

A STUDY OF MUSICAL DIFFUSION BASED ON THE WANDERING OF THE OPENING PEYOTE SONG¹

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THE widespread diffusion of the peyote cult² among Indian tribes of the Great Plains between the mid-nineteenth century and the present provides a wealth of musical material that awaits further analysis and interpretation. McAllester has made a significant contribution in the field of ethnomusicology with his scholarly study, *Peyote Music*.³ Although he has given a clear description of the over-all style of peyote songs with detailed references to the differences as found among the Comanche, Washo, Dakota, Fox, Cheyenne, Pawnee, Kiowa, Shoshone, Ute, Tonkawa, Kickapoo, Arapaho, Huichol and Tarahumare, he calls attention to the complexity of the picture and the need for further investigation. It is the object of this paper to examine several versions of the opening song of the peyote ceremony and to draw whatever conclusions seem justified by the evidence. The validity of such conclusions is necessarily affected by the limited amount of material on which they are based. They are offered, however, with the hope that they will call attention to a significant area of culture that has been imperfectly reported and too little studied, and that other students may be stimulated to investigate further this field.

Though the peyote ceremonial complex is composed of a number of elements essential to the proper celebration of the ritual, it is in the eating of the peyote and singing of the songs that the individual achieves his deepest religious experience. Songs, many of which are received in visions while the singer is under the influence of peyote, constitute the nuclear core of peyotism. They may be regarded as the quintessential expression of the cult. At stated intervals during the all-night meetings the leader sings four songs that are ceremonially determined, the opening song, the midnight water song, the dawn water song, and the closing song. Each of these songs appears as the first of a group of four songs and is sung four times before the leader proceeds to the remaining songs of the group. These are the only songs that are ceremonially fixed, the leader being free to use whatever songs he chooses to complete each group. Throughout the night there is almost continuous singing by the individual members of the cult, each man presenting a group of four songs of his own choosing, each song being sung four times.

In the diffusion of the peyote cult, the four ceremonial songs have passed from tribe to tribe as an integral part of the complex. McAllester concludes "from statements by Peyotists and from the available evidence it has seemed probable that the four special songs in Peyote are essentially the same wherever the cult is practised and that many of the regular songs also have a wide intertribal currency."⁴ This finding should not surprise us if we take into account that factor which Linton, for lack of a better term, calls the "inherent communicability" of culture elements. What in man's culture could be more communicable than song? Here is a universal expression of man, an abstract, symbolic art that lives anew with each re-creation

in the voice of the singer. Transcending and oft-times avoiding the limitations of language, vocal melody, which by definition includes rhythm as a component part of its substance, crosses tribal barriers with an ease that is not common to many culture elements. All that is needed for the diffusion of song is the contact of a bearer and a receptive receiver in a favourable situation. A receptive receiver would be a person possessed with sufficient aural sensitivity and memory to perceive and retain a melodic pattern, adequate vocal co-ordination to reproduce the melody at will, and an interest strong enough to engage him in the learning process. The average individual in any society would meet these qualifications. Though musical talent within a culture ranges from that of the active singer and maker of songs to that of the passive listener, there are few persons who are completely devoid of musical perception. Anthropologists, while recognising the significance of music in culture, have been prone to exaggerate the specialisation of this activity and material. Conditioned by their own culture in which the prerogative of music making has passed from the folk to the professional, they have come to regard themselves as unmusical, and distrusting their own musical perceptions they have neglected and avoided the ethnological problems posed by music.

The dynamics of diffusion of the peyote have been dealt with in various studies and will not be reviewed here. It may be noted, however, that in the spread of the ceremonial complex the songs figure importantly. In reporting peyotism among the Winnebago Radin observed that at the time that Rowe introduced the cult "all that took place was the singing of peyote songs. . . . There seems to have been little more (at first) than this singing of songs."⁵ It appears that the songs with their direct and immediate appeal through the sensory perception were accepted and sung before the doctrine and teachings of the new cult were understood and assimilated. If this assumption is accepted then it is to be explained in part by the nature of music and man's receptivity to this element of his culture.

Another factor which exercises a strong influence on the diffusion of music is the aesthetic satisfaction which man derives from his activities in this medium of expression. Man is endowed with an aesthetic impulse which impels him to seek satisfaction by moulding the raw materials of his environment into an idealised rhythmic form and order. His creative, re-creative and interpretive efforts are frequently stimulated and seconded by his taste for and interest in novelty. Would it be assuming too much to suggest that the popularity of the peyote songs and their ready acceptance among so many tribes may be due in part to the fact that they are distinctly different from traditional tribal music? It is a nice analogy to speak of music as a universal *lingua franca*, but we are obliged to recognise countless dialectic nuances of musical style that differentiate the music of one tribe or culture area from that of another. In the peyote songs the distinct musical style is further emphasised by the vocal technique employed in singing them.

But enough of generalisations. It is time to examine the opening peyote song which has had an interesting career in its wide and varied wandering. Records of the song as sung by the Lipan and Mescalero Apache who are credited with having passed the peyote on to the Comanche are not available. In their absence we must begin our journey with the Comanche and Kiowa who were responsible for the rapid diffusion of the cult in the plains north of the Rio Grande after 1880. This is the song as sung by George Hunt, Kiowa, recorded at Anadarko, Oklahoma, during the summer of 1941.

EXAMPLE 1. Peyote Opening Song (Kiowa).⁶

M.M. ♩ = 116 Sung one half tone higher

he - e - e - e hai-yo wi-ci na- a ya hai-yo wi-ci nai he - e - e ya he - e - e

hai-yo wi-ci nai he - e - e - e he-na he - e - e hai-yo wi-ci na- a ya

hai-yo wi-ci nai ya-a ya he - e - e hai-yo wi-ci nai he - e - e - e

A comparative analysis of twelve versions of the song, one Comanche, three Cheyenne, one Kiowa, two Dakota, one Southern Ute, one Winnebago and three Menominee,⁷ furnishes an index of the range of variation to be found not only between tribes, but within one tribe, and also in the different performances of the same singer. This observation simply confirms what we have known of the oral tradition of folk music in non-Indian cultures and reminds us that singing is a re-creative activity providing within certain limitations a wide range of variation and expression to the singer. If this observation has significance it lies in the fact that the same general psychological principle operative in the field of secular song is found here in cult music. More surprising, however, is the basic uniformity which these versions present. Unlike the long, poetic chants of the Navajo, Apache and Pueblo tribes, the opening peyote song has no words to give it form and regulate its pattern other than the meaningless vocables, *He-yo-wi-ci-mai-yo*. This sequence of syllables has a rhythm of its own, four short pulsations followed by two long ones. Prefixed by two long pulsations which may be doubled without destroying the distinctive rhythm of *He-yo-wi-ci-nai-yo*, there emerges a rhythmic motive of six or eight beats, - - ' ' ' ' - -, or - - - - ' ' ' ' - -. It is this rhythmic nucleus in combination with melodic patterns which reappears in the various versions of the song and assures us that we are dealing with variations of a prototype. There are many songs which employ the common peyote syllables, *He-yo-wi-ci-nai-yo*, but I have limited my study to those songs that offer evidence of musical relationship. The simplicity of this short rhythmic motive in association with the sequence of peyote vocables seems to have facilitated the diffusion of the opening song and contributed to its stability through time and space.

An examination of the tonal aspects of the song reveals a number of interesting features. In the matter of range, eight songs extend through a compass of an eleventh, two extend through a compass of a tenth, and two are confined within the frame of an octave. Only two of the twelve songs employ a heptatonic scale. These are the Southern Ute song, cast in the mixolydian mode, which is like our Western European major scale except for a lowered seventh, and the Cheyenne version reported by Edward S. Curtis, based on the natural minor scale. The Comanche and Kiowa versions, the two Dakota examples, and one of the three Cheyenne versions are based on hexatonic scales. All of these follow the pattern of a major scale without the seventh tone. To this basic scale the Comanche song adds an extra tone, a minor sixth, used alternately with the major sixth found in the scale series. One of the Dakota songs introduces a similar variation by the occasional use of a minor third in place of the major third of the scale series. Two

songs employ pentatonic scales; one Menominee version transcribed by McAllester following a descending tone series, D, B, A, G, F#, D; the Cheyenne version reported by Natalie Curtis following a descending tone series, D, C, A, G, E, D. The Winnebago version and two of the Menominee versions are limited to four-tone scales, but even here there is a difference in the tonal composition of these scales to be noted. The Winnebago song employs the following tone series, D, A, G, F, D; the two Menominee songs, both versions by the same singer, are based on the tone series, D, B, A, F#, D.

A comparison of the melodic contour of the first and second phrases of the song presents a remarkable uniformity. All of the versions except the Dakota and the Winnebago begin on the octave above the tonic and after one or more repetitions of this tone descend to the fifth. The Dakota versions reverse the order, beginning on the fifth above the tonic and without repetition of the initial tone ascending to the octave above the tonic. The Winnebago starts on the tonic and after several repetitions of this tone leaps to the octave above. In all versions except the Winnebago, whose inclusion in this group of twelve songs is subject to question on the basis of its wide variation from the norm of the song, the first phrase cadences on the fifth above the tonic. The Winnebago cadences its first phrase on the tonic. In all examples except the Winnebago and the Natalie Curtis version of the Cheyenne song the second phrase or section, discounting repetitions of the first phrase, opens with an upward movement rising from the fifth or sixth tone above the ground tone to the octave and ends on the tonic. The Edward Curtis version of the Cheyenne song is the only case in which this upward melodic movement starts on the fifth, all other examples except as noted starting on the sixth. The aberrant Winnebago version in its second phrase moves downward from the third above the tonic to the tonic where it comes to a point of repose. The Natalie Curtis version of the Cheyenne song in its second phrase repeats twice in linked succession the pattern of the descending fourth with which the song opens. This cascading, terraced movement, so characteristic of Plains musical style, is more evident here than in other versions. From the evidence presented it is apparent that we have here a melodic-rhythmic configuration with an identifiable individuality and that it has maintained its basic musical structure despite the variations it has undergone in its diffusion. It is re-created with scales of four, five, six and seven tones, varying considerably in their patterns and tonal material, but the song emerges with its personality intact.

In a paper, "Acculturation in North American Indian Music,"⁸ which I presented at the Twenty-ninth International Congress of Americanists in 1949 I stated, "the highly religious character of the Peyote songs tends to render them inseparable from the whole ceremonial complex in which they function so importantly." At that time, Dr. Omar C. Stewart kindly reminded me of the opening peyote song which has become dissociated from its ritual setting and has had a wide diffusion as a social song. When and how this song broke over into the realm of the secular I am unable to determine, but I present the following facts which I hope will lead to the unearthing of additional information regarding the history of this song and the eventual solution of an intriguing problem.⁹

In 1919 Elizabeth Willis De Huff recorded this song on wax cylinder as sung by two Lujan girls of Taos pueblo. Miss De Huff has kindly supplied me with the following information. "According to their statement (the two Lujan girls), which was corroborated by several other Taos and Navajo pupils at the Santa Fe Indian School, where I collected it, the song originated among the Navajo and was

adopted by the Taos Indians to use in their peyote ceremony. At that time, the Government was opposing the use of peyote and I could not find out whether or not the Navajos used the song in a peyote ceremony. That is still a moot question.¹⁰ . . . I used it in an Indian play that year and it became popular with all of the Indian pupils and was disseminated when the pupils returned to their homes in Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico and among the Utes. It seemed to strike like a spark of dynamite. Homer Grunn used the tune exactly as it was in harmonising it." In 1924 the song appeared in a collection of Indian songs from the Southwest, published by Oliver Ditson Co., Boston, set for solo voice with piano accompaniment arranged by Homer Grunn, who had transcribed the melody from Miss De Huff's recording. It is titled "Navajo Peyote Drinking Song." Sometime later the song was recorded with piano accompaniment and issued commercially under the label, "Peyote Drinking Song, Navaho Indiana" (*sic*), His Master's Voice B2083, Homer Grunn, in Native Dialect, Chief Os-ke-Non-Ton, Canadian Red Indian. Since His Master's Voice is a British company it is doubtful whether this record found wide distribution in the United States and influenced the diffusion of the song. It is not so easy to estimate the extent of the influence of the printed version of the song. Like many professional folk singers of to-day who acquire their repertoire of songs from books, some professional Indian singers, knowing few songs from their own broken cultures have learned their songs from printed scores. These singers unknowingly have been active agents in the diffusion of the printed versions of songs, for other Indians who hear them at fairs, rodeos, pow-wows and ceremonials have learned their songs. War Bow (Harry Nieto) of Zuni recorded this song for me in the summer of 1941. He told me that he had first heard it sung by an Indian "Princess" at the Gallup Ceremonial. Since Nieto's performance follows so closely the published version, one is led to believe that the Indian "Princess" either learned the song from the printed score or by oral tradition as disseminated from the Santa Fe Indian School.

EXAMPLE 2. "Peyote Drinking Song, Navaho Indiana" (*sic*)¹¹

M.M. $\text{♩} = 136$ Sung one whole tone lower

ha - yo ha-yo wi-ci na - yo ha - yo ha-yo wi-ci na - yo

ha - yo ha-yo wi-ci na - yo ha - yo ha-yo wi-ci na - yo he - nei yo-wi hi

yo - hi yo ha-yo wi-ci na - yo ha - yo ha-yo wi-ci na - yo

ha - nde ha - nde yo-wi - hi

After a slight pause the song starts again but does not bring the CabCabccd* parts, instead it ends as follows:

In 1927 George Herzog transcribed by ear a version of the song sung by Mayo Archuleta from San Juan in Saceton, Arizona. It was described as a young men's song, sung for entertainment. Herzog noted, "Mr. Archuleta considered this a San Juan song and didn't think it came from another tribe." During the summer

EXAMPLE 3. Song sung by War Bow (Harry Nieto)¹⁸

M.M. ♩ = 186

Sung three whole tones lower (A flat)

hai-yo hai-yo wit-si nai-yo hai-yo hai-yo wit-si nai-yo hai-yo hai-yo wit-si nai-yo

hai - yo hai - yo hai-yo wit-si nai - yo we (As in bars 1-3)

hai - yo hai-yo wit-si nai - yo we hai - yo hai-yo wit-si nai - yo

hai-yo hai-yo wit-si nai - yo he - ne hen

of 1953 David McAllester recorded the song as sung by Walter Taylor, who had heard it sung in 1935 by two Hopis, Robert Lomodofkie from Shungopovi on Second Mesa and Edward Nequatewa, son of Edmund Nequatewa, former caretaker of the Museum of Northern Arizona at Flagstaff. Taylor had heard the song the previous year sung by a Zuni workman on a dig being directed by Frank H. H. Roberts Jr.

David F. Aberle encountered the song during a dig in the Jemez Mountains in 1938. He writes (I quote his personal communication because it states the problem so succinctly, at the same time contributing further information regarding the linkage of the sacred and secular versions of this song): "We had several Jemez Indian labourers, who taught me a song which they said was an Indian song, and implied it was a Jemez song. The first line of the song was: *Ha-yo-ha-yo itsi-na-yo*. This was definitely a secular song, and at that time I knew nothing about peyote. When I first heard *Ha-yo-wi-ci-na-yo*, I thought I recognised the Jemez song as a debased version of the peyote song. Of course, I heard my first peyote song in 1949, some eleven years after I heard the Jemez song. I once tried singing the Jemez song to a Navajo peyote man, who considered it a familiar secular Indian song. He knew, of course, that it was not Navajo—so, I am baffled. Did I hear a different song in Jemez, or was this a secular interpretation of the peyote song?" I believe that we can safely assure Dr. Aberle that he heard a secular version of the opening peyote song.

Space does not allow a detailed analysis of the several secular versions of this song. In brief, we may note that the De Huff-Grunn version and that of Nieto are almost identical with the majority of examples of the song in its sacred setting. Both versions have a range of an eleventh. The published version employs a hexatonic scale, D, B, A, G, F#, E, D; the Nieto version a pentatonic scale, D, B, A, F#, E, D, and the melodic movement of the first two phrases matches the over-all pattern of the cult versions. The Herzog and Taylor versions are very similar. In the latter the range has been contracted to a tenth and the song has been lengthened by an extra repetition of the final phrase.

Several years ago the song appeared on radio and television in a very fancy arrangement as the theme song of the Mohawk Carpet Co., a gentle reminder that acculturation is a two-way process. This is the Mohawk Carpet Co. version of the opening peyote song:

EXAMPLE 4. Carpets from the Looms of Mohawk¹³

M.M. ♩ = 104

Sung a major sixth lower

Car - pets from the looms of Mo - hawk, Beau - ties for your rooms by Mo - hawk,

Car - pets that are long - er wear - ing, Val - ues that are worth com - par - ing,
Rich new col - ors smart - er styl - ing, Wov - en with a deep - er pil - ing.

10 beats of accompaniment 6 beats of accompaniment Car - pets from the looms of Mo - hawk, —

Ask for, and be sure they're Mo - hawk. —

The song has a range of a tenth and employs a pentatonic scale, D, B, A, F#, E, D. Though the melodic movement varies somewhat from that which we have observed in the other examples, the core rhythmic pattern, - - ' ' ' ' - - , repeated four times in the song in the commercial interest of inducing the listener to buy "carpets from the looms of Mohawk," leaves little doubt that this is one more example of the opening peyote song in secular form.

In conclusion we make the following observations:

1. Songs, which constitute the nuclear core of the peyote ceremonial complex, have greatly facilitated the rapid and widespread diffusion of the cult.
2. The ready acceptance and popularity of the songs are in part a result of the nature of music and man's psycho-physical receptivity to it.
3. This psycho-physical receptivity is associated with what, for lack of more knowledge, we call an aesthetic impulse and man's curiosity or interest in novelty.
4. The same psychological principles operative in the re-creation of secular music are found also in the singing of peyote songs.
5. Songs from cult music can and do pass over into the field of social music where they live an independent and parallel existence. Songs may also move in the opposite direction, from the secular to the sacred.
6. The complexity of the song is in inverse ratio to its distance from the centre of diffusion. As the song travels there is a trend toward simplification to be noted in a contracted range, limited tonal material, regularity of metre and symmetry of phrases.
7. The opening peyote song has maintained its musical structure and personality intact despite the variations it has undergone in the course of its wandering in time and space.
8. Music, though one of the most intangible, fluid and malleable artistic expressions of man, is one of the most persistent elements in his culture and least subject to change in its basic structure and forms.
9. If the stability of form and resistance to major change observed in the opening peyote song are characteristics of musical diffusion in general, these facts may be helpful in dating music, establishing time sequences, and postulating movements and contacts of peoples through ethnomusicological studies of their music.

10. The widespread diffusion of this song in its secular form is indicative of a pan-Indian movement in which tribal differences in culture lose their sharp definition and take on a generalised Indianism. This is to be noted in costumes, social music and religion.

11. Though modern Indian music has borrowed little from white culture, the white composer has frequently gone to the Indian for his themes, as observed in the Mohawk Carpet Co. theme song.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This paper is a revision of an earlier paper that was read at the Fifty-second Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Tucson, Arizona, December 1953.
2. The peyote cult, also known as the Native American Church, is a syncretic religion in which North American Indians have blended native religious beliefs and practices with the symbolism and teachings of Christianity. The peyote ceremony centres around the eating of the peyote, a small fleshy cactus found in Mexico. This is a source of spiritual power to the participant.
3. David P. McAllester, *Peyote Music*. Viking Fund Publication No. 13. New York 1949.
4. J. S. Slotkin, *Menominee Peyotism, a Study of Variation in a Primary Group with a Homogeneous Culture*. With Transcriptions and Analysis of Menominee Peyote Music by David P. McAllester. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, Vol. 49, Part 4. Philadelphia, 1952. p. 681.
5. Paul Radin, *A Sketch of the Peyote Cult of the Winnebago: a Study in Borrowing*. Journal of Religious Psychology, Vol. 7, No. 1, Jan. 1914. p. 7.
6. Music of the American Indian: Kiowa, recorded and edited by Willard Rhodes, AAFS L35. The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
7. Comanche, McAllester, *op. cit.*, The Songs, No. 2: Cheyenne, McAllester, *op. cit.*, The Songs, No. 58, quoted from Frances Densmore, Cheyenne and Arapaho Music, Southwest Museum Papers, No. 10. May 1936. The Songs, No. 63, quoted from Natalie Curtis, *The Indian's Book*, New York, 1907, p. 188. Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, University Press, Cambridge, 1907-30. Vol. 19, pp. 205-6: Kiowa, Music of the American Indian, *op. cit.*: Dakota, Rhodes Collection of Indian Music, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1942, Reel 6, No. 10. 1942 Reel 7, No. 9: Southern Ute, Rhodes Collection of Indian Music, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 1942 Reel 8, No. 7: Menominee, J. S. Slotkin, *op. cit.* pp. 688-9: Winnebago, manuscript transcription of song sung by Sam Blowsnake furnished by David P. McAllester.
8. Willard Rhodes, "Acculturation in North American Indian Music." Tax, Acculturation in the Americas, Vol. 2, Proceedings of the 29th International Congress of Americanists. The University of Chicago Press, 1952, pp. 127-132.
9. There is the possibility that the song was originally a secular song and that it was incorporated into the ceremonialism of the cult by the peyotists.
10. This statement by Miss De Huff's pupil-informants regarding the Navajo origin of the song fails to stand in the light of more recent research and investigations that have been made by anthropologists. David Aberle, whose intensive study of the peyote cult among the Navajo may be accepted as authoritative, writes, "The Taos would appear to have had peyote at least since 1913, whereas the Ute complex cannot be dated any earlier than 1908 and probably 1914 to 1917 for the Southern Utes. Since the Navajos got it from the Southern Utes and so far as I can tell there were few Navajo peyotists prior to 1933, and perhaps 1936, I think that the idea of a song spreading to Taos from the Navajos is virtually out of the question. Navajo peyotists themselves regard the Taos as having earlier contact with peyote than they did." (For detailed information consult David F. Aberle and Omer C. Stewart, *Navaho and Ute Peyotism: Chronological and Distributional Study*. University of Colorado Studies, Series in Anthropology, No. 6, 1957.
11. His Master's Voice B 2083. Transcribed from the record by George Herzog.
12. Rhodes Collection of Indian Music, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. LWO 1483.
13. Carpets from the Looms of Mohawk, produced by Maxon, Inc., New York. 53510.