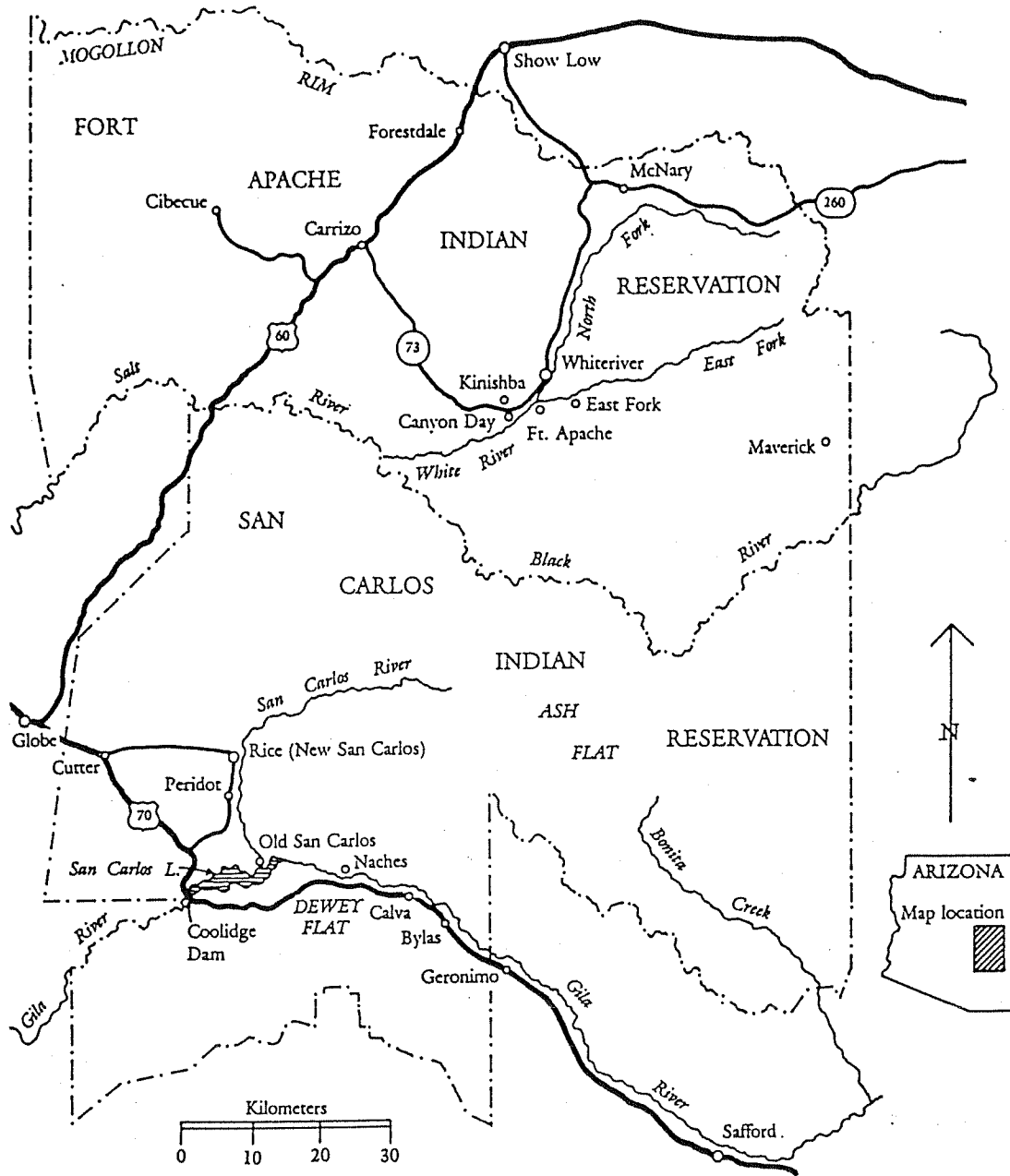


Missionaries and Medicine Men:
A Study of Lutheran Mission and Apache Resistance



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COVER: A group of masked dancers impersonating the supernatural spirits at a curing or puberty ceremony, probably near San Carlos in December, 1925.
 ABOVE: Map of the two Western Apache reservations.

They called themselves *Inde'*. They were short and stocky individuals, but had a physique and endurance that belied their size. Their speech was a tone language that few outsiders could master. They were very intelligent. They possessed a complex temperament. They had an ethic that differentiated between friend and foe, a democratic concept of leadership and a bravery that came to its zenith in the face of adversity (Brown, p.24-25). *Inde'*, "The People," were also extremely religious.

Anglos and others called them *Apache*, "The Enemy." The Apache were considered a savage and uncivilized foe that was capable of terrible atrocities. They were the last of the American Indians to be settled on reservations, late in the 19th century. This task however, was only accomplished by a greatly larger force of Army soldiers aided by "friendly" Apache scouts. These Anglos subdued the Apache with "famine and fire," committing much of the same savagery and atrocities as their enemy.

Many agree that these hostilities showed the Army to be just as uncivilized. The results were devastating; the effects long-ranging. Subduing the Apache meant killing them off, shipping them away from their homeland, confining them to a reservation that did not meet their needs for survival or methodically dispossessing them of their culture, heritage and even their dignity and pride as "The People."

Sad to say, the Apache were never able to comprehend the persistent and contradictory nature of those who came in swarms to seize their land, and who did it without the slightest regard for Indian rights. They kept asking what or whom it was that gave men the right to act in such a way. Had their God told them to behave so? If that were the case, they certainly wanted nothing to do with Him! Again, when the Whites dug up the apparently precious yellow iron and then fashioned gleaming crosses out of it, was that really their god? The Whites plundered their land, stole their horses, killed their people, and destroyed their villages; why then did the Whites find it so strange when the destitute Apache raided in return? Finally, the Whites said they would give them reservations. Yet how could they give the Apache that which already belonged to them in the first place? Was there any recourse but to fight with such a peculiar foe (Mails, p.212)?

The hatred and suspicion that the Apache had for the white man also hindered the Wisconsin Synod Lutheran missionaries who sought to bring them the good news of Jesus Christ. "These missionaries found a people whose historical experience, physical and mental characteristics, social structure and customs, and religious beliefs were so unique in the aggregate as to create a formidable barrier to their efforts (Brown, p.20)."

On October 10, 1893, Missionaries John Plocher and George Adascheck arrived at the lower Western Apache reservation of San Carlos. In less than two years Adascheck returned to the East because of his difficulty with the English and Apache languages. Plocher left after six years because of his wife's failing health. The two however, did succeed in laying a foundation for Lutheran work. They completed a residence, chapel and school at Peridot. Plocher held services on Sundays at two boarding schools and visited neighboring camps during the week to preach the gospel.

Their efforts also produced fruit: "The initial reaction of the Indians was one of doubt --they had seen too many white men who spoke one way and acted another-- but in time they realized that Plocher had come to give and not to take (Brown; p.80)." The mission school also boasted twenty "half wild little children of nature brought in by the government police (Centennial Committee, p.233)." In April of 1899 four of the students, the mission's first converts, were baptized.

In 1896 a third missionary, Pastor Paul Mayerhoff, was sent to the upper reservation in the White Mountains of Arizona. In June of that year he settled near East Fork a few miles from Fort Apache. "By his own admission he was looked upon with considerable suspicion. He noted a strong Apache opposition to Christianity. He was continually confronted with the attitude that the white man's God was good for Anglos, but the Apaches' gods were sufficient for their needs (Kessel, p.92)."

Mayerhoff's greatest obstacles to preaching however, were geography and language (Koehler, p.201). The Indians lived in

camps scattered throughout the mountainous terrain. Limited to walking or riding a horse, there was no way one man could cover the large area. Mayerhoff did his best. But once he found the Indian's camp, he still had to contend with the second difficulty. Jack Keyes, an interpreter for the Lutheran missionaries spoke of the language problem:

Long ago we Indians don't know anything about missionaries. Then the first missionary came from San Carlos to Fort Apache. His name was Rev. Mayerhoff. He talked to us but we didn't know what he meant. We Indians thought that was just another white man just talking about something. I was only a boy at that time. Few Indians at that time could understand or speak English. If we could have understood him we would have known he was the right one (Apache Scout 1936, p.488).

"There were those, however, who listened to his teachings, but only after Mayerhoff had learned to speak Apache (Kessel, p.92)."

The Wisconsin Synod historian, J.P. Koehler, visited the mission for five months in 1902 and made a number of observations about this "first phase" of mission successes and failures. He wrote:

Uphill work is everywhere the nature of the preaching of the Gospel, for obvious reasons, but here it was notably thus because all the prerequisites for such an undertaking were lacking. It was a mistake to have sent some one down there who couldn't handle the English language even. Just as unintelligent was the procedure of releasing a missionary before having had his successor initiated by him into the work. And it was necessary that the missionaries be men who could analyze and recognize the distinctive and vital problems of the situation and also discover the manner and method of meeting them. The stolidity of the Indian is such an essential problem. Add thereto the concrete type of the Indian's thinking processes, proceeding immediately from the perceptions of his physical senses and devoid of the abstractions that the civilized peoples of the western world have filled their minds with in the course of the ages. Another obstacle is the distrust with which the white man's bad faith poisoned the Indian's mind against him (Koehler, p.199).

Koehler offered advice for the missionaries he visited and the Synod he addressed. Though his thoughts were nothing new to the Lutheran church, it proved to be a timely, and also the most fruitful, suggestion the missionaries could follow. Koehler

[emphasized] one fundamental in determining the missionary's approach and dealing with the red man. In general it is much like the mother's care of the child and her learning from the little one itself how to reach its understanding, which applies especially to the way of bringing home to the Indian the teachings of the gospel. But all this requires an understanding that can grow only from a deep insight into the gospel itself and the love of Christ. The intellectual knowledge of the gospel is not sufficient. Cleverness and calculation will not avail, but only the sincere prompting of the heart (ibid).

In November 1910, a ministerial candidate at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Edgar E. Guenther, volunteered to serve as missionary on the upper reservation:

Here was my call! At [one] time I refused to study for the ministry; now I was eagerly set to go to Arizona. The next day I went down to Pritzlaff's hardware store and purchased a cook stove and two guns: a 351 Winchester rifle for keeping distant enemies at bay and a 38 Colt Army pistol for close range encounter (Guenther, p.65)!

His perception that the mission field would be filled with danger and threats from the "enemy" was short lived: "It wasn't long before I sold the one [gun] and embalmed the other," Guenther remarked (ibid). He and the other missionaries found that the one effective weapon they had for winning the Apache for Christ was love --love expressed in the gospel and demonstrated in the missionaries' lives. The history of the "second phase" of their work bears this out.

Coinciding with this new phase of work were the drastic changes made in the Apache's government, economics, education, social organization, and culture. In his autobiography, Guenther noted that

under military rule the Indians were permitted to live their own lives while the Army saw to law and order. But under civil rule the "white man's way of life" so-called, which outside of the gospel has so little to commend it, was literally thrust upon these primitive people with the same inevitable results achieved among other primitive people -- robbing them of their commendable customs without edifying replacements (Guenther, p.110).

This change in government brought bureaucracy and corruption to bear on the Apache; they found their lives turned upside down.

Traditionally the Apache were a semi-nomadic group who survived by hunting, farming, gathering and conducting occasional raids when shortages demanded it. Their varied terrain consisted of six natural vegetation zones. The Apache would migrate from one area to the next exploiting food sources as they became available. They would travel to the southern slopes of the mountains in April to harvest mescal. In May they would move to farming in the fields near rivers in the mountain valleys. In July they would gather saguaro fruit in the desert regions. Later in the summer months they would collect acorns where the Emory oak grew. By September they harvested their corn and other crops. In November they set out in search of pinon nuts and juniper berries. From November to April they would hunt. When winters were severe and supplies ran short, they would raid for domesticated animals. They also traded with neighboring Indian tribes (Kessel, p.31-35).

The civil Agency put a stop to the Apache's nomadic way of life. The Anglos tried to establish irrigated farming on the lower reservation and cattle-raising in the White Mountains. Neglect and corruption made both ventures failures. Faced with hunger and a shortage of government-issued rations, the Apache was forced to adopt the white man's way. Their livelihood changed from a subsistence to a wage economy. Apaches hired themselves out as scouts, ranch hands and mine workers. Many sold crafts such as beaded watch fobs, baskets, hat bands and rattlesnake-skin products. Some clung to their old ways and barely survived on meager government rations, but many left their primitive camps for the new life in populated towns.

The ability to speak English meant a better job for the Apache. Government schools that saw forced education as the only way to civilize the savage soon found the Apache a little more willing to attend. This migration from the small Indian camp in the hills to areas of employment and education broke down much of the Apache's organization into tribes, bands and extended families. The government also took the liberty of naming new

chiefs who cooperated with their policies. All of these changes were detrimental to Apache life and culture.

But these changes also opened up countless opportunities for effective mission work. Gustav Harders was a missionary at Globe, just west of the San Carlos reservation. He won numerous converts from the Apaches who came to this mining town to work. Many of them spoke English; Harders knew little Apache.

The missionaries continued to make their "camp calls," but they were gradually able to reach more and more Indians as the Apaches moved near the towns, forts and schools where they could find employment and education. Missionary Edgar Guenther's brother-in-law, Arnold Koop and his wife established a trading post that treated the Apache fairly and gained respect for the Lutheran white men. Minnie Guenther, the missionary's wife, encouraged the Apaches to continue in their craft-making skills and make items for sale. She and her sister's family, the Koop's, bought or traded food and supplies for the craft items. (Her collection is a large part of today's Western Apache Material Culture display at the Arizona State Museum in Tucson).

Perhaps the best opportunity for mission work was found in the mission schools. The school opened by Missionary Mayerhoff and Teacher Schoenberg at East Fork closed soon after in 1908 because of a shift in mission personnel and a lack of students (Centennial Committee, p.236). Edgar Guenther arrived in 1911 and was assigned the task of reopening the school. He had no additional help in the budget. There was also plenty of competition from the government boarding schools that offered the Apache student a free meal and clothing. But Lutheran dedication paid off. The Guenthers and Koops remodeled the church for a classroom. They fashioned rough lumber into the school furniture they needed. Mrs. Guenther cooked noon meals for the students.

The school opened in September 1912 and by Christmas the students could carry on simple English conversations and the Guenthers had learned the corresponding Apache. The school had proven to be an overwhelming success. Never again did the missionaries have to solicit students, for the Apache parents came to appreciate not only the education, but also the love their children were receiving (Ferg, p.12).

The camp work done by the Guenthers and the proceeding missionaries was bearing fruit. This camp work "consisted in watching the Indians' physical needs and helping wherever they could, and practicing the language at their visits, to gain their



Missionary Edgar Guenther and his wife Minnie at East Fork, 1911.

confidence, and win their hearts by the practice of Christian love (Koehler, p.200)." Koehler observed this mission theory at work:

win over the old folks to let us have their children. Then the teacher, by means of the English language, wins the children for the gospel, and in that process gains enough knowledge of their language from the children for further approach to the old folks. Camp work and mission school are correlates in the service of the gospel (op.cit. p.202).

Camp work also gave opportunity for other expressions of love. Babies that were orphaned or left to die because of defect or superstition connected with bearing twins were welcomed into the East Fork missionaries' homes and later, into an orphanage run by the Lutherans.

Another scourge the Anglo brought was disease. Epidemics of whooping cough, pneumonia, influenza, and cholera took countless lives and sent surviving Apaches to seclusion and safety in camps hidden in the hills. But again the missionaries saw difficulty as opportunity to share the Gospel. During the flu epidemic of 1914-15, Pastor Guenther spent three and one-half months riding from camp to camp with the Agency Doctor Fred Loe. During that time he saw his wife once --to pick up a new pair of pants. He wore out the other pair in the saddle (Ferg, p.17). Dr. Loe and Pastor Guenther would treat the sick and try to prevent its spreading to others. Guenther also shared the gospel at every opportunity.

One such opportunity allowed Guenther to win the trust and friendship of Chief Alchesay. A few years later Alchesay would lead one hundred of his warriors to the dedication of a chapel at Whiteriver. All 101 were baptized that day. Alchesay urged his people to attend "this church that alone had his 'thumbprint' (Guenther, p.17)."

In two phases of work, first laying a foundation and then building their mission, the Lutherans encountered, but then, overcame many obstacles. By the 20's many had mastered the language. With their lives they demonstrated a genuine concern for the Apache and their well-being. They shared the gospel message in schools and churches and camps. And every year saw them gain more confidence and converts from the Apaches.

In summary, and comparison with the first period, it may be said that the work had expanded about five times. Over against the first four men there were twenty-five in the second period. The first three or four stations were offset by eight to ten, with double the work in camp and school. But only about half of the men continued in the work. The number of Indians then was about 5500, the same as forty years previous (1890). 1930 statistics revealed that over 1500 of these Apache Indians were baptized. Synod's mission schools were attended by 350 children, and over 600 were receiving instruction by the missionaries in the various government schools (Koehler, p.202).

No history of the hardship and opposition faced by our Lutheran missionaries would be complete without a look at the

Apache's native religion and their medicine men's reaction to Christianity. As late as 1951 Guenther would call the Apache medicine man's influence "the greatest obstacle to successful gospel work (Centennial Committee, p.230)." At the beginning of this work it was stated that the Apache was extremely religious. His native religion permeated every aspect of his life. And of course, nearly every difficulty faced by the Lutherans outlined above could be traced back to the Apache's native religion and, more specifically, the medicine men's opposition to "the white man's ways and the Anglo's God."

During our government's first encounters with the warring Apache, the Indian medicine man was seen as a hindrance to establishing a reservation and peace. One ethnologist reported to Washington in 1887 what many already knew:

It will only be after we have thoroughly routed the medicine man from their entrenchments and made them an object of ridicule that we can hope to bend and train the minds of our Indian wards in the direction of civilization. In my opinion, the reduction of the medicine men will effect more for the savages than the giving of land in severalty or instruction in the schools (Brown, p.47).

Geronimo, the great Indian chief who caused trouble for the Army before and after the Apache were confined to reservations was also a medicine man of some renown:

Since raiding and warfare were both the special interests of those who had supernatural power to find and frustrate the enemy, one or more medicine men were sure to accompany a large war party. The party leader himself might have this power. In all instances the medicine man's advice and predictions would receive great respect during the journey, and his ceremonies would be performed regularly as guidance from his "power" was sought. Several testimonies were given in evidence of Geronimo's amazing ability to predict events accurately (Mails, p.253).

Early Apache opposition to their confinement on the reservation was spearheaded by a medicine man named Noche-ay-del-klinne. He began a religious movement called *Na'ilde'*, a Western Apache term which refers to a return from the dead.

Late in the 1870's the US Army carried out President Grant's orders to confine the Apache to four reservations. Problems

persisted, even though most of the fighting had ended by 1880. Anglo miners and ranchers encroached on and were given more and more land once allocated for Indian reservation. Confinement to the lower areas of the reservation brought hardship. Hunting and gathering was limited; government rations ran short. An epidemic broke out. Unfriendly factions of Apache tribes were forced to live in close proximity to one another. Trouble was imminent.

On September 1, 1880, Chief Diablo was killed by members of Pedro's band. In March of 1881, another chief, Eskirole, was killed in a duel. By the summer of '81 conditions were perfect for the rise of the *Na'iilde'* movement.

Noche-ay-del-klinne, a Cibecue medicine man, predicted that he would bring chiefs Diablo and Eskirole back from the dead on June 26, 1881. The date came and went without incident; the medicine man retreated to the mountains. But by August he was back. He explained that "he had raised the corpses to their knees and talked to the spirits of the dead, but the dead chiefs would not return because of the presence of the white man (Kessel, p.66)."

The government agent J.C. Tiffany was alarmed. Traditional tribal enemies were joining together for the medicine man's ceremonies. Rumors of the Apaches' driving out the white man or fleeing with the Navajos and Tonto Apaches persisted. Sam Bowman, Chief Apache Scout, investigated the situation, turned in his report and offered his resignation; he wanted no part of the trouble that was brewing (Kessel, p.66-68).

On August 15, 1881, Agent Tiffany telegraphed General Carr, commander at Fort Apache, and ordered that *Noche-ay-del-klinne* "be arrested or killed or both." The prophet avoided arrest by moving from the Fort Apache area to Carrizo Creek and then on to Cibecue. On August 29, Carr lead 117 scouts and soldiers to arrest the medicine man (Kessel, p.67 & 71).

Accounts vary as to what happened when Carr's soldiers arrested *Noche-ay-del-klinne*. Anglo witnesses insist that the prophet volunteered to leave peacefully. Apaches maintain he was

manhandled, yanked from his wickiup and treated like a prisoner (Kessel, p.71). Whichever the case, the cavalry made their arrest, withdrew a short distance and stopped for the night. Before dark a number of Indians circled the camp. Who fired the first shot, no one knows. It was most likely the second shot fired that struck Noche-ay-del-klinne in the head; his guard was under orders to kill him at the first sign of trouble (Brown, p.68).

"The Apaches claimed that the entire command had been annihilated and, because the telegraph wire was down, these rumors received wide publication and Eastern newspapers carried reports of a 'second Little Big Horn' (Brown, p.69)." Actually the "Cibecue Massacre" accounted for 26 deaths, eight Anglos and an estimated eighteen Apaches, including six scouts and the prophet (Kessel, p.72).

The following day another medicine man prayed over Noche-ay-del-klinne's grave but was unable to resurrect the prophet. The *Na'ilde* movement ended abruptly. Unrest however, continued. Renegades attacked Fort Apache and carried on other skirmishes for nearly a month. On September 30, Geronimo and 74 Chiricahua Apaches fled their reservation for Mexico. These incidents strengthened the Agency's resolve to rid the Apache of their medicine men.

Agent Crouse notified his superiors back East that the "medicine man, usually the shrewdest man of the band, also combated the schools, for intelligence was against his business (1904 report; Kessel, p.96)." He said the medicine men were teaching parents that formal education would transform their children into some other nationality and teach them not to respect their parents. Crouse also viewed as "non-progressive" the medicine man's insistence that Apache's wear traditional Indian clothing. Finally he suggested that "the superintendent or bonded officer be authorized to send these Indian agitators away to live with some tribe where they would have none of this bad influence" (Kessel, p.97)."

Though there is no documentation to this effect, it can be assumed that the Agency hoped the Lutheran missionaries would oppose the medicine man and convince the Apache to leave their religion and ritual and turn to civilized Christianity. But nearly every record of the missionaries' interactions with medicine men demonstrated a hesitancy on the part of the missionary to ridicule or confront the medicine man: "Mayerhoff and Schoenberg, rather than opposing the teachings and practices of the medicine men, were content to simply present the teachings of Christianity, assuming that the Holy Spirit would open the Apaches' minds (Kessel, p.93)."

Missionary Edgar Guenther viewed the "positive" aspects of Indian religion --their creation and flood stories, their worship of the "Giver of Life" who manifested his life-giving powers in the sun-- as beneficial to his efforts: "This faint knowledge that the Apache 'were the offspring of God,' as Paul says, is anything but an obstacle to the entering of the gospel into the human heart (Centennial Committee, p.230)." But he also noted that the "negative" aspects of Apache religion --the superstition, fear and witchcraft which the medicine men played upon in order to further their influence-- obscured this "natural knowledge of God" and made the medicine man "the greatest obstacle to successful gospel work (op.cit.)."

Guenther said that "the old time medicine men were honorable men as a rule, convinced of their powers and sincere in their beliefs." But he insisted that the "average garden-variety of his day were charlatans to the nth degree (Guenther, p.133)." He was convinced that the medicine man cultivated Apache fears and superstitions for one reason: "the more they could be kept alive, the more lucrative would his practice be (Centennial Committee, p.230)."

Early in the mission's history, Guenther and other missionaries simply went about their business of preaching the gospel and, for a large part ignored the medicine men. Their philosophy: the medicine man's ulterior motives would expose him

for what he really was. But that was a long time in coming; fears die slowly. As late as the 1950's Guenther would write that "none of the pupils of our day schools had thus far been wholly free from the forces of evil and superstition (Centennial Committee, p.245)."

Gradually the missionaries made progress in their efforts to bring the Apache under the influence of the gospel rather than the medicine man. Undoubtedly every missionary toiled with that goal in mind. They employed prayer, not polemics. This was demonstrated in one incident Guenther experienced:

One evening (ca. 1914) as I was heading for home on a round-about way I ran onto the camp of the medicine man Pete Qaedejule not over two miles from the Mission. Pete heard me coming through the brush and stepped out to tell me that his daughter Nina (one of our favorite pupils) was deathly ill. Instantly there came something over me that led me to ask the Lord for a miracle that might bring this proud old faker to his knees. I entered the camp. A burning forehead, galloping pulse and feverish respiration, all confirmed Pete's apprehension. It was pneumonia in an advanced stage. Placing my hand on her brow I pleaded with the Lord to spare this child. There was little sleep for me that night and at sunrise I was again in the saddle to learn what the Lord had done. I found Nina outside walking about by the campfire and she is still alive today [1956] (Guenther, p.112 & 113).

Guenther said he was reluctant to share that account with readers of his autobiography because he didn't want anyone to misjudge his motives. Yet here his concern for the medicine man and his praise for God's miracles shone through. That same joy showed itself as he watched his own Apache brothers deal with the prophets and prophecies of the 'Aayode' movement.

The 'Aayode' movement was begun in 1916 by a medicine man from Turkey Creek on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. This prophet was commonly known as P-1, or Chief George (the Anglo "tag name" consisted of a letter designation for the band and the individual's number. The number 1 was usually given to the band's chief). His son, P-6, other family members and a number of area medicine men joined him in this new religious movement.

The name 'Aayode' meant "it is going to happen." All of the

participants were instructed to dress in white clothing and join in the ceremonial dances. At some point during this ceremony, these followers would be lifted off the earth by one of several Apache deities. The earth would be destroyed. They would be taken to a happy, heaven-like place where they would live in peace and there would be no fighting, death or hunger and the dead would be resurrected. Preparation also included "moral and physical cleanliness (Kessel, p.129)."

The medicine men made a concerted effort to keep news of the movement from the Anglos. P-1 "refused to speak in the presence of any of the parochial school children and threatened death 'in hell' to anyone who disclosed some part of the movement to white missionaries." By Spring of 1917 the movement spread throughout the Fort Apache Reservation. In April, 1917 Guenther reported that "the devilish influence of P-1 was felt everywhere. He had indeed instructed his people in all virtues but with the result that the whole group was more defiant, more lazy, less reliable and more obstinate against the Word of God than ever before (Kessel, p.133)."

Only once did Guenther speak out publicly against the movement:

My church attendance at East Fork had been falling off for no apparent reason though I might have know that a medicine man was the cause of it. The trail from East Fork to White-river takes one much nearer the foothills than the wagon road, and as I was returning home on the former one Sunday forenoon, I heard singing off in the brush. A short detour brought me to the medicine man P-7's "service." My congregation was well represented. For once I angrily told all and sundry that they were headed for the nether regions. Only then did I realize that I had stepped on dangerous ground; but perhaps all had been taken too much by surprise for not a single word was spoken and since I had my say, I departed. My attendance next Sunday and for many more, went over the top and everyone seemed more friendly than ever before (Guenther, p.151).

Most opposition to the "false prophets" came from Apaches, both Lutherans and non-Lutheran:

The medicine man P-5 would hold forth on the glories of this "new-kingdom." Y-23 [a Lutheran] refused to be inter-

ested. He [sarcastically] told the movement's "faithful," "You can go on your way and I will become a rich man from all the ponies and cattle you will have to leave behind."

Jack Keyes, the missionary's interpreter, took another view: he drew two circles in the dust. "These are two corrals," he said. "The one to the right is the kingdom of Jesus. The one to the left is the devil's kingdom. It is all the same in your new world, the devil is the boss. Your missionary has been calling you people and inviting you to enter the kingdom of Jesus; many of you have come over. That makes the devil jealous. He can't break into Jesus' corral, therefore, he is now trying to coax you into his new world. And now do you want to know what I think of that new world?" With that he jumped into the circle with both feet, obliterated it and walked away (Guenther, p.151).

The movement ended within a year. Gradually the participants themselves became disenchanted because the prophets failed to produce any results. One participant recalled one of the final ceremonies conducted by P-6:

Messengers said they're going to dance four nights and we're going up to heaven. They dress us good. They use power this yellow powder, the blue stone and the feather, and they say, "All right, let's line it up." And the medicine guys over here, and they pray for us, do the best they can. We're going up pretty soon. Don't go to bed, don't go to sleep. Four nights wait. Little kids tired --nobody go to bed. Sit there four nights four days.

Oh they lie you know --those guys. Didn't do it. Finally they get mad at each other, you know, those medicine men. "You damn lie. You don't know nothing, " that's what they said (Kessel, p.133).

Guenther would probably be the first to confess that there was more to the medicine man's opposition to Christianity than cultural ritual and uncivilized superstition. If it were simply that, time and the gradual acceptance of the white man's way would have made the medicine man's influence a threat of the same scale as the earlier barriers of language, geography and education.

But more lay behind the medicine man's opposition. Guenther too, would join Jack Keyes in stating that the medicine man's attack came right from the heart of the devil's kingdom: In his autobiography, Guenther asked the reader "not to judge these poor people too harshly. Wiser folks than our Apaches are daily being

deceived by the same Satan who 'transforms himself into an angel of light' (Guenther, p.133)." He also informed his Synod in their centennial year that it was "Satan who was active in our mission at San Carlos. [There] a bible-studying native began an agitation which appealed to some extent to the Indians, to form an independent tribal church (Centennial Committee, p.242)."

This "instrument of Satan" was, as Guenther referred to them, one of a group of "more influential performers who were able to add features to their repertoire through the widening of their mental horizon in the white man's schools (Centennial Committee, p.230)." Guenther doesn't mention him by name, but Guenther knew this medicine man well. In fact, many of this new prophet's "tricks" were learned in Guenther's own "school." This medicine man was Silas John Edwards.



Silas John Edwards' father (pictured at left with his son) Yoohn, or Johnnie Yuma as Anglos called him, was a medicine man of some influence. Born in 1857, his father served with the Apache Scouts from 1882 until 1886, when he took up farming near East Fork. He also supplemented his income by making and selling horsehair and snakeskin items to the soldiers at Fort Apache. His practice as a medicine man and his willingness to handle snakes (which most Apaches hesitated to do, for practical and

superstitious reasons) undoubtedly influenced his son.

Bahl-yay, or Silas John Edwards was born in either 1887 or 1888. Little is know of his early life. He spent most of his childhood on the lower reservation. Silas John attended school at San Carlos. But by 1911 he returned to the Fort Apache Reservation.

Already proficient in English, Silas John became a friend with the Guenthers soon after they arrived. He also expressed an interest in learning about the Christian faith. From July through October 1911, Missionary Guenther saw Silas John nearly every day. Both Guenther and his wife came to enjoy Silas John's attention and friendship. A typical entry in Mrs. Guenther's diary reads:

August 25, 1911 --a little piece of ice left. Edgar quickly got ready for more ice cream, chocolate ice cream this time. gave Keyes, Silas and Schoenberg some. Ed and Silas went out bee tree hunting. Found two tress. Brought back two pails full. Had to leave much behind. Gave Silas supper. Impressed with his thoroughly gentlemanly ways (Kessel, p.155).

Silas hired on as official interpreter when Keyes quit and was also asked to teach Missionary Guenther the Apache language. Those first months gave little indication of any potential trouble from Silas John.

Once, on July 23, 1911, "Missionary Guenther gave Silas John a small, liberally illustrated bible history book which Silas John had noticed and wanted very badly." Mrs. Guenther would later recall Silas John's preoccupation with one illustration of Moses. Moses was standing before the people of Israel (who were being bitten by poisonous snakes) and holding up the Bronze Snake attached to a cross (op.cit.). At the time, Mrs. Guenther did not think much of it.

The real rift came in November, 1911 when the Guenther's were gone from home. When they returned they found out that Silas John had used their house for an affair with a woman. Their friendship was damaged but Silas continued as interpreter.

In 1912 Silas John began collecting rattlesnakes and selling

products made from their skins, much as his father had done. In March of the year he married Rose Opah. They had 3 children in 10 years. In 1915 he joined the US Army as a scout. He may have joined the campaign against Poncho Villa. Soon after he attended the Indian School at Phoenix.

Silas John claimed he received his "power" and prayers as a medicine man through a vision of three segments sometime in 1916:

In the first vision, Silas John started to follow the trail to Black River crossing, a place where travelers could ford the river and cross over onto the San Carlos Reservation. Yet somehow, he ended up on a new trail. Just as he was about to cross the Black River he noticed that a storm was gathering force. Soon there was lightning. Silas John took shelter under a rock to wait until the storm had passed. While under the rock he heard a drum and music --it was a song. After remounting his horse he set out across the river, but when he reached the middle of the stream he realized that a great wall of water was coming upon him. There was no escape. The water picked Silas John and his horse up and carried them downstream. At this time, he noticed two snakes --a very large black snake facing east and upstream a very large yellow snake facing west. Silas John continued to be swept downstream, but then was lifted out of the torrent by twelve snakes which went around his head singing. This segment of the vision was over.

In the next segment Silas John was carried to a place of "beginnings" where the deity Naaye'nezyanne was born, where the earth was made, and where time began. It was a white mountain with a black cloud over it. From the cloud a supernatural being emerged and came to Silas John informing him that he would become a prophet and leader on the earth. This being also taught him prayers. Thus ended the second segment of the vision.

Then Silas John experienced the third segment of his vision. While he was walking down a trail in Firebox Canyon, near East Fork, four times rocks and trees began to fall, shaken by earthquakes. He later encountered people and told them of the event, but they had no knowledge of the quakes. From high in the sky Silas John heard a voice saying that in four years he would begin to work among his own people. He would represent the thirty-two supernatural "powers." Naaye'nezyanne would guide him and he would work with him. He would be "holy" and oppose evil forces like witchcraft (Kessel, p.162 & 163).

Silas John Edwards began his movement with a number of ritual dances held near East Fork in July 1920. Soon after, the superintendent of the Fort Apache Reservation had Silas John

arrested and fined \$25.00 for "starting a new religion and holding a snake dance (Kessel, p.166)." Silas John then moved to San Carlos and held a number of dances there. He returned to Fort Apache in September. He was arrested in October and held until the winter when the snakes (which he used in his healing ceremonies) hibernated. He returned to San Carlos but was soon returned, having been told to stay away from the lower reservation because of the stir caused by his teachings. Again he was arrested. This time for making tulpai, a corn beer, and for beating his wife.

In the spring and early summer of 1921 Silas John seemed to turn again to Christianity:

Throughout May and June of that year Silas John was in close contact with Reverend Guenther who was attempting to convince Silas John that he had been misled by the devil and was having an evil influence on the Indians. On June 4, Silas John wrote a letter to Manuel Victor, one of his disciples, informing him that the Apaches should read the bible and obey it. Silas John also urged Victor to seek out the local Lutheran missionary once a week for bible study. In July Guenther accompanied Silas John to the San Carlos Reservation where Silas John told the Apaches that he had been teaching them the devil's words and that they should obey the bible and listen to the Lutheran missionaries (Kessel, p.171).

But Silas' "conversion" was short-lived. Silas John was now viewed with less suspicion and used this relative freedom to do everything he could to legalize his religion. He even hired an attorney from Globe to help him incorporate. The lawyer dropped Silas' case under pressure from the superintendent. In the following year agents on both reservations were trying to jail Silas John on charges including "most prominently, illegal religious practices and illicit sexual activities, including rape (Kessel, p.174)."

Again, Silas turned to the missionaries for help in the form of "Christianization." He received instruction from Pastor E. Arnold Sitz and was baptized, along with his wife and children, on May 30, 1922. A year later he divorced his wife, remarried and also returned to practicing his religion. This time he did

it quietly, with few large, public ceremonies. He also met quite a bit of success on other reservations. Silas John also took his teachings to the Apaches at Verde Valley, Ft. McDowell and Mescalero, New Mexico.

At the same time, his popularity at home decreased. Rumors of his "improprieties," for which the Agency was hoping to jail him, discredited him with the Apaches. He also faced opposition from Lutheran Apaches. One incident at Whiteriver was indicative of growing dissatisfaction with the "prophet:"

A number of pickup trucks pulled into the fairgrounds one Sunday afternoon. Several people from San Carlos got out, including twelve women dressed in white dresses. They began their ritual. Suddenly, this man shouted to the crowd, telling all to kneel down because Silas John was coming. The men took off their hats and the women began to kneel. Then a young boy who was attending the East Fork Lutheran mission school said, "We are not going to kneel down for you. You're not God." A few snickers were heard from the crowd. The boy became bolder. "We only have one God and we only kneel down to one God. And you can't make us kneel down. You're not God." The women straightened up, and the White Mountain Apaches began to laugh and talk about the San Carlos people. The ritual ended immediately (Kessel, p.180).

"In September of 1930, Silas John was arrested for selling liquor to Indians and was sentenced to thirteen months imprisonment at McNeil Island, Steilacoom, Washington. He was also officially forbidden from ever returning to the Ft. McDowell or San Carlos Reservations because of the religious fervor he was stirring up among the Indians (Kessel, p.158)." Silas John returned from prison and regained another large following on the Fort Apache Reservation. But soon that would end.

On February 18, 1933 Silas John's wife was killed and he was charged with her murder. Margaret Edwards had been strangled with her own hair and yucca cords. Her head was also beaten in with two rocks. The rocks were found with the initials "SJE" inscribed on them in his wife's blood. Witnesses testified that Silas had argued with his wife the day before and was also drunk. The arresting officers also found blood stains on his clothing. Silas John was found guilty and sent back to McNeill Island.

Silas John maintained his innocence. He said the blood stains on his clothing came from embracing his dead wife after he learned of her murder and returned home. Some witnesses corroborated that account. It was even doubtful that he would have left his own initials as evidence. Guenther himself was convinced that Silas John was framed (Kessel, p.159).

The real murderer was discovered in 1936. "In July of that year a woman was raped and her assailant threatened to murder her just as he had Silas John's wife (Kessel, p.160)." But Silas John remained in prison. He was transferred to a jail in Wickenburg, Arizona in 1950 and finally paroled on August 1, 1955. He held his last ceremony in the mid-60's before retiring to a nursing home in Laveen, Arizona. He died in 1977 at the age of 90.

Apache medicine men sought their "power" either through supernatural revelation or by apprenticing themselves to a medicine man who already had "power." It seems that Silas John did both. He claimed his vision as the source of his 62 prayers and new dance forms. He undoubtedly developed his snake-handling ceremonies while learning from his father. But it can also be said that much of his ceremonies were influenced by his years of contact with Lutheranism and especially, Missionary Guenther. This syncretism of Apache superstition and Christianity brought success to Silas' movement and plenty of problems for the missionaries:

Silas John Edwards' preoccupation with "Nehushtan," the bronze serpent of the Israelites' wilderness experience, showed up in his rituals. His ceremonies in 1921 at San Carlos brought crowds of over 500 every Sunday. The centerpiece of his ritual was "a large cross, about five feet high. On it was painted a large serpent with its tail at the bottom and its head just below the point at which the crosspiece was attached (Kessel, p.172)." He also informed the crowds that his religion did not require that he speak from the bible. He told them they should just follow the image of the snake on the cross (Kessel, p.167).

Silas John also copied much of the missionaries' methodology. In place of a bible, he developed a system of graphic symbols that allowed him to write his prayers and make notations of important ritual gestures (Basso and Anderson, p.1014). He appointed a number of disciples and taught them to read and follow these directions.

He gave family leaders charms and rituals to use daily to prevent sickness or witchcraft. These also served a pedagogical function and furthered his religion. When he was forbidden to enter a reservation, and also during his imprisonments, he directed his disciples by mail [often he would address them, "Dear brother in Christ"] (Kessel, p.177).

Silas John also organized "holy grounds" committees and appointed disciples and governing officers for each one. Basically, they were much like Lutheran congregations. "The committees held services every Sunday, curing the sick and praying for the continued good health of the well (Kessel, p.175)."

The Silas John movement was probably the most destructive opposition the Lutherans faced. Its pseudo-Christian nature caused plenty of confusion. "Several Apache individuals asked to be baptized by the Lutherans on the same spots Silas John had been conducting his snake dances (Kessel, p.174)." Others saw no difficulty in being both a disciple of Christ and Silas John. The rest of the Apache people who weren't caught in the confusing middle were polarized around Lutheranism or Silas John. The founding of his native tribal church also opened the way for other "sectarian" Anglo denominations to proselytize Lutherans (Centennial Committee, p.242). To this very day reports are still heard about our missionaries' difficulties with the Christless puberty ritual called the Sunrise Dance.

Lutheran mission and Apache resistance. In many cases "resistance" isn't the best word, it sounds too much like open, active opposition. Language and geographical barriers were no "fault" of the Apache. But every hindrance our missionaries

faced made our mission efforts "uphill work." The real resistance came from the Apache's hatred and suspicion of the white man and from the Apache's medicine men who struggled to maintain their traditional and newly developed religions.

Looking back on nearly a century of mission work, someone may wonder if it was worth the effort. We only need to consider the angels' rejoicing over Alchesay and so many others who found their salvation in the gospel of Jesus Christ:

Seriously ill, Alchesay told the missionary, "You are the only friend I have; these people are not my friends. They say that I am going to ride again; they are lying to me. I am just like the cars passing by along the road; first they are new and shiny; then they get older and one part after another falls off and then you don't see them any more. I am falling apart just like that old car and know that I will never ride again. I know that I am going Home soon." The Chief died in the faith a few days later (Guenther, p.43).

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