

concerning the relation between Black Elk's characterizations of traditional Lakota beliefs and religious rituals and his acceptance of and participation in Christian religion. Neihardt and Brown made no mention of Black Elk's Catholicism. In publishing the interview transcripts, DeMallie (1984) discussed Black Elk's life as a Catholic catechist, and in telling her life story, Lucy Looks Twice, Black Elk's daughter gave her perspective on her father as a Catholic religious leader (Steltenkamp 1993). A critical literature has developed that attempts to disentangle Christian and traditional elements from Black Elk's religious teachings. However, Black Elk can best be understood as an individual who spent his entire life seeking religious knowledge to benefit his people. As a young man he found it in traditional religion, and later, when he traveled in Europe, he found strength in Christian teachings. After the failure of the Ghost Dance, Black Elk apparently relied more and more on Catholic teachings until he finally stopped the practice of traditional rituals altogether. But this should not be confused with lack of belief. Black Elk's descriptions of Lakota religion incorporated more and more Christian symbols and values as his life progressed, revealing an increasing syncretism of Lakota tradition and Christianity. In old age he performed traditional Lakota religious rituals for the edification of tourists, not merely for amusement, but to demonstrate that there was goodness and value in the old ways, different as they were from Christianity.

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#### Further Reading

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- See also: Lakota; Lakota Sun Dance.

#### **P** Black Mesa (New Mexico)

In the autumn of 1969, I spent a month in the Huichol Indian village of San Andres de Coahimiata in a remote region of the Sierra Madre Occidental of western Mexico. I was conducting field recordings of Huichol music and documenting their annual peyote fiesta, as well as their construction of musical instruments. It was during this time that I realized that traditional cultures are endangered by the spread of industrial monocultures whose paradigm is dominated by an economic imperative and growth for its own sake.

On returning to the United States, I resigned as music director for the Center for Arts of Indian America and co-founded the Central Clearing House in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Clearing House was committed to gathering and providing information about threats to the natural environment occurring throughout the American Southwest. In early April 1970, National Park Service historian Bill Brown informed me of a massive coal strip mine to be situated atop Black Mesa, a land formation located in northern Arizona bearing the largest coal deposit in that state. Black Mesa is sacred to both Hopi and Navajo Indians. The ancient Hopi villages are situated on the three southern promontories of Black Mesa, a land form considered to be the body of the female mountain by the Navajos.

Brown and I explored the surface of Black Mesa from both truck and airplane. We learned that the coal from Black Mesa was to be delivered to two electrical generating stations, one to be located on the banks of Lake Powell near Page, Arizona, the other already constructed in Laughlin, Nevada.

Subsequently, I visited my old friend and Hopi elder David Menongye who resided at Hotevilla on Third Mesa. David had heard nothing of this and asked if I would speak before an assembly of Hopi elders, to which I agreed. Sixty-three elders gathered in the Second Mesa village of Shungopovi in mid-April. I presented the few facts that I had at my disposal. The Hopi Tribal Council chaired by Clarence Hamilton, and represented by John Boyden, a Salt Lake City attorney who served as the Hopi Tribe's legal counsel, had signed a lease. It allowed the Peabody Coal Company of East St. Louis to strip-mine Black Mesa. Coal would both be hauled by special railway to the power plant at Page, and be transported by water drawn from wells tapping the ancient Black Mesa aquifer, then pumped through a slurry pipeline for 273 miles to the Mojave power plant in Laughlin.

The coal commanded a very low price, and the Hopis were to be paid \$1.67 an acre foot for some of the purest water in America. Three acre-feet is the equivalent of approximately one million gallons, or a one acre pool three feet deep. This water was to be pumped at the rate of two thousand gallons per minute, twenty-four hours a day.

The traditional Hopis were enraged that these negotiations had taken place without their knowledge. Many of these elders spoke little or no English. After a discussion, David Menongye asked if I would help serve as a bridge to the world of the Bahannas, or white people, to end this mining, which violated the Hopi's spiritual relationship to Mother Earth. I agreed, and on 17 April 1970, my friends Jimmy Hopper, Bill Brown, John Kimmey and I founded the Santa Fe chapter of the Black Mesa Defense Fund. We were soon joined by Terrence Moore, Philip Shultz, Caroline Rackley, Tom Andrews, Hannah Hibbs and a host of volunteers. For the next three years, we did everything in our power to stop what we considered to be the rape of Black Mesa, but to little avail. We worked closely with the Native American Rights Fund of Boulder Colorado, a law firm devoted to serving Native Americans. We also worked with traditional Navajos and many others throughout the American Southwest and beyond to try to thwart the juggernaut of corporate America as they ravaged the land making every attempt to convert Black Mesa into money.

Research revealed that the underlying purpose for the Black Mesa strip mine was to fuel the Navajo Generating Station capable of a 2000 megawatt generating capacity. About 25 percent of this electricity was to be used to pump water from Lake Havasu downstream on the Colorado River to the central valleys of Arizona. This massive public works project is known as the Central Arizona Project (CAP). The water was ostensibly to be used for agriculture, but over time became far too expensive for farmers, and is now used for development in Phoenix and Tucson.

It should be recalled that the original proposal for supplying the electrical needs for the CAP would require that two dams be constructed near either end of the Grand Canyon to generate hydro-electric power. David Brower and the Sierra Club called on the American public, and public opinion indeed thwarted the proposed dams. The obvious alternative was to mine coal from Black Mesa to fuel the Navajo Generating Station near Page, Arizona.

In the meantime, traditional Hopis were being represented in the world at large by Thomas Banyacya with whom I traveled throughout the United States on speaking tours wherein Banyacya revealed his interpretation of the Hopi prophecy of coming disaster in the face of "the march of progress." In his lecture, Banyacya referred to a cloth rendering of the ancient petroglyph situated near Old Oraibi that bespeaks of the Time of Purification. The rendering portrayed the tools given to the Hopi by the Great Spirit, Massau. This was followed by two roughly parallel paths. The upper path was that of the White Man and revealed two white men and one Hopi that had assumed the ways of the White Man. This path finally peters out. The lower path reveals the way of the traditional Hopi and is strong and enduring. Both World Wars I and II are represented, as is the coming of World War III

followed by the time of purification. Banyacya said that the White Man was doomed because of his faith in technology over that of the way of the Great Spirit. Only those would survive who followed the traditional Hopi way and the path of the Great Spirit.

In my own lecture, I spoke of the necessity for understanding the facts surrounding the strip-mining of Black Mesa, and attempted to rally university students to protect endangered environments using whatever means were available short of harming fellow humans. I called the Central Arizona Project the perfect model of total environmental degradation, which included:

- the polluting of aquifers with seepage from strip-mined Earth;
- devastation to landscape through massive strip-mining of coal;
- marring of landscape by the construction of the coal-bearing railroad across the once pristine Kaibito Plateau;
- the befouling of the air of the American Southwest with smoke emanating from the coal-fired power plants;
- the depleting of the Navajo aquifer beneath Black Mesa;
- the march of the electric powerlines extending from Page to Lake Havasu;
- providing water from the Colorado River to Phoenix and Tucson, cities located in the fragile ecosystem of the arid Sonoran Desert.

All of this would result in the utter disruption of both Hopi and Navajo traditional cultures which would bear the brunt of devastation to air, land and water in their sacred homelands in the heart of the Colorado Plateau.

In early 1971, my wife Katherine and I were invited by traditional Hopis into the *kiva*, or subterranean sacred ceremonial chamber at Hotevilla on Third Mesa. Present were twenty or so male elders including David Menongye, Thomas Banyacya and John Lansa, husband of Mina Lansa, then the *kikmongwi* or traditional leader of Old Oraibi. Throughout the day, they related their collective point of view, which they asked me to write down and publish. The following two quotes are excerpted from what was published in *Clear Creek Magazine* in 1972:

The Black Mesa area is a sacred place. The Hopi knew it to be the spiritual center of the whole continent that contained the heart and soul of the Earthmother. The Great Spirit had granted them permission to live in that sacred place, to pray for balance and harmony, and to live within the life plan that the Great Spirit had taught them. The Hopi people still live there in the Black Mesa area, and the traditionalists still follow the teachings of the Great Spirit.

The Hopi look to the Earthmother for food and nourishment, for it was from the womb of the Earthmother that the Hopi and all living creatures emerged in the beginning. The animals and plants, the eagles and people are all kept alive through the power of the flow of Nature. The inter-action between all living things – the relation of rocks to the land, the flow of water, the dance of yellow butterflies in the cornfields – all this marks the balance of Nature.

The Hopis are stewards of the land. In their *kivas*, they perform rituals and ceremonies so that Nature will work in balance with people. These ceremonies are reflections of the teachings of the Great Spirit, which the Hopi received at the time of emergence from the lower world. They achieve a state of mind through which they perceive that those early beginnings and the present are all the same, that time is not just a linear passage from the past to the future, but rather a continuum in which the annual cycles with their ceremonial events touch each other in reaffirmation of meaning.

In the words of Hopi elder John Lansa as translated by Thomas Banyacya,

There is a spiritual seeing of things that can't be explained. There are shrines in the spiritual center, which are markers for spiritual routes which extend in all four directions to the edge of the continent. Through our ceremonials, it is possible to keep the natural forces together. From here at the spiritual center, our prayers go to all parts of the Earth. Our prayers maintain the balance that keeps all things well and healthy. This is the sacred place. It must not have anything wrong in it. It must never be defiled. We want it organic the way it has always been. Leave the land in the hands of the Hopi to take care of everything for all the people. We know how to farm. Only people who know how to grow things will survive. Through prayer, people can develop in their own way as the Hopi have.

On the one hand, Black Mesa was seen as an enormous coal deposit, the strip-mining of which would result in great economic gain to resource extractors, land developers, politicians, and other corporate beneficiaries. On the other hand, the sacred heartland of an ancient traditional culture was to be utterly desecrated and defiled. The Hopi deity Massau was in direct conflict with Mammon, the hidden deity of corporate America over the fate of the precious landscape of the American Southwest. A hidden villain in this scenario was the Hopi's general counsel, John Boyden who was suspected of and later revealed to be quietly representing the Peabody Coal Company of East St. Louis at the same time.

Within their cultural milieu, the Hopi are sophisticated and knowledgeable with regard to subsistence farming in one of the continent's most arid landscapes. Hopi spirituality and ceremonial practices help them remain aligned with the seasons and allow them to recognize that which is sacred within the flow of nature. The presence of the Black Mesa mine has greatly disturbed the natural balance of both Hopi culture and the ecosystem.

In the spring of 1972, David Menongye, Thomas Banyacya, two younger Hopis, Katherine and I were scheduled to attend the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, in an attempt to bring the Black Mesa debacle to global attention. The Hopis had refused to secure United States passports on the grounds that they were citizens of the Hopi Independent Nation, not the United States of America. My wife and I fashioned passports bound in tanned deer hide that bore the inscription, "The bearer of this passport is a citizen of the Hopi Independent Nation. This passport is valid as long as the Sun shines, the water flows, and the grass grows." David Menongye blessed the passports with corn pollen and affixed an eagle feather to each one. It took a fair amount of time at LAX, but finally a pilot from Scandinavian Airlines agreed to take us to Stockholm. Ultimately, the passports were stamped by Swedish authorities, thus validating them in the eyes of international bureaucracy. They were later stamped in Denmark.

In Stockholm, Hopis and Navajos met with members of other traditional cultures from around the world establishing a network that continues to today.

But the strip-mining of Black Mesa was begun and continued into the twenty-first century. Water continues to be pumped out of the Black Mesa aquifer. A new generation of Hopis and Navajos use every legal means at their disposal to thwart this pumping as Hopi springs and Navajo wells run dry. This environmental catastrophe now fosters growth in the major cities now located in the Sonoran Desert, a fragile landscape ill-prepared to absorb so many humans. The Central Arizona Project, originally conceived as an irrigation project, has become the means by which population centers in Arizona continue to metastasize over the land.

In the meantime, Hopi and Navajo culture-bearers fight so that their home habitat and their spiritual values may survive.

The human species is an invasive species. The mining at Black Mesa has many parallels globally. Traditional cultures that have evolved within habitat are gravely endangered by invading outsiders intent on extracting non-renewable resources located in homelands native to others. Peoples whose sensitivities and sensibilities are finely honed to home habitat are being displaced not only by extractors, but more also by the dominant monoculture which attempts to reeducate people native to place into a

paradigm commensurate with that of the more dominant culture. Thus cultural diversity is disappearing. As cultural diversity and its attendant affiliation with the spirit of place disappear, the intuitive ability to perceive the sacred quality of the biotic community seems to atrophy. Finally, the perception of reality is restricted to a “nuts and bolts” point of view that excludes the mystery, the *numen*, the meaning.

Imagine a collaboration between indigenous peoples whose understanding of native habitats is contained within their lore, music and ceremony, and biological scientists who well understand that extermination of species tolls the knell for habitat. Imagine thinking in terms of watershed boundaries rather than geopolitical boundaries. Or that the Earth is a living organism rather than a body of real estate to be divided among the most powerful humans. Or that we are honored to be members of the biotic community of our planet Earth rather than considering ourselves to be dominant and separate. The result could combine knowledge and wisdom of specific homelands in such a way as to foster reciprocity between humanity and habitat, and thus reinvoke the Spirit of Nature in our daily lives.

Jack Loeffler

#### Further Reading

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- See also: Abbey, Edward; Brower, David; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Holy Land in Native North America; Hopi-Navajo Land Dispute; Hopiland to the Rainforest Action Network; Indigenous Environmental Network; Law; Religions and Native American Lands; Radical Environmentalism; Snyder, Gary.

### Blackfoot Cosmos as Natural Philosophy

Our ancestors were strong, powerful and were well equipped with survival skills. They taught us to live in harmony with nature, the animals and the birds. They taught us that the land belongs to the Creator and that we belong to Mother Earth. Our legends teach us lessons (Rufus Goodstrikier (Piinakoyim) in Zaharia and Fox 1995: 97).

The group of closely related nations of the Algonquin linguistic stock known as the Blackfoot Confederacy is comprised of four divisions: the Southern Piegan, or Blackfeet, of Montana; the Northern Piegan, or Blackfoot, of Alberta; the Kainah, or Bloods; and the Siksika, or “Blackfoot” proper. Loosely organized in mobile social units described as “bands” in the anthropological literature and relying on the buffalo as its economic base, the Blackfoot Confederacy controlled a vast terrain stretching from northern Alberta and western Saskatchewan in Canada down into the high prairies of Montana in the United States. In 1833, their numbers were estimated to be nearly twenty thousand people (Maximilian 1906). Devastated by epidemics and unequal military struggle with colonial powers, the Blackfoot Confederacy suffered a steep demographic decline at the turn of the twentieth century, which was partially offset by a gradual post-World War II population increase that brought the confederacy’s numbers to about fifteen thousand enrolled members in 1990. Deprived of a bulk of their territorial possessions, the present-day Blackfoot resist a high unemployment rate, lack of proper medical care and bureaucratic interventions through an intensive focus on communal values, personal integrity, local knowledge, and cultural revival, including that which represents a strengthening of the Blackfoot philosophical universe.

Throughout the world, Native peoples seek to be aware of, in communication with, and hopefully synchronized with, the rhythms of the natural world. In the Blackfoot context, spiritually “knowledgeable” or “powerful” people are those who know how to do this. The purpose and structure of stories, teachings, and practices emphasize this point. *Mokakssini*, the Blackfoot word that approximates *epistemology* – referring also to notions of awareness of total being, and knowing – is founded upon deep knowledge of the environment, the cosmos, and all of life, and is rooted in spirituality. Blackfoot teachings consider humans to be part of a delicate harmonious relationship with both the Earth and the heavens, wherein the Sun, Moon, the planets and stars – called *Spumatapiiwa* (“Sky People”) – have spiritual as well as physical properties. The natural harmony of the Blackfoot universe is easily disrupted unless humans remember their responsibility to maintain it.

The spiritual practices that are related and relayed to humans in Blackfoot stories hold valuable lessons for seeking deeper knowledge via awareness of the interrelationships between humans and the rest of their environment. Preparations to increase one’s awareness during a vision quest or by participation in the Sun Dance, for example, are not simply about the preparation of the mind (i.e., psychological), but rather to bring into harmony, to synchronize the whole human, with the “whole,” the “multiverse.” Blackfoot vision traditions are central awareness-seeking sources contributing to the rich body of Blackfoot knowledge. This tradition survives as