kinietz and Barnouw (through their informants) do provide some examples of how some of the rituals in the ceremony were evolving. As Kinietz observed: "Formerly, people were able to swallow and disgorge them [*miigis*], but now they only hold them in their mouths--during four circuits of the lodge. Then each puts his *miigis* away in his medicine skin" (Kinietz 1947:196). The the swallowing and regurgitation of the *miigis* may have been replaced by the simple placing of the *miigis* in the participant's mouth, but, the power attributed to the *miigis* remained.

The "shooting ceremony," in which the officials threw their "medicine skins" at a point (shoulder, elbow, knee) in order to strengthen it, remained fundamentally the same, although there were some minor variations. In Barnouw's account, any part of the body might be marked with coloured pigment and shot with medicine bundles, rather than the specified areas that other accounts mentioned. Whereas earlier accounts had employed the image (and vocabulary) of shooting arrows, the officials now "loaded their guns" with *miigis* shells (Barnouw 1960:92). Both observers related how, at another point in the ceremony, when the *miigis* was placed in the candidate's mouth, he fell over as if dead, until he was revived by the power of the shaman's medicine bundle. As Tom Badger explained, when describing the public duelling: "If you had a hide pointed at you, you would get sick and die. The only way you could get well then would be to join the *Midewiwin*. It's dangerous, when they're pointing their hides" (Barnouw 1960:97). Thus, while the *Midewiwin* may have taken on the outward appearance of just another religious

denomination, its members were well aware that *Mide* shamans continued to possess powers which made them both respected and feared.

Other essential aspects of the *Midewiwin* also remained the same. Kinietz recorded the use of the sacred phrases "Ho! Ho! Ho!" on several occasions during the ceremony, but principally in connection with the shooting rituals.³² The staging of a *Midewiwin* continued to require a considerable accumulation of goods, including food and alcoholic drink for several feasts, in addition to payment to the *Mide* officials and the assistants responsible for erecting the lodge. Kinietz (1947:173) implied that the introduction of alcohol in the ceremonies was new, but Mallery (1972:203) and Hoffman (1891:164) had both noted this in their accounts in the nineteenth century. Both Barnouw's and Kinietz's accounts also described the teaching that occurred during the ceremony in which the candidate was given instructions regarding the ceremony itself as well as the origins of the *Midewiwin*. While the medium of instruction appeared to have changed from pictographs drawn on birchbark scrolls and boards to pictographs drawn in sand or dirt, in every instance, the intention remained to provide memory aids for the participants. As Barnouw explained:

The *naganit* explains the meaning of the marks in a heap of earth to the *wamidewit* [candidate].³³ He tells him that if he doesn't listen, he will go off on the top road . . . if he goes off on that road, he won't live long. But he says that if the *wamidewit* listens carefully, he will go along the path to the point where your hair starts to turn white. (Barnouw 1960:87)

In this brief speech of the *naganit* (leader), the functions of the *Midewiwin* were clearly broader than that of a simple curing ceremony for a specific illness, for what is being expounded upon is the necessity of keeping to the path of life set out by the *Midewiwin* in

order to live to old age. Once again, it would appear that Euro-American observers focused on almost entirely on the curing rituals, to the exclusion of the teachings of the *Midewiwin*.

Nevertheless, despite the many similarities with older versions of the *Midewiwin*, it is equally clear that entry into the *Midewiwin* had lost much of its early rigour. Candidates were no longer required to have a vision before applying for admission, nor were they (and *Mide* officials) required to undergo cleansing in a sweat lodge at the beginning of the ceremony.³⁴ Tom Badger, Barnouw's main informant, explained that he had never been visited by a guardian spirit during his vision quest--a fact he attributed to his mother giving him food to eat during his fast! This, he claimed, accounted for his limited powers as a shaman (Barnouw 1960:84;87;106).

A number of aspects of the ceremonies themselves also changed. Kinietz (1947:18) singled out the lack of secrecy as one of the most important changes, but it would appear that the practice at Katikitegan was the exception rather than the rule. The medicine stone and the *midewatig* or posts in the lodge appear to be no longer used, although they were referred to in the ceremonies. Another innovation at Katikitegan was that medicine bundles were inherited or sold, rather than being buried at the death of a *Mide* (Kinietz 1947:208-209). Sweat lodge rituals were no longer part of the ceremony, and funeral ceremonies did not take place within the *Midewigan*. However, the *Mide* water drum and rattle continued to be used.

The number of *Mide* officials was smaller than formerly since the pool of trained people was limited, and as might be expected, arguments regarding the accurate details of

different rituals were intense. However, from Barnouw's description (1960:78-82) it would appear that the functions of the officials were more specialized than previously recorded. Although instructions continued to be given during the ceremony, the series of teaching sessions before the ceremony was no longer carried out, and the description of the origin myth within the ceremony had been considerably shortened. However, Barnouw's collection of myths does indicate that the cycle of myths continued to exist in the same basic format.

Whereas instruction in medicines had previously been a vital part of a candidate's instruction, the informants indicated that this knowledge was no longer passed on to the same extent within the context of the *Midewiwin*. They maintained that even at the higher degrees, medicines were used only to cure minor ailments, and were never used to cause illnesses. Kinietz indicated that the people continued to believe that physical ailments were mainly the result of supernatural causes, which required the aid of shamans who possessed supernatural gifts that allowed them to effect cures. It would seem that although many people knew the medicinal value of a number of herbs and roots, only *Mide* shamans were able to draw upon this extra supernatural assistance.

Both Kinietz's and Barnouw's informants appear to have been anxious to minimize the role of the *Midewiwin* as a place for individuals to gain knowledge, power, and prestige. Except for Tom Badger's brief remarks regarding the power of the medicine bags to actually kill, there was little indication that such power carried with it the potential to do both good and evil. If the powers of the *Mide* shamans to do good or evil were more limited than in previous times, it would have been natural that the prestige of

the *Mides* in their communities diminished. This certainly appears to have been the case, for even in the traditional villages, the *Mide* shamans did not play leading roles in the life of the community. However, it may also be that these groups of Ojibwa had learned to be more cautious in revealing the true nature of their ceremonies to outsiders, given the increased efforts of church and government officials to suppress the practice of aboriginal religions. Finally, the descriptions may indicate the particular perspective of the observers themselves, since they were specifically interested in the curing aspects of the *Midewiwin*.

Certainly the preceding accounts vary considerably from the work of Ruth Landes among the Ojibwa of the Cass Lake reservation in Minnesota and the Manitou Reserve near Elmo, Ontario during early 1930s. Years later, Landes was to put together much of her earlier field studies into what has become the modern classic version of the *Midewiwin* (Landes 1968). The first results of this field work had resulted in the publication of Ojibwa Sociology (1937) and The Ojibwa Woman (1938), in which she dealt with what she termed the highly individualistic nature of the Ojibwa hunting and gathering society, and the personalities in it. Like Schoolcraft before her, Landes believed that the Ojibwa were shaped by their environment. She painted a bleak picture of a lonely hunter who "felt himself a soul at bay, against cosmic forces personalized as cynical or terrorizing. . . life is a battle with the manitos for meat and blanket; and a battle one must fight all alone, desperately, for mere survival" (Landes 1968:7-8). Landes' vision of Ojibwa society was one in which suspicion, fear and conflict predominated. Quarrels, duels, blood feuds, forms of sexual aggression, and psychic disorders were,

according to her, part of the Ojibwa character. It was within this context that Landes approached the study of the *Midewiwin*, which even more than in the isolated communities just examined, continued to play an important role in Ojibwa life. Predictably, her explanation focused on the sorcery practiced by evil shamans who used their powers primarily for evil purposes. Will Rogers (Hole-in-the-Sky), from Cass Lake, who served as her primary informant, she suggested had a alarming repute as an evil shaman, but was finally bested in combat and ended his days in a mental hospital. Landes painted a picture of a boastful man who both threatened and charmed those around him. The other informant, Maggie Wilson, though part Cree, and a nominal Christian, was a well-known visionary who appears to have served as a counter-poise to Rogers. Yet even Wilson could hardly be considered to have been a "good shaman" given the way that she was described (Landes 1968:16-20).

Given her understanding of Ojibwa society as individualistic or "atomistic," it is not surprising that that she should raise the question as to why the *Midewiwin* society should have flourished among them. She answered her own question by explaining that "rampant individualism also operated here too" (Landes 1968:71). This, she explained, was the reason that Will Rogers had agreed to teach her without first consulting his *Mide* colleagues. According to her, each shaman's public status rested on his private visionary accomplishments, but was given public acknowledgement in "mutual challenges and covert duels" in which they engaged. The excitement in every *Midewiwin* ceremony was generated as much by the shaman's performance as the cure itself (Landes 1968:72).

Landes acknowledged that the *Mide* origin tales spoke of the *Midewiwin* bringing "life" for the Ojibwa. However, she interpreted this as a blessing which resolved the conflict between good and evil among the Manitous. While public *Mide* teachings might stress positive virtues and inspire hope, the shamans, she argued, were traditionally the enemies of the people who indoctrinated them in fear and aggression, and used sorcery to terrorize the people by causing illness or even death. She went on to argue that the Ojibwa notion of "terrorize" could be equated with our notion of "respect," and their notion of "evil" could best be equated with "unscrupulous" or "highly skilled" (Landes 1968:45).

The main events of the *Midewiwin* ceremony, as described by Landes, outwardly resemble the nineteenth century ceremonies far more than they resemble the ceremonies described by Kinietz and Barnouw. To begin with, they lasted seven to eight days and were closed to non-members except for the final day which the public could attend. Personal visions, though not required of all applicants for membership, played an important part in the *Midewiwin* observed by Landes (1968:56). Sweat lodges were also an essential part of the *Midewiwin*, and sweat rituals were used at several points during the ceremony. Landes classed members into three groups: 1) cured patients, 2) ritual officers, 3) curing shamans or *Mide* doctors (Landes 1968:76-77). This differed from Hoffman (1891:151:52) who made no distinctions among *Midewiwin* members. The curing shamans or *Mide* doctors, she suggested, were set apart since they "merged with the Supernaturals and addressed one another as "manito" (Landes 1968:44).

According to Landes, patient members could not automatically become either ritual officers or curing shamans, regardless of the degree that they might hold (Landes 1965:76-7). Special instruction was required for those who wished to be ritual officers or curing shamans, and normally visions were required of them in order for them to be able to demonstrate their superior power. These offices generally ran in bilateral family lines (and included both sexes), since family members were able to receive instruction at reduced rates and shared in the fees paid by candidates. This, at times, caused tensions between family and non-family members, regarding what Landes termed "nepotism."

The *Midewiwin* described by Landes was structured as four Earth grades followed by four Sky grades, although she noted that few people ever proceeded beyond the third grade, because the fees increased markedly with each grade. Landes noted, as Hoffman had observed earlier, that those who went through the highest grades inevitably found that the power they acquired was "increasingly open to abuse," with the result these shamans were both respected and feared. In Landes' understanding, "good" shamans ranked below "evil" ones, and were much less respected (Landes 1968:9).

Perhaps due to the fact that she had paid for a lengthy series of instructions from Will Rogers, Landes' account of the actual ceremonies was, if anything, more detailed than Hoffman's had been. Landes described the different rituals that were conducted on each succeeding day, and she provided names and explanations of the duties of the presiding *Mide* ceremonial officials. Although her explanation was at times confusing or confused, it was much more focused than Hoffman's which was interspersed with side explanations which came from a variety of Ojibwa and non-Ojibwa sources.

Nevertheless, Landes' work described a generic ceremony, while Hoffman provided details of the ceremonies for each of the first four grades or degrees.

In contrast to Hoffman's description of the *Midewiwin*, Landes' work provides a more personal flavour. Not only were Will Rogers' (Hole) and Everwind's (another *Mide*) activities described in such a way that they became individual human beings, but Landes inserted herself into the process so that there is less of a feeling of subject and object in her work. Thus, for instance, she described the weeks she spent transcribing *Mide* narratives and pictographs from Hole's scroll in order to understand them. Her description of the discussions of the *Mide* shamans also revealed a very different side to them:

There was no firm limit to the number of elaborations about the midé tale. Hole and others, like Everwind's circle revealed that imaginative men like to speculate on ethical, philosophic, therapeutic, and even novelistic implications hidden in the tale. . . . Hole would walk miles to talk midéwiwin with his colleague, Everwind. (Landes 1968:109)

It is hard to believe that these are the same men whom she claimed regularly engaged in quarrels, blood feuds, various forms of sexual aggression, and who suffered from psychic disorders, although it is not impossible that she was describing two sides of the same individuals.

Landes, herself, made few comments about these apparent contradictions but she did find significant differences between the *Midewiwin* that Hoffman had observed, and the ones presided over by Hole and Everwind. If anything, she believed that the ones that she had observed were closer to the Menominee form of the *Midewiwin* describe by Hoffman, particularly with regard to the origin narratives (Landes 1968:112).

Until this point our description has focused on the *Midewiwin* as it was practiced by the Ojibwa, but in order to put it in proper perspective, some attention needs to be paid to the *Midewiwin* among neighbouring peoples with whom the Ojibwa shared many of their beliefs and ceremonies.

ENDNOTES

1. The term *reserve* is the one generally used in Canada while *reservation* is used in the United States. I will follow this practice in referring to Indian lands in the two countries.
2. Ramsey served some time as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for what was then termed the "Northwest" country, and was Governor of the new state of Minnesota.
3. Hall was in charge of the American Board of Foreign Commissioners' mission from 1831 to 1853, first at La Pointe and later at Bad River when most of the band moved there. Although his skills in Ojibwa were far less than those of Fr. Baraga, he was equally committed to the well-being of those that he considered to be his flock, and fought vigorously for their rights.
4. In addition to Hoffman's and Densmore's writings on the subject, S. A. Barrett has written a book on the Dream Dance among Ojibwa and Menominee, and George and Louise Spindler devoted considerable attention to it in their book on the Menominee. Barrett also compares the Dream Dance and Ghost Dance movements, and while admitting there are some similarities, argues that they were separate developments.
5. Hoffman (1892-93:157-161) provided a brief sketch of "the Dreamers" among the Menominee in which his informant explained that *Kitche Manito* had become angry at the corruption of the *Mitawat* (*Midewiwin*), and thus gave them the drum dance. While he never mentioned its appearance among the Minnesota Ojibwas, Bieder (1995:170) notes that it was practiced by traditionalists in the Lac du Flambeau region of Wisconsin, where it had been introduced by the Menominee or the Potawatomi.
6. The Warren family cannot, of course, be classed along with the normal run of "mixed-blood" traders. Nevertheless, Lyman Warren, William Warren's father had been the American Fur Trade Company's agent at La Pointe until he was replaced in 1838 for alleged mismanagement (Crooks to Halsey, Sept. 20, 1838. American Fur Company Papers. MHSRC, St. Paul). Following this he engaged in many attempts to clear his name and gain compensation. He was one of the "mixed-blood" traders who claimed and received compensation for Indian debts at the very treaty for which his son William acted as interpreter (Crooks to Halsey, Sept. 6, 1839; Report from Borup, Lapointe, Sept. 15, 1839. AFC. MHSRC).
7. Since Hinsley (1981) and Bieder (1986) have covered the early work of American ethnologists and the Smithsonian Institute thoroughly, I have not attempted to give anything more than a brief overview of the significance of this work.
8. Hoffman died at the age of 53 in 1899, following a two year period as the American Consul in Mannheim, Germany, during which time he studied European collections and records of American Aborigines.

9. The Bad River Reservation was made up of Indians from their community at La Pointe on Madeline Island who had moved to the mainland near the present town of Ashland since the local Protestant missionary, Rev. Leonard Wheeler, believed the soil on Madeline Island was unsuitable for extensive agriculture.

10. Mallery (1972 v.1:203) made an interesting comment that one elderly informant, Kitche-sh-abads, who possessed a chart similar to the one set out at length in Hoffman's work, agreed to bring together some men who would perform some of the songs and dances--if Mallery would provide them with some whiskey, which at that time Indians were forbidden to purchase. Mallery observed that they were obviously planning a drunken orgy, and while he couldn't oblige, the old man was correct. "The ceremonial chants could be advantageously pronounced only under inspiration, which was of old obtained by a tedious form of intoxication, now expedited by alcohol."

11. Mallery did make brief mention of the *Midewiwin* in his work which was published by the Bureau of Ethnology as part of their Tenth Annual report (Reprint 1972 v.2:508). In it, he comments briefly that the "medicine dance" was preceded by four days and nights of drumming. He adds, that after the dance, which lasted a day, a sweat lodge ceremony was held. Mallery also implied that the candidates who "passed" the initiation rite did so because they possessed the strength of mind and body to endure. This would lead one to believe that Mallery actually never witnessed a *Midewiwin* ceremony himself, but was simply providing second hand information given to him by his informants. This is probably the case, since as he himself acknowledged, the *Midewiwin* was no longer practised at Bad River.

12. Even the missionaries were forced to tone down their usual enthusiasm regarding their efforts and speak of the "gradual" changes that had taken place. In a series of letters that were later published in the 1849 Oberlin Evangelist, J. P. Bardwell spoke mainly of farming successes, but noted that the Indians seldom adopted English modes of dress, and were indifferent to having their children attend school. The church had only nine or ten converts after several decades of efforts, although the Ojibwa continued to observe the *Mitewe* (*Midewiwin*) quite frequently (J. P. Bardwell to Henry Cowles, July 30, 1849. Grace Lee Nute Papers. Box 14. MHSRC, St. Paul).

13. Hoffman had earlier indicated that the *Mides* that he had spoken to admitted that much of the information regarding the *Midewiwin* had been lost as a result of the death of the *Mide* priests, and the lack of younger candidates to whom they could pass on their knowledge, since most of the latter had adopted Christian beliefs (Hoffman 1891:167).

14. Hoffman later published another extensive work on the Menominee which included a significant portion on the *Mitawit* Society, as Hoffman termed the Menominee form of the *Midewiwin*.

15. According to the 1889-90 report (p.xxvii) Dr. Hoffman, ". . . had been initiated into the mysteries of the four degrees of the society, by which he was able to record its ceremonials. . . ." and Hoffman alluded to this himself in the 1892-93 report which included his study of the Menominee Indians (Hoffman 1892-93:70).

16. *Mitawit* was the spelling adopted by Hoffman, although subsequent scholars such as Skinner believed that the correct term was *Mitawin*.

17. Why Hoffman's informants limited their explanations to four degrees is not known, since Warren, writing in the 1850s had noted that the *Midewiwin*, as it had existed in the golden days of Chequamegon, had eight degrees, while David Spencer, a missionary at Red Lake in 1848, quotes an origin story which suggests eight degrees. Similarly, one of Kohl's pictographs shows a representation of a *Mide* Lodge with eight steps running through it. Frances Densmore, writing in 1910, also noted that the *Midewiwin* had eight degrees, though she gave no details regarding the last four degrees.

It remained for Landes (1968:114ff) to provide a more detailed description of the four "earth grades," and the four "sky grades," which were used when the fourth degree initiation failed to achieve a cure. In the latter degrees, the Great Spirit replaced the *Miigis* manitou, and the Eagle replaced the Bear manitou.

Dewdney (1975:111-14) also addressed the problem. He noted that Red Sky's scrolls, which have a Plains influence, were the only ones which provided instruction for the last four degrees. According to him, those who qualified for the sky degrees had perverted ambitions, for the *Mide* master of the fourth degree was supposed to have reached the apex of Manitou power. While the instructions and rituals were relatively simple (mainly repetitions of the first four degrees), the fees were exorbitant.

18. At first glance both the concept and term "witch" might be considered to be Euro-American. However, the concept was also present among Algonquian societies, where witches (evil shamans) were believed to be indicative of the work of evil spirits who were intent on destroying the society. Thus, for instance, Tenskwatawa (the Shawnee Prophet) carried on a campaign against "Christian witches" among the Shawnee and the Wyandots whom he felt were trying to destroy traditional society (Edmunds). Warren's description of the evil spirit at Chequamegon prior to the Ojibway dispersal, is another example of this phenomenon (Warren 1984:109-110). It could be argued that similar situations existed in some communities during the twentieth century following the breakdown of Ojibwa society in the post-reservation period.

19. Normally the bear was associated with the fourth degree in other descriptions of the *Midewiwin*. The manitou associated with the third degree was usually the snowy owl.

20. *Waabanos* were generally considered to be a deviant off-shoot of the *Midewiwin* society, but could also become members of it.

21. Spencer was writing an article on the Midewiwin for the American Missionary 1848: v.3:23-24. (Grace Lee Nute Papers. Box 14) While he might have been somewhat confused in that the "relatives" were probably Mide "ritual brothers" (who might well be relatives), the quote is a good example of the redistributive functions of the Midewiwin.

22. This is based on the statement of Ojibwa, his informant from Sandy Lake (Hoffman 1891:181).

23. Little Frenchman and Leading Feather, two *Mides* from Red Lake, were Hoffman's main sources for this information (Hoffman 1891:191;290). Although he didn't give any indication as to their status in the *Midewiwin*, he did note that the song charts were "imperfectly interpreted" by them, and implied that this was because the songs were not their own, so that they were not certain of the true meaning of the pictographs.

24. Among other Algonquian tribal groups, this deterioration of *Midewiwin* practices can be seen, if one compares Hoffman's study of the *Mitawit* ceremony among the Menominee. Even though the time period of the two studies was almost identical, and the two tribes were closely related and situated, the descriptions show two quite different developments.

25. If, for instance, Hoffman had included the Ojibwa at Manitou Rapids and Fort Frances (Rainy Lake) as part of his study, he might have expanded the range of documents on the *Midewiwin*. The *Midewiwin* had been a powerful force there at least until the 1860s (Angel 1985), and while acculturation gradually occurred, the *Midewiwin* continued to be practiced well into the twentieth century.

Similarly, Shingwaukose and his relatives embraced Christianity, but the *Midewiwin* which he had been involved with continued to be practiced at Garden River in the early twentieth century when the American ethnologist, Jones collected his *Midewiwin* narratives there.

Since the *Midewiwin* developed somewhat differently in locations such as these, the tendency has been to term them "deviant" forms which have developed outside the region from which most of the Euro-American materials were collected.

26. While Densmore's published work falls in the twentieth century, I believe that it is closer to that of Hoffman than that of those who followed her. Certainly, the changes in Ojibwa society separating Hoffman and Densmore were relatively minor. By the time that succeeding ethnologists such as Kinietz, Landes, and Howard carried out their work, Ojibwa society had changed considerably and the *Midewiwin* with it.

27. As quoted in Nina M. Archabal's introduction to Chippewa Customs (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979,n.p.)

28. Densmore published an article on her experience in the American Anthropologist, New Series 9:443 (April-June, 1907).

29. Baraga defined the *wedaked* as a steersman or pilot, and the *naganisid* as "he that is foremost," overseer, boss.
30. Hallowell argued that the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwa were still Ojibwa in personality, even though they had looked and outwardly lived like their Euro-American neighbours. For Hallowell, as for Barnouw this meant that Ojibwa society continued to be "atomistic" since "it functioned in terms of internalized controls; the individual felt the full brunt of responsibility for his own acts" (as quoted in Danziger 1979:151).
31. This practice of the sick person wearing a *miigis* shell around the neck appears to have been common to the Midewiwin as it was practiced in all three Wisconsin communities.
32. Barnouw described the phrase as "he' he' he'!" It would appear that this was just a case of his rendition of the phrase, although he does also record a number of other phrases which do not appear in other documents concerning the Midewiwin.
33. Barnouw explained that *naganit* was the Ojibwa term for the "leader" of the *Midewiwin* ceremony. He indicated that the leader did not have to be a *Mide* "priest" although the duties would have demanded someone with a considerable degree of knowledge. He went on to explain that the candidate was called the *wamidewit*, while the *wedunikagmaget* (one who speaks for another) took the place of *gici manido* (*Kitchi Manitou*) in the ceremonies (Barnouw 1960:78-82). The *skawbewis* (*oshkaabewis*) invited people to the ceremony, filled their pipe bowls with tobacco, and their food bowls with food.
34. John Pete, the chief *Mide* at Lac Vieux Desert, never specifically noted that visions were required in order to join the *Midewiwin*, but in his description of a curing ceremony, he did allude to them as though they were still commonly sought and received (Kinietz 1947:169). However, Kinietz indicated that the only things required to join the society were "the desire and the price" (Kinietz 1947:206).

CHAPTER SIX

MIDEWIWIN CEREMONIES: A MULTI-TRIBAL PERSPECTIVE

The Midewiwin among the Plains Ojibwa and Plains Cree

Our examination of the *Midewiwin* has been based, so far, primarily on documents and studies describing the Anishinaabe people who were to become known as the Ojibwa. The majority of these studies have concentrated on those Ojibwa who have often been categorized as the Southwestern Ojibwa by Euro-American scholars. It would be wrong, however, to suggest, as some scholars have done, that the *Midewiwin* was confined essentially to this group of Ojibwa.¹ Usually such statements are based on the early documents, which were examined previously in this work. Often these statements are contrasted with later documents which appear to indicate that the *Midewiwin* was introduced more recently, and had died out, or been drastically altered, among those Ojibwa who were called the Plains Ojibwa or Bungi, and among those often designated as Northern Saulteaux.² Although there were some cultural differences between the Southwestern Ojibwa and other groups of Ojibwa, these differences were not significant with respect to the practice of the *Midewiwin*. Indeed, as will be seen, with few exceptions, different practices within groups were often far more pronounced than between groups.

The first major ethnological report which dealt with the *Midewiwin* among the Plains Ojibwa was by Alanson Skinner in his study of the groups who lived mainly in southern Manitoba and North Dakota.³ Noting that the separation of the Plains Ojibwa

from the Ojibwa proper had taken place in relatively recent times, he contended that by their own account they had intermarried to some extent with the Cree, Ojibwa, Assiniboine and Ottawa, and more recently had associated with local bands of Sioux who had fled north to Canada from Minnesota in the late nineteenth century. He might have also noted that Ojibwa also frequently inter-married with French and Métis in the area. Skinner's brief explanation was amplified and expanded, first by James Howard in his follow-up study of the Plains Ojibwa in 1977, and more recently by Laura Peers' more comprehensive history of The Ojibwa of Western Canada in 1994.⁴

As Milloy (1988) and Peers (1994), have pointed out, the adaptations of Cree and Ojibwa migrants to Plains culture can not be seen simply in terms of environmental determinism. The changes that took place were the result of complex reasons, including inter-tribal connections, which developed at least partly in response to the advent of the European fur trade, and which, in turn, were connected to both the spread of European diseases, and the decline of the vast herds of buffalo upon which so much depended. In this new and rapidly changing world, the Ojibwa were numerically small, and it can be argued, played a relatively secondary role. Certainly, the lingua franca of trade was Cree or Cree-based, and Plains Crees believed Plains Ojibwa to be their inferiors.⁵ And yet, the early statements of traders throughout the prairie region during this period, often made reference to how members of other tribal groups feared and respected the superior power of Ojibwa shamans.⁶ This has led some writers such as Hugh Dempsey (1984:17), in his biography of Big Bear, to suggest that this reputation led to the ready acceptance of the Ojibwa by other tribal groups on the plains. Big Bear, who was to figure prominently

as a powerful "Cree" leader in the 1885 Rebellion, had been raised as Cree, but his father, at least, was an Ojibwa member of a mixed Cree and Ojibwa band. It was natural for members to participate in each other's ceremonies, and to adopt some aspects of each other's value system.⁷ At the same time both the Cree and Ojibwa were in the process of adapting to life in the parklands and on the plains and adopting some of the practices and values of other Plains groups who had preceded them there. Peers (1994:45) has further speculated that the Ojibwa's reputation may have been directly related to the *Midewiwin* ceremonies and the powers which were gained during these ceremonies. While it is more likely that the reputation was extended to all Ojibwa shamans, some of the *Midewiwin* rituals did influence their neighbours. Some of the *Midewiwin* artifacts that have been collected in western Canada have been identified as Cree. We also know that at least some Cree leaders such as Starblanket were not only members but *Mide* officials (Letter of E. Ahenakew to Dr. Paul Wallace. Paul Wallace Papers. American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia). Nevertheless, given the fact that among many Plains Ojibwa the Sun Dance ceremonies replaced the *Midewiwin*, it is probable that the Ojibwa were more influenced by their Plains neighbours than vice versa.

Although the religious beliefs of different tribal groups may have differed, they were similar in a number of fundamental ways, including their understanding of the concept of power. Thus, neighbouring Cree or Assiniboine would have understood the concept of Ojibwa shamans receiving power from manitous. They would have both appreciated the capacity of Ojibwa shamans to use this power to heal, and feared their ability to use this power to maim or kill. Not only would these Ojibwa shamans have

been sought out to use their powers, but members of other tribal groups would have welcomed the chance to share in these powers by participating in Ojibwa ceremonies such as the *Midewiwin*.

Despite the relative paucity of detailed early reports concerning the practice of the *Midewiwin* in these parts, there is no reason to doubt that it was as well established there as among the Ojibwa of Minnesota. Alexander Henry the Younger (1897:212), David Thompson (1971:178-180), George Nelson (1988:82) and John Tanner ([1830] 1994:100;122) all made brief references to *Midewiwin* and *Waabanowin* ceremonies in the early 1800s.⁸ A. Irving Hallowell provided a good historical overview of some of these observations in what he termed a "post-mortem record of a ceremony which once was of major importance in the native culture of the Saulteaux Indians of the Lake Winnipeg Country" (Hallowell 1936:32). While adding his voice to the litany of a long line of ethnologists who announced its demise, Hallowell correlated a considerable amount of otherwise unavailable information regarding its practice. Although his own focus of interest was Berens River and bands residing on the east shore of Lake Winnipeg, much of his research dealt with the practice of the *Midewiwin* among groups to the south, including many who considered themselves Plains Ojibwa.

According to Hallowell's data, the *Midewiwin* had been held in a number of locations before treaties were signed and the Ojibwa consigned to reservations. He mentioned Tanner's reference to such a ceremony at a location south of Riding Mountain and west of Lake Manitoba in the early 1800s. Hallowell was told that the *Midewiwin* had been held on Garden Island at the northern end of Lake Manitoba, during the

nineteenth century, and this would appear to be corroborated by George Nelson's reference to a *Midewiwin* ceremony at Jack Head in 1819.⁹ Various observers, beginning with Henry in the early 1800s, have commented on the *Midewiwin* which was held near the confluence of the Roseau River and the Red River. Hallowell also mentioned J.J. Hargrave's reference to "dog feasts" near Lower Fort Garry which sound like *Midewiwin* ceremonies, and to Rev. Cockran's 1832 reference to what may have been a *Midewiwin* ceremony at Netley Creek. Coupled with Peter Jacobs' reference to a *Midewiwin* ceremony near Fort Alexander in 1852, and the previous reference to *Midewiwin* ceremonies on the Broken Head River, one can safely conclude that the ceremony was of major importance to the Plains Ojibwa throughout the nineteenth century at the very least.

However, by the time that Skinner arrived to do his field research in the early twentieth century the *Midewiwin* was no longer a dominant force in the lives of most Plains Ojibwa. Several factors appear to have been involved in its gradual decline. Among those Ojibwa who elected to maintain their traditional religion, many had turned to the Sun Dance ceremonies which they adopted from their plains neighbours. Others, such as many members of the St. Peter's band, elected to become Christians. Later, government officials joined forces with Christian missionaries in an effort to "vigorously suppress" all forms of aboriginal religious ceremonies. The principal tool by which this was accomplished was Section 114 of the Indian Act in 1895. Although the regulations did not forbid ceremonies such as the Sun Dance and *Midewiwin*, the Department adopted specific tactics such as applying the pass system to prevent individuals from attending

gatherings at other reserves, withholding agency food rations which were required to feed those present at gatherings, and impeding the sale of trade goods for use in the ceremonies. As Katherine Pettipas has commented in her book on the government repression of indigenous religious ceremonies on the prairies, "the Indian Department regarded conservative traditional ritual leaders as major impediments to the assimilation process. Consequently, officials were committed to using every possible means to divest them of their spiritual and secular power" (Pettipas 1994:115). Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that members of the Long Plains band were extremely reluctant to discuss the practice of the *Midewiwin* with visiting ethnologists.

Nevertheless, Skinner did present some "meagre data" on the *Midewiwin* as practiced by the Plains Ojibwa in his 1920 comparative study of what he termed the Medicine Ceremony. From what he was able to learn, the ceremony "differs little from that of the Ojibwa proper, with whom they sometimes come in contact. A dog feast is connected with the ceremony" (Skinner 1920:311). Individuals who became sick during the winter, brought blankets, calicos and other gifts at the appropriate time (in the spring) in order to purchase information. They were instructed and given a medicine bag which contained *miigis* shells and certain paints and medicines. Four degrees were recognized, though only a few attained the rank of fourth degree. Skinner was able to obtain two birch bark charts, one of which gave instructions concerning the "Jipai" or Ghost *Midewiwin*. When the birch bark roll was transferred to Skinner, "[the informant] claimed that it was the oldest and greatest of rolls, and "descended," through copying,

from the original roll which first was made to contain the directions and ritual of the four degrees" (Skinner 1920:318).

Skinner's chief informant regarding the *Midewiwin* was Ogimauwinini (Chief of Men), an elderly man, who had become a third degree *Mide*. As a youth he had participated in the "*Okitcita*," a formal council of "strong-hearted men" who maintained order in camp, regulated the buffalo hunts and took part in forays against enemy forces before they had been confined to the Long Plains Reservation. Skinner noted that Ogimauwinini had received his training in the *Midewiwin* from "Naigis" (Someone Shaking) from Broken Head Reserve. Hallowell, in his article on "The Passing of the *Midewiwin*" mentioned that the inhabitants of Broken Head River (I.R.4) had remained pagan for years, and that their head man, "Nenagis" was the most widely known *Mide* south of Lake Winnipeg (Hallowell 1936:42-43).

Ogimauwinini provided Skinner with a brief overview of the *Midewiwin* ceremony but was unwilling to give him detailed explanations of the rolls, or the names of the manitous involved, since these things were too sacred to share even with fellow *Mides*. From the explanation, however, it is clear that the celebrants asked the manitous for help in their quest for long life. However, nothing was included in Skinner's description regarding the "initiation rite" nor the public duelling--no doubt since these rituals not only contained the essence of the ceremony, but also because these were the practices most likely to bring on further repression on the part of the Canadian government.

During the 1950s James Howard carried out field work among the Plains Ojibwa, so it is possible to determine the changes that had taken place since the 1920s and 1930s when Skinner and Hallowell produced their brief reports.¹⁰ What is immediately apparent is that despite the predictions that the *Midewiwin* would die out, ceremonies were still being carried out--even though the number of adherents would appear to have been reduced, and the ceremonies took place on only a few reserves.¹¹ Nevertheless, the attempts by government and church groups to ban ceremonies such as the *Midewiwin* and Sun Dance does not appear to have greatly affected the world view of the Plains Ojibwa. Even those who were not actively involved in the *Midewiwin* or the Sun Dance continued to understand the world in terms of manitous, who could confer blessings, or cause evil. An interesting sidelight is the extent to which the world view of the Plains Ojibwa continued to incorporate many of the concepts and manitous of more northerly Ojibwa. Thus, for instance, the *Wihtigokanak* (*wiindigoo*) or cannibalistic ice monsters continued to play an important role. And even more telling was Howard's discovery that the culture hero was known both as *Nanapus* (*Nanabozho*) as in the case of other southern Ojibwa, and also as *Wisakedzak* as he was known to the more northerly Ojibwa and Cree.

According to Howard's interpretation, the Ojibwa world was a dualistic one in which the "good" Thunderbirds and the "evil" Underwater Panthers were constantly at war. Since humans were felt to have both qualities within them, it was necessary to keep the forces in balance. Yet, as we have seen, the situation was more complicated than Howard suggested. Even he realized that the Underwater Panthers imparted some of their knowledge of medicines (which were mainly obtained from plants) to humans as part of

the *Midewiwin*. These medicines were still common on most Ojibwa reservations, and members of the *Midewiwin* were renowned for their knowledge of them (Howard 1977: 113-115; 120-121).

Howard, like Ritzenthaler before him (1953:185), believed that for the Ojibwa (including the Plains Ojibwa) the *Midewiwin* was primarily a response to their concerns about health and the threats to health represented by individual shamans. According to Howard, "by incorporating the tribal shamans into an organized group, where their medicinal and supernatural knowledge conferred great prestige, and even wealth, and at the same time making membership in this group open to non-shamans, the threat to the community from evil magic was minimized and the positive aspect of shamanistic lore turned to best account" (Howard 1977:133-134).

Certainly *Tsisakids* (*jaasakids*) remained few in number and often were members of the *Midewiwin*, so it could perhaps be argued that the *Midewiwin* was successful. Most accounts such as those by Hoffman (1891), Densmore (1910-13), Kinietz (1941), and Barnouw (1960) would appear to confirm this. However, if Landes (1968) and Blessing (1977) are to be believed, then the problem of evil shamans (who caused illness and even death) continued to exist within the *Midewiwin* itself. The underlying problem was that with increased power came the temptation to use it in ways which caused harm to others.

It is interesting to note that while Joseph Greatwalker, who was Howard's informant at Waywayseecappo reserve, and a member of the *Midewiwin*, informed Howard that the sole purpose of the *Midewiwin* was "the promotion of health and

longevity," Greatwalker's first action on entering the encampment was to purchase some "swamp root medicine" in order to ward off the purposeful machinations of "bad medicine men" who might "shoot" them while they were there (Howard [1965] 1977:135-36). What Howard was witnessing was an example of the on-going tension between those aspects of the *Midewiwin* which appeared to stress the positive teachings and practices which would lead to health and longevity, and the ever present possibility that those with power could use it for purposes that would adversely affect one's health and even cause premature death.

Even though Howard added his voice to the litany of those predicting the final death of the *Midewiwin*, his description of the ceremony which he attended hardly appears to be the final rites of a dying society. Much of Howard's description of the actual ceremony bears an uncanny resemblance to the first complete description rendered by Nicollet. Like Nicollet before him, Howard began by explaining how the rites were conducted by an official called the *skabewis* (*oshkaabewis*). He proceeded through the presentation of the gifts to the leading of the songs by the *oshkaabewis*. Howard reported that on the third day of the ceremony, the "shooting" of the candidates took place. The ritual as described by Howard is basically the same as reported by other observers. Although Howard was unable to stay for the remainder of the ceremonies, he noted that his informants had explained to him that another part of it involved a ritual vomiting (in which the shell was regurgitated) induced by herbal medicines, and a "shooting" (duelling) rite and dance in which new candidates and observers alike were indiscriminately "shot."

Howard went on to explain that the shells which were in the medicine bags were believed to be the scales of the Underwater Panther, who had taught the rites to *Nanabozho* as related in the origin myth. In the shooting, the shells left the bag and entered the body of the person being shot. This belief, Howard explained, was an ancient and widespread custom in the northern part of the hemisphere, widely associated with witches and shamans, which had been ritualized and regulated in the *Midewiwin* ceremony in order to protect its members from attack by shamans outside the order (Howard [1965] 1977:141). The belief that the intrusion of a foreign object is the cause of pain, illness, or even death, is an integral part of the world view of many aboriginal groups and in turn, may explain their willingness to incorporate the *Midewiwin* into their belief system.

The Northern Saulteaux and Lowland Cree¹²

As in the case of the Plains Ojibwa, neither scholars, nor the people themselves are agreed upon the terms or geographic boundaries of these two groups. For the purposes of this section, the term Northern Saulteaux includes the groups defined as such by Skinner; that is, those groups who lived primarily to the east of Lake Winnipeg and the watershed that drained into it, and those who lived north of Lake Superior along the Severn River and Albany River watersheds which drain into Hudson Bay. Yet, as Brown (1986;1992), Lytwyn (1993), and others have explained, the names and composition of the groups that lived in these regions have been subject to vigorous debate. Generally speaking it now appears that groups of Ojibwa gradually moved west and north into

portions of the Hudson Bay Lowlands throughout the eighteenth century or even earlier (Lytwyn 1993:112-141). The Lowland (Swampy) Cree whom they encountered were distantly related, and shared many beliefs and customs. By the beginning of the nineteenth century there was considerable overlap in the two groups' territories, and Euro-Americans noted that many of them spoke a mixed dialect, thus indicating that here too a composite culture was beginning to develop. While both groups were involved in the fur trade, many scholars tended to minimize the amount of activity that actually took place in this region, since it was cut off from the Great North, to the north and west of Lake Winnipeg--where most fur trade activity took place. Lytwyn (1981:29), however, has demonstrated that the region was the scene of intensive fur trade activity from the latter half of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, other Euro-American influences, particularly the influence of missionaries and government officials, were much slower in coming, and had less of an impact, than among the people covered thus far.

The first extended study of the Northern Sauteaux was carried out by Alanson Skinner in 1909 for the American Museum of Natural History in conjunction with a related study of what he termed the "Eastern Cree."¹³ He explained in his work that since the main purpose of the study was to look at the material culture of the people, "very little attempt was made to secure information in regard to shamanism and the midewiwin, or medicine lodge society" (Skinner 1911:152). Nevertheless, he did make some attempt to collect basic information, although he tended to mix up descriptions of the ceremonial practices among the more southerly Ojibwa with his observations concerning the Northern Sauteaux--thus throwing into question the validity of many of his findings.

Thus, for instance, Skinner based his scanty information on the *Midewiwin* among the Northern Saulteaux on a report by Jabez Williams, the HBC factor at Osnaburgh House, who had attended a *Midewiwin* ceremony at the north-west angle of Lake of the Woods.¹⁴ Although Osnaburgh House falls within the northern region, the Ojibwa in the Lake of the Woods region are generally considered today to have been more closely related to the Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux, the Ojibwa of Red Lake, or even to the Plains Ojibwa of Pembina. Skinner went on to state that at the time he did his field work the *Midewiwin* was not practiced north of Lac Seul, although in former times it had been practiced as far north as Fort Hope, among the people usually referred to today as the Northern Ojibwa. However, he provided little evidence to support this latter claim other than the testimony of a "conjurer" at Fort Hope who would appear to have been a *Jaasakid*, rather than a *Mide*.¹⁵

Nevertheless, Skinner did describe a ceremony among the northern Cree which somewhat resembled the *Midewiwin* of the Ojibwa.¹⁶ In fact, the same name was used by the Albany Cree who were in close contact with the Ojibwa. While it no longer existed as an organized body at the time of Skinner's visit, Christian beliefs having almost totally replaced aboriginal ones, some of the elders were apparently able to provide him with some information. Skinner noted that there were four degrees among the Moose and Albany Cree, although only two were common among the Eastmain Cree. Membership was only open to those who had received a dream or vision which led the person to believe that they were to be a shaman. The main ceremonies were held in the fall after the first snow fall, although they were occasionally also held in the spring.

According to Skinner, the ceremony closely resembled the *Midewiwin* among the southern Ojibwa:

The ceremonies opened with the singing of songs, after which the shaman took his medicine bag which is usually made of otterskin . . . he began to go about the lodge holding the otter in front of him . . . When the shaman approached the novice it was pushed directly at the young man until its nose touched him, and as it did so it made a noise. The novice immediately fell down and lay unconscious. During this time, the medicine power of the otter was passed into his body. When at length, he came to, the shaman inquired of him if he understood what the otter had said. The novice invariably replied, "No." The shaman answered, "I will tell you what the otter said to you. Death is on you, but you will be alive again." When the young man had fully recovered he knew as much as possibly could be taught to him by any human being, because the power had passed into his body while he lay unconscious (Skinner 1911:61-62).

In order to validate his account, since it appeared to contradict common assumptions, Skinner included an extensive passage from the nineteenth century French missionary Emile Petitôt regarding the *Metwi* ceremony among the Cree which appeared to corroborate and elaborate on Skinner's account. Certain key passages deserve quoting:

At the approach of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, the oldest and most powerful jugglers, the Sokaskew, convoke all the Crees in the neighbourhood to the ceremony of the Mitwei, sending messengers, little presents of tobacco.

When all the Crees are gathered at a place designated by the delegates, they build an oblong and conical house or shed, with an opening at each end. This the Mitwei tent. The medicine men and magicians now enter, Maskikiy-Iyiniwok (magic-men) led by the grand priest of Sokaskew. They carry in their hands the skin of the animal which is their totem . . . they carry into the council lodge all the medicinal roots and herbs which have been plucked and culled by the medicine men during the heart of the summer.

The novices having been brought into the lodge . . . each medicine man points . . . the invisible arrows of their power manitous at the stomach of the novice [who] immediately falls to the earth The initiate being dead, the problem is to resuscitate him . . . They breathe towards the heart

of the dead man to recall him to life. (Petitot as quoted in Skinner 1911:64-65)

While Petitot did not indicate the locality where the ceremony took place, Skinner suggested that it probably occurred on the lower Saskatchewan--some distance from the Swampy Cree, but still among Woodland Cree who would have been in close proximity to the Ojibwa. Skinner noted that the further one progressed from Ojibwa boundaries, the less important the *Mitwe* appeared to be among the Cree.

Skinner's account regarding the Northern Ojibwa and Cree is supplemented, and to a certain extent, contradicted by John M. Cooper (1934;1936) and A. Irving Hallowell (1936). Cooper's most extended study, which included both field work and original source materials, dealt with the concept of the "supreme being" among the northern Algonquians. While his study thus concentrated on a very limited concept and was concerned primarily with the Cree, Cooper did spend some time dealing with possible Ojibwa influences. He acknowledged the close association of the Cree and inland Ojibwa, particularly along the upper Albany. One of his Albany informants, old Jeannette, believed that the term "*manitu*" was of recent Ojibwa origin, but none of them were familiar at that time with any characteristics of the *Midewiwin*. They all maintained that there was only one type of shaman whom they termed the "*miteo*," but which they said referred to a practitioner of the Shaking Tent. This led Cooper to believe that Skinner's informants were either Ojibwa descendants living among the Cree, or visiting Woodland Cree (Skinner 1934:76-77). While this is probable, it is also entirely possible that Skinner's informants were, in fact, describing a situation which existed prior to the

1850s when Christianity was introduced. Skinner's informants still would have had memories of this period in a way that could well have been lost by the time that Cooper appeared on the scene. The Cree use of the term *miteo*, in itself, would suggest some connection.

A shorter article by Cooper was based on a brief, fly-in visit to the Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake regions--south of the region Skinner had described. However, Cooper's informants did note that the *Midewiwin* was still being practiced in the Kenora and Rainy Lake regions, while the *Wabaanowin* was practiced further north at Lac Seul, Wabigoon and Eagle Lake.

Hallowell's previously-mentioned article provided considerable information regarding the practice of the *Midewiwin* in the region to the east of Lake Winnipeg. He identified a number of locations and *Mide* leaders, beginning with Black Island where the *Mide* leader was Sekanakéwgabau (The one who reaches the sky). Following the signing of the treaty, the Hollow Water Reserve (I.R.10) was organized on the adjoining mainland near the mouth of the river by that name. Kagiéwbit, who died in 1919, and Wabanang, who died in 1932 were said to have been the last leaders of the *Midewiwin* there (Hallowell 1936:44-45). Further north, at the narrows, the *Midewiwin* was practiced on both sides of Lake Winnipeg for many years. The earliest *Midewiwin* ceremonies in this region, according to Hallowell's informants, were held at Dog Head on the western side of the lake, and Jack Head on the eastern side. Yellow Legs, the paternal great grand-father of Chief William Berens of Berens River, was apparently the first *Mide* leader in this region before taking up residence at Berens River. Later a *Mide* leader

called Sagatcǐweas (Peter Stoney), who had come originally from St. Peter's Reserve on the Red River, assumed the role.¹⁷ On his death, the ceremonies were only held at Jack Head by Wawasan (Lightning).

According to Hallowell, Berens River marked the northernmost point that the *Midewiwin* was held on the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg, for he was unable to find any evidence of it ever having been practiced at Island Lake, Deer Lake or Sandy Lake, although Saulteaux people were found in these communities. The *Midewiwin*, however, was practiced occasionally on the Upper Berens River at Little Grand Rapids and at Poplar Narrows, where Tetabaiyabin (Daylight all around the Sky) was a very influential leader (Hallowell 1936:450). However, it was not practiced after his death in 1922. Further up the river at Pekangikum (Pikangikum) it was practiced until 1920 when the *Mide* leader, Pindandakwan moved to Lac Seul. Hallowell further pointed out that there was an informal connection amongst the various *Mide* leaders in the region, since all of them belonged to the Sturgeon clan and were related.

Hallowell ended his article with a note regarding the connections between the *Mides* on the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg and Lac Seul, where some of them obtained their medicines. He suggested that the *Midewiwin* may well have been "disseminated all the way from the Lac Seul Ojibwa to the Ojibwa (Saulteaux) on the western shore of Lake Winnipeg and perhaps beyond" (Hallowell 1936.:51). This is a plausible explanation, particularly since connections have been demonstrated in the genealogies of the regions. However, an equally valid argument could be made for influences disseminating from the Ojibwa (Saulteaux) communities near Red River, who in turn

could well have been influenced by the bands of Ojibwa and Ottawa who had emigrated from Minnesota and Wisconsin to the woodlands and plains of southern Manitoba.

Both Skinner (1911) and Hallowell (1936:49) made reference to another description of the *Midewiwin* as it was practised at Berens River. In it, James Stewart, an HBC employee, provided what Hallowell considered to have been a description of the last *Midewiwin* performed at Berens River in the 1850s.¹⁸ As such it would appear to be one of the earliest extended descriptions of the *Midewiwin*--anywhere. Stewart explained that:

The name of the feast is "Metawin" or "feast of long life." The head-centre lodge, or tent, was established in the east by some of the divinities . . . The centre lodge remains in the east . . . but on account of the migrations of the Indians, they received power and instructions to establish subordinate lodges . . .

Each lodge had its Grand Master of Medicine, a Master of Ceremonies, and other minor officers. Each member of the lodge had in his possession the bag of life. This bag consisted of the skin of a certain bird or animal . . . and contained medicine of the most select kind. (Stewart 1904:94)

Stewart went on to explain that through the intercession of the local HBC clerk, Mr. Cummings, and "a liberal quantity of tobacco, tea and sugar from myself," he was permitted to enter the *Mide* lodge where the ceremonies took place. Having been told to deposit his offerings in front of some wooden images of deities, he was invited to partake in a feast of boiled sturgeon. Stewart's account included a relatively detailed explanation of the origin of the *Midewiwin* which was given by a *Mide* whom Stewart called Bear.¹⁹

Unless one knew otherwise, this document could be taken as a more or less accurate description of the *Midewiwin* at Berens River in the 1850s. Seeming anomalies could be accounted for by the fact that James Stewart was presumably recounting events

which had taken place almost fifty years earlier. However, the reference to an identifiable person (Bear), does lend credibility to the account. Nevertheless, the account was actually a composite of personal experience, and a series of articles written by James Settee, Jr., a Christian Cree whose father had been an Anglican missionary. Stewart had spent two years with the Hudson's Bay Company in Norway House and Berens River in the early 1850s, but subsequently moved to Red River where he had a varied career including some time as a newspaperman in the 1880s. While editor of the Selkirk Record, he published a series of articles by Settee (Selkirk Record, June 3, 10, 17, 1887).²⁰

The references to Bear, and terms such as "Grand Master" (Stewart was an active member of the Masons and a Presbyterian) were undoubtedly his, and it is possible that Stewart could have witnessed part of a *Midewiwin* ceremony at Berens River in the 1850s. However, the fact that other passages were copied from Settee raises doubts about the validity of the entire account.

There are, for instance, what appear to be anomalies in his account of the origin narrative. The first paragraph reads like a Christian creation account with the Great Spirit (God) creating the first man and woman. The second paragraph then makes a sharp break to tell the story of two snakes: a rattlesnake and a *natawa*. A chief, whose son had been killed by the *natawa*, was visited by an enormous snake at the grave site, where the snake addressed him as "Old man of the plain." Later, after the snake had turned into an old, white-haired man, he taught the chief the pipe ceremony, before teaching him the ceremonies and rites of "the tent of long life" (Stewart 1904:95-97). Selwyn Dewdney

appears not to have been aware of Stewart's account, but one of the snake scrolls that he analyzed was from Berens River. Dewdney speculated that these scrolls reflected an alternate tradition which originated in the Leech Lake area (Dewdney 1975:142-44).²¹

Following his explanation of the origin tale, Stewart then proceeded to give an explanation of the ceremonies as they were performed. He explained that the feast was announced by sending out a portion of tobacco to all members of the lodge. After the *Mide* lodge had been erected, all the members, led by the "Grand Master" and "Master of Ceremonies" marched around it three times, following which the "Grand Master" addressed the company:

The Great Spirit, who dwelleth in the heavens, bless you all and send you long life. The white haired man brings with him life and has given me life which I give to all my brothers and sisters. Our forefathers left us this tent to teach our children, and your life depends upon the secrets of your own breast. Prepare your magic beads and medicine skins of the tent of life, to cast your beads on the sick and dying men who may be placed before you to restore life. Your magic beads shall pierce the rocks, the spirits who preside over our secret councils shall bless your efforts to restore health and long life. The path of our ancestors teaching us the use of countless herbs and roots growing in this our world will sing the song of enchantment, when each member will offer with gratitude to his teacher, the offerings he may have brought with him to speak and receive long life. (Stewart 1904:98)

The above passage, other than Stewart's introduction in which he used Masonic-like terms to describe the *Mide* officials, appears to be taken from Settee's original article.

This would explain the "Biblical" language and concepts which were used.

Stewart then went on to explain the by now familiar "initiation ritual" in which the *Mide* officials took turns "shooting" the candidate, who thereupon collapsed as though he had been shot. The candidate was then revived by the officials blowing upon him and

placing their medicine bags upon him. Following this the *Mide* officials demonstrated their power by swallowing a *miigis* shell which "magically" appeared in their medicine bags. This was followed in turn by the distribution of the trade goods, which each candidate had brought as payment, to the officials. After the initiation rite was completed, the "public duelling ritual" commenced. Stewart noted that throughout this time, a number of the women were employed gathering fish for the ongoing feast, while any dog that entered the lodge was killed and added to the pot.

In the final analysis, it is difficult to make a judgement as to where or when Stewart or Settee obtained their information regarding the *Midewiwin* which they described. The best that we can say is that the result is a curious amalgam of Masonic and Christian accretions to some *Mide* account. And yet, the picture that it presents is surprisingly sympathetic from men who would otherwise have been thought to be unsympathetic. This is particularly true, when it is compared to the more negative accounts of missionaries such as James Evans or Peter Jacobs. Ironically, it showed fewer Christian influences than the accounts of twentieth century Ojibwa such as James Redsky and Norval Morriseau who have written about the *Midewiwin*.

James Redsky (Esquekesik, Last Man in the Sky), was born at Rice Bay, on Lake of the Woods, in 1899, and was educated at mission schools at Shoal Lake and Kenora. However, he ignored the Christian religion, and followed the *Midewiwin* teachings of his uncle, eventually becoming the leading *Mide* in the Lake of the Woods region. While he lived at the very edge of where the shield began to merge into the plains, Redsky's traditions, as narrated in the book edited by James Stevens (1972) are concerned with the

Ojibwa of Lac Seul, Lake Nipigon, Wabigon and Lake of the Woods, and their efforts to fend off the marauding Sioux. Redsky's book centred around the exploits of a "folk-hero" of the local Ojibwa named Mis-quoana-queb. Among the tales are those concerning Mis-quoana-queb's initiation into the *Midewiwin*. Various narratives recount the creation of the world, mankind, and the *Midewiwin*, the way of life according to the *Midewiwin*, and an account of the migration story of the Ojibwa and the *Midewiwin*. In a sense, Redsky's narratives functioned as a means of teaching the truths of the *Midewiwin*. The following extracts provide an indication of how Christianity had affected the articulation of traditional Anishinaabe religion:

The Ojibways who belong to the Mide-wi-win believe that God made the world and that we, his children, might live the everlasting life. . . .
When God created the world, in the beginning He set aside a path of life. . .
. . .
There are a lot of tasks to perform to follow the way of life of the Mide-wi-win. As the important saying goes: "Love thy neighbour as thyself."
(Redsky 1972:90-91)

Redsky explained that after an Ojibwa had dreamed about the *Midewiwin* it was necessary for him to have a sweat bath before he could enter the *Mide* lodge. The next day, after the sweat bath, the "*Mide-winini*" was ready to enter the *Mide* lodge and proceed with the initiation. He went on to explain that during the initiation ceremony, the *miigis* were placed on the initiate's body according to the degree into which the person was being initiated. Birchbark scrolls were used in order to ensure that all the procedures were carried out correctly (Redsky 1972:107-108). In fact, Selwyn Dewdney, in his book on The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway (1975) spent a substantial portion of the book analyzing Redsky's origin, migration and master scrolls. Dewdney attempted to

provide interpretations of Redsky's and other scrolls, and also to use the scrolls to help understand more about the *Midewiwin* itself. Although he did come up with a number of very creative interpretations which have some general applications, he became too enmeshed in trying to explain the fine points of individual charts, which were meant to be specifically used as mnemonic records of local *Midewiwin* ceremonies.

Dewdney (1975:131-144) and Fred Blessing (1977), on whose work he based some of his ideas, both believed that there were orthodox and deviant traditions in the *Midewiwin*. This would appear to be partly the result of talking to *Mides* in the Minnesota triangle which Blessing considered the bastion of orthodoxy. Although debates (and perhaps duels) took place between rival *Mides*, notions regarding orthodoxy and deviancy were dependent to a large extent upon the perception of the individuals involved in the dispute.

Redsky's versions of *Midewiwin* narratives were heavily overlaid with Christian terminology and some Christian concepts, although the underlying structure and functions of the *Midewiwin* ceremonies remained fundamentally the same. Candidates continued to seek the means to obtain a long life and the ability to protect themselves from evil forces. However, *Kitche Manitou* and *Machi Manitou* have begun to share a role with the Thunder Birds and *Michipizheu* in being the forces behind good and evil. As a result, there was more emphasis on the duality of good and evil, and the Christian concept of sin, which manifested itself in the doing of evil, was becoming evident.

These concepts became even more pronounced in the writings of Norval Morrisseau (Copper Thunderbird), an Ojibwa from the Lake Nipigon region in

northwestern Ontario who was born in 1931. Located just thirty miles north of Lake Superior, the Lake had served as the point of departure for the fur brigades heading into the Little North since the eighteenth century, so that aboriginal people were positioned on a well travelled route, despite their seemingly isolated location (Lytwyn 181:24).

Although Morrisseau became far better known as one of the first Ojibwa artists to gain an international reputation, his artistic works derived their inspiration from shamanic scrolls, and the sacred narratives of his people. While he had only elementary schooling, with the assistance of Selwyn Dewdney, he set down many of these narratives in print, along with some of his personal observations.

Morrisseau's narratives reflect the dual heritage of his grandfather who had been a *Mide* shaman and his grandmother who was a devout Roman Catholic. While he considered himself to be a Christian, he believed that "we must never forget our great legends, traditions, and folklore . . . (Morrisseau Ms. p.22. Glenbow Museum Archive, Calgary). Nevertheless, by the time Morrisseau came to write down his thoughts, it would appear that the practice of the *Midewiwin* was a distant reality, for his description of it is considerably less detailed than his description of the Shaking Tent and Sweat Lodge ceremonies. Morrisseau's descriptions are also illustrative of how *Midewiwin* ceremonies and other traditional ceremonies were viewed in light of Christian beliefs--not merely among Euro-Americans, but particularly among members of the aboriginal community themselves.

According to Morrisseau, a *Midawin (Midewiwin)* society had existed in the Lake Nipigon area. New members had to pay a great amount of goods, and pass tests in order

to become members of the society and be given a medicine bag containing great powers. He explained that in the *Mide* lodge there were two tables of food, one containing good food, and another containing partly cooked dog meat and broth. Candidates were made to eat the latter in order to pass the tests, and were also made to swallow live snakes whose tails had been cut off. During the *Midewiwin* ceremony the medicine bags, which were made of different kinds of hide, seemed to come alive - "the bear skin began to growl, and the fox skins began to bark. . . ." New members were asked to point their bags at other new members, and out of the bag would shoot forth magic powers so that the Indian would fall to the ground spitting blood and dying. However, he would be revived again as if nothing had happened (Morriseau Mss. p.17. GMA).

Morriseau went on to explain that his grandfather had dreamed of a bear, who became his guardian and provided him with the power to do good. One time, however, his grandfather had got into a fight with a couple of conjurers and gave them a good "licking." As a result they used bad medicine in order to make him sick, and although he had gone to another *Mide* in order to have him suck out the bad medicine, though he recovered for a while, he died about a year later.

Even though Morriseau's description of the *Midewiwin* revealed a number of details which were no doubt the result of his Christian upbringing, these had served only to strengthen his belief in the power of "conjurers," as he termed them. Further on in his material he made this connection explicit when he stated that "a lot of Ojibwa who turned devoted Christians of the Catholic faith believe it is the devil himself who gives power to all conjurers. . . If the devil came to you in a dream and told you that you will be

powerful in return for your soul you would not accept that offer. But, if the devil appears in a medicine dream in the shape of an angel or in a different way like a thunderbird or some demi-god he will tell the same thing and you would accept because you would not know he is the devil himself." However, he went on, "all the conjurers who use their powers for evil no matter what good intentions, one has to pay later" (Morrisseau Ms. p.21. GMA).

Morrisseau was hardly alone in his experience in combining beliefs from both the *Midewiwin* and Christian traditions. Edward Rogers and Garth Taylor (1994) both assert that by the 1930s most Ojibwa and Cree were at least nominal Christians, although they continued to retain some aspects of their traditional belief system, particularly the concept of "power." While Shaking Tent ceremonies and *Waabanowin* ceremonies continued to be practised in a few places, the *Midewiwin* appears to have died out almost completely, although a few *Mide* shamans continue to be mentioned in a few reports.²²

The Midewiwin Among the Menominee

The Menominee in pre-contact times inhabited the area bounded by Lake Superior and the Green Bay region of Lake Michigan, where they were in close contact with groups of Ojibwa and Winnebago people, with whom they often inter-married. While they spoke an Algonquian language, it did not have a particularly close relationship to other allied groups. While the Menominee were spared from direct Iroquois attacks, and while there were few forced changes to their way of life during the periods of French and English influence, they remained relatively small in numbers. During this period, the

Menominee were able to adapt successfully to the new arrivals and the new commercial, political and religious influences. Any adjustments that were made were accomplished with a minimum of societal strain. With the coming of massive numbers of Americans, the situation changed dramatically, for their lives were fundamentally altered when they were forced to sign treaties and moved to reservations. Gradually their lands were ceded and in the 1850s they were confined to a small reservation at Keshena in northeastern Wisconsin, when they refused to take accept a reservation near Crow Wing, Minnesota. Their new home was relatively close to several Ojibwa reservations with whom they kept in contact. Like the lands of their Ojibwa neighbours, the reservation land was too poor to farm and too small to engage in their traditional subsistence patterns of hunting and fishing. Members of the band suffered greatly from physical disease, including the effects of alcoholism. The population declined, and traditional societal structures began to disintegrate among both those who considered themselves "traditionalists" and those who had accepted Christianity and many of the facets of "White" culture.²³

Like their Ojibwa neighbours the Menominee's traditional world view was based to a large extent on their concept of "power."²⁴ Among the Menominee, the term had three connotations: that which is strong or powerful, to be of sound health, and spiritual power. Power to live was conferred on individuals during a dream or vision experience. Unlike many other groups, this method of securing a guardian spirit has remained a part of Menominee religious experience until relatively recent times. Not surprisingly, since power played a central role in the Menominee world view, their concepts of power helped

to shape their understanding of religious leadership, and determined the nature of their religious ceremonies.

Many of the types of shamans were similar to those of the Ojibwa, although, in some cases their names show little or no similarity. Thus, practitioners of shaking tent rituals were termed *ce'sahkows*, while *wabanows* corresponded to *wabaanos* among the Ojibwa. The *Metawin*²⁵ society, which was described in some detail, first by W.J. Hoffman in 1896, and later by Alanson Skinner in 1921,²⁶ was the oldest and most elaborate of Menominee religious institutions.

Hoffman's study forms part of an ethnographic study of the Menominee Indians published in the 14th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology in 1896. Hoffman explained that as a result of his work on the *Midewiwin* of the Ojibwa, he was approached by Nio'pet,²⁷ a Menominee chief and *Mita* leader to visit their reservation at Keshena, Wisconsin so that he could attend a *Metawin* ceremony and preserve it for future generations. Hoffman made five visits in all to Keshena, and ended up studying all aspects of Menominee life, and according to his account, being inducted into the *Metawin*. Why he should want to claim the latter is somewhat surprising, since he had earlier denounced Schoolcraft for making a similar claim with regard to being initiated into the *Midewiwin* of the Ojibwa. It is interesting to note that Skinner explained that he had been formally adopted by the shaman who had provided him with his version of the *Metawin*, and had attended all the rituals, but was considered an unaccepted *Meta* since he had not purchased the actual initiation.

Hoffman felt obliged to contrast the *Metawin* ceremonies with those of the *Midewiwin*. The former, he believed, was a pale imitation of the latter, since much of the ancient ritual had been lost, although the ceremony continued to be conducted in an archaic language mixed with Ojibwa.²⁸ It is probably true that the Menominee at this time more closely resembled the Ojibwa at Bad River than at Red Lake or even White Earth where Hoffman had done his research on the *Midewiwin*. However, Hoffman's and Skinner's research on the *Metawin* reveal only a few significant differences in the ceremonies which had nothing to do with the degree of assimilation. Members of the two tribal groups, along with members of the Potawatomi, shared each other's ceremonies on various occasions, noted the language and ceremonial differences, but do not have appeared to consider one version "right" or even better than the other.

According to Hoffman, the *Midawin* (*Metawin*), as the *Midewiwin*, consisted of two distinct functions: the initiation of new members, and a feast of the dead designed to release the "shadow" and let it depart to the land of mysteries. Among the Menominee, the initiation was done either directly or by proxy. Candidates were often chosen to replace someone in a family which had recently lost one of its members. The ceremony began with a consultation between the giver of the ceremony and the *Meta* shamans at which three sets of four shamans each were chosen. The candidate or his sponsor then provided both a large number of gifts to presiding *Metawin* officials, and a feast. Following this the *mita'wiko'mik* or Medicine Lodge was erected by women, and gifts of the candidate or his sponsor were suspended from poles in the lodge. The ceremony itself

normally was held Saturday evening and night, and all day Sunday since by that time the Menominee were following the Euro-American work week.

Usually the ceremony began with a feast and speeches near the grave of the person who had recently died. Hoffman's example of the initial speech by the chief *Meta* provides a good illustration of the fact that the Menominee people and the followers of the *Metawin*, in particular, felt themselves under the same pressures as the Ojibwa:

My grandson will now be placed on the correct path. It gives me pleasure to see the goods before me, which have been brought here as evidence of the good will of my grandson, and his desire to become instructed in the way to go through life. I can hear beneath the ground the approach of our enemies, the ana'maqliu,²⁹ who destroyed the brother of Manabush, and who now would wish to oppose our proceedings, but Manabush said: 'Whenever you are in trouble, place some tobacco aside for me, and when the odor of your smoke ascends I shall help you.' Therefore, we have before us some tobacco to be offered to Manabush, that he may be present at the meeting and fill us with contentment." (Hoffman 1892-93:78)

Later in the ceremony, when the assembly had moved into the Medicine Lodge, this same theme was taken up by another *Meta* official who spoke to the members present:

Long ago the grand medicine was observed with more care and reverence than it is now. The sun was bright when the whiteheads³⁰ assembled, but now it is dark, and I can not see the reason. (Hoffman 1892-93:80)

Again and again this theme that the sky was light when the people were following the teachings of the forefathers, and that it has now become dark echoes throughout the ceremony. Hoffman explained that this was because it had started to rain throughout the ceremony, but this would have been a confirmation, not a cause of the sentiments.

Still later in the ceremony the story of how *Manabush* brought the *Metawin* to the Menoninee was narrated by the chief *Meta* shaman named Shun'ien. He explained how the gifts of the *Metawin* were given:

Then from the east came Owasse, the Bear, who entered the mitawikomik and said to Manabush, "My brother, I come to you to offer you my strength, that you may be able to withstand the power of the anamaqkiu." . . . Then Wabon, the Daylight, also came in from the east . . . [followed by a variety of other deities]

From the south then came Mikek, the Otter, who said to Manabush, "My brother, I come to give you the konapamik [*miigis*]; you will find it in a rock in the waters of the lake" . . . Then Ke'so, the Sun, came from the south and said, "I too, my brother will appear above you when you all gather in the mitawiko'mik and as I go westward you will see my path, which you will, in time, follow."

From the west came the Ina'maqki'u, the Thunderers; [and] The North Wind then came . . . [and said] "I will grant you one [gift] which will surpass them all; I will give them the North Wind so that sickness will not affect them." (Hoffman 1892-93:91-92)

At the conclusion of the origin narrative and the story of the Menominee genesis, an explanation of the tree of life and the journey that each person had to take was given.

The drumming and singing by the shamans continued all night. The next day, after lunch, a group of what Hoffman termed "jugglers" gathered to impress all those present with their powers, by a performance of a number of "tricks." Following this, an initiation or "shooting" ritual took place which was similar to the rituals in Ojibwa *Midewiwin* ceremonies. *Meta* shamans took turns breathing on their medicine bags and then thrusting them at the candidate with a loud exclamation "Ho!" The candidate gradually succumbed until by the time the fourth *Meta* had "shot" him, the candidate fell down as if dead. According to Hoffman, the power had been transferred from the shaman (who had previously swallowed a *kona'pamik* (*miigis* shell) to the bag and henceforth into

the candidate's heart. The shamans then gathered around the body and revived the candidate by laying their bags on him. As they did so, a shell dropped from the candidate's mouth, he took it into his hand, and while dancing, and chanting "Ho!, Ho!, Ho!, Ho!", exhibited the shell to those present.

The candidate then received his otter skin medicine bag, and began to try his newly acquired power on others as he made his way around the enclosure. Those thus "shot," would fall, gradually recover, and then follow the candidate, while periodically "shooting" others. Soon the entire lodge erupted into a general "melee," as Hoffman described the general shooting ritual. After about an hour of this, the time came to distribute the presents to *Meta* officials, who, in turn, distributed some of them to those who had been engaged in the building of the lodge and the preparing of the feast. With that, the ceremony came to a close.

Hoffman's descriptions of subsequent meetings of the *Metawin* noted few substantial differences with the description provided, although the origin narratives did vary among the different *Meta* leaders. In addition, he did provide an interesting detail, which illustrated how intimately connected religious ceremonies and games were among the Menominee (and no doubt the world view of all Anishinaabe). Hoffman explained that when a *Meta* felt that he had not lived up to the injunctions and precepts of the *Metawin*, or if someone wished to make an offering when a family member was sick, he was obliged to give a ball game. From the description, the game would appear to have been lacrosse--similar to that played by the Ojibwa. The person giving the game (at which a feast would be provided) began by selecting the captains of the two opposing

sides, who in turn selected their team, ball sticks and an influential mita who was responsible for ensuring the safety of the ball sticks (Hoffman 1892-93:127-129).

Approximately thirty years later, Alanson Skinner's description of the *Metawin* ceremony did not vary substantively from Hoffman's, although he did identify a number of errors made by Hoffman, and he did fill in some major lacunae. Like Hoffman, Skinner described the telling of the origin narratives at the beginning of the ceremonies and the initiation rituals. The only difference in the accounts was that Skinner used Menominee names for many of the deities and ceremonial leaders of the *Metawin*. However, he then proceeded to identify a second function of the lodge which was to provide a private or public memorial ceremony³¹ for the rest of the soul of the deceased (whom the new candidate had been chosen to replace). The soul of the deceased was invited to a feast, and was believed to take residence in a specially appointed person of the same sex and age. At the conclusion of the ceremonies the soul was dismissed and returned to the other world. The implication was that the soul could thus be satisfied and no longer bother the living. It could be taken as indicative of the importance of beliefs and rituals concerned with death among the Menominee that they should have incorporated these rituals into the practice of *Metawin*. Keesing, in his study of the Menominee, based on field work carried out ten years after Skinner's work, certainly noted that beliefs and customs concerned with death were "among the most tenacious elements of the old culture" (Keesing 1971:51). However, this "memorial" service, for which Skinner gives no Menominee name, is very similar to the Ojibwa Ghost *Midewiwin*, which was described by a host of early and more recent observers.

A third function associated with the *Metawin* that Skinner identified was the *Yatapewin* or Reinstatement Ceremony. This ceremony was held when members of the *Metawin* believed that they had been negligent in their duties regarding the *Metawin*, and as a result, underwent a second initiation ceremony. The ceremony was basically the same except that the movements within the lodge were conducted in reverse order. Four such reinstatements were considered possible among the Menominee, although few individuals ever went beyond two. Each reinstatement or degree was represented by a different medicine bag, different facial colourings, and different coloured *Kona'pamik* or *miigis* (Skinner 1984:163-164). Thus, it would appear among the Menominee that progressive reinstatements played the same role as degrees in the Ojibwa ceremony.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century when Hoffman was doing his research, the influence of the *Metawin* had already begun to decline among the Menominee. This process was accentuated around 1880 when neighbouring Potawatomi and Ojibwa brought the Drum Dance, "Peace Dance or Dream Dance" as it was known variously among its adherents. Catholic Indians attempted to break up the meetings and a detachment of U.S. troops were called in to restore order. In the aftermath of the affair divisions developed not only between traditionalists and Christians, but also between those traditionalists who believed the new dance was merely an adjunct to the *Metawin*, and others who argued that it superseded traditional ceremonies such as the *Metawin*.

Many members of the *Metawin* moved to a densely forested area of the reservation, and began to associate more with bands of Ojibwa, Potawatomi and Winnebago who held similar viewpoints, than with their fellow Menominee (Bureau of

Indian Affairs Report as quoted in Keesing 1971:182). Gradually the *Metawin* was replaced in influence by the Dream Dance which had a relatively open membership and provided easier access to sacred knowledge and power. By the time the Spindlers were doing their field work among the Menominee in the 1950s and 1960s, the *Metawin* ceremonies were seldom practiced by those Menominee who continued to hold traditional beliefs since there were few remaining elders who knew the complicated rituals (Spindler 1971:54).

Clearly the *Metawin* of the Menominee and the *Midewiwin* of the Ojibwa were one and the same ceremony. The minor variations which did occur, other than with regard to language, were no greater than among different groups of Ojibwa. Certainly the Ojibwa made greater use of pictographic mnemonic aids than other groups, and the southwestern Ojibwa created elaborate migration scrolls.³² However, the differences are mainly a matter of degree.

The one area where the *Midewiwin* among the Ojibwa appears to have been different from groups such as the Menominee was the latter's hereditary membership, although even here, some Ojibwa, such as the Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux, came close to such a practice. While it is not possible to analyze the *Midewiwin* as it existed among other closely allied groups in the same detail, the information that does exist leads to similar conclusions.

The Midewiwin among the Ottawa and Potawatomi

In his famous migration account, Warren related how the Ojibwa, the Ottawa and the Potawatomi had separated at the Straits of Michilimackinac. He went on to explain that the Ottawa had remained there for a number of years, serving as middlemen between the French traders (and Hurons) and the tribes to the west, thus gaining them the name of *Ot-tah-way* or "trader" (1984:81-82). While Warren simplified the situation somewhat, as we have seen, his brief description does set the stage for much Ottawa activity during both the French and Anglo-American periods. While they played a role far greater in importance than their relatively small numbers would suggest, they never established centres of population on their own, except for the regions around Arbre Croche and Grand River in Michigan. During the nineteenth century bands of Ottawa continued to range far and wide, both before and after the U.S. government's attempt at removal. Their members could be found from the region around Red River in the west, to Manitoulin Island and Walpole Island in Ontario, while a composite band of Ottawa, Ojibwa and Potawatomi were removed by the American government to Iowa and later to Kansas. It was among the Ottawa at Arbre Croche that Rev. Baraga began his Christian missions in America, and from which other observers such as Schoolcraft and Kohl drew many of their observations regarding "Indian" religious practices.

Nevertheless, there is very little specifically written about Ottawa beliefs and practices concerning Ottawa religion, least of all the *Midewiwin*. No doubt this is because of the degree of interaction between the Ottawas and their neighbours. Later, in the nineteenth century when Euro-Americans began to take an interest in the *Midewiwin*,

they failed to sufficiently distinguish the Ottawa from the Ojibwa since their informants either came from mixed villages in the Upper Michigan Peninsula, or were members of mixed bands of Ojibwa and Ottawa traders in the Red River and Pembina regions. Later students of the Ottawa carried out field work at a time when most of the Ottawa had become Christians.

Several brief quotations by early Jesuits provide an idea of how closely connected Ottawa and Ojibwa beliefs were.³³ Allouez wrote that the Ottawa paid worship and veneration to spirits they called manitos. He added that they believed that "the evil spirit is in adders, dragons, and other monsters." Rasles, another Jesuit, indicated that the Ottawa called the great manitou of all animals *Oussakita*, while the evil spirit was said to be called *Michibichi*. Jean Perrot, the early French trader in the region, considered their principal deity to be the Great Hare, which would appear to be equivalent to the Ojibwa *Nanabozho*, particularly since he figured in an Earth-Diver narrative which is similar to those told about *Nanabozho*.

Although the early presence of the French Jesuits does not appear to have had much effect on Ottawa beliefs, some scholars have suggested that the concept of the Great Spirit developed during this time, and link the departure of the Jesuits with the rise and elaboration of the *Miteowin* ceremonies.³⁴ According to Gertrude Kurath, who is one of the few scholars to have written on Ottawa religious practices, these *Midewiwin* ceremonies continued to operate independently even after the arrival of Catholic and Methodist missionaries during the mid-nineteenth century. She suggested that the last *Midewiwin* ceremony among Ottawa conservatives was held around the turn of the

century. Thereafter, traditional practices either incorporated Christian features, or were gradually amalgamated with Catholic festivals (1959:212). Nevertheless, Kurath suggested that many of the Ottawa continued to express a reverence for grandmother earth, *Nokomis* and *Nimiki*, the Thunderers. She also suggested that this transition period was one in which the old shamans were replaced by sorcerers whom she called "bear-walkers," who had malignant powers. Since the information is very scanty, it is difficult to make any definitive statements, but Kurath's latter statement would appear to indicate that the Ottawa during the latter part of the nineteenth century may have been undergoing a similar process of cultural disintegration to the one described by Landes among the Ojibwa and later among the Potawatomi.

Like the Ojibwa and Ottawa, the Potawatomi believed that at one time they shared a common language and culture, but sometime prior to the coming of the Euro-Americans, the three groups separated at the Straits of Mackinac, and the Potawatomi moved southward into Michigan.³⁵ In the mid-seventeenth century they moved to the Green Bay area on the western side of Lake Michigan in order to escape Iroquois attacks. There they came into contact with a variety of other groups of Algonquian refugees, often acting as arbiters for their neighbours. Nevertheless, the various Potawatomi groups continued to maintain contact and intermarry. Until well into the nineteenth century they considered themselves a separate and distinct people, and were acknowledged as such by Euro-Americans. They established friendly relations with the French, and later played an important role in the wars against the Fox, the Iroquois, and the British colonies.

During this period the Potawatomi figured prominently in the writings of French observers. Jacques de Sabrevois' statement, while serving as the Commandant of Detroit in 1714 that: "Often the old men dance the medelinne, they look like a band of sorcerers" (WHC 16:367) is often taken to be the earliest surviving reference to the *Midewiwin* among any Indian group, although as I have noted earlier, there were numerous earlier references that did not explicitly use the term. Yet there were few references to the *Midewiwin* among the Potawatomi in the years that followed, even though we know that the Potawatomi, along with other tribes, suffered heavily from epidemics during this period, and therefore could be expected to have been heavily involved in the *Midewiwin*.³⁶

Unfortunately however, most of the information regarding the religious ideas and practices of the Potawatomi during this time consisted of references to their idolatry, while many of the recent accounts rely solely on upstreaming techniques, or simply apply descriptions of Ojibwa practices.³⁷ Nevertheless, it would seem safe to accept that the Potawatomi at that time had a corporate clan system, more similar in structure to the Miami than the Ojibwa. As Skinner (1924-7), Callender (1962), and Clifton (1978) all suggest, it was the clans that owned the ancestral names and the powers that were associated with them, including the vision powers of their members. Thus, they were less individualistic than such close neighbours as the Ojibwa and Ottawa.

We also know that in the upheavals that followed many among the Potawatomi embraced a variety of other religious movements. Some listened to the Delaware Prophet's message as put into action by Pontiac, later during the early 1800s many became followers of the Shawnee Prophet and his brother Tecumseh, while other factions

followed the *Waabano* leader Main Poque. By the 1830s, when the Potawatomi, along with neighbouring tribes were forced to sign treaties with the Americans, the once unified tribe became separated both geographically and culturally into distinct factions.

Although many of those with Métis ties were acculturated, others continued to resist Euro-American influences. In the diaspora that followed the American government's policy of forced removal, several groups, which included some Ojibwa and Ottawa, eventually found themselves in Iowa, Kansas and later Oklahoma, while many other Potawatomi moved to southern Ontario where they joined groups of Ottawa, both of whom gradually became incorporated into Ojibwa reserves since they held no lands of their own. A third group of Potawatomi remained in upper Michigan and northern Wisconsin.

It is from the first group, or Prairie Potawatomi, as they have generally become known, that we have learned most of the information concerning the *Midewiwin* or *Midawin* (Mystic Doings), as it was known by the Potawatomi. Information was gathered by Alanson Skinner in the mid 1920s and particularly by Ruth Landes in the mid 1930s.³⁸ As Skinner and Landes, and subsequent researchers have recognized, the Prairie Potawatomi were hardly a homogeneous group. Not only did they include some Ojibwa and Ottawa, but some members had intermarried with French-Canadian traders. The latter were Christians who opposed traditional religious practices and common ownership of land.

While it would seem probable that any observations of this group would reveal syncretic beliefs and practices that had developed in isolation to the groups previously

studies, in fact, there were many common features. Despite the fact that the Potawatomi lived in scattered communities in three countries, they continued to maintain a degree of contact. However, the degree of similarity could also be partly due to the fact that the same researchers were involved. It is not surprising, for instance, in Landes' work, that the dominant theme is one of sorcery in which shamans terrorized the community and often exercised total sexual control over their victims.³⁹

Landes reported that when she began work on the reservation, and word was received that she had been trained in the Ojibwa *Midewiwin*, several people offered to be her informants "expecting that the association would reveal to them this once-premier sorcery of which Ojibwa men were considered masters" (Landes 1971:26). Although Skinner observed that bundles during the 1920s were often owned by clans, according to Landes, bundles were owned by individuals, who often formed themselves into societies, among which she mentioned the "*Wabeno*" society, and the "*Mida*" society. Shamans from these groups were feared for their ability to "blow rotten stuff" on their victims or mix "poisons" which would be mixed in their victims' food at group ceremonies. Thus, guests carried "preventers" in order to protect themselves (Landes 1971:50-51). Certainly most other observers mentioned similar beliefs and practices, but did not give them the same level of significance that Landes did. Either she was attributing too much to her informants' statements, or her colleagues were not attributing enough.

Far less has been written about the Potawatomi who migrated into southern Ontario during the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ Although they eventually settled on a number of reserves ranging from Walpole Island, to Manitoulin Island, to Parry Island, unlike their

brethren in the United States, most quickly assimilated into the more dominant Ojibwa culture.

Thus, for instance, Frederick Johnson reported that while over half of the individuals on Parry Island were Potawatomi who had migrated there from Christian Island (Ontario) and from Wisconsin over fifty years previously, the Potawatomi now spoke Ojibwa. While Johnson uncovered some traces of Potawatomi material culture, he found it difficult to discover anything concerning traditional religious practices of either group owing to the "profound influence of government officials and the Methodist missionary." His informant explained that the last time the "*midewin*" had been performed was about thirty years previously (Johnson 1929).

Years later, however, another Canadian ethnographer, Diamond Jenness, produced a volume on the Indians of Parry Island in which he described the activities of both *Mide* and *Waabano* shamans, although no actual ceremonies were observed (Jenness 1935). Interestingly enough, whereas in the descriptions of most observers it was the *Mide* shamans who were the dominant group, and the *Waabano* shamans who were in the minority, Jenness described a situation in which the reverse was the case. Furthermore, his descriptions closely approximate those of Landes, in that the shamans were involved in power duels which involved sorcery and engendered considerable fear in the community. Unfortunately he did not provide sufficient information for us to determine whether or not there was a special significance to this.

The Medicine Ceremonies of the Winnebago and Wahpeton Dakota

So far our discussion of the *Midewiwin* and its variants has dealt with Algonquian speaking peoples, but variants of the *Midewiwin* can also be found among a few Siouan speaking groups. Given that some groups of Ojibwa who had become plains dwellers had adopted a version of the Sun dance, it is not altogether surprising that some Siouan groups should have adopted a version of the *Midewiwin*.

One of the earliest accounts of a "Medicine Dance" among the Sioux was a ceremony which Jonathan Carver described in the 1760s (Carver 1770). Jonathan Carver claimed to have witnessed the ceremony near Lake Superior and west of the Mississippi, during his travels among the Sioux and the Ojibwa during the 1760s (Carver 1778). Although Carver's general reputation as a reliable source has been challenged, there is little reason to question the basic accuracy of his description in this case. Previous descriptions of the Medicine Dance did not exist in English, although Carver implied that the French traders had been familiar with it for some time. Indeed, he even suggested that it was beginning to die out in areas close to European settlements.

The particular ceremony that Carver described was definitely Siouan. He mentioned that it was performed among the Naudowessies, as he called the Sioux, and that the dance was called the *Pawwaw* or Black Dance, while the society was called the *Wakon-Kitchewah*, or the "Friendly Society of the Spirit." Carver appears to have conflated Siouan and Ojibwa words, while his translation is at best liberal, but many aspects of the description which followed are recognizable, even if they were often

embellished with extraneous descriptions designed to appeal to his English audience. He noted that:

About twelve o'clock they began to assemble; when the sun shone bright, which they considered as a good omen, for they never by choice hold any public meetings unless they be clear and unclouded When the assembly was seated, and silence proclaimed, one of the principal chiefs arose, and in a short but masterly speech informed his audience of the occasion of their meeting. He acquainted them that one of their young men wished to be admitted into their society No objection being made, the young candidate was placed in the center and four of the chiefs took their stations close to him. . . . the chief that stood before the kneeling candidate began to speak to him in an audible voice. He told him that he himself was now agitated by the same spirit which he should in a few moments communicate to him; that it would strike him dead, but that he would instantly be restored again to life At this juncture he threw something that appeared both in shape and color like a small bean at the young man, which seemed to enter his mouth, and he instantly fell as motionless as if he had been shot.

The candidate lay several minutes without sense or motion; but at length, after receiving many violent blows, he began to discover some symptoms of returning life. These, however, were attended with strong convulsions, and an apparent obstruction in his throat. But they soon appeared at an end; for having discharged from his mouth the bean, or whatever it was that the chief had thrown at him . . . he soon after appeared to be tolerably recovered. (Carver 1778:271-275)

Following this description of the initiation ritual, Carver explained that the candidate was then outfitted in new clothes, given some advice, and presented to the members. A drum began to sound and everyone then began to dance. Some, he noted, carried in their hands an otter or marten's skin which they squeezed so that it made a noise when they thrust it in the face of another person. The person thus attacked would fall down lifeless, only to arise again later and continue the dance. After some time a feast was given, of which the main course was dog flesh (Carver 1778: 276-279).

Whether or not Carver's description was of the Wahpeton Dakota, the Winnebago, or some other Siouan group, a form of Medicine Dance was evidently practiced by them. Not only were the initiation and general shooting rituals clearly described, but clothing of the candidate in new clothes was not an Algonquian practice.

Almost one hundred years later, in 1848, J.E. Fletcher, who was the Indian sub-agent among the Winnebago, described a similar ceremony in a report to Henry R. Schoolcraft, and his account made its way into Schoolcraft's multi-volume compendium on Indian tribes (Schoolcraft 1851-57: 286-288). Fletcher noted that the ceremony which was sometimes called the Medicine Dance, was carried out by members of a secret society who charged candidates heavy fees to join. The ceremony, he explained, was composed not only of a feast (of dog's flesh) and a dance, but also instructions and initiation rites. The latter included both fasting, a sweating process, and a shooting ritual. Fletcher described the latter in the following manner:

Before the candidates are brought forward, the ground through the center of the bower is carpeted with blankets and broadcloth laid over the blankets. The candidates are then brought forward and placed on their knees upon the carpet . . . Some eight to ten medicine men then march in single file round the bower with their medical bags in their hands. . . they then form a circle and lay their medicine bags on the carpet . . . deposit from their mouths a small white sea-shell about the size of a bean; this they call the medicine stone. These stones they put in the mouth of their medicine bags, and take their position at the end of the bower opposite to and facing the candidates. They then advance in line . . . holding their medicine bags before them with both hands, they dance forward, slowly at first, and increasing in energy, until with a violent "Ough!" they thrust their medicine bags at their breasts. Instantly, as if struck with an electric shock, the candidates fall prostrate on their faces . . . Blankets are now thrown over them, and they are suffered to lie thus a few moments. As soon as they show signs of recovering from the shock, they are assisted to their feet and led forward. Medicine bags are then put in their hands and

medicine stones in their mouths; they are now medicine men or women, as the case may be, in full communion and fellowship. (Schoolcraft 1851-57:286-288)

Fletcher went on to explain in passing that although he had observed the ceremony for six years, he had been unable to detect anything which would make him believe that the ceremony was practiced by charlatans. The participants truly believed that the shamans possessed great power, and he was willing to grant that it had no doubt been practiced for centuries by their ancestors. Indeed, he did not even make any connection to the Medicine Dance he had witnessed and the *Midewiwin* which was practiced by the Winnebagos' neighbours.

Although the Winnebago spoke a dialect of Sioux, they had broken off from the Sioux proper long ago, and lived in relative harmony with most of their Anishinaabe neighbours in the Green Bay region of Wisconsin, at the time of the first French contacts in the early seventeenth century. Initially they appear to have been a single unified group with a relatively complex social structure analagous to such Algonquian groups as the Miami and Potawatomi. Around this time, a disastrous war with the Illinois forced them to inter-marry with many of these neighbours in order to recoup their population losses. In the process of doing this, they adopted many Anishinaabe social customs, including a similar clan structure,⁴¹ and no doubt it was about this time that they also came into contact with the religious practices of their Anishinaabe neighbours. Later, during the eighteenth century, probably as a result of their participation in the fur trade, they began to disperse into smaller, independent settlements, although most remained in the Green Bay region, close to the Menominee. At the time of treaty negotiations with the

American government in the nineteenth century, two factions arose among the Winnebago. One group elected to abide by the treaties and allowed themselves to be moved to Nebraska, where they attempted to become farmers. However, most of their lands soon passed out of their hands, and they entered a period of social disintegration. A second group resisted the moves and remained in Wisconsin, where they were eventually able to obtain homesteads on very marginal lands. There they attempted to eke out a living.

In the early twentieth century the ethnologist Paul Radin began to do field work among the more acculturated Nebraska Winnebago. One of the best known and most influential ethnologists during the first half of the twentieth century, Radin's work encompassed a wide variety of indigenous people including the Ojibwa, but it was for his studies of the Winnebago that he is best known.⁴² Over the next several decades he returned to study and write numerous works about their religious beliefs and ceremonies (Radin 1923, 1945, 1950). Along the way he spent considerable time collecting and analyzing a rich collection of Winnebago narratives that dealt with the role of the Winnebago version of the *Midewiwin*, and their world view in general. Just as the Anishinaabeg had sought ways by which they could lead a full and long life, while dealing with the conflicting tensions of good and evil, the Winnebago people posed similar questions. In Radin's words, they asked: "how are we to meet the two aspects of life and of reality with which we are being continually confronted, the protective, constructive and positive, and the repelling, destructive and negative?" (Radin 1945:52). Winnebago shamans, like their Anishinaabe counterparts, functioned both as healers and

as diviners. Their powers could be used to cure, or to assist hunters or warriors--but they could also be used for evil purposes. People who used their powers in these ways were literally known as "poisoners." The fear of being considered a poisoner or witch helped to reinforce positive values of generosity and sharing (Lurie 1978:696).

However, Radin, unlike many Euro-American observers, did not attribute the Winnebago concept of power to some form of "magic." According to Radin, this misconception was due to the fact the Euro-Americans have insisted on the presence of corporeality as a test of reality, while for the Winnebago, the test for reality was based on the final sign or result. In other words, spirits demonstrated their existence by the fact that the blessings they bestowed on a person enabled that person to be successful. Relationships between spirits and humans were fostered through fasting, prayers, offerings and sacrifices--and as Radin argued, especially through mental concentration upon the spirits (Radin 1923: 280-311).

The concept of evil among the Winnebago during the period of Radin's field work was evidently less pervasive than among the Ojibwa. Although Radin reported that evil spirits were supposed to exist, he could find no concrete notion of who they were. Whether it was the case that such ideas belonged to an earlier period in Winnebago history, as Radin suggested, or whether they simply represented a reluctance to discuss such topics is impossible to determine. Certainly, the very existence of witches in Winnebago society indicates that some concept of evil did exist, although it does not appear that the Winnebago were overly preoccupied with it.

Radin went on to describe Winnebago concepts of death and afterlife. According to him, they saw death as a "stumbling" after which the individual goes on as before except that he no longer has a corporeal body or desires. Communications could and did continue between the living and the dead, and there was a fear of ghosts among many people. There was also a belief in reincarnation. In fact, according to Radin, the desire to live again was general among the Winnebago, and many of their religious societies, including the Medicine Lodge, made promises of reincarnation for their members (Radin 1923:313-313).

Radin's study of the Medicine Dance (Lodge) Society among the Winnebago was conducted within the context of his wider study of Winnebago society and aboriginal society in general.⁴³ As such, it goes far beyond the mere description of isolated rituals of a single group, although he relied primarily on contemporary accounts and sources.

According to Radin, the most important religious function of the Medicine Dance was the passing on of the "blessings" for the greater benefit of the host and his guests. New candidates to the society could join either by requesting admission or by taking the place of a deceased relative, the latter case being the most common. There appears to have been no requirement that new applicants had received a vision from a guardian spirit, as was usually the case in the *Midewiwin*. In both forms of admission the candidate or his sponsor were required to pay considerable amounts in the form of goods as an entrance fee. In the Medicine Dance these goods were then distributed to the presiding officials, who in turn distributed them to other officials and assistants.

Membership in the society consisted of five bands which, for the ceremony, were known as the "Ancestor's host band," and the east, north, west and south bands. The first represented the ancestor of the Winnebago, while the others typified the four spirits visited by Hare in the Winnebago origin myth. During the ceremony each of the bands was represented by a leader, two assistants and the rest of the members. Men, women and children could all be members of the society, although their privileges differed, and children did not possess the power to wield otter skins.

The ceremony itself, which was comprised of several days of preparations, sweat lodge rituals, and the ceremony proper, took place over a number of days and nights. During the first days of preparation, the narratives of the origin and dissemination of the Medicine Dance among the Winnebago was recounted by one of the presiding shamans. The narrative, as related by Blowsnake, Radin's informant, contained elements of both Anishinaabe and Christian mythology, along with elements which were distinctly Siouan.

The narrative began with the creation of the world, and of mankind. The latter were weak and pitiful, so *Na'una* (Earthmaker) made four extra powerful spirits to help them, and the last of these was Hare. The first three were unable to help, so Earthmaker said: "Hare, what I am doing, you also will be able to accomplish. Try with all your power. If (the evil spirits) injure my creation, it will not be good on earth, life will not be good. Try and overcome these (evil spirits)" (Radin 1923:350). So Hare went to earth where he entered the body of a young woman, and having killed off the evil spirits, he told his "Grandmother" that humans would now be the same as him. But his

grandmother explained that this would not happen since death was necessary lest the earth become overcrowded. However, Earthmaker took pity on him and told him:

Now that their lives may be benefited, a holy teaching you are to take back to them You are to go back there (to earth) and put this (ceremony) before them. . . . and if one of your uncles and aunts [the Winnebago] performs everything properly he will have more than one life. I will always keep the door open to him. When he becomes reincarnated he can live wherever he wishes. (Radin 1923:355)

Even taking into account external influences and the difficulties of translation, it would appear that while the Winnebago, like their Anishinaabe neighbours, were concerned with the ultimate questions of life, there were significant differences. Whereas, for the Anishinaabe the main concern was achieving a long and good life on earth and secondarily to ensure the safe passage of the soul into the next world (ie. the Ghost *Midewiwin*), for the Winnebago, the prime function of the Medicine Dance was to provide a means of escaping the bonds of death. As Radin explained, "to live again is the greatest desire of the Winnebago, and practically every secret society holds this out as the lure to the outsider. If you join the Medicine Lodge you will become reincarnated, they say . . . (Radin 1923:314).

In the Winnebago version of the ceremony, the narratives were followed by a late night feast. Following this, the candidate was taken from the lodge out into the brush where the elders preached to him, showing him the sacred shells, explaining to him how they would be shot at him, and how he in turn was to shoot them. Then the leader of the East band made a road for the candidate to follow, which was symbolic of the path of life. This was followed by teaching the candidate about swallowing the shell, and the recovery

from its effects. Finally they dressed him in a new suit and led him back into the Medicine Lodge, where the initiation ritual took place the following morning.

The initiation ritual, as described by Radin's informants, was basically the same as other versions already discussed. As one of them reported:

Those who were initiating me then spread upon the ground the things which had been brought. Then the leader spoke. He told me that he would put me on the medicine-dance road. They sat me down there and shot me. Then the clothes that I had on were taken off and I was given other clothes. I was now told that I was standing on the medicine-dance road. After that they danced all day. In the evening they stopped.

(Radin 1923:378)

While there were differences in the specifics of how the shooting was done by the shamans, the location of where the candidate was shot, and how it was regurgitated, the essential elements remained the same. Certainly the exchange of clothes was an added feature, but served only to further accent the concept of the candidate having taken up a new life.

Nevertheless, it is unclear how central to the ceremony the shooting ritual was among the Winnebago. Certainly, Radin believed that it was peripheral; an intrusion into the basic ritual. To Radin, what was essential was the passing on of the blessings, which were associated with the speeches, songs and actions of the band elders. He argued that in the Medicine Society and in other Winnebago societies such as the Buffalo, Ghost and Night societies there was a common ritual which had similar functions. In all cases, he argued, the purpose of the ritual was the strengthening of powers obtained in a vision. While he made no attempt to explain the purpose of the initiation ritual, Radin suggested

that it had been borrowed from "the Central Algonkin Midewiwin" (Radin 1910-11:183-185).

Certainly Radin's analysis has much to commend it--both its comparison of the *Midewiwin* and Medicine Society, and for its analysis of the *Midewiwin* itself. As will be seen, he applied a similar analysis to similar societies among other Siouan groups.

Nevertheless, that not only the initiation ritual, but almost all the ritualistic elements of the Medicine Dance ceremony shared common features with the *Midewiwin*, as did the narratives upon which they are based. While the most extensive accounts of medicine ceremonies are available for the Winnebago, similar ceremonies were also carried out among other Siouan groups. These accounts provide some clue as to which aspects of the ceremonies were commonly borrowed, and thus presumably were considered important.

A description of the Medicine Dance Society as it existed among the Wahpeton Dakota who lived near Sisseton, South Dakota was provided by Alanson Skinner in the early twentieth century. His informants at that time were elderly band members who explained that the last ceremonies had been performed many years previously when they were very young.

The Wahpeton Dakota, along with other bands of Santee, or "Eastern Sioux," had originally lived in north central Minnesota near Mille Lacs, where they hunted, fished, and cultivated large garden plots alongside permanent villages.⁴⁴ Gradually, they were pushed westward by the advancing Ojibwa, so that by the end of the eighteenth century they were found mainly along the headwaters of the St. Peter's (Minnesota) and Red Rivers near Lake Traverse.

They were still in this vicinity when Joseph Nicollet encountered them during his visit to the area in the 1830s. While Nicollet's observations primarily concerned the Ojibwa, he also made some regarding the Sioux, as he termed them. Thus, for instance, he compared the character of the Medicine ceremonies of the two groups, contrasting the "barbarity" of the Sioux ceremony with the more refined and intelligent ceremony of the Ojibwa (Nicollet 1970:208-209). Although Nicollet did not single out the Wahpeton band specifically, he did mention attending a Medicine ceremony of over three hundred Mdewakanton in February 1837. It would appear that the ceremony had previously been practiced by members of the Santee division at a time in which they were in close contact with the Ojibwa--even though much of this contact would have been in the form of warfare. The ceremony among the Santee Dakota could conceivably go as far back as the 1680s to the 1730s when the two groups were at peace. Or, it could also have been adopted from the Menominee, the Miami, Sauk⁴⁵ or some other Algonquian group, or it could have come from the Winnebago who were distant relatives of the Santee.

Much was to happen though to the Wahpeton Dakota before Skinner was to work among them. In 1851 they had been forced to sign treaties giving up most of their lands in exchange for tiny reservations on which they were given individual allotments of land. During the next decade their attempts at subsisting by farming were unsuccessful, so that in 1862, when their annuity payments were held up and local traders failed to give credit for supplies, they attacked the Indian agency and killed some Euro-American colonists. Retaliation by the U.S. government was swift. Wahpeton Dakota along with other bands of Santee were removed to a new reserve near Sisseton in the northeastern corner of

South Dakota. Others fled northward into Canada where a small band of them still live just outside Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Those who were forced to live in South Dakota found themselves subjected to increasing efforts of government agents and missionaries to give up their traditional beliefs and ceremonies. In 1890 the massacre of close to 150 men, women and children of a Teton Dakota band at Wounded Knee by the U.S. cavalry signaled the end of outward resistance of all groups of Dakota to the process of enforced acculturation. Once again, some fled to Canada, while most gave up, or carried out traditional rituals in secret until there were gradual relaxations of the restrictions.

As with other Medicine Dance societies among Siouan groups, the *Wakan Wacipi*, as described by Skinner, showed some strong similarities to the *Midewiwin*, while at the same time it contained some (but not all) elements which were much more in keeping with other Siouan societies. Likewise, some elements of the origin narrative and the rituals had begun to show some evidence of Christian concepts.

As with most other Siouan groups, the *Wakan Wacipi*, as described by Skinner, was divided into four groups or bands. New candidates applied to join a particular band, often the same band to which their parents belonged. It would appear that an application for membership normally followed a personal vision, as among the Ojibwa. However, individuals could also be given the medicine bag of a deceased member of the same sex, and asked to take his place in the society. According to Skinner, ceremonies for both types of new members were similar, except that the latter did not have to pay the initiation fees (Skinner 1984:291).⁴⁶

When a candidate wished to join the society, he first hosted a feast for the four band leaders, followed by a sweat lodge ceremony and a pipe ceremony. This was carried out four times. When the candidate had gathered a sufficient number of goods to pay the band leaders, and secured food for a feast, then a rectangular medicine lodge was constructed, with three to four feet high bark or canvas walls, but an open ceiling. In this respect the lodge resembled more closely the lodge of some Ojibwa since most Menominee, Potawatomi or Winnebago normally had closed in lodges. The lodge faced east and west, with one door at the eastern end, which was guarded by *akicita* (members of "soldier societies" who both acted as police, and cooked the feast). At the western end of the lodge a tipi was erected. Inside, the host of the ceremony sat by the open door, while the heads of the other clans were seated along the sides.

The night before the ceremony proper, the candidate was taken into the sweat lodge--rather than into the bush as had been the case among the Winnebago--for final instructions. The instructions included the origin myth of the society, and what were termed the "ten rules of life." In the origin myth, *Wakantanka* (Great Spirit) descended to the sea where he created *Unktehi* (underwater monsters) from his ribs, before returning to heaven. The *Unktehi* caused muskrat to dive down and bring up some mud so that earth could be formed. They then established the Medicine Lodge Society with the assistance of a variety of birds, animals and fishes. These birds, animals and fishes later appeared to individuals in dreams and instructed them in the medicine dance ceremonies.

The ten rules were a combination of a code of conduct and ritual obligations which members had to observe in order to gain long lives. Most related to aboriginal

beliefs regarding hospitality, sharing and duties regarding the dead, although there was a Christian influence in the injunction to "love your neighbours" and in the very idea of ten rules. In addition, the candidate was instructed in herbs and medicines, and the sacred songs which accompanied each herb or root. Similarly each medicine bag had its own sacred song which members sang before entering the lodge.

The main ceremony among the Wahpeton Dakota resembled that of the Winnebago to a considerable degree. At dawn the candidate was led into the lodge, and seated at the west end. Four elders were selected to make circuits of the lodge, before stopping in front of four blankets. Each knelt, spread his otter skin before him, and vomited forth the sacred shell on the otter skin. Then each in turn took the shell in his left hand and ceremonially displayed it to those assembled as he circled the lodge. The candidate was then brought forward and the four took turns shooting a shell from their otter medicine bags into the mouth of the candidate. After the last shot he collapsed, and was covered with a blanket. The four members then revived him by singing, blowing on him, and wiping a sacred root over him. When he recovered the *akicita* brought in the sacred drum stick which they gave the new member so that he could take the drum and begin the dance.

First, however, he sang a song which referred to the [underwater] panther (*unktehi*) for power. Then he was presented with a cane which represented the bulrush, and symbolized a long life through the medicine lodge. He was told that the Medicine Dance was supposed to be held under water, where the *unktehi* dwell, and that if he is ever in danger he need only grasp the bulrush. Skinner's informant explained that the

candidate had to sacrifice dogs at the entrance of the lodge in order to remain in the good graces of the *unktehi* (Skinner 1984:287-290).

It would appear that, similar to the many Algonquian versions of the *Midewiwin*, there was a tension between good and evil in the Wahpeton Dakota version of the medicine dance. On the one hand the medicine dance ceremony had been given to them to promote long life and help them deal with illness. On the other hand, the society's benefactor was the Underwater Panther, and the sacred roots were said to symbolize serpents. Thus new members were given power which had the potential to be used for good or evil. Life was ambiguous, not dualistic.

Following the singing of his song, the candidate addressed those present: "My friends, be merciful to me, for I am now about to take part in this ceremony which I have observed" (Skinner 1984:290). He then took his medicine bag in his hand, expelled the shell which he displayed to those present, and sang another sacred song. At this point in the proceedings the candidate had gained full membership in the society, and his payments were divided up among the four band leaders. While Skinner doesn't mention it in his account, the ceremony continued with the public duelling ritual which was a common feature of medicine dances among other groups (Neill 1885:269-271).

The accounts of the Medicine Dance among the Winnebago and the Santee Dakota would suggest that the ceremonies were both ancient and that they contained elements of both Algonquian and Siouan culture. Although Radin argues otherwise, it would appear more likely that, as with the *Midewiwin* among the Alonquians, the Medicine Dance Society and ceremonies reflected both shamanistic rituals to obtain

power which could be used for good and evil purposes, and teachings which set forth rules for members to follow in order to obtain a long life.

It would appear that as the medicine ceremony moved further afield from the Ojibwa it took on more characteristics of Siouan society, while only a few core elements of the original ceremony remained. This meant that there was more of an emphasis on the corporate aspects of belonging to band which shared knowledge related to living a long and full life, and less on the curing aspects which relied on individual shamanistic powers. Even the shooting ritual was remembered more as a matter of ritual form, than as a continued belief in the transfer of power which could be used for good or evil purposes. The general disappearance of the requirement that initiates must first have a vision, coupled with a decline in the belief in the efficacy of the shell, corresponded with a further lessening in beliefs regarding the shamanistic powers of members.

ENDNOTES

1. See, for example, Hickerson's argument that the growth of the *Midewiwin* was a function of the development of large, sedentary villages in this region--which contrasted with the small hunting and gathering clans which lived further north (Hickerson 1964;1988).
2. At the same time, the Ojibwa who came to settle in the Red River Valley and further north to Berens River came to be known, and in some cases still refer to themselves as *Saulteaux* or *Soto*. See also the map in the Appendix.
3. Skinner's informants came mainly from the Long Plains Reserve near Portage La Prairie and Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota, with a few references to Cowesses and Sakimay Reserves in Saskatchewan. Howard's follow up study concentrated mainly on Turtle Mountain band, although his description of a *Midewiwin* ceremony is from Waywayseecappo Reserve in Manitoba. Neither report mentions the band at Roseau River, where Henry noted the *Midewiwin* was held annually in the early 1800s. Hallowell (1936:39-41) mentions that the Roseau River band remained "pagan until well into the twentieth century."
4. Skinner himself wrote a comparative study of the *Midewiwin* among a number of Algonquian and Siouan groups in 1920, amongst which were the Plains Ojibwa. In it he acknowledged that he had used information collected in 1913 for his information on the Plains Ojibwa.
5. Peter Erasmus, a Métis interpreter during the 1870 treaty negotiations, as quoted by Peers (1994:120).
6. See, for example, the Journals of Alexander Henry the Young and David Thompson edited by Elliott Coues (1965), David Thompson edited by Hopwood (1971:176), and the Manuscript Papers of John McLoughlin in the Public Archives of Manitoba
7. The Glenbow Museum collection includes *Mide* medicine bags, birchbark song scrolls, and *Mide* drums, from Nut Lake, Kinistino and Poor Man's Reserves in Saskatchewan. Most are Ojibwa, but a number are also Cree. Some of the artifacts date back to the nineteenth century, but others are more recent, the most recent having been used in a *Midewiwin* Ceremony in Nut Lake in 1973. Tapes from the Cree Oral History Project further substantiate that some Cree did practice the *Midewiwin*.
8. Their descriptions contradict the statements of Skinner's informants that the *Waabano* had never been practiced among the Plains Ojibwa.
9. As quoted in Peers (1994:81).

10. Howard also briefly mentioned the *Waabanowin* which, he explained, no longer existed among the Plains Ojibwa though its bad reputation remained. He also mentioned that the *Tsisakawin* (*Jaasakaan*) was practically extinct, but a few people continued to practice traditional healing as *Nanandoiwewid* (*Nenaandawiiwejig*).

11. Howard contrasted the decline of the *Midewiwin* to the flourishing of the Sun Dance which continued to be performed on all Plains Ojibwa reserves with the exception of Peguis and Roseau River.

12. The term "Northern Saulteaux," as used by Skinner does not correspond to contemporary descriptions of either the Northern Ojibwa (Rogers 1981:231-2) or the Saulteaux of Lake Winnipeg (Steinberg 1981:244-5), but takes in portions of both. I have used the term Lowland (Swampy) Cree to apply to the Cree who resided in the Hudson's Bay Lowlands although I realize this is not a precise designation, and that some of Skinner's examples fall outside this region.

13. Skinner at the time was 23 years of age, and this was his first extended piece of fieldwork.

14. Bishop suggested that the practice of the *Midewiwin* at Osnaburgh House disappeared around the 1870s when missionary activities were intensified (Bishop 1974:89).

15. Rogers (1981:231) believed that the northernmost groups of the Ojibwa, whom he called the Northern Ojibwa, lacked certain cultural traits found among their southern and western Ojibwa neighbours. Chief among these, he included the *Midewiwin*.

16. Long, in an article on the "Manitu, Power, Books and Wihtikow: some factors in the adoption of Christianity by nineteenth century Western James Bay Cree," Native Studies Review, 3/1(1987):1-30, noted that some Cree individuals who received additional powers from *mikinak* (turtle, the chief spirit of the Shaking Tent) were called *mitews* (which he translated as shamans, or conjurers) and their activities were referred to as *mitewin*, although he made no connection to the *Midewiwin* of the Ojibwa. Although there is no direct proof, one could infer that, even more than among the Ojibwa, the two ceremonies had become intertwined.

17. Hollowell elaborated on this incident in subsequent works, providing Sagatciweas' full English name, and explaining that he was a leader of the *Midewiwin* from the Bloodvein River region who never became a Christian convert. Stoney opposed William Berens "for the chieftainship in 1875," and although Stoney was considered very powerful, Berens won, epitomizing "the acculturative influence that anticipated future developments" (Hollowell 1992:36).

18. Although Stewart provided no dates as to when he observed the ceremony, Hollowell was able to draw his conclusions from the fact that the HBC official, whom Stewart

identified as his interpreter, was in charge at Berens River in the 1850s (Hallowell 1936:49).

19. Hallowell learned from descendants that this was "Masque (*Makwa* or Bear in English)," the son of Yellow Legs, who had succeeded his father at Berens River as the chief *Mide* (Hallowell 1936:49).

21. This information was uncovered by Hugh Dempsey in the course of doing research for an edited version of Stewart's personal memoir, "Life in Rupertsland."

21. Warren ([1885] 1984:93) stated that the names *Naud-o-wa-se-wug*, which was sometimes applied to the Dakotas (Sioux), and *Naud-o-waig*, to the Iroquois, meant "adders." The catalogue of plants and animals at the end of Tanner translated *nau-to-way* (*natawa*) as a type of rattler (Tanner [1830] 1956:303). Both snakes are native to the plains rather than the Shield, which would suggest some sort of connection between the ceremony at Berens River and those of the Plains Ojibwa.

22. As quoted in Rogers and Smith's Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on the First Nations (1994). Rogers also mentioned the persistence of the *Wabaanowiwin* among Ojibwa in southern Ontario. While he acknowledged that the *Midewiwin* had existed there, he indicated that there was little written about it. See also Paul Radin's article on Ojibwa religion in the Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records (19??: 210-218) and Diamond Jenness's mention of both the *Wabaanowiwin* and *Midewiwin* in his work on The Ojibwa Indians of Parry Island (1987:103-106).

24. Among the Menominee, as among the Ojibwa, many early factional disputes in tribal councils occurred between "mixed-bloods" who had become largely assimilated but wanted to share in annuity payments, and "full-bloods" who wanted to maintain their traditional mode of living as far as possible.

25. See George and Louise Spindler Dreams without Power: the Menomini Indians. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston: 1971), for a good general introduction to the Menominee concept of power, which, as will be seen was very similar to that of the Ojibwa.

26. Skinner, in his study of the *Mitawin* concludes that Hoffman had given the incorrect spelling for a number of terms, including this one. According to Skinner, *Mitawit* refers to the candidate for admission, not the ceremony itself.

27. Edwin James (the editor of John Tanner's autobiography) wrote an account of the *Mitawin* in 1826, but it was never published. See Sylvia S. Kasprzycki's "A lover of all knowledge: Edwin James and Menominee Ethnography," Native American Studies 4/11(1990):1-9. J.G. Kohl included one of the few existing examples of Menominee pictography from a *Mitawin* ceremony and provided an interpretation of it in Kitchi Gami (1985:291-296) which was originally published in 1860.

28. Nio'pet (Neopit) was a member of the Bear clan and the son of Oshkosh, the first head chief of the tribe to be so recognized by American officials. Nio'pet was elected chief after the conviction and imprisonment of his elder brother. Although a senior member of the *Mitawin*, and a leader of the traditionalist faction of the Menominee, according to Hoffman, he urged his children to adopt Christianity.

29. The term "manido," for instance is not a Menominee expression. Skinner claimed that the Menomini term for creator is *Matc Hawatuk*, not *Masha Manido*, the term Hoffman reported from his informants. Elsewhere in his selection of vocabulary, however, Hoffman does define God as *Hawatuk*.

29. According to the origin narratives recounted at the *Mitawin* ceremony, the *ana'maqkiu* were underwater creatures who killed *Manabush's* brother. As such, they corresponded to the Underwater Monsters of Ojibwa narratives.

31. According to the origin narrative which was recounted at the *Mitawin* ceremony, *Wapishketapau* (white-hair) is chief of those who have charge of the entrance to the sky.

32. The private ceremony was held for members of the immediate family, while the public was held only for prominent *Mita* shamans.

33. Kohl (1985:291-296) provided an illustration and detailed explanation of a song chart which was given to him by a Menominee, but few other examples have survived.

34. The quotations are from a brief overview of the Ottawa in Kinietz's Indians of the Great Lakes (1965:284-297).

35. Keesing (1939:124) as quoted in Kurath (1959:212). Hoffman (1892-93:304) gave this spelling as the Ottawa version of the Ojibwa word.

36. Clifton's (1971:30-32) analysis of the Potawatomi demonstrates that while such accounts express certain fundamental truths, they cannot be used to substantiate exact historical events. He argues that the similarities in their language and culture certainly point to a common heritage, but that the original split took place far earlier than the tribal history suggests.

37. Certainly we have reports of the *Midewiwin* and *Mide* shamans among other Algonquian groups including the Miami, during this period (White 1991:117-219). Once again, we are forced to rely upon the chance remarks of individual Euro-Americans.

38. See, for instance Clifton (1977:122-123).

39. Although the book by Landes, as with her book on the *Midewiwin*, was not published until years later.

40. Indian officials at the time certainly believed that her emphasis was undue, believing these reports to be the work of various individuals who exaggerated their stories in order to see just how much she would accept (Landes 1970:27). While she argued that other researchers had found a similar state of affairs, she is the only one to make this the dominant feature of the society under observation.

41. See, for instance, Rogers and Smith's overview of the Anishinaabe in Ontario (1994).

42. It is an interesting side-light that among the Winnebago, the Bear clan operated as a police force with jurisdiction over internal affairs--a function which has made its way into contemporary Ojibwa descriptions of the *Midewiwin*, although it is never mentioned in any of the accounts concerning the Ojibwa examined in this study.

43. His "autobiography" of Crashing Thunder, a Winnebago shaman, became a classic in its time, while his study of the trickster in Winnebago mythology laid the groundwork for many subsequent studies of the indigenous myth cycles.

44. There are two major and often overlapping sources for Radin's discussion of the Medicine Dance: his chapter on Religion in his monographic study of the Winnebago in the Thirty-seventh annual report of the Bureau of Ethnology (Washington: 1923), and an article in the 1911 Journal of American Folklore. There is also a brief description of Rolling Thunder's initiation into the society in another issue of the same journal.

45. There is no indication at what point if any the Santee Dakota, including the Wapeton, broke away from the Winnebago, but there are few references to relationships between the two groups by the first Euro-American observers. Therefore, it is open to speculation whether or not the Wapeton Medicine Dance originated with the Winnebago, with the Ojibwa, or some other Algonquian group.

46. Skinner mentioned that the first of the four bands which comprised the *Wakan Wacipi* was named the Sauk, from whom the Wapeton ceremony was deprived. The Sauk were close relatives of the Fox Indians.

47. Skinner's account contained an excerpt from the Minnesota Historical Collections (Vol 1:269ff) which described the initiation of a candidate who was replacing a deceased member.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Almost without exception, Aboriginal "explanations" of the *Midewiwin* in any of its numerous manifestations have been experiential, whether they have been in the form of narratives which explained the origin of the world and the place of the *Midewiwin* in it, or the sacred scrolls which told of the migration of the Ojibwa and the rituals to be followed in the ceremonies. This does not mean that the Ojibwa were not reflective. As practitioners or potential practitioners of the *Midewiwin*, they shared a common world view.

Originally knowledge regarding the *Midewiwin* was oral, although pictographic mnemonics were employed as memory aids. Despite the publishing and recording of some narratives, songs, and rituals by outsiders, the *Midewiwin* has remained until recently, basically oral in nature. *Mides* may gather together to argue over the accuracy of particular versions of narratives, songs or rituals, but they do so within the context of the oral tradition, not some definitive set of texts.

Euro-American explanations have, by their very nature, been the work of "outside observers" who have described the ceremony and its teaching for a variety of reasons. Writers have sought to explain the *Midewiwin* to their fellow Euro-Americans, to engage in polemics with its teachings, and to preserve the teachings and rituals for posterity. Only a few have been proficient in the language, and despite the fact that several have claimed to have been initiated into the ceremony, none have been practitioners. As a

result, Euro-American scholars have employed a number of different methodologies in an effort to better understand the *Midewiwin*. Early writers concentrated on the external characteristics, while others have sought to explain the philosophical or religious conceptions upon which it was based through an analysis of specific texts and the structure of the language. Still others have attempted to place it within the context of broader religious, psychological, socio-economical or historical patterns. Members of the *Midewiwin* have been variously described as agents of the devil, charlatans, neurotics and psychotics, shamans, natural philosophers, members of a crisis cult, and pawns of economic forces. In one sense the study of the *Midewiwin* has become a duel between competing world views and methodologies. On the other hand, these debates can also be viewed as parts of a continuing dialogue which gradually work towards improving knowledge and appreciation for the *Midewiwin*.

Early French and later English writers on the subject of Ojibwa religion were usually highly literate individuals writing for literate audiences. There were few, if any, unvarnished accounts written by ordinary people, and John Tanner's account, although edited, stands alone as one of the few by an "insider." Most accounts attempted, with limited success, to fit the Ojibwa belief system into Western structures of thought. However, in doing so, they had great difficulty in comprehending a cosmology in which their own separate categories of the transcendent (God) and the immanent (powerful, holy) were subsumed into the single word "manitou," or where it appeared that the transcendent figure could be both singular and multiple in form and nature. It was perhaps for this reason that many accounts concentrated on externals and rituals which

would have been easier for their audiences to comprehend since this kind of information appeared to be more straightforward.

With the writings of Schoolcraft and his contemporaries, there was a perceptible shift in emphasis, as increasing numbers of Americans moved into regions which had previously been occupied by Indians and only a few Euro-Americans. Schoolcraft's particular purpose was to expose what he considered to be the falsehoods of the traditional Indian religious healers such as the *Mides*, whom he believed were preventing assimilation of the Ojibwa into American society. Nevertheless, Schoolcraft, Nicollet, and Kohl were the first Euro-Americans to begin to seriously examine the beliefs of Indians in an effort to understand their world view. Their writings mark the beginning of an attempt to systematically describe the *Midewiwin*, even though they failed in their efforts, and to a considerable extent further perpetuated faulty images of the *Midewiwin*.

At approximately the same time, a number of acculturated Ojibwa and mixed-blood individuals including Peter Jones, George Copway and William Warren published works on the Ojibwa in an effort to bring their history, culture and impending doom to the notice of Euro-Americans. Although on the one hand they were able to provide an "insiders" perspective, on the other, their acceptance of Euro-American beliefs and values colored their perspectives to varying degrees. One can question the extent to which even Warren's work truly represents the traditional Ojibwa perspective that he was attempting to portray.

The works of Hoffman and Densmore and their successors, mark another important shift in emphasis from the recorded observations of dedicated amateurs, to the

detailed writings of professional ethnographers which were based on extended field work using Aboriginal informants. Their efforts to preserve the cultural records of America's Aboriginal peoples before it was too late coincided with a similar desire on the part of some traditional Ojibwa healers. As a result, these practitioners were willing to pass on to them detailed descriptions and explanations.

The detailed explanations of Hoffman, and the insights offered by Densmore, added significantly to an understanding of the *Midewiwin*, despite the fact that Hoffman, in particular, continued to view the ceremonies through the filtered lens of his own world view. Despite this, his work on the *Midewiwin* has sometimes taken on a canonical status, and has become the measure by which other descriptions are judged to be orthodox or deviant. Unfortunately, although we know that other communities continued to practice the *Midewiwin*, there were no similar descriptions with which it can be compared until some time later.

Nevertheless, during the twentieth century there have been a number of relatively detailed accounts collected by trained ethnographers and dedicated amateurs. In addition, *Mide* narratives and scrolls have been collected from an even wider number of communities. It is possible, therefore, to form a better idea of the geographical and historical variations in the *Midewiwin*, taking into account the problems in translating and transcribing materials, and the world views of the individuals providing the descriptions. One of my original objectives was to use this information in order to provide a fuller composite picture of the *Midewiwin* as it has existed in the past.

Despite the fact that early observers, and some contemporary ones, have argued that one of the objectives of the *Midewiwin* was to provide a forum in which the *Mides* gained control over their followers, I could find little basis for this view. Certainly *Mides* were involved in passing on the teachings of the *Midewiwin*, and when faced with evangelistic efforts of Christian missionaries, they used a variety of means to oppose these efforts. Thus, they not only countered the arguments of the missionaries, but sometimes engaged in physical intimidation of potential converts. *Midewiwin* beliefs sometimes formed the basis of the arguments used by Ojibwa (and other) *ogimaas* who were engaged in Treaty negotiations. This was particularly true among those bands who wished to follow traditional beliefs and practices, although in some cases *Mide* leaders represented all factions, including Christians. Nevertheless, it would appear that the growing exclusivism of the *Midewiwin* was equally due to the conviction that their existence as a people was dependent upon their ability to physically separate themselves.

Midewiwin documents and some Euro-American accounts would appear to indicate that the twin objectives of the *Midewiwin* were to promote a long life and access to the manitous who could bestow power to accomplish this goal. These two aspects have often been separated by observers who have seen the initiation and public duelling rituals as shamanistic features, or as part of a curing ritual, in contrast to the broader, ethical and social concerns with which the rest of the ceremony was concerned.

However, I believe that the two were intimately connected. *Mides* were blessed by the *Mide* Manitous with the power of the *miigis*, as well as with the power of specific plants and herbs, both of which became part of their medicine bags. In both cases *Mide*

officials helped the new candidates, but the manitous, not the officials, were responsible for the transfer of power. To be blessed with these powers meant that the odds of surviving to old age would be improved. However, some accounts did observe that people with "too much power" which tended to be used inappropriately, often died at the hands of other even more powerful shamans.

A third objective of the *Midewiwin*, although it was not explicitly stated anywhere, appears to have been to help foster self-knowledge and a sense of identity for members. The origin and other narratives recounted during the training sessions, and the rituals of the ceremony itself, helped the members place themselves (both personally, and as a people) within a familiar cosmos in which everything was personally connected. The ceremony offered the opportunity for members to dramatically and ritually experience their beliefs. Thus, for instance, the *Mide* officials as they entered the *Mide* lodge became Bear breaking through the barriers in order to bring the *Midewiwin* to the Anishinaabe, they took the initiate on a dance procession which taught him or her the road of life that was to be followed, while the gift of goods to the *Mide* officials was a public acknowledgement of the power's worth, and the respect that was accorded it. Even the combination of danger and entertainment in the public duelling ritual reminded the people of the ambiguity of life in much the same way as did the stories of Nanabozho as culture hero and trickster.

Many commentators on the *Midewiwin*, whether or not they have done actual field research, have emphasized the distinction between the two means of obtaining power which existed among the Anishinaabe; through visions, and through the passing on of

learned knowledge. There is usually at least an implication that the process is an evolutionary one with the result that the *Midewiwin* is often seen as an indication of the growing complexity of Ojibwa society.

There is no doubt that the *Midewiwin* did provide another way of obtaining power, even for those who lacked a visionary experience. However, nineteenth century accounts do not indicate that there was a replacement, or even a conflict between these two types of power. In fact most indicate that the methods co-existed. All but a few twentieth century accounts indicate that candidates for the *Midewiwin* (or their sponsors) were still required to have had a visionary experience before being considered for admission to the *Midewiwin*. The difference was that in the *Midewiwin*, knowledge and thus the access to power was shared and passed on. In theory this allowed more individuals to gain access to a greater amount of power, although the progressively higher fees precluded this, as shown by the fact that only a few people became members of the higher degrees.

Another aspect of the *Midewiwin* that is often taken as a sign of evolutionary development is the fact that the *Midewiwin* was a secret society made up of many members in contrast to other types of traditional healers such as the *Jaasakiids* who operated independently. Although scholars such as Hickerson maintained that this indicated a greater sense of collectivity had developed among the Ojibwa, this may not be entirely borne out in practice. It is difficult to determine the exact organizational structure of the *Midewiwin* before Hoffman's account in the late nineteenth century, but what little information is available indicates that there was no permanent set of officials.

Rather, they were chosen from a pool of powerful *Mides* for each ceremony--probably this done mainly on the basis of the kinship connections of the person being initiated. Certainly by the second half of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century, the picture that emerges is of *Mides* who come together briefly during *Midewiwin* ceremonies, but who functioned independently, sometimes in opposition to one another.

It must be remembered that among the Ojibwa in particular, medicine bundles were a personal possession, rather than a clan or band possession as was common among some neighbouring groups. This meant that the power resided with the individual, not the collective. Moreover, with some possible exceptions, the bundles and scrolls were not passed on or sold. Unlike the Sioux who practiced a form of the Medicine Dance, members of the *Midewiwin* were not divided up into bands with specific responsibilities. Although Landes did make a distinction between *Mide* officials and the general membership, she also noted that these roles were dependent upon their individual, not their collective powers.

Another aspect of the *Midewiwin* which attracted notice very early on, and continues to draw the attention of commentators, is the question of how the Anishinaabeg dealt with the problem of evil. Warren's ([1885] 1984:108-112) graphic description of the evil times at Chequamegon illustrates what might be called the systemic version of evil, in which whole segments of the community were believed to have succumbed to a form of behaviour which has been described as everything from merely anti-social, to being an indication of bearwalkers or witchcraft, to resulting from some type of cosmic imbalance.

Bearwalkers, though not specifically connected to the *Midewiwin*, are mentioned by a variety of nineteenth and twentieth century writers on the subject of the *Midewiwin*, since many Ojibwa believed them to be evil shamans who had transformed themselves in order to cause havoc at night. Whether or not they were originally part of the Anishinaabe world view, they continue to be part of the world view of both followers of the *Midewiwin* and Catholics in some Ojibwa communities such as those on Manitoulin Island (Smith 1995).

At other other times the way that suffering or evil is dealt with has been in terms of duels between "good" and "bad" shamans. In much of the literature this takes the form of "good" *Mides* and "bad" *Waabanos* or *Jaasakiids*, but sometime the situation is reversed. Such was the case, for instance, at Parry Island (Jenness 1935). Some commentators have seen these duels as expressions of kin and clan feuds, or as examples of factionalism between *Midewiwin* followers and Christians. Certainly there is some evidence that the "badness" of a particular shaman depended to a large extent on the perspective of the informant. However, the literature also includes examples of individuals whose actions could be considered nasty by anybody's standard such as the Potawatomi leader, Main Poc (Poque), a powerful *Waabano*, who was noted for his use of poison to kill rivals, as well as for his violent temper, drunkenness, and frequent violence towards women (Edmunds 1985:261-2).

However, this does not imply that the Anishinaabe were or are dualistic as some commentators have stated. Rather, as I argued earlier, and as Smith points out in her commentary on the paintings of several young Ojibwa artists depicting the struggle

between *Misebishu* (*Mishibizhi*) and the Thunderers (*Animikii*), the Ojibwa envisioned interchange as occurring between two mutually dependent persons, not two independent principles (Smith 198:129-130). It is for this reason that *Mishibizhi* is sometimes spoken of as the tutelary manitou who gives powers to heal to members of the *Midewiwin*, even though at other times he is feared for his evil powers. Receiving power from *Mishibizhi* is not like signing a pact with the devil, as in the Western tradition of Mephistopheles, but there is the danger that too much power can be used for evil purposes. As Landes and others have indicated, powerful *Mides* were both feared and respected.

In my study of the *Midewiwin*, I was particularly interested in examining how beliefs and rituals may have varied over time, as well as how they may have varied in the different regions occupied by the Ojibwa and the other groups which have practiced allied ceremonies. In the sources that I examined, the major features of the ceremony appear to have remained relatively constant. Where differences do appear, there were often questions regarding the reliability of the observer in describing the ceremony, particularly in the early reports when the descriptions were often the work of someone with little or no knowledge of the society they were describing. Even some of the most meticulous observers such as Hoffman interlaced some sections of their work with information from secondary sources which are questionable, while other accounts, such as those by Day and Stewart, were written years after the event described, and sometimes incorporated material from other writers.

Nevertheless, there have been a number of changes in the *Midewiwin* which have occurred over the period of the past two hundred years. Some of these, which relate to

changes in tutelary spirits, appear to have been the result of new visions. Others, such as the changes which were recorded during the twentieth century at a time when the *Midewiwin* was very much under siege by Christian missionaries and government officials, were forced on practitioners from outside. Thus, for instance, bans on intertribal and even inter-community gatherings, and the adoption of the six day work week, temporarily forced communities to hold smaller, local gatherings, and simplify the ceremonies. Some rituals, notably the sweat lodge ceremonies, were dropped in some communities, as young men no longer wanted make the effort, while the time devoted to teaching the narratives and the medicines was often reduced, as old *Mide* leaders died, and younger ones with the proper knowledge could not be found to replace them. Young people who had been forced to attend residential schools often returned to their reserves and reservations with little or no knowledge of their traditional beliefs, whereas in earlier days, young people had often been initiated into the *Midewiwin* and were quite familiar with its teachings and rituals before they had reached what we would consider adulthood.

Nevertheless, what is remarkable is that despite everything, a few individuals such as Dan Raincloud, from Red Lake Reservation, were able to learn the ways of the *Midewiwin*, and continued to function as traditional healers (Black-Rogers 1989). Often this was done in the face of scepticism from their own community and the derision of the non-native community. Other Ojibwa, including some who were ostensibly Christians, worked out a variety of ways by which they could live in the larger Euro-American community while at the same time maintaining their Anishinaabe identity.

The question of Christian influences in the *Midewiwin* has been addressed by a number of commentators including Hickerson ([1970] 1987:60-61) who based part of his argument for post-contact origin on the fact that the fourth degree of the *Midewiwin* used a cross as one of its symbols. Although Hickerson's argument is rather tenuous, since it is based on his interpretation of a single documentary source, there is do doubt that Christian deities and some Christian concepts were incorporated into the Anishinaabe world view in many Ojibwa communities over the last two hundred years.

The extent to which this has affected the practice of the *Midewiwin* is open to question. Some changes, such as the addition of the *Machi Manitou* to the Anishinaabe cosmology, appear to have evolved in reaction to Christian missionaries. While the term appears to have been adopted in most communities, many influences are not as pervasive, varying from region to region and even community to community. Thus, for instance, Kinietz's description of the *Midewiwin* at Katikitegan showed a ceremony which was quite influenced by Christianity--at least in its outward manifestations, while the ceremonies at the neighbouring community of Lac du Flambeau exhibited few Christian influences (Kinietz 1947; Barnouw 1960).

It must also be remembered that Christian influences were not the only ones that followers of the *Midewiwin* encountered. The Ojibwa and other Anishinaabe who moved westward on to the plains intermingled with a variety of other Aboriginal groups. As a result, the *Midewiwin* of the Plains Ojibwa, as well as among the Northern Saulteaux, was influenced in some ways by the people they encountered. In retrospect, it is this diversity that one finds in the *Midewiwin*, both historically and geographically, during

similar time periods, that has to be seen as one of the main characteristics of the *Midewiwin* Society. Given the vast area in which the Ojibwa lived, the different historical circumstances in which they have found themselves, and the nature of Ojibwa society, this is not surprising. However, it is a diversity which exists within the general context of the basic elements of the *Midewiwin* which Warren delineated in the opening passage of this work. There may have been competing visions but to the extent that I have been able to understand it, the underlying world view of its members has remained the same.

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