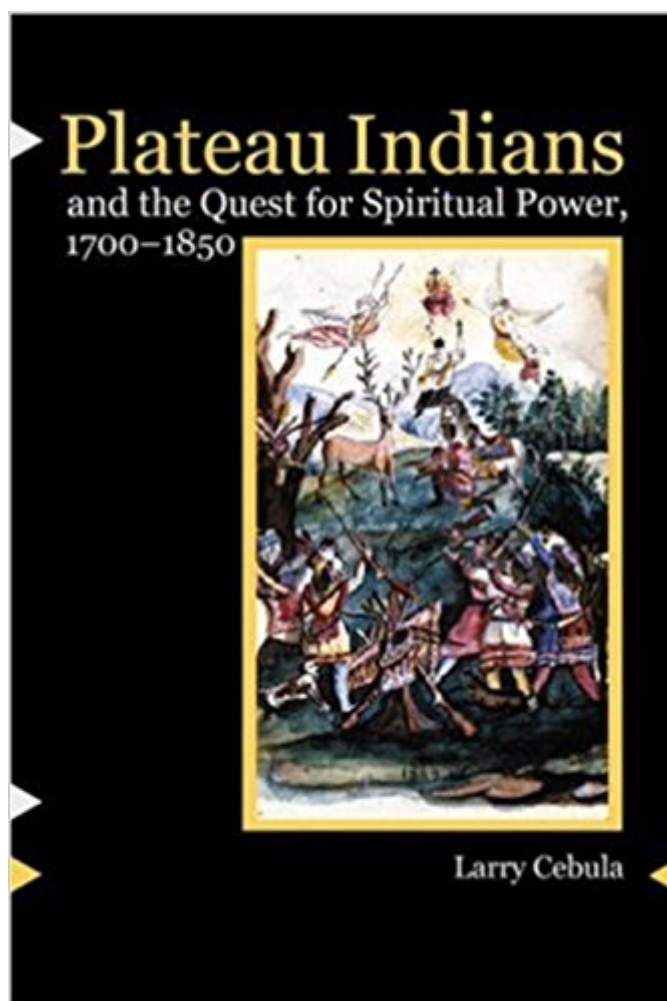


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Plateau Indians And The Quest For Spiritual Power, 1700-1850



Synopsis

Fusing myriad primary and secondary sources, historian Larry Cebula offers a compelling master narrative of the impact of Christianity on the Columbian Plateau peoples in the Pacific Northwest from 1700 to 1850. For the Native peoples of the Columbian Plateau, the arrival of whites was understood primarily as a spiritual event, calling for religious explanations. Between 1700 and 1806, Native peoples of the Columbian Plateau experienced the presence of whites indirectly through the arrival of horses, some trade goods by long-distance exchange, and epidemic diseases that decimated their population and shook their faith in their religious beliefs. Many responded by participating in the Prophet Dance movement to restore their frayed links to the spirit world. When whites arrived in the early nineteenth century, the Native peoples of the Columbian Plateau were more concerned with learning about white people's religious beliefs and spiritual power than with acquiring their trade goods; trading posts were seen as windows into another world rather than sources of goods. The whites' strange appearance and seeming immunity to disease and the unique qualities of their goods and technologies suggested great spiritual power to the Native peoples. But disillusionment awaited: Catholic and Protestant missionaries came to teach the Native peoples about Christianity, yet these white spiritual practices failed to protect them from a new round of epidemic disease. By 1850, with their world devastatingly altered, most Plateau Indians had rejected Christianity.

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Customer Reviews

"The strength of this work is Cebula's focus on the dynamic motivating power of spiritual belief in the lives of the Plateau Indians of Northwestern North America and on Indian people as free actors and makers of their own history. . . . [C]arefully researched, clearly written, and systematically presented." —Choice (Choice) "An accessible contribution to the literature . . . it would make a useful supplemental text in courses on Northwest, Native American, and religious history." —Andrew H. Fisher, Oregon Historical Quarterly (Andrew H. Fisher Oregon Historical Quarterly) —"Altogether, Cebula has crafted a smart and accessible book addressing complex issues of cultural syncretism in a region of many actors." —Steven M. Foutain, Itinerario (Steven M. Foutain Itinerario)

Larry Cebula is an associate professor of history at Missouri Southern State College.

Larry Cebula offers a thoughtful, insightful look on the Plateau Indians of Northwest U.S. and Canada. Instead of a mere recitation of facts, this history focuses on the spiritual life of the Indians of that period, and how their spirituality drove their relationship with the whites moving into the area. A must-read for anyone interested in American history.

It is rare that one finds a scholarly book which is informative, interesting, and well-written. This book is, unquestionably, all three. Dr. Cebula presents his scholarly work in a flowing, engaging manner, providing historic information as well as intelligent analyses and conclusions in a manner that an educated layperson can understand and appreciate. I had little knowledge of the subject before I opened the book. Yet, I was able to follow, and be drawn into, the narrative of the book: the impact that contact with Europeans, their diseases, their goods, their culture, and their religion, had on the Plateau Indians, and most of all, the spiritual journey that these peoples took in response to these impacts, and where this journey took them. I agree with the reviewer above that this is a must-read for anybody with interest in the history of North America.

I came away from reading this feeling a satisfaction at the author's statements, those of which I find truths within, describing what I know and understand about my own Plateau/Salish Flathead Culture. Our oral history tells us many things, the educational/religious system impressed upon us from 1843 tells us many things, and the world of the Salish Flathead continues to tell those who wish to listen - many things. However, so many 'academics', anthropologists, archaeologists, economists, scientists and 'ologists of many types... can write a great many things about what they have

understood about Native Salish Culture - with the exception of... the 'real' insiders P-O-V. This book comes close.

The best book I've ever read about the Plateau Indians. I recommend it for anyone with a deep interest in the period. By coincidence I recently read a great textbook called *Collective Behavior* (Locher 2002) that helped me understand how some of these events could have taken place.

This is a very poor indication of the American Indian's quest for spiritual power. I was expecting something a little more based on hard factual information. I found the book disappointing. I expected some more colorful examples to support its thesis. Save your money. A book like *The Spiritual Legacy of The American Indian* might be a better choice. *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian: Commemorative Edition with Letters while Living with Black Elk* (The Perennial Philosophy Series)

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