

Meme, Masonry and the American Indian!

By RW Brother Roger Quintana, Sovereign Master 2012, Daniel Coxe Council #479

There is no Indian Freemasonry. There is Indian Freemasonry. An understanding of which comes to light for those that seek to find it. The Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institute, an authority on the American Indian quoted a paper by Dr. Spainhour, in their first annual report. Dr. Spainhour was described by the institute as a man of "undoubted integrity, whose facts as given could not be doubted." Dr. Spainhour had found and dug into an Indian burial mound in Burke County, North Carolina. He found there three bodies, each in an upright position. One in the south facing north, one in the west facing east, and one in the east facing west. The grave was situated due east and west. In the center an altar. He found that the body in the east was at a higher standing elevation than the body in the west, which in turn was elevated slightly higher than the body in the south. There were implements of authority near each body. The tomahawks placed by each of the bodies were different from one another, in one, two, and three pieces.

Were Dr. Spainhour's findings some evidence of Masonic influence? In the book "The Soul of the Indian", Charles Eastman details Indian ritual in which the initiate is raised from a symbolic death, endures a cut to the chest upon entering a ritual area and is clothed in breech-cloth and moccasins. Eastman goes on to describe the "Grand Medicine Lodge". The Grand Medicine Lodge was the Native American institution which held back influences by the conquering missionaries until 1862. Eastman describes it thus:

"The order was a secret one, and in some respects not unlike the Free Masons, being a union or affiliation of a number of lodges...Leadership was in order of seniority in degrees...No member might become a member unless his moral standing was excellent, all candidates remained on probation for one or two years... The Grand Lodge exerted a distinct moral influence..."

Eastman further explains the Lodge's highest degree called the "Grand Medicine Dance". It was given after the candidate had made a suitable proficiency in the preceding degrees. Tylers were appointed and each member donned their respective regalia in lodge. The Great Chief, stood in the east, facing east - west. He gave a sign with his right arm which all present then gave. He addressed the Great Mystery as part of the opening ritual. When it came time for the initiation ritual the candidate took part in a silent prayer and received charges to observe all rules of the order. Instructions were given on his duty to fellow men and to God. The candidate was then struck by a medicine bag, symbolically dying from the impact, and then symbolically resurrected by the Great Chief.

The historian Brinton in his instructive work, *The Myths of the New World*, (p.285) says that among the red race in America:

The priest formed secret societies of different grades of illumination, only to be entered by those willing to undergo trying ordeals, whose secrets were not to be revealed under the severest penalties. The Algonkins had three such grades, the Waubino, the Meda and the Jossakeed, the last being the highest. To this no white man was ever admitted. All tribes appear to have been controlled by their secret societies.

In *American Indian Freemasonry* by Arthur C. Parker, published in the Buffalo Consistory, A.A.S.R.N.M.J.U.S.A., 1919, Parker analysis the correlation between American Indian Ritual

and Masonic Ritual. Parker states that in the native American religion there were many spiritual powers but only one supreme Deity. Parker refers to the "Undiscovered Masonry", stating "It is not the Freemason alone who is curious of Freemasonry; every man who enjoys the society of his fellow men and who sees in the symbols that are found in the world about him moral lessons that admonish him to virtue, sees also in all Cosmos the potentialities of Masonry." "The student who has penetrated the strange lands and places of the Earth is called upon to tell what other races and peoples know of mystic orders that bind men to morality and brotherly devotion." Does the American native have signs, grips and words like those of Ancient Craft Masonry? In his thesis, Parker questions what is Freemasonry. One must define Freemasonry prior to using it to brand native ritual as Masonic. Is Masonry just ritual? Is it material or spiritual? Is it not the legend or allegory that is essential in Freemasonry? Morality and truth are its foundation and one must remember where we were first made a Mason. "Masons are thus taught that there is an inherent Masonry in men capable of becoming Masons and that there is an inductive masonry into which Masons are led, to be taught the special principles of masonry by men and of such rites as the experience and the wisdom of our ancient brethren have deemed as truly Masonic in the accepted sense."

We then need to ask ourselves how much of Freemasonry did the native American possibly know of an order that up to 1717 was not organized and whose rituals had not been fixed. An examination reveals that the native American ritual is indeed Masonic, but not Accepted Masonry. Let us examine the fundamental beliefs of the nations and tribes of native America, by which they held the same truths as supremely evident.

First there is the Native belief in a supreme being. Whether it was Tirawa of the Pawnee, Hawenui of the Iroquois, Gitche Manitou of the Algonquin, the same idea prevailed of one Grand Architect of the Universe. Next was Morality, where the native was held to be just, truthful, charitable and considerate with his fellow man. Immortality and a strong belief in the "World beyond the Sky". A belief that current conduct affects future life. A belief in Brotherhood. If there is one belief among the native tribes was a belief in a universal kinship of all created things. It was this brotherhood that made hospitality the universal rule among Indians. The Indian drew moral lessons and analogies from the art of building their houses and other dwellings, at most symbolism came from their study of the "Temple of Nature". The Indian used sacred words that could only be whispered and some never spoken except in lodge.

The question remains, how much did the Native American know of Accepted Freemasonry. In Dr. Mitchell's, the History of Freemasonry we learn of the possible association with the Welch Indians whose ancestry immigrated from Wales. There were more Druids in Wales than in any other part of Europe. Many distinguished Indians became Accepted Freemasons, among whom was the late General Eli S. Parker, the Seneca Chief, who was an aide to Gen Grant in the Civil War. During the revolutionary war W. L. Boden wrote in his book, Masonry Among the American Indian, that Colonel McKinstry about to be executed while in captivity, gave the mystic sign of appeal of a Mason in the hour of danger. It was seen by then chieftain Brant who was a Mason and who immediately interposed in his behalf, and rescued the brother from his impending fate. Freed him from his bonds, guided him to safety to Quebec and placed him in the hands of the English to return home to safety.

Chief Joseph Brant was a Mohawk, Loyalist and freemason. During his early youth Brant, a true blood Mohawk became a favorite of Sir William Johnson, the British super-intendent of the northern Indians of America, who was very popular among the Mohawk tribes, and who also was Provincial Grand Master of the New York Colony. In 1776, Brant became the principal war chief of the confederacy of the Six Nations. According to Albert C. Mackey in Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, after examining a number of historically Native American Indians who were Freemasons, including Brant and Parker, concluded "Thus from primitive and ancient rites akin to Freemasonry, which had grown in the shadow of the distant past, the American Indian is graduating into Free and Accepted Masonry as it has been taught to us." It is an instructive example of the universality of human belief in fraternity, morality and immortality. Mackey presented that the Indians, in recognizing the ethos of Freemasonry within their own culture, were drawn to the Craft. In April 1776 at the Grand Lodge of England, Chief Brant received his masonic apron from the hands of King George III.

Accepted Freemasonry among the American Indian flourished in the territories. On July 12, 1849 under dispensation from the Grand Lodge of Arkansas a charter was granted to Cherokee Lodge #21, the first lodge of Indian Free And Accepted Freemasons established in the United States.

What was then the Accepted Masons attraction to the Native Mason? Joy Porter, in "Native American Freemasonry Association and Performance in America" states; "The Westerner saw the the ability to work directly on the passions of the listener was a rhetorical skill associated with the Native American, and in the Masonic lodge specifically rhetoric and the meaningful recitation of learned speech were the absolute central.

Rhetoric according to Porter is a key to understanding why Accepted Masons might permit Indians into the very heart of their exclusive, white, Protestant and predominantly middle-class organization. Perter quotes the contemporary thinker James Burgh on the ideal passionate, elocutionary act "which, by influencing the will, makes one proceed to action...Like irresistible beauty, it transports, it ravishes, it commands the admiration of all....The hearer finds himself as unable to resist it as to stop the flow of a river with his hand. ...His passions are no longer his own." In fact, it was witnessing Indian oratory that allowed a young Thomas Jefferson to first feel such feelings. Jefferson, in "Notes on the State of Virginia" repeats a favorite theme, the similarities of Indian and classical culture. Both cultural assimilation.

In Eric Lott's 1993, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, Lott encourages us to look at the phenomenon of Whites dressing up as ethnic "Others" in new ways. "In the Masonic Lodge at various times Indians performed Indianness as part of the Masonic Ritual, and Euro-American Masons similarly "performed" as Indians in specific Indian or Indian-inspired Masonic rituals". The Accepted Masonic lodges for the Indian created a social and political space where Indians and Euro-Americans could conjoin and interact at the level of the imagination and within the realm of the sacred. A Spiritual sanctuary and haven for Euro-American versions of the Indian past. A sanctuary and haven for Indian versions of the Euro-American past.

meme definition philosophy

/meem/ [By analogy with "gene"] Richard Dawkins's term for an idea considered as a replicator, especially with the connotation that memes parasites people into propagating them much as viruses do.

Memes can be considered the unit of cultural evolution. Ideas can evolve in a way analogous to biological evolution. Some ideas survive better than others; ideas can mutate through, for example, misunderstandings; and two ideas can recombine to produce a new idea involving elements of each parent idea.

The term is used especially in the phrase "meme complex" denoting a group of mutually supporting memes that form an organized belief system, such as a religion. However, "meme" is often misused to mean "meme complex".

Use of the term connotes acceptance of the idea that in humans (and presumably other tool- and language-using sophists) cultural evolution by selection of adaptive ideas has become more important than biological evolution by selection of hereditary traits.