

PEYOTE CULT ON THE GOSHIUTE RESERVATION
AT DEEP CREEK, UTAH

ALDEN HAYES

Although the material offered here is by no means full or complete, it may be of some value because of the scarcity of information on peyote from the Great Basin. The Deep Creek Reservation lies in Western Utah on the Nevada boundary and close to the western edge of the Great Salt Desert. The population is approximately 155. With the exception of a few Western Shoshones who have married into the community all are Goshiutes.

The informant was the local peyote chief, a man 24 years old, alert and intelligent, and a high school graduate from the school at Riverside, California.

In 1925, there were less than a dozen users of peyote in the valley and there was no organization whatsoever. At that time a Sioux man, Sam Lone Bear, came west from the Dakotas teaching the peyote way. He stopped among the Utes at White Rocks in eastern Utah and ordered the people how to use peyote according to the doctrines of the "Western Slope Way." When Lone Bear left to go into Nevada he told the people organized a church there. He then came on to Deep Creek. He taught that after he had gone another peyote movement would follow him from the East. Within a short time the "Tipi Way" or orthodox procedure of the Native American Church supplanted the "Western Slope Way" at Deep Creek. The important difference between the two "ways" or "roads" is that in Lone Bear's meetings tobacco was never used.

Before the incorporation of the Native American Church in Oklahoma in 1918 an earlier peyote church was organized by Jonathan Koshiway, a Sauk and Fox, called the First Born Church of Christ.¹ Here, too, the primary difference between the two organizations seems to be that in the earlier organization no tobacco was used.

It seems probable that missionaries of Koshiway's cult reached the Great Basin and preached what later came to be known as the Western Slope Way. As the spread of a religion is necessarily a slow process, exponents of the earlier cult were still preaching and teaching to new disciples on the peripheries of the area while the later and stronger cult was entirely dominant in the center. At Deep Creek two-thirds of the population are peyote users but there is a split in membership. A little more than half follow the Tipi Way of the Native American Church. Some old men oppose peyote as being dangerous competition to the old beliefs. Especially antagonistic are the few "doctors."

Peyote buttons are hard to obtain in Utah. The Indians and the traders seem to be uncertain whether the government considers peyote a harmful narcotic. Traders are reluctant to take the chance of sending it through mails. At Deep Creek the people have to pay \$5.00 a

1. LaBarre, Wesley, *The Peyote Cult*, Yale University Press, 1938.

hundred for buttons. When they are available, meetings are held on Saturday night. Prayer meetings for the sick may be held at any time of the week.

The meetings are held in an army squad tent. The informant is anxious to have a real tipi made so they can "do it right." The members at Skull Valley have a large 20-foot tipi. It is interesting that a people, who in aboriginal life never used a tipi and seldom, if ever, saw one, should feel that the ceremony is not complete without it. The procedure during the meeting seems to be essentially the same as that described for the users in Utah,² Oklahoma,³ Kansas,⁴ etc. The crescent moon and fireplace are conventional, constructed of mud with a bit of cement mixed in for permanence. At meetings four buttons are taken the first time they are passed. After that each member takes as many as he likes. The iron kettle water-drum, tied in the traditional fashion, is passed, each member taking his turn drumming and singing. The informant explained the significance of the crescent moon altar as being symbolic of the months of the year in which the members were born. "There are different months but they are marked by the same moon." Teh "chief peyote" is planted in earth "to show that we are all on the earth, we are all close to the earth."

The informant, as the local peyote chief, is quite active in church affairs. He has traveled and participated in meetings at Skull Valley and at White Rocks. At Riverside he met some Taos boys who were peyote users and plans to visit them sometime. He is quite anxious to go to Oklahoma to visit. He looks to Oklahoma as the origin place and hearth of the peyote cult. "In Oklahoma they know peyote and they know how to use it. They know what they are on this earth for." He wonders why some white people frown on the use of peyote and why some Indian Service officials try to stamp it out. He knows that the constitution grants religious freedom and is perplexed that anybody should resent the peyote church which he feels will establish the Indians as a progressive people—unite them as well as heal them in mind and body.

One who uses it for a long time finally begins to understand peyote; he becomes cleansed and strengthened and it doesn't have as much effect on him. Gray Horse, a Washo from Fallon, Nevada, is a great peyote leader in the Western Basin. He has been using it for 25 years. He "understands" peyote and can eat seventy buttons without noticeable effect. Recently a white man who participated in a meeting at Deep Creek became quite sick. The informant suggested that this occurred because he didn't understand peyote and didn't "think right." "Peyote has a machine and it gives

2. Cook, unpublished manuscript.

3. LaBarre, *op. cit.*

4. Radin, Paul, "Sketch of the Peyote Cult; the Winnebago Tribe," *Annual Report 37*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D. C., 1916.

you a terrible threshing the first time and maybe the second time if you have done any bad things or have anything wrong inside you. But after a few times it makes you strong—it doesn't treat you so badly but it makes you clean and strong."

NECROLOGY

Earl of Crawford and Balcarres. March 8. Aged 68. Chairman of the British School of Archaeology in Rome. Trustee, British Museum.

Haddon, Alfred C., Dr. April 20. 84 years old. Anthropologist and Ethnologist. Formerly President of Royal Anthropological Institute.

Smith, Reginald A. Born 1874, died Jan. 13, 1940. Compiled guides to the archaeological collections of the British Museum.

Smolenski, Jerzy. Polish geographer. Died either in a concentration camp or shortly after his release from one.

From August 3 to 31 the University of New Mexico will conduct its annual Field Sessions in Anthropology in the Jemez and Chaco Canyons, New Mexico. Permanent buildings have been completed for the General Session encampment at Battleship Rock, near Jemez Springs, where practical field experience in archaeology and geology is offered undergraduate students. The Advanced Session will be held at the Chaco Canyon Research Station; this is devoted primarily to graduate instruction and fieldwork in archaeology, anthropogeography, biology, paleontology and ethnography.

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