The Dakota Way of Life

Ella Cara Deloria

Edited by Raymond J. DeMallie
and Thierry Veyrié

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The Dakota Way of Life

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Edited by Raymond J. DeMallie
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Afterword by Philip J. Deloria

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Acknowledgments

Many anonymous Dakota people should be credited for having shared their knowledge of Dakota social life with Ella Deloria, and they can only be thanked collectively. Deloria wrote to Hiram Beebe:[1]

> I should like to add your name in the preface to those of all friends who have helped, either by encouragement, material aid, information, or whatever. I am not trying to name individually the literally scores–into the hundreds–of Dakota people I have talked with and from whom I have obtained not only plain facts but–and more especially–the psychological background that motivated action and behavior in the old camp circle life. (December 2, 1952)

Since she never formally completed her manuscript, this quote is the only testimony of Ella Deloria's gratitude toward and acknowledgment of the many people who made this work possible.

We know that Ella Deloria received precious guidance from Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and, in secondary roles, Alexander Lesser, Will Robinson, and Inez Adams at Columbia University. Several other institutions should be mentioned for providing stipends, travel funds, and money for gifts that made fieldwork and typing possible. The Penrose Fund of the American Philosophical Society supported her fieldwork before 1944. The Viking Fund of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Institute for Intercultural Studies, and Hiram E. Beebe sponsored Deloria's editing of her manuscripts after 1944.

Ella Deloria's family, over four generations, was integral to the materials comprising *The Dakota Way of Life*, beginning with Reverend Philip J. Deloria and Mary Sully Deloria, her parents, who were undoubtedly the first sources of her knowledge of Dakota culture and language. Vine V. Deloria Sr. and Mary Susan Deloria, her brother and sister, were companions throughout the preparation of this manuscript. Vine V. Deloria

Jr., with whom Raymond J. DeMallie maintained a long friendship, correspondence, and collaborative study, introduced him to his aunt's work and unpublished manuscripts. The fourth generation of Deloria scholars, manifested by Philip J. Deloria, also deserves mention for his suggestions and for authoring the afterword to this volume. We express our deep gratitude to the Deloria family.

Our admiration for Ella Deloria's life and commitment to the description of her Native culture and language is immense, and we are proud and grateful to bring this manuscript to the public. DeMallie also had the privilege to enjoy conversations with Deloria in 1965 and 1970. Many people have helped or informed DeMallie's research on Deloria's life and work and cannot be listed exhaustively. We should, however, make mention of her biographer, Janette Murray, who was most helpful in diving into Deloria's life.

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Presentation of Ella Cara Deloria

Ella Cara Deloria, who devoted much of her life to the study of the language and culture of the Sioux (Dakota and Lakota), was born on January 31, 1889, on the Yankton Sioux Indian Reservation in southeastern South Dakota, near the present town of Lake Andes. She was the firstborn child of the reverend Philip Joseph Deloria and Mary Sully Deloria and was named *Ąpétu Wašté-wį* 'Beautiful Day Woman' in commemoration of the blizzard that raged the day of her birth. Her parents, members of the Yankton Sioux tribe, were both descended from Yankton Dakota (Sioux) and Euro-American ancestors. Her father's Dakota name was *Tˀípi Sápa* 'Black Lodge'; her father's father was François des Lauriers (known as *Saswé*, the Dakota pronunciation of François), a Yankton chief who was the son of a Frenchman and a Yankton woman. Deloria's mother, Mary Sully Bordeaux, the granddaughter of the artist Thomas Sully, was also of mixed heritage, being of Irish and Yankton descent. Both of Deloria's parents had had children by previous marriages. As a young man, Philip Deloria had converted to Christianity and renounced his claim to chieftainship; ultimately he became one of the first two Sioux to be ordained priests in the Episcopal Church.[1] In 1890 he was placed in charge of St. Elizabeth's Church and Boarding School, near Wakpala, South Dakota, on the Standing Rock Reservation. There Ella Deloria was raised with her younger sister and brother, Susan and Vine. Her childhood memories of the big tipi her mother would put up during the summers, which served as the children's playhouse, and of the families of Chief Gall and other local Hunkpapa and Blackfeet Lakotas, are warmly recalled in her writings.

None of this made for a carefree childhood. Ella Deloria wrote that she and her siblings were not completely at home in Indian society, where social restrictions of gender and respect circumscribed the children's play, and, in the context of the mission they were the minister's children, always called on to "set an example." Being the eldest of her siblings, she started acting as caretaker early in her childhood and was called upon for

farm work. At twelve she was driving a team of horses that accidentally got scared, tipped the wagon, and caused the loss of her right thumb, handicapping her for life (Deloria 1998, xi). Then they were sent to boarding school at All Saints in Sioux Falls, where Deloria studied from 1902 to 1910. That year she entered Oberlin College, after which, in 1913, she enrolled at Columbia University Teachers College in New York City, where she received her bachelor of science degree in 1915. During her last semester in New York, she was introduced to pioneer of American anthropology Franz Boas, who was pursuing a study of the Dakota language. Boas hired her — Deloria's first paying job — to come to his class and work with him and his students on translating portions of the texts written by Lakota scholar George Bushotter in 1887. It was her first realization that her skill in her Native language was valued outside Sioux Country. This experience introduced her to the formal study of American Indian languages and cultures, thereby setting in motion the course of much of the rest of her life. After graduation Deloria returned to All Saints, where she taught for four years. In 1919 she took a job with the YWCA as health education secretary for Indian schools. In 1923 she returned to teaching, this time as a physical education instructor at Haskell Institute, an Indian boarding school in Lawrence, Kansas.

Her letters from Haskell reveal Ella Deloria's strong identity as a Dakota and as an Indian — an identity fostered by a network of educated Indian friends and acquaintances. While at Haskell she was particularly proud of her accomplishments in writing and staging pageants, modeled in part after tableaux performed by the students at All Saints. In 1928 she copyrighted "The Wohpe Festival," a day-long celebration of traditional Dakota religion for schools and summer camps that celebrates Indians as children of nature: "The great lesson is taught that life in any form is precious . . . all children, regardless of race, need to learn it at some time during their lives." Based on the Sun Dance, the directions for the festival give invocations, prayers, dances, and ritual movements.

In 1927 Boas's student Martha Warren Beckwith happened to meet Philip Deloria while recording Sioux folklore in South Dakota. From him she learned of Ella Deloria's whereabouts and wrote to tell Boas. Anxious to continue their collaboration, Boas visited her in Oklahoma to propose that she resume the Dakota-language studies she had begun with him in New York. That June, in Lawrence, they continued their work on the Bushotter

translations and finalized the writing system for the Dakota language, Boas reinforcing in Deloria's mind the necessity of distinguishing aspirated, unaspirated, and glottalized consonants. Before leaving Boas drew up a formal agreement to pay her to continue work during the summer. She readily agreed and spent the summer translating written texts, including those by George Sword, a reservation policeman who wrote for Lakota newspapers. She also recorded texts on her own. In a letter to Deloria in January 1928, Boas referred to the writing system they developed in the summer of 1927 as "the alphabet as we designed it."

Ella Deloria continued translating the Bushotter texts that Franz Boas mailed to her at Haskell. Writing to Bishop Hugh L. Burleson, her spiritual advisor and temporal benefactor, in August 1928, she explained it this way:

> Dr. Boas of Columbia, with whom I did some work in recording Dakota phonetically, when I was in school, came to see me and we worked out some more material. He is most interested in getting the language recorded accurately for future reference in comparative languages of primitive peoples, and wants me to work with him . . . I am finishing up now some revision of the Bushotter Dakota texts from the Smithsonian Institute. Also I am writing a course of study in physical education for the Indian schools. . . .
>
> I always have the feeling that this (whatever I am doing) is temporary—that ideally I would be doing church work. I feel a constant pull towards that. I wish there were a position in the Church in South Dakota involving traveling for the woman's auxiliary. I don't brag, but I know that I have been fortunate enough to have the natural ability of getting people to do things, and that with my Dakota, and knowledge of Church affairs, and of changing customs among the white people, I can make a success of such work, helping women to take their place in the Church and also interpreting white people to them, so they can adjust themselves better than they have till now. I am very thoroughly convinced that you can not really get at the heart of a people without knowing their language. I think my knowledge of Dakota is a big asset there. And then, pageantry. I have been putting on things [pageants] down here, and made each one better than the previous one.[2]

Deloria so enjoyed the linguistic work that at the end of the fall semester she precipitously resigned her teaching position in Haskell, even before Boas could guarantee her full-time employment. At age thirty-nine, she found teaching physical education to be too exhausting and was looking for another line of work. In November 1927 she wrote to Boas by hand in an exhilarated tone:

> [I] am considering resigning . . . I have in view two things,—a position in a book company, or church work at home. But of course that is in case you have nothing for me. I am wondering—you once said that for a time you might have me come to live in your home and do work on the Dakota. Would you care to offer me such a thing at this time? I could come the first part of January . . . I should have to have a salary, and whenever an opportunity came from a high school or organization, to tell Indian customs and demonstrate dances, as used to come when I was in New York, I would like to be able to go. The rest of the time I could give to any work you would want me to do. . . .
>
> P.S. You spoke of a possible fellowship. If that should materialize, I could come back to the Sioux Country in June. I would like that better than teaching gym work any more.

Boas was guardedly optimistic about being able to provide support for Deloria and proposed a salary of $100 per month, with Ella to live with his family. She preferred a higher salary that would allow her independence in New York. On Christmas Day, 1927, she wrote to Boas again, assuring him that there was nothing she wanted to do more than work with him on the Dakota language. The following month, on January 18, 1928, Boas wrote her that he had obtained funds for her to revise the Riggs dictionary of Santee (1890), recording the equivalent forms in Teton Dakota, or Lakota. Finally, on January 28, Boas was able to guarantee her regular employment for eighteen months, which began a decade of collaboration supported by Columbia University.

Her funding permitted to employ her under Otto Klineberg, a friend of Boas's, to work on a project to study Dakota psychology, "the habits of action and thought" of children and adults. However, Boas used this as an opportunity to further their collaboration on Dakota language and

culture. When, in January 1928, he asked her to write the Dakota forms in the Riggs dictionary, he noted that, "from an ethnological point of view, the whole study will, of course, have to know all the details of everyday life as well as of religious attitudes and habits of thought of the people."

Boas asked Deloria to come to New York to receive directions and assist in the classroom, but she delayed her trip until February, when her brother could come to South Dakota to stay with their father and assist him, as his health was precarious. Philip had retired from missionary work and moved back to the Yankton Reservation. The $200 a month Boas now provided allowed her to rent her own lodgings and to bring her sister to live with her; as neither Ella nor Susan Deloria ever married, the two would be lifelong companions. At the end of April 1928 she wrote to her bishop that she had completed the work on the Riggs dictionary, having written the Lakota forms in the margins. Boas's objective was to reorganize the dictionary according to verb stems. Deloria was also teaching two classes: one on her own (presumably devoted to Dakota culture and society), and the other a linguistics methods class, "where I do not teach but answer questions put to me by the students who are trying to learn methods of getting at a new, primitive language."

During the summer Deloria returned to South Dakota to continue field study. Upon her departure Boas provided directions about the comparative psychology project to Deloria in a letter:

> The principal object of your trip is to supplement your knowledge of the general culture background of the Dakota for the purpose of assisting in the preparation of psychological tests that will fit their culture. . . . If you should find any kind of games among children that train activities, with which our own children in the cities are not familiar, these will be of particular value. . . . At the same time, you will obtain as much information as possible on the ethnography and language of the Sioux. (Whitten and Zimmerman 1982)

Deloria was to develop a comparative performance test. Two years later the test, which was based on beadwork, proved adequate for showing that Lakota children performed better than children from the city in an activity with which they were familiar, unlike the tests that were commonly imposed on them.

In addition to collaborating with Boas and Klineberg, Ella Deloria was to collect song texts for ethnomusicologist George Herzog. He recorded 192 songs, which she translated, and Deloria herself collected an additional 240 Dakota song texts. Her ethnographic studies were carried out under the supervision of Ruth Benedict, a cultural anthropologist who was Boas's assistant and colleague.

The second project Deloria undertook for Boas in the summer of 1928 was the translation of a Native-language text on the Sun Dance, the most important traditional Lakota spiritual ceremony. A long and detailed account, it had been written in the early 1900s by Sword, who was a religious leader among the Oglala Lakotas on Pine Ridge Reservation, in southwestern South Dakota. Deloria read the text aloud to several Oglala elders and, with their guidance, edited and retranscribed it. The text, printed in both Lakota and English, was her first professional publication (Deloria 1929).

This first experience with anthropological fieldwork was not without difficulties in working with language consultants. In a letter to Boas, written from Rosebud in August 1928, she expressed frustration: "I am getting along all right. There are some discouraging features—one of them, the temperament of some of my informants. It is the old man or woman who is most valuable, but unfortunately is apt to be vague and indefinite. I do not see how non-Dakota-speaking workers get along as well as they do."

Searching for someone who would talk about traditional spiritual beliefs and practices, Deloria was led to an old medicine man, a diviner, said to be the only man capable of providing the kinds of information she needed. As a half-brother to her father, he was also father to her, but "he hates my father because he considers him disloyal to the teachings and practices of their father." Another old man was a possibility, but his son was married to one of Ella Deloria's half-sisters, making her his daughter-in-law, and kinship custom forbade direct communication between them. In short Deloria's status as an insider seemed a mixed blessing.

Deloria intended to be back in New York by fall, but her father suffered a stroke, and she went to be with him. She continued working for Boas by writing texts, doing interviews, and correcting dictionary cards as he sent them to her, but she stayed with her father on the Yankton reservation. Klineberg also sent her questions for investigation. Most comfortable

working with the people at Wakpala, Deloria decided to move her ailing father back to Standing Rock, over the bishop's protest, to facilitate her work. She made three trips there during the summer, then moved her father in the fall.

Not until the spring or early summer of 1930 was Deloria able to return to New York. There she worked with Boas on language and organized her field data. By the fall she was back in South Dakota. In November she started collecting Lakota men's vision experiences on Rosebud. The pattern of field study with periodic visits to New York continued.

By 1932 Ruth Benedict had taken over direction of her ethnographic work, and Deloria came to develop a close relationship with her. She also continued working on the Dakota languages with Boas as a research mentor. Deloria's field study involved working with Native consultants, which required knowledge of Dakota etiquette. In a letter to Boas in July, Deloria outlined her field work methods:

> I can not tell you how essential it is for me to take beef or some food each time I go to an informant—the moment I don't, I take myself right out of the Dakota side and class myself with outsiders. If I go, bearing a gift, and gladden the hearts of my informants, with food, at which perhaps I arrange to have two or three informants, and eat with them, and call them by the correct social kinship terms, then later I can go back, and ask them all sorts of questions, and get my information, as one would get favors from a relative. It is hard to explain, but it is the only way I can work. To go at it like a white man, for me, an Indian, is to throw up an immediate barrier between myself and the people.[3]

In the summer of 1933, Ella Deloria conducted field study among the Assiniboines in Montana. While she had difficulties at first finding informants, she used the mediation of a Teton Christian missionary named Red Door, whose daughter Deloria had adopted as a cousin at Haskell. One time an elderly Assiniboine man came to visit the Red Doors and addressed Mrs. Red Door as younger sister. When he stepped up to Deloria and said, *Háu, Nakʿóta* 'Hello, Indian', Mr. Red Door said, "She is my niece." Deloria immediately addressed the elder as "father," at which he was much pleased. She commented: "When I asked questions in a general

way, I prefaced them all with *Até* 'father', and so immediately he opened up to me." The elder turned out to be *Tʿaté Hų̨ká*, a traditional spiritual leader. Deloria wrote, "From my relationship with him, I became related to many others of the people. And I had an entrée that was definitely denied me until this happened" (Deloria [ca. 1933], 16–17). During her time with the Assiniboines, Deloria began to contemplate writing a study of contemporary Sioux social life to complement the reconstruction of traditional culture that was the main goal of her studies.

Deloria continued doing fieldwork throughout the 1930s. She worked among the Santees of Prairie Island, Minnesota, in 1934, which resulted in a manuscript called "Santee Legends," comprising twenty-one texts with literal and free translations. With the Santees she began studying colloquial Dakota, which she continued on Pine Ridge throughout 1935 and into 1936, regularly sending manuscripts to Boas.

While continuing her fieldwork, Deloria worked by correspondence under Boas's supervision on translating and checking manuscripts. In 1936, during her only trip to New York in this period, she resumed and finished translating the Bushotter texts. From 1937 to June 1938, she worked on the Sword manuscripts and, at Boas's request, attempted to confirm with her informants some of the details of James R. Walker's mythological cycles, recorded at the turn of the century at Pine Ridge.

At last, in May 1939, Boas wrote that there was no more money to continue the work. The grammar they wrote together was accepted for publication, bringing closure to their long collaboration, which had culminated with *Dakota Grammar*, a classic of American Indian—language description (Boas and Deloria 1941). Final corrections and proofing continued through 1940.

Ill, lacking funds, and facing the specter of world war, Boas wrote in November 1942 to Deloria, who was then in New York: "It will take such a long time before I can get your Dakota manuscripts published that I should feel much safer if I could have the two copies in different places, but for that purpose the second copy ought to be provided with diacritical marks." Boas died less than a month later.

Benedict continued to provide support for Deloria's sustained work, when possible, and helped her prepare her manuscript material on Dakota social life for publication, a manuscript that would become *The Dakota Way of Life*.

Ella Deloria helped to support her sister, Mary Susan, an artist known professionally as Mary Sully, who did the artwork for Deloria's *Speaking of Indians* (1944a), which was intended to introduce American Indians to a broad popular audience. In this book, with great insight and empathy, Deloria succinctly summarized her understanding of traditional religion. She considered the Lakotas before they had learned of Christian teachings to be naturally religious, "always subconsciously aware of the Supernatural Power. Before it they felt helpless and humble" (51). She exemplified this with an account of the Sun Dance, making the esoteric ritual comprehensible to the general public.

With support from the American Philosophical Society, Deloria completed a first draft of the manuscript about Dakota social life in 1947 and sent it to Benedict for reorganizing, writing conversationally with the expectation that her manuscript would be heavily edited. Deloria worried about her writing style; in February 1947 she confessed to Benedict: "It is distressing to find it so hard to do this writing in any detached, professional manner! It reads like a chummy book on travel, rather than like a study. That bothers me terribly. I try to keep out of it, but I am too much in it." Worse, she began to have doubts about its relevance: "With times so changed, I sometimes wonder who cares what the Dakotas were doing and thinking, and what good, if that was known" Benedict completed her work, and Deloria planned to consult with her on the final editing in September 1948. But when Deloria arrived in New York, she learned that Benedict had died unexpectedly. After Benedict's death Deloria struggled to continue her work on the manuscript and received a number of grants for studies of language, religion, and social life.

Writing to Hiram E. Beebe, a benefactor who provided money for the typing of a later version of the Dakota social life manuscript, in December 1952, she described her purpose in the following terms:

> This may sound a little naive, Mr. Beebe, but I actually feel that I have a mission: To make the Dakota people understandable, as human beings, to the white people who have to deal with them. I feel that one of the reasons for the lagging advancement of the Dakotas has been that those who came out among them to teach and preach, went on the assumption that the Dakotas had nothing, no rules of life, no social organization, no ideals. And so they tried to pour white

> culture into, as it were, a vacuum, and when that did not work out, because it was not a vacuum after all, they concluded that the Indians were impossible to change and train. What they should have done first, before daring to start their program, was to study everything possible of Dakota life, and see what made it go, in the old days, and what was still so deeply rooted that it could not be rudely displaced without some hurt. . . . I feel that I have this work cut out for me and if I do not make all I know available before I die, I will have failed by so much. But I am not morbid about it; quite cheerful, in fact. And I can afford to do on it, each day, and put [it] aside to earn a bit, now and then, only so I can get back to it again.

Deloria published a collection of short translated Dakota texts, including conversations, in 1954. She also continued to work on the book about Dakota social life with the aid of a grant from the Bollingen Foundation, but in 1955 she responded to a plea from the church to return to Wakpala and run St. Elizabeth's, where she had been a student, by now reduced to a mission home for Indian children. She remained there until 1958, when she returned to the University of South Dakota to continue her linguistic studies of Dakota. At that time she interviewed Yankton elders in support of the Yankton land claim, as well as elders at the Cheyenne River Reservation, in conjunction with the Doris Duke Oral History Project. Later she worked briefly for the Sioux Indian Museum in Rapid City and served as assistant director of the W. H. Over Museum at the University of South Dakota. There, as a member of the new Institute for Indian Studies, Deloria received a National Science Foundation grant that supported work on a Lakota dictionary from 1962 to 1966. The material she had prepared under Boas and Benedict had been transferred from Columbia University to the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, together with Boas's personal papers. She used a microfilm copy of the Lakota dictionary material she had prepared many years before under Boas's direction, but she lacked the support that would have been necessary to complete her dictionary. During her later years Deloria worked under many disadvantages. Her constant traveling had taken its toll in lost notes and manuscripts. At the end of her life all of her major works were left unpublished.

Her concern with communicating to the public motivated Deloria to write an ethnographic novel, *Waterlily,* that told the story of three gen-

erations of women before the reservation period. It masterfully summarizes the important themes of her study of Lakota culture and is the only written source that explores the spiritual life of Lakota women. When she completed the book in 1948, she could not find a publisher; it was published posthumously, in 1988 and rapidly became the most widely read of her works.

After retiring Deloria continued to live in Vermillion, South Dakota, and to go on field trips to isolated communities on different reservations (Deloria 1998, xviii). She suffered a stroke in the summer of 1970 and died on February 12, 1971, in Tripp, South Dakota, of a pulmonary embolism.

As a member of a prominent Episcopal family, Deloria initially had little familiarity with traditional Lakota religion, but she became interested in it. She recorded a large number of myths and sacred stories, many of which have been published in Lakota and English (Deloria 1932). While recording the autobiographical texts of elders, she learned a good deal about the individual's role in religious ceremonies, about visions and other supernatural experiences, and about conflicts between traditional beliefs and Christianity. Benedict pressed her to interview medicine men and record their visions, but this forced Deloria into a personal dilemma. Her father was a prominent missionary, and her younger brother, Vine, had followed in his footsteps and begun his career as a missionary at Pine Ridge. Showing undue interest in traditional religion jeopardized the family's reputation, and, in any case, traditional religious leaders were not comfortable sharing their sacred knowledge with a devout Christian, who they feared might ridicule them. Deloria focused instead on the forms of ceremonies, starting with the Sun Dance. She hypothesized that all the Sioux groups shared common ceremonies, but that each performed them in different ways. For years she collected material for a study that would document the variations from group to group, but failed to complete it. Her unfinished manuscripts contain important materials of relevance for the understanding of Dakota culture.

Today Ella Deloria's manuscripts are being systematically edited and published. To appreciate them it is important to know how they originated. In the field Deloria worked cautiously, through kin networks. She was concerned about her reputation; as an unmarried woman she had to always be above suspicion, as gossip about her could have hurt her brother's ministry. Vine had followed his father's wishes, become an

Episcopal priest, and served the churches in Bennett County, on what until 1911 had been the east end of the Pine Ridge Reservation. During much of her fieldwork she lived in Martin in order to be near her brother and his family. To some degree these constraints restricted her contacts, but at least she knew well the people whom she interviewed and had a clear sense of the value of the material they gave her.

Deloria's finances were always insecure. She was supported by small research grants, the proceeds from speaking engagements, writing and consulting work, and the generosity of friends. Her correspondence with Boas reveals a continuing conflict between her commitment to work and deeply felt sense of obligation to her family.

Deloria was the most prolific Native scholar of the Dakotas, and the results of her work (much of which is still unpublished, archived in the American Philosophical Society and the Dakota Indian Foundation, Chamberlain, South Dakota) comprise an essential source for the study of Dakota culture and language. Her studies provide some of the best material ever recorded on Sioux culture and are the fullest accounts in the Native language. Her work is also important in emphasizing an understanding of the culture from women's perspectives, which is lacking in most studies of American Indian cultures. Her research had three main goals: first, to translate and to edit linguistic texts that had been written or dictated by Sioux people in the various dialects of the Native language; second, to record a detailed description of traditional Sioux social and spiritual life; and, third, to compile the data for a thorough grammar and comprehensive dictionary of the Lakota dialect of the Sioux language. Deloria was a perfectionist who worked slowly and cautiously, rewriting many times and attempting to be as objective as possible. As a result she published relatively little, but her work is invaluable.

From her papers we know that Ella Deloria recorded material during interviews in oversized, coarse wood-pulp paper notebooks, then transcribed her notes on a typewriter. Late in life, in April 1967, she characterized these notes: "There is no attempt at smooth and 'stylish' writing because that isn't the primary object in note-taking, but rather to transfer the thought of the informant himself." Indeed her notes seem simultaneously transcription and analysis; her English translations are free enough to be characterized as paraphrases. Each set of notes from a particular individual was prepared as a discreet text; most are in English, recorded for

Benedict, but the stories, conversations, and other speech events recorded for Boas are transcribed in Dakota with literal and free translations. To what extent the Native-language texts represent actual dictation as opposed to Deloria's subsequent remembering of a text and writing it down is presently unknown, given the lack of evidence in her papers.

Deloria's ethnographic manuscripts rely heavily on her own life experience and incorporate her field interviews anecdotally to validate more general points. Her manuscripts freely mix material from such historical manuscripts as those of Bushotter and Sword with her own field material. The concept of culture that emerges from her writings is a decidedly normative one; traditional culture is presented in terms of broad generalization, bolstered by narratives of events. Perhaps following Boas, she was not content with information from a single individual; she wanted corroboration from multiple sources before accepting anything as true. Consequently, she only occasionally named the sources of information in her writings, preferring to leave her informants anonymous.

Deloria assumed an essential continuity in Dakota culture, which she understood as disrupted not by the end of warfare and buffalo hunting, or by the introduction of Christianity, but by the moral degeneration that she began to see on the reservations in the 1930s, marked by the use of alcohol and the sudden proliferation of unwed mothers. Her writings could have the practical value of educating missionaries and teachers about traditional Dakota values. In this sense her detailed cultural descriptions were intended less for purposes of cultural preservation than for practical application; the Sioux knew their own values—they only needed the support of church and school to live up to them. By the 1930s, she felt, very few still believed in the old Sioux religion; the people had become Christians. She herself had never interviewed a man who had gone to war, and buffalo hunting was nearly as distant from the collective Sioux memory. Cultural continuity was best expressed in the kinship system, though she bemoaned the degeneration of extended families. Her concept of culture as the core of Dakota life was normative and collective, not individual.

As an individual Ella Deloria was secure in her conception of a stable, normative culture to serve as support and guide. She herself could move easily between social contexts—church life, secular reservation life, academic life. Thus she could, without contradiction, speak contextually of *we Indians* and *those Indians*. In speech, behavior, and dress, she was alter-

nately insider and outsider, both welcomed and resented. She exploited kin networks and was treated with the respect required by custom. But among the Tetons she was always a Yankton, with all the baggage that befalls a familiar neighbor and rival, a subcultural boundary that may have been harder to cross than that between Indian and white. In academia she was always the Indian—as she characterized herself to Ruth Benedict in a letter of February 1947, "the glorified (?) native mouthpiece," lacking a degree, at the periphery of the profession.

Ella Deloria was a scholar through and through, yet she never let her dedication to scholarship overwhelm her sense of responsibility as a Dakota woman, with family concerns taking precedence over her work, nor did she ever lose her deep faith in Christianity. She was a warm and gracious individual, whose kindness and personality were inspirational. Her constant goal was to be an interpreter of an American Indian reality to other peoples. Her studies of the Sioux are a monument to her talent and industry.

In 1967, at the fifteenth annual meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory, held in Lexington, Kentucky, Ella Deloria delivered a paper on Yankton place names that derived from her land claims work. Her style of delivery, total mastery of the material, and level of excitement to share information with the audience set her presentation apart from all the others. As an undergraduate student, already committed to a life as an anthropologist, I listened to her with rapt fascination. At the end of her talk, she explained the significance of the name of the Vermillion River, where the Dakota used to dig *wasé* (Indian paint), but her time was up. "There's so much left to tell," she said, breathlessly, "so invite me back next year, and I'll tell you more!" Her writings go on telling generation after generation. Whatever the personal costs of her life as a transculturalite, today we are all the richer for it. And enormously grateful.

Editorial Note

The Dakota Way of Life was a project long in gestation and has had several editors. Ella Deloria first elected Ruth Benedict, with whom she entertained a passionate correspondence and friendship, to edit her manuscripts, including this one. In a letter dated April 7, 1947, she provided Benedict with clear guidelines to direct the editorial work that it needed:

> Of course I want you to edit it! I don't know who else could, with the understanding and sympathy it cries for. . . . When you read through, you will find that the repetitions abound, and that much is dragged in that can easily be omitted. I wanted you to understand what I was trying to explain from all angles, but did not truly intend it should all appear. The problem of selection also is an art—and I don't have it, I guess. I think you know better, from your experience and also from "ringside seat," what must go in and what can be cut out. I just wrote on and on. . . . Please cut ruthlessly, and also change my wordings for better clarity. If you think an expression sounds absurdly affected, or I seem to be straining too desperately for effect, change it. You can't insult me. . . . P.S. . . . I think if the [American Philosophical Society] turns it down it will be because it isn't scholarly. No scores of footnotes, bibliography, references to previous works, all that. Maybe you better add some of those? Or give them some excellent arguments as to why this m[anuscript] does not have them.

In her last letter on July 19, 1948, Benedict invited Deloria to retype "the Philosophical Society M[anuscript]" after she had "been over it carefully and tried to delete the sections that seemed repetitious or unnecessary." This work was continued by subsequent editors, but Benedict was the first to help Deloria shape her manuscript, which was at that time unnamed. In their correspondence Benedict had suggested "Dakota Home Life" as a title (March 26, 1947), and Deloria referred to this manuscript as the

"Dakota Family Life" (April 26, 1947) and the "tiyospaye study" (July 17, 1947). The *tʽiyóšpaye* is the traditional camp group, the fundamental unit of Dakota social life.

When Benedict unexpectedly passed away, Margaret Mead took over the manuscript, along with many other projects of Benedict's. Together Deloria and Mead settled on *The Dakota Way of Life* as a title, and Mead continued the editorial preparation for sending the manuscript to the American Philosophical Society for publication. Although, as noted earlier, Deloria expressed concerns about her style in the manuscript, Mead offered the following remarks in her letter of transmittal about its value and the authentic character it brought to ethnographic writing: "I have gone over the manuscript with care and have paid special attention to the problem of more idiomatic English that still conveys the Dakota manner and meaning. . . . The manuscript is written with a very rare feeling for Dakota life and style."

While the manuscript was edited for and reviewed by the American Philosophical Society, Ella Deloria continued to conduct research well into 1953. In a letter to Alexander Lesser, from whom she hoped to receive input, she wrote: "At VERY long last, my [manuscript] is about ready. It has taken a lot of time because every time I talk to Dakotas I get more and even better angles on the subject." Deloria's manuscript originated from fieldwork that had been supported by the American Philosophical Society, and much of her typing and editing work on it was financed by grants from Wenner-Gren and from the Institute for Intercultural Studies.

But the manuscript needed more work. To Beebe, who was supporting her during the typing, she wrote in February 1954, "The [manuscript] was read and I was told to reorganize it again, and add some Appendices [to the text]. This is what I am trying to do now." By necessity Deloria nonetheless moved on to other projects, including one to prepare a book on Dakota religion for which Mead had obtained funding. As a result Deloria was unable to dedicate sufficient time needed to reorganize her manuscript for the American Philosophical Society to publish it.

All the different versions and typed copies of *The Dakota Way of Life* started to form an editorial maze. The following manuscripts each derive from one another in a chronological fashion:

1. The first version of the manuscript was completed in 1945, and Deloria continued to revise it for several years. She gave it to Ben-

edict and received feedback on it just before her death. This early version is less stilted in style and includes more Dakota words. Its introduction was largely different from subsequent versions, and, unlike other versions, its first half included handwritten diacritics on Dakota words; in fact it is the only copy that includes such diacritics, in accordance with Franz Boas's advice. It is archived at the South Dakota Historical Society in Chamberlain.

2. In 1953 Ella completed a second revision. This manuscript was edited by Margaret Mead, with handwritten ink annotations consisting of word additions and stylistic improvements. It is archived at the Dakota Indian Foundation and is also available online at the Ella Deloria Archive. Another version of the 1953 manuscript was typed for Beebe and had a different title, "The Sioux Indians." The Beebe manuscript is incomplete.
3. The "Pierre" or 1954 version of the manuscript is the one that was submitted to the American Philosophical Society and included Mead's edits. Its table of contents mentions a preface originally planned by Margaret Mead and also includes an abstract of Alexander Lesser's dissertation, "An Analysis of the Dakota Kinship System," listed in an appendix. It has some word additions by Ella Deloria and is archived at the American Philosophical Society.
4. A version of the 1954 manuscript, edited by Joyzelle Gingway Godfrey, a relative of Ella Deloria, with Margaret Mead's foreword and a preface by Godfrey, was published in 2007 by Mariah Press. It was minimally edited, omitted some repetitions, and "up-dated" some of the language (vii).
5. Raymond J. DeMallie started preparing *The Dakota Way of Life* in the 1980s and accumulated copies of all of the versions mentioned above, as well as all the Deloria correspondence with Boas, Benedict, Mead, Lesser, Beebe, and Burleson. On April 26, 1988, Vine V. Deloria Sr. wrote a formal letter to DeMallie endorsing his research at the Dakota Indian Foundation, the South Dakota Historical Society, the Southwest Museum, and the Vassar College Library. DeMallie combined the style and Dakota language of the first manuscript with parts of the additions found in subsequent versions.

This new manuscript was typed on a computer in 1994 and included the diacritics from the first manuscript, but this draft was not in Unicode, and, as a result, the diacritics were lost in subsequent versions. Also, it was copyedited again by several of DeMallie's doctoral students. Then, due to a series of unforeseen health issues, and other priorities, DeMallie's attention became distracted from the manuscript, and eventually a stroke suffered in 2014 made it impossible for him to work on the manuscript on his own. He then enlisted Thierry Veyrié to assist in finishing it, help prepare the prefatory materials and annotations, and guide it through publication. At this stage the diacritics in the second half of the manuscript that did not exist in any of the previous versions were added either by comparison with DeMallie's previous notes or by using the *New Lakota Dictionary* (2011).

Following the spirit of the guidelines quoted earlier that Ella Deloria had given to Benedict in 1947, Raymond J. DeMallie and I excised some of the repetitions, reduced the excessive length of some of the prose, selected chapters that were appropriate to incorporate the appendices and endnotes, revised some of the wording to improve clarity, mitigated some of the stylistic excesses, and added footnotes and scholarly context. This edition is the result of the long history of Ella Deloria's ethnographic manuscript on the Dakota social life.

Pronunciation Guide

a	like in f**a**ther
e	like in b**e**d
i	like in p**i**t
o	like in n**o**
u	like in m**oo**n
ą	like in c**an**'t
į	like in s**in**g
ų	like in d**on**'t
b	like in ba**b**y
l	like in **l**ight
m	like in **m**e
n	like in **n**o
g	like in **g**o
ǧ	like in **r**ed
h	like in **h**e
ȟ	like in Oa**x**aca
č	like in **ch**urch
čʿ	like in **ch**in (aspirated)
čʾ	like in pit**ch** (followed by a pause)
k	like in s**k**ip
kʿ	like in ba**ck h**ome pronounced fast
kʾ	like in ki**ck** it
p	like in s**p**in
pʿ	like in **p**unish
pʾ	like in sto**p** it
t	like in s**t**ill
tʿ	like in si**t h**ere pronounced fast
tʾ	like in til**t** it
s	like in **s**o
š	like in **sh**e
z	like in **z**ero
ž	like in plea**s**ure
w	like in **w**e
y	like in **y**es
ʾ	like in o**h-**oh

Kinship Terms

These terms were recorded by Ella Deloria with Alexander Lesser in New York City in the spring of 1928. They were published in Lesser's dissertation *Siouan Kinship* (1958, 17–65). They are presented here in the orthography that Deloria elected. The first name of any pair is for a female; the second is for a male.

Blood Relatives

Grandmothers, grandfathers	*Ųčí, Tʿųkášila*			
Aunts, uncles, mothers, fathers[1]	*Tʿųwį́, Lekši*		*Iná, Até*	
Cousins, older siblings, younger siblings[2]	Woman speaking	*Čépʿąši, Šičˀéši*	*Čʿuwé, Tʿibló*	*Mitʿą́, Misų́*
	Man speaking	*Hąkáši, Tʿąhą́ši*	*Tʿąké, Čʿiyé*	*Tʿąkší, Misų́*
Children of siblings of different sex; children	Woman speaking	*Mitʿóžą, Mitʿóška*	*Mičʿų́kʿši, Mičʿį́kʿši, Mičʿį́ča*[3]	
	Man speaking	*Mitʿų́žą, Mitʿų́ška*		
Grandchildren		*Mitʿákoža*		

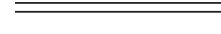
Marriage Relatives

Fellow parents-in-law, mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law	*Omáwahitʿų*	*Ųčíši, Tʿųkáši*

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, wife, husband, cowife</td><td>Woman speaking</td><td>Čyépˁąn, Šičˀé</td><td rowspan="2">Mitˁáwin (address) winya mitˁáwa (reference), Mihį́gna (address) wicása mit’áwa (reference)</td><td rowspan="2">Tˁéa</td></tr>
<tr><td>Man speaking</td><td>Hąká, Tˁąhą́</td></tr>
<tr><td>Children-in-law</td><td colspan="4">Mitˁákoš</td></tr>
</table>

1. By “aunt” and “uncle” is meant “father’s sister” and “mother’s brother.” “Father’s brother” and “mother’s sister” in Dakota kinship are referred to with the terms for father and mother.
2. By “cousins” is meant children of a father’s sister or mother’s brother (crossed cousins). Children of a father’s brother or mother’s sister are referred to with the terms for elder sister, elder brother, younger sister, and younger brother.
3. *Mičˁį́ča* is not marked with gender.

THE DAKOTA WAY OF LIFE



Introduction

This book is about the Dakota-speaking Indians of the Plains, and all its material comes directly from them. One of the largest tribes in North America, the Dakotas have sometimes been referred to as the Dakota or Sioux Nation. Perhaps "nation" is not the most apt designation, since it was not as a single and unified greater tribe that the Dakotas made their impact on neighboring tribes, but rather as three tribe-size distinct peoples who occupied separate regions, had their own traditions, and spoke a particular dialect of the common tongue. These three component peoples are: (1) the Santees, or Eastern Dakota; (2) the Yanktons, or Central Dakota; and (3) the Tetons, or Western Dakota. In terms of language, there is no "pure" or classical Dakota apart from these dialects; each of them is equally valid and acceptable as long as they are not confused, or fused, into a hybrid Dakota, as has sometimes been done by non-Dakota unaware of the finer distinctions among them.[1]

Although all Dakotas consider themselves as one single people, under the surface universality of language and of a social system based on kinship relationships, variants of custom and dialect, of habits, skills, and arts, tend to set the three peoples apart from one another and to give a recognizable character to each. Because of this an account that lumped the three peoples together as if they were exactly alike in behavior, custom, speech, and traditions would be too general to be completely satisfactory. On the other hand, it would not be feasible to treat them separately, sorting into neat piles the material pertinent to each. How to discuss Dakota culture as a whole and still retain an awareness of the distinctiveness of the three peoples was my first problem. Out of the inchoate mass of Dakota data I had accumulated, I cast about for the right approach, and, after some false starts, I saw that the simplest way was the best: to take one people for a focus and work out from there.

Consequently I have written these chapters with the emphasis on the Tetons. Everything said here is applicable to them first, but, the Yanktons

and Santees being also Dakotas, it is broadly true of both or either of them as well—except for an occasional minor difference not necessary to dwell on. Only radical departures from the Teton forms as they come to light are specifically pointed out. I may add that divergences from the Teton ways are most likely in the Santee tradition—an understandable fact when it is realized that "Santees and Tetons have always lived farthest apart," as one informant said, "with the Yanktons between them."

I have chosen the Tetons as my focus for two reasons. In the first place, they form the largest division, their number being generally understood to exceed that of the Yanktons and Santees combined. Secondly, because of their location farthest west, they were able to retain their culture for a longer period than could the Yanktons east of the Missouri River, or the Santees still farther east. The tide of modern civilization overran first the Santees and kindred bands speaking the same dialect, and next the Yanktons farther west. Finally, and inexorably, it reached the Tetons beyond the Missouri and forthwith affected their culture also.

Even so, thanks to a geographical accident, Teton lives remained integrated and undisturbed the longest, so that this investigation is most rewarding among that people. Among the Tetons a very satisfactory number of old people were still alive who could tell me about their people's old life out of personal experience and knowledge. A scant dozen Yanktons still lived who could do this, too, and only a handful of Santees, who were remarkably reliable informants despite their extreme age. Such eyewitnesses were priceless because they could say, "*I* saw; *I* did." Without exception they gave conscientiously only what they had personally known: nothing secondhand, nothing from hearsay. And if they must illustrate with a myth or legend, they carefully added the indefinite quotative *keyápi* 'they say; it is said'.

More numerous and often as valuable were those middle-aged to elderly men and women who, even if they could not clearly recall the camp circle environment of early childhood, had nevertheless grown up well imbued with the flavor and feel of it from their parents and grandparents. When they could not say "*I* saw; *I* did," they could do the next best thing—name someone they had known and trusted as their authority ("My mother said this"; "I heard my grandfather tell"; meaning, "and so I know that it was true").

When asked about the *yuwípi*, an ancient divining rite wherein the seer was first blindfolded and tightly bound, Little Moon, a *Hų́kpapʿaya* Teton, did not hesitate: "Yes, I do know something about that *from my father*."[2] So he described the procedure step-by-step and ended with the following:

> When my father was sitting in on a *yuwípi* one night, something struck him in the chest so forcibly that it stunned him. Yet he managed to grope for the thing and felt it to be the thong rope with which the holy man was bound before he was brought into the dark sweat lodge. It was looped and bound in a tight roll, as long as his forearm. And my father, though only a curious and skeptical boy, knew that "It" [the Power being invoked] had punished him for his disbelief.[3]

If there was a time when all Dakotas lived together and spoke the same language, what was that mother tongue? Was it like Santee, Yankton, or Teton? Or did those dialects, those divergences, occur after the people separated into three groups and moved independently? How long a period was that, before they finally remained in the regions where the white man found them—Tetons west of the Missouri, Yanktons east of it, Santees still farther east in what is now Minnesota?[4]

To these and other such tantalizing questions the people offered no authentic answers, not even hopeful clues. The one informant who spoke of "Seven Council Fires" admitted that he had read of them in a book. Zeneas Graham, a Santee, did date the event he was relating by saying, "They say it was while our people were dwelling near what is now Dulut [Duluth, Minnesota]." Yankton informants insisted on a traditional affinity with the Missouri River:

> Always our people traveled along its course and never abandoned it. If they roamed for a season over buffalo country, they always returned to their home tipis in its valley where those who had stayed behind kept up the homes, cared for the children, and tended the gardens. Our people did not rely on meat alone, you know, corn and squashes were also necessary to them. Upstream, northward and then westward, the Yanktons migrated slowly throughout the years, always as it were with one hand grasping the river for support and guidance.

His word, *į́kduzeze* 'to cling to', was a well-chosen metaphor, suggesting that the winding Missouri River was a steadying bannister to which the Yanktons clung for support and reassurance as they moved along. Its nearness gave them their bearings; its sameness through ever-changing terrain their sense of security. Perhaps it is no accident that all the Yankton-speaking Dakota finally settled in detached colonies along that river.

The usual Teton reply to my inquiry about the origin of the tribe is exemplified by Fast Whirlwind, an Oglala, who delivered the following assertion with supreme certainty: "Why, we have always lived here!" With a wide sweep of his arm he proceeded to delimit a great expanse that was "the Tetons' hunting range." He said: "From the *Mníšoše* 'Roiled Water', the Missouri River westward to the foothills of the *Ȟeská* 'White Mountains', the Rockies, and from *Ųčíyapi Tʿamákʿočʿe* 'Grandmother's Land', Canada southward to the *Pʿąkéska Wakpá* 'Musselshell River', the Platte River in Nebraska, our people roamed and hunted, and sometimes went beyond these boundaries. . . . Many tribal reunions took place in the Black Hills, they being central."

However, he conceded at the same time that the Dakota country was earlier occupied by alien tribes, a fact generally inferred from the reminiscent place names still heard: *Šahíyela Wóžu* 'Cheyenne Plantings' is the name of the agency and reservation known as Cheyenne River; *Pʿaláni Tʿawákpa* 'Rees' [Arikaras'] river' is the Grand River in South Dakota; *Pʿaláni Tʿíohe* 'Abandoned Homesites of the Rees' are large circular depressions on the flats overlooking the Missouri, across the river a few miles upstream from Mobridge, South Dakota. Another Ree village site, called *Tʿítʿąka Óhe* 'Remains of Large Dwellings', is now under the waters of the Oahe Dam, north of Pierre, South Dakota.

It remained for *Makʿúla*, an Oglala Teton who was perhaps the best informant of all, to give the only vivid and plausible legend to account for his people's arrival west of the Missouri. He was the last of the professional raconteurs among the Oglala who knew the old culture from personal participation.[5] But this story was an ancient tale in his youth; he dated the alleged event by saying, "My grandfather told me this when I was a boy. His grandfather told him when he was a boy." How much further back it began, he could not say. He himself was in his middle eighties when he told it to me. He knew the tale was legendary, and so, by way of disclaiming

all personal responsibility for its authenticity, he punctuated the telling of it rather frequently with *keyápi* ‘so it is said’.

> Long ago, all the Teton-speaking Dakotas lived in *čʿų́wąča* ‘wood-continuous’; that is, forest land, far off in the direction of the sunrise, so it is said. From time to time a party broke out into open country to hunt buffalo. Once they did this again but never went back. Instead they roamed over the trackless prairies for an indeterminable number of years, ever in search of food. But at last, and not without design, all Tetons found their way to this country, and here they have lived ever since. It is probable that whenever a hunting party of several parties failed to return to their forest home, others went out after them, until all Tetons were in habitual migration.

If this became a mass migration, it could not be likened to a planned invasion of new territory, with the intention of wresting it from its occupants in the Old World manner. Without plan or organization, out of touch with the others—and perhaps not even aware that all the other Tetons were also roaming over the same trackless land—those fragments of the one people moved fortuitously, each at its own pace, each going here and there, as necessity dictated.

The legend tells how and why a group of Tetons crossed to the west side of the Missouri, to live there permanently. Unconsciously *Makʿúla* kept saying “the Oglalas,” though he could not say when that name was fastened on his particular band of Tetons. But he speculated that if those roving groups that broke out of forest country and reassembled west of the river as one people were seven in number, perhaps were they the beginnings of the seven bands of Tetons as we know them today. A trim theory, but who knows?

At any rate each group eventually reached the Missouri and crossed over on the ice to the west river country at some advantageous point. It was enough for *Makʿúla* that he could account for the Oglalas and describe the occasion of their crossing and give the specific site of it. “It was where a little stream flowing westward empties into the Missouri, where that river starts to bear eastward, somewhere north of the [Wheeler] bridge,” he said. He did not name the stream, but it could have been the one marked

Platte Creek on the map, which empties into the Missouri not too far north of the Wheeler bridge, roughly forty miles south of the present town of Chamberlain, South Dakota. As a child I heard my grandfather refer in the Yankton dialect to a place in that region as *Pté Kdį́yąka* 'Buffalo Return on the Run', which would seem to indicate this alleged crossing by the Teton. Perhaps the Yanktons knew the legend, too. The legend told by *Makˁúla* follows:

> The Oglalas were camped for the winter at the mouth of a creek that flowed westward into the Missouri. One day at dawn a cry went up throughout the camp: "Get up! Get up! A herd of buffalo is arriving on a run from the north; a blizzard is driving them down!" Buffalo were welcome at all times but now they were hailed with special joy, for the people were close to starvation. So the men hastily organized and forced the herd onto the river by waving blankets and branches and shouting in concert to create a general din. The terrified beasts stampeded and were soon sliding and falling on the slick ice, many breaking a limb. Unable to run fast or to rise when down, they were easy prey.
>
> Their flesh was hastily dissected and dragged by loads in their own slippery hides to the nearest point of land, which happened to be on the west bank. And thither the Oglalas moved their camp for a few days while they cared for the meat and feasted with one another, which was always their delight. Unaware that the unseasonably warm winds were thawing the ice, they woke one morning to see the river flowing and bearing great hunks of ice along. "We are trapped," they said. "Well, no matter. We can hunt buffalo on this side of the river just as well."

Makˁúla concluded by saying, "My people made that crossing in the 'Sore Eyes Moon', *Ištáwičˁayazą Wí* 'March'," so named because hunters and scouts were blinded by the strong sun on the late snows. Each moon of the year had its own descriptive name.

From then on the Oglalas roamed and hunted over large areas of the western plains. One day—the legend does not say how long after that crossing—two strangers appeared, "sitting on novel beasts that bore them along." Clearly, they were peaceful visitors, but their alien speech was

not understandable. At last in desperation one of them dismounted and made a rude drawing in the dust; then the two rode off, gesticulating and jabbering earnestly, and pointing northward again and again until they disappeared over the horizon.

The wise men studied the drawing and decided it was an invitation: "Two sleeps on the way. Come!" So next day the Oglalas struck camp, and after two nights on the way they came to a vast encampment in a wide pleasant valley, close to a beautiful river that might have been the White River, or farther north, the Cheyenne River. Here they were warmly welcomed and feasted many times and given fine presents. From the hills where countless horses were grazing, their leading men were given some choice ones. These non-Dakotas who welcomed them so generously were Cheyennes, and those "novel beasts" on which their messengers brought the invitations were "the first horses those Tetons ever saw," *Makˁúla* said. He remarked that in his youth he sometimes heard the old men haranguing the people say, "Let us never forget. It was the *Šahíyela* [Cheyennes] who first disburdened our shoulders of the wearisome travois."[6]

Makˁúla also said that the Oglalas regarded the Northern Cheyennes and their companion tribe, the Arapahos, as their traditional friends. Naturally, intermarriages were not infrequent, and there are Oglalas today who claim part-Cheyenne descent. "They have always been our friends," many informants said of the Cheyennes. I have to explain here that "always" and "never" are not invariably used in their absolute sense. Often they signify "as far as anyone knows."

When *Makˁúla* finished relating the legend to me, he said, "We Oglalas have had horses for two hundred years." Historical records indicate that the Tetons were mounted by 1742, or thereabouts.[7] Informants readily agreed that the horse drastically altered and improved the people's capabilities and quickened the pace of Dakota life to an unbelievable degree. *Makˁúla* commented, after dwelling at some length on the lavish giveaway and feasting customs:

> Ah, but you must not imagine that it was always like that. For when our people were on foot, nothing was easy to obtain. The custom of relatives honoring one another might be from of old, but before the coming of the horse, gifts and feasts were much simpler. Our people were very poor, you know, in those times when it was difficult, even

> in fair seasons, to kill enough buffalo to meet the demands of all the families of the village. And when the snow was very deep, hunting was out of the question. An exceptionally hard winter brought famine without fail, unless the people had enough food preserved from the preceding summer to tide them over until spring. Famine and cold were their real enemies.

As far into the past as anyone would dare to say, certainly within remembered times, the three Dakota peoples lived and moved over a vast uncharted territory, though each one kept generally to a chosen area where it felt at home. The Yanktons and kindred bands lived generally on the prairies east of the Missouri River, and the Tetons west of it. The Santees and related bands meanwhile lived mostly in what is now Minnesota until their dispersion following the so-called Minnesota Uprising in 1862. But one band, the Sissetons, whose reservation occupies the northeast corner of South Dakota, is said to have lived in and around that region for many generations.

These areas were not without certain boundaries, of course; there were intervening bands of wild country, a kind of no-man's-land, where danger lurked; danger from wild beasts, danger from chance encounters with enemy war parties passing through, danger from becoming lost in unfamiliar terrain. One must therefore suppose that visits from one tribe of Dakotas to another were uncommon. Only the most daring would take the risk. But, after the horse made long journeys less arduous, it is thinkable that a few related families sometimes went visiting for an indefinite stay and were sure of a welcome. Usually such visits took place at long intervals because they involved difficult traveling over a wide expanse of no-man's-land before reaching Dakota country again. Travel was never without its risks.

But, whatever the difficulties, there was always room for romance and courtship resulting in an occasional intermarriage. Every such marriage, say of a Teton and a Yankton, a Yankton and a Santee, or a Teton and a Santee, automatically brought all relatives of the marrying pair into specific kinship relationships. For, as will appear in later chapters, Dakotas shared all relatives of marriage with their relatives of birth, and still do, at least in theory.

Yet the fact is that, despite such alliances, the Yanktons, Tetons, and Santees never mingled together freely or permanently but continued to keep with their own people in the region where their own familiar habits and dialect prevailed, so they never lost their identities or their distinctive dialects. A Teton and a Santee could converse all day, each in his own dialect; a Yankton woman and her Teton husband could live together a lifetime without either one's compromising a single item of their respective dialects.

At the same time, a sense of oneness held them together, an attitude of laissez-faire, a tolerant, casual allowance for the "oddities" of "those other Dakotas." The idea seemed to be: "That is their peculiar way—so let them have it; this is our cherished way from of old and we will keep it." To this day each people from habit continues certain inherited practices and techniques even while openly admiring the superiority, ingenuity, or practicality of some feature of another's way, without thereby adopting it. A melody sung, tale narrated, or art form borrowed was conscientiously attributed to its source: this is a Santee melody, a Yankton story, the Teton cut and style of moccasin.

There was universal interest in the deeds of Dakota warriors, whatever their tribe, and their names enjoyed fame among all the Dakotas. Yet the three peoples carried on their warfare independently. Even had there been no differences of dialects, customs, or ideas, they were not situated near enough together for one people to be either a help or a hindrance to another. The three peoples had their own special enemies, too—those non-Dakota-speaking tribes within their range—with whom they carried on intermittent warfare, except during truces. At such times they welcomed their erstwhile foes as friends, feasted them, and showered them with fine presents at the ceremonial giveaways. The Sun Dance, for example, by its very character as a religious event demanded peace between tribes. At other important though secular festivals during the year, visitors from enemy tribes were also welcomed as friends. "When the Crow came to sue for peace" and "When the Omaha came to sing" are incidental references to such occasions in the life stories of informants.

Certainly it cannot be denied that the Dakotas and their enemies fought viciously, but I find no sign that they hated one another with an unremitting hate, on general principles. After all, war, cruel and primitive as it

might be, was primarily a game, but it could not be dispensed with. It was considered essential to both sides as the proving ground for manliness, courage, endurance, cunning, and such-like attributes; and it was the arena in which honors and tribal prestige could be won. I could almost say that the Dakotas rather treasured their enemies as worthy opponents who, like themselves, dauntlessly accepted the challenge to fight—and to die if need be. I feel quite sure of this because as a child I often listened with fascination to war stories told around the campfire, where the old men unstintingly praised all deeds of outstanding valor, be the warriors Dakotas or aliens. Also I heard them scorn the coward, for cowardice in any man was unforgivable.

Returning to the mutual attitudes of the Tetons, Yanktons, and Santees, from all reports it seems unlikely that any one of them ever tried to subdue the other two, in order to exercise lordship over them. Today rivalry and hostility are singularly absent, and perhaps it was always so. Normally each of the three Dakota peoples minded their own affairs, like respectful peers, or like adult siblings with family responsibilities who were ready to make common cause against a common threat if necessary, but were otherwise content to leave one another to live in their own way.

There was light ridicule back and forth, no doubt, and even open irritation at another's poor judgment or unseemly show of vanity, but nothing serious enough to call for interference or advice. *Íš iyépikʿe čį́!* is a key idiom here; it is untranslatable, except by a lengthy paraphrase: "If that is what they want, let them go ahead! It is entirely their affair, their responsibility; no one but themselves is responsible for the consequences." In the students' slang at Haskell Institute, one might say "It's their own ups!" It amounts to a regretful shrug from helplessness to avert a possible bad outcome. In that spirit internal peace and amity were possible to maintain—no taking up arms by one people against another or by one camp circle against another camp circle, for they were all of one kind, one people.

The single instance to the contrary in all my material was something quite minor and local. A mere handful of unhappy men once joined a Crow war party and attacked their own *Hų́kpapʿaya* Teton village because of resentment over some real or fancied injury to them. But those were frenzied men and renegades, not sane and responsible Dakotas, who would never turn against their own people or village. All such traitorous behavior was everlastingly reprehensible, no matter the exciting cause.

The old men preached: *Hóčʿoka kį́ wakʿą́ yélo; kiksúya pó!* ‘The center of the circle is hallowed ground; remember!’ Hence there was no glory in taking the scalp of another Dakota. The two terms for killing a human convey a contrast: *tʿilwíčʿaktepi* ‘killing within home’ is plain murder, a crime against society and therefore punishable; *tʿókʿakte* ‘slaying an enemy’ is alone legitimate and honorific.

So the distinction between “our kind” and “not our kind” was sharply drawn between all Dakota-speaking people, and all others who spoke alien tongues. At first meeting the latter must always be approached with inner caution until their intentions could be discerned as friendly, for aliens, being potential enemies, might more likely have sinister motives. Always the language barrier was the deterrent to immediate understanding, without which no association could be wholly free and safe. Undoubtedly an outsider’s approach was equally tentative and for the same reasons. Without mutual understanding friendliness was impossible and association was unsure.

By the same token, only a Dakota climate was reassuring. The individual Dakota could feel completely at ease only among other Dakotas, where he was on familiar ground; where he knew what to expect and what was expected of him, because the prevailing viewpoint, speech, and standards were the same as his own. If he came to a strange camp circle of Dakotas, all that he needed was a valid kinship relationship with at least one person there. Any plausible connection, however tenuous, would do. Failing that, he could resort to the time-honored custom of establishing social kinship with someone convenient, and he was in. Once in he belonged and was surrounded by relatives, for automatically all the kinsmen of his new relative became his, too. He was then able to start functioning at once as a bonafide member of the community, with the smoothness of one who knows his way around. Wherever there were Dakota people, there potentially was home. He knew the password for entry: the kinship term of address.

From this point on, kinship will be the recurring word, for one cannot describe Dakota life fully and omit what was its very heart and substance. Kinship law was tribal law in fact. Abstract, yet both compelling and impelling, it was in complete control of society. Through its specific rules of attitude and behavior in every relationship it made for amiable group living. Particularly stringent were the rules for siblings and cousins of