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Preface

How can a person of the 21st century understand the essential character of the nomadic American Indians of the 19th century? What lessons can we learn from the Native Americans about God's immeasurable, wild, and virgin Nature? Is there a way to learn the spiritual wisdom of the olden-day Indians directly from the source? While the nomads of the plains and forests have long since vanished, we can still glimpse the spirit of that irreplaceable world directly through the words and photographs of the warriors and sages that have been preserved to our day. This book is an elegy for those great chiefs, who are the paragons of Plains Indian life. It is meant to communicate their wisdom and their beauty of soul, expressed so eloquently and poignantly by their own words and their own faces. While all of the American Indians presented here have long since passed from this earth, the heroic ideal that they represent, blending the qualities of the priest and the warrior stands as a model for all people.[1]

Many of these photographs have never before been published, so how have they been selected? Most of the photographs in this selection are taken from several thousand photographs that we have collected over the past thirty years. The majority of the photos in our collection are the result of research done in the Library of Congress in 1974.[2] All of the photographs ever submitted for copyright protection are in that facility, and at that time it was still possible to roam freely through the stacks and to easily obtain copies of

1. *Indian Spirit* contains wisdom from many American Indian tribes, but it has a certain focus on the Plains Indians because they were the last group of tribes to succumb to the white encroachment and thus their wisdom and their photographs are the best preserved of all American Indian tribes. When considering Plains Indian spirituality, it is evident that the many variations among the tribes are too vast and diverse to create a definitive statement about what it entails; but few would deny that there are unifying themes, including the sacred quality of virgin Nature, the Directions of Space, the use of the Sacred Pipe, and above all the idea of a Supreme Being. This book focuses on those common themes. While Indian women expressed a complementary perfection, no women have been included because they are the focus of a companion volume: *The Spirit of Indian Women* (cited in the Appendix). As with other civilizations, it is evident that not all American Indians lived up to the cultural ideal, but that ideal is nevertheless a reality.

2. The photograph of Black Elk on page 20 was taken by the late Joseph Epes Brown in 1947 and is used with the kind permission of his family. Dr. Brown was a professor of Religious Studies at the University of Montana and a well-known authority on the Plains Indians.

those photographs whose copyright protection had expired. We limited our selection of photographs to men who were raised into manhood during the nomadic days of the Plains Indians prior to the reservation era.[3]

We are also grateful to include photographs from the collection of the late philosopher Frithjof Schuon, compiled by him over a period of some fifty years. Although well known among scholars of comparative religion, many readers will not be familiar with Schuon. From his youth, Schuon had a profound and ultimately lifelong interest in and affinity with the Plains Indians of North America. He was formally adopted into the family of Chief James Red Cloud,[4] a grandson of the great Sioux chief well known to history. Years later, he was adopted into the family of Thomas Yellowtail, the Crow Indian medicine man and Sun Dance chief, who was one of the most admired American Indian spiritual leaders of the last century,[5] and whose family is also one of the most famous American Indian families of the last century.[6] In a career that spanned more than 50 years, Schuon wrote over 25 books that touched on diverse aspects of all the world's great religions, including that of the Plains Indians. He corresponded with many American Indian leaders and received photographs from many sources. For example, the photograph of Black Elk, the renowned Sioux holy man, on page 21, was a gift from Black Elk and is inscribed "*Mita Kola, Hehaka Sapa*" [(to) my friend, (from) Black Elk].[7] For several of the photos in the Schuon collection, the identity of both chief and photographer are unknown,[8] as they were gifts to Schuon and the information was not provided to him.[9]

3. Photographic technology was not widely available until the second part of the 19th century, so there are few records of the nomadic tribes of the Eastern part of the United States. We have therefore only chosen photographs of the Western tribes, who still lived in virgin Nature during the first years of photography.

4. In 1959 at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, Chief James Red Cloud gave Schuon the Sioux name Brave Eagle, *Wambli Ohitika*. Some of the photographs in this book were gifts from James Red Cloud to Schuon.

5. The story of Yellowtail's life is revealed in *Yellowtail: Crow Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief* (cited in the Primary Bibliography). For more information on Thomas Yellowtail, see "About Thomas Yellowtail" in the Appendix.

6. For information on the Yellowtail family, see "About Thomas Yellowtail" in the Appendix.

7. The handwriting is reproduced in actual size on page 21. It is not known whether this is Black Elk's handwriting or the handwriting of one of his relatives.

8. We are very grateful to Mike Cowdrey, one of the foremost experts on Native American photography, who painstakingly reviewed our manuscript and provided us with many missing names. Cowdrey corrected several errors in the recorded names of the men who appear on these pages.

9. In 1992, in response to our request, Frithjof Schuon reviewed both his photographic collec-

INDIAN SPIRIT

Our research on American Indian oratory and writings started in 1970 when Michael was the graduate teaching assistant for the course "Religious Traditions of the North American Indians" at Indiana University, taught by Joseph Epes Brown. It was through Dr. Brown that we met both Thomas and Susie Yellowtail and Benjamin Black Elk, the son of the revered Sioux holy man. From that time we have studied the American Indians, particularly the Plains Indians, continuously seeking out the oratory and writings that concerned the spiritual traditions of the pre-reservation nomads.

The traditional world of the American Indians had no written language, so written documentation of this wisdom starts with the coming of the white man. This greatly limits the overall time period for the direct recording of the words of the nomadic chiefs. As *Indian Spirit* only focuses on their sacred heritage, we have not included statements about the interaction with the dominant white culture unless there is a comparison of the sacred or moral values of the two races. In addition to the words of the great olden-day chiefs, we have added selected writings from the generation who was taught directly by these traditional nomads. All of the education of the young was through the oral teaching of the elders. This storytelling was the basis of the transmittal of the tribal wisdom from one generation to the next, or more precisely, from the generation of the grandparents to the grandchildren, because the children spent countless hours under the tutelage of the grandparents while the parents provided for the material needs of the family. This process was an integral part of the children's education and in this way each third generation provided a vital link to the ancestral tribal traditions. Plains Indian youth born around the turn of the 19th century still had the benefit of an integral education directly from the "old-timers," as many American Indians affectionately refer to the last generation that lived in the nomadic era of the Plains Indian culture. That generation was the last direct living link to the nomadic pre-reservation era, and most of them are no longer with us. While

tion and ours and identified many of the photographs that form the basis of this selection. We are grateful to him for his guidance and for allowing us to use several of his photographs and his sketches (pp. 10, 26, 50, 66, 90, 125, 130).

there is not a precise time that defines this generation, we have chosen only to include writings or oratory from the elders born before 1904.[10] Some of the quotations may be familiar, but some lesser known quotations have been included to demonstrate the breadth and diversity of tribal wisdom.

The Introduction is the result of our relationship with the Yellowtail family, which began in 1970. Prior to Thomas Yellowtail's death in November 1993, we spent a part of every summer with him in the West, including annual visits to the Sun Dance. Beginning in 1978, Yellowtail also made annual trips to visit our home in Indiana. During this time together, we tried to work on various projects of interest to him, including the preparation of the Yellowtail book and then this book. He loved to see all of the photographs and read the writings and oratory of the old-timers that we found during the course of each passing year. Yellowtail finished the Introduction[11] while staying in our home in the autumn of 1992, after reviewing all of these photographs and quotations.[12] Though personal and professional obligations delayed the book's publication for several years, there is a sense of fulfillment now in completing what we worked on together.

10. This does not deny that much of the wisdom of these old-timers has been preserved in later generations, but the later generations did not have the benefit of learning directly from those who actually lived the traditional life of complete freedom in virgin Nature. The further one travels from the source, the more difficult it is to know the authenticity of the recorded words, owing to a wide variety of factors. We have tried to select writings that stay as close as possible to the source of the ancestral wisdom.

11. The process that Yellowtail used to write the Introduction is the same process that was utilized in recording and editing the Yellowtail book. In brief, we recorded his thoughts about the subject at hand, which we then edited and set onto paper, always trying to preserve his actual word choice and manner of speaking. He reviewed our drafts and made corrections, which we incorporated into a subsequent document. He always read and approved the final writing. We started this process in 1991 and completed the Introduction in 1992.

12. Since that time, Raymond Wilson, a professor at Fort Hays State University and the leading authority on the life of Ohiyesa (Charles Eastman), led us to the photographs of Ohiyesa on pages 12 and 13, which are provided courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University. We also added selected quotations from the Yellowtail book. In all other respects, Yellowtail reviewed all of the photographs and the words of the chiefs at the time the Introduction was written. For diverse reasons, it was not possible to utilize all of the photographs and quotations that Yellowtail reviewed.

Indian Spirit introduces us to the foremost members of that tradition, in both photographs and words. We see the great emphasis the American Indians placed on moral character and their intimate contact with God's immeasurable, wild, and virgin Nature. It is evident that they strongly believe the sacred spirit within each person is mysteriously linked to the Great Spirit and that man's vocation is to live in harmony with the teachings of the Great Spirit. Their entire culture was built upon these precepts. In today's technological world, we often lose our connection to anything of sacred value that can provide a balance for the disequilibriating factors which we encounter on a daily basis. It is our hope that the insights conveyed in *Indian Spirit* will help each of us to better understand the sacred spirit that dwells in every person.

Judith and Michael Fitzgerald
May, 2006
Bloomington, Indiana

Preface to Indian Spirit: Revised and Enlarged
by Judith and Michael Oren Fitzgerald

Features in

Indian Spirit: Revised and Enlarged
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