

"I Was Brought to Life to Save My People from Starvation and from Their Enemies": Pahutakawa and the Pawnee Trauma of Genocide [Abstract]

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This article argues that military conflict with the Lakota and Cheyenne caused a major spiritual crisis among the Pawnee Indians in the first half of the nineteenth century. In their desperation, some Pawnees allowed Christian missionaries among them in the hope of acquiring additional spiritual power, while others sought to end the ritual sacrifice of human captives in the Skiri Pawnee Morning Star Ceremony to gain the political and military support of the United States. In addition, an increasing number of Skiri Pawnees turned toward the worship of Pahukatawa, a man who had returned from the dead after he had been slain by the Sioux in the early 1830s. Pahukatawa was controversial among Skiri Pawnees who favored Morning Star, but eventually he was accepted as one of the Pawnee sacred powers who assumed a prominent place in the Pawnee pantheon. The worship of Pahukatawa revitalized the Pawnee, but unlike other revitalization movements, this one was the result of Lakota and Cheyenne expansionism rather than Euro-American settler colonialism.

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