

PEYOTE, THE GIVER OF VISIONS

BY RUTH SHONLE

I

WHEN THE Spanish fathers first walked among the Indians in Mexico, they were disturbed by the use which the Indians made in their ceremonies of a small plant, which the Spaniards thought was a dried mushroom. This plant has since been identified as peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*), a small spineless cactus indigenous to the lower valley of the Rio Grande, especially on the Mexican side.¹ When eaten in the fresh or dried state, this cactus causes a kind of intoxication and, more important to the Indians, color visions.² This mysterious and seemingly magical vision-giving power and the curative properties which peyote is believed to possess have made it the center of elaborate religious ceremonies. For many years—even centuries—these ceremonies were confined to tribes whose wanderings carried them through or near the peyote country. But since about 1890 the ceremonial use of peyote has spread among the Indians as far north as the Sioux and Chippewa and west to the Ute. The ceremony has been incorporated into the cycle of tribal ceremonies, in some cases even displacing them. The cult can no longer be disregarded in a study of significant tribal ceremonies, nor should the opportunity be foregone to discover the factors which have favored the recent diffusion and the extent to which an intrusive cult is modified in the process of its adoption.

The information upon which this study is based has been obtained from three sources: anthropological studies of specific

¹ Safford, *Narcotic Plants and Stimulants of the Ancient Americans*, p. 399. Safford, *An Aztec Narcotic*, pp. 299-300.

² "The physiological action of peyote may be divided into a preliminary stage and a stage of intoxication. In the preliminary stage there is excitement, a feeling of exhilaration, and a diminished power to perceive the sensation of movement, performances involving effort being hardly noticed . . . The stage of intoxication is characterized by an inclination to lie down, although there is never a tendency to sleep." Newberne and Burke, *Peyote*, an Abridged Compilation, p. 20, quoting Dr. Walter E. Dixon.

tribes; correspondence with agents in charge of reservations; and correspondence with Indian peyote users. These sources have yielded a considerable mass of material, but even so there are uncertainties and gaps which can be filled only by increased attention to the peyote ceremonies on the part of those in the field.

II

The origin of the use of peyote by the Mexican Indians is lost in the past. Various writers record its use among the Aztec in the sixteenth century;³ the Chichimeca before 1569⁴; the Cora Indians as early as 1754⁵ and as recently as 1899⁶; the Huichol, Tepecano and Tepehuane in 1899⁷ and the Tarahumare⁸ for the same period. The Comanche and Kiowa were initiated into its use prior to 1891.⁹ The Mescalero and Tonkawan Indians are credited with being the intermediary agents between the Mexican Indians and the Comanche and Kiowa,¹⁰ but this link in the chain has become traditional and cannot be asserted with assurance. But it seems relatively certain that peyote was carried no further north than the Comanche and Kiowa until after 1890; nor does it seem to have ever been used by the Indians of the Southwest. The Oto Indians also received peyote from the Tonkawans, but at a later date (1893-96).¹¹ Of other tribes of the same region, Mooney is

"The production of visions is the most interesting of the physiological effects of peyote. The visions ranged from ill-defined flashes of color to most beautiful figures, forms, landscapes, dances—in fact, there seemed to be absolutely no limit to the variety of visions." *Ibid.*, p. 21, quoting Doctors D. W. Prentiss and Francis P. Morgan.

³ Safford, *Narcotic Plants and Stimulants of the Ancient Americans*, pp. 404-05, quoting Sahagun, *Hist. Nueva España*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 399, quoting Sahagun.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 402, quoting Ortega, *Historia del Nayarit*.

⁶ Safford, *An Aztec Narcotic*, p. 305, from Diguët, *La Sierra du Nayarit et ses Indigènes*.

⁷ *Ibid.*

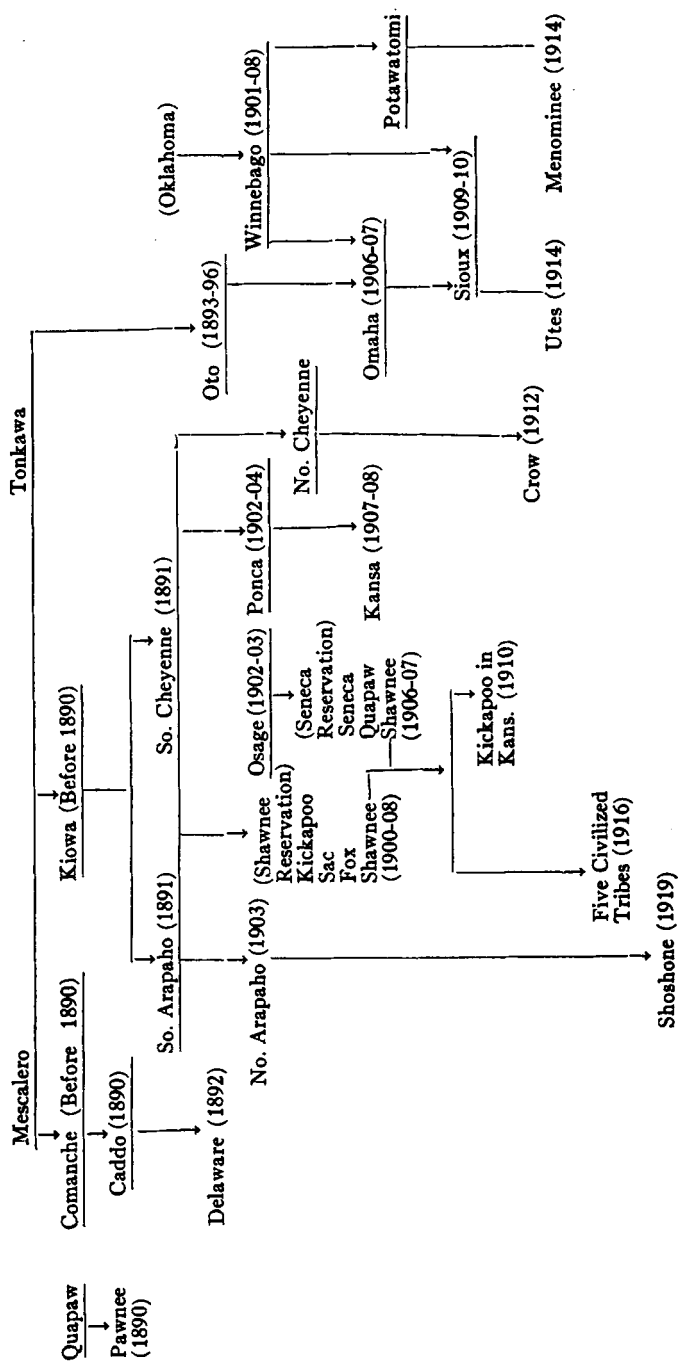
⁸ Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, pp. 361 ff.

⁹ Peyote, Hearing before a subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, pp. 63, 70, quoting James Mooney.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Information given by Richard Shunatona, Pawnee, Okla., and Charles Whitehorn, Red Rock, Okla.

DIFFUSION OF PEYOTE



reported as saying that "in 1890 the Caddo and Wichita were little acquainted with peyote, and only one man in the Arapaho knew anything about it," the same being true also of the Cheyenne.¹² But from this date on the spread was rapid. The Delaware learned the peyote ceremony from the Caddo in the years between 1890 and 1892,¹³ at the same time that the Quapaw passed their knowledge of it on to the Pawnee.¹⁴ By 1905 not only did most of the tribes on the reservations in Oklahoma have a group of peyote users, but the Northern Arapaho had begun to use it and a few years later the Winnebago and Omaha had learned the ceremony and transmitted it to the Sioux, who in their turn gave it to the Ute. A glance at the attached table and the map¹⁵ indicates that the Kiowa have been the main agents in disseminating the peyote cult, although the Winnebagos have been active and there is scarcely a tribe, except the most recent acquirers of the cult, which has not given the ceremony to some neighboring tribe. The connection with Mexican tribes has been completely lost, although the peyote plant still comes from that region, and the tribes now stationed in Oklahoma have become the center for diffusion of the cult through the North American tribes. How great the separation is from the Mexican tribes and how close the connection is between the Plains Tribes will come out more clearly in the discussion of the ceremonies used.

More important perhaps than the dates are the factors which have caused the recent spurt in the diffusion of peyote. In the four hundred years prior to 1890 that the Indians have been known to white men, and one can only guess at how many centuries before, peyote spread at most to only five or six tribes

¹² Peyote, Hearing before a subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, p. 71, quoting James Mooney.

¹³ Harrington, *Religion and Ceremonies of the Lenape*, p. 185.

¹⁴ Murie, *Pawnee Indian Societies*, p. 636.

¹⁵ The map shows (1) the number of reservations upon which peyote is used; (2) the percentage of Indians on each reservation using peyote (it should be noted that relative numbers of users from reservation to reservation are not shown, but that each reservation is used as an independent group-unit); (3) lines of diffusion. The data is based on reservations rather than on tribes because information was available for the former and not for the latter and because the diffusion of peyote is in part a reservation phenomenon.

north of the Rio Grande; in the thirty-four years since 1890 it has been carried to some thirty additional tribes. The segregation of Indians on reservations was perhaps the most important factor fostering diffusion. Reservation life broke up the competitive ranking of the tribes and realigned them as common participants in a new manner of living toward which they had little inclination. The breaking down of the old attitudes of unity of the tribe and of enmity toward other tribes was but part of a more complete cultural disorganization. The buffalo was gone; the wide stretches of free territory were gone; the social organization, slowly built up through generations to protect fundamental interests, no longer met crucial problems. Agricultural life and Christianity were the unfamiliar substitutes offered. Into this uncertain period of adjustment swept the Ghost Dance religion, engendered by the wish for the old security and distaste for the white man's civilization, and eagerly sought and accepted by one after another of the distraught Plains tribes. Fundamental in the philosophy of the Ghost Dance religion was the dictum of peace between the tribes—a philosophy the more readily accepted because of the common hardships of adjustment from a hunting to a sedentary life. The building up of intimate and friendly contacts was perhaps the most lasting effect of the Ghost Dance religion; its teaching of resignation was too far divorced from practical issues, its hope of relief too illusory to give lasting satisfaction. The dissemination of the peyote cult flowed easily along the newly opened channels of friendship. It came up from the south with the promise of great power; in its adaptability to new needs and a new stage of cultural life it was far superior to the tribal ceremonies, hampered as they were by age-old traditions; and it was Indian in origin, fitted to the Indian mode of thought.

Another factor which may be traced to reservation life is the provision of mechanical means of easy communication. Postal service and railway travel have increased contacts between tribes and made transportation of the peyote plant easy. The rapid diffusion of peyote, which grows only in a limited area, depended not only upon friendly relations but also upon easy means of transportation.

The exact lines of diffusion which the peyote cult followed are easy to account for. The far jump from the Arapaho and Cheyenne in Oklahoma to the Northern Arapaho and Cheyenne in Wyoming and Montana and the jump from the Sioux on the Yankton reservation to those on the Fort Totten reservation are due to intertribal visits of kinship groups. Proximity of tribes accounts for many cases. The spread throughout Oklahoma may be accounted for in this way. Here not only the plains tribes took over the cult but also tribes from other culture areas, as the Delaware. Other instances of the contacts of proximity are found in the Northern Cheyenne and the Crow, the Omaha and Winnebago, and the Potawatomi and Menominee. In addition to the contacts of kinship and proximity there are those resting upon friendship of long standing, as between the Sioux and the Ute. While there are instances of a peyote user from one tribe coming into another tribe and organizing the people (suggesting missionary effort) there are other cases in which visitors learned the ceremony from their hosts and carried it back to their own people. Marriage into the peyote family of another tribe has often led to conversion to the cult and its propagation.

While peyote seems to spread freely to the north there are apparently rather definite limits to its possible spread toward the west. The Indians in the states of Washington and Oregon are immersed in the Indian Shaker religion, a hybrid religion which in a sense parallels in development the peyote cult and stands in the nature of a competitor. It will no doubt prevent the spread of peyote toward the northwest. The Rocky Mountains act as a barrier to the tribes in Idaho and California. With one exception noted below, the tribes of the southwest have never been interested in peyote, probably because it did not fit into their seasonal division of ceremonies. The pueblo at Taos has thirty-three peyote users—a percentage of .4 for the Pueblo Reservation. It should be recalled that the southwest was also impregnable to the Ghost Dance religion. This brings the discussion to the question of why merely the Plains tribes should so eagerly adopt peyote—a question whose answer lies at least partially in the vision-giving power of the peyote.

MAP SHOWING USE OF PEYOTE IN THE UNITED STATES

Circles show location of Indian
reservations in western
United States. (1919)

○ No peyote used


◐ Less than 25% of Indians
on reservation use peyote

◑ 25-49% use peyote

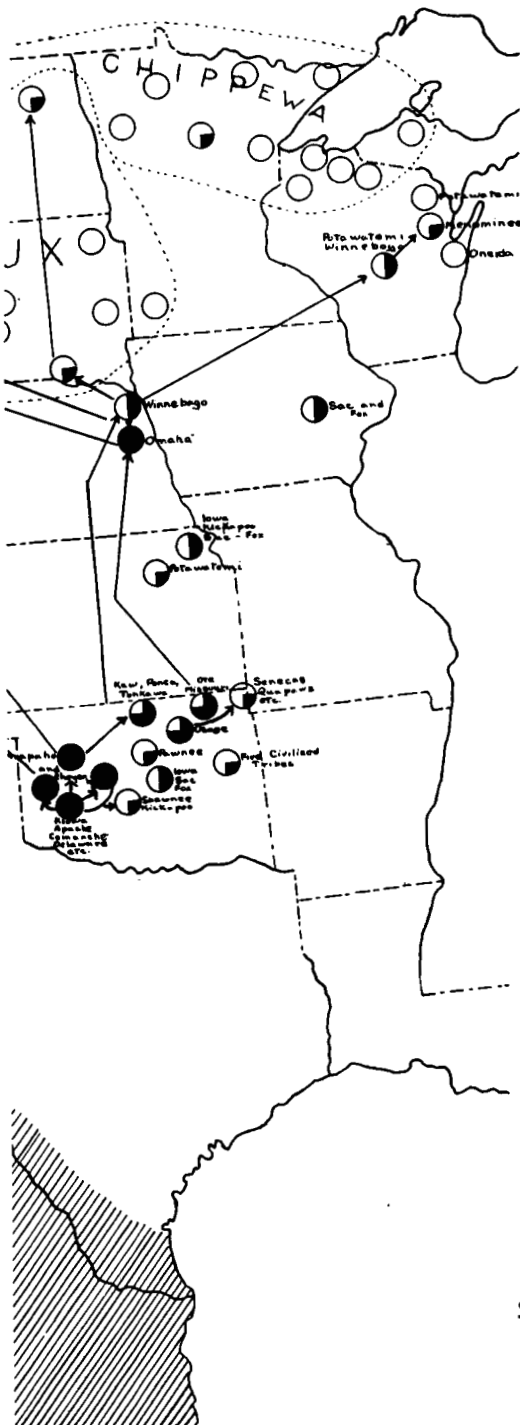
◒ 50-74% use peyote

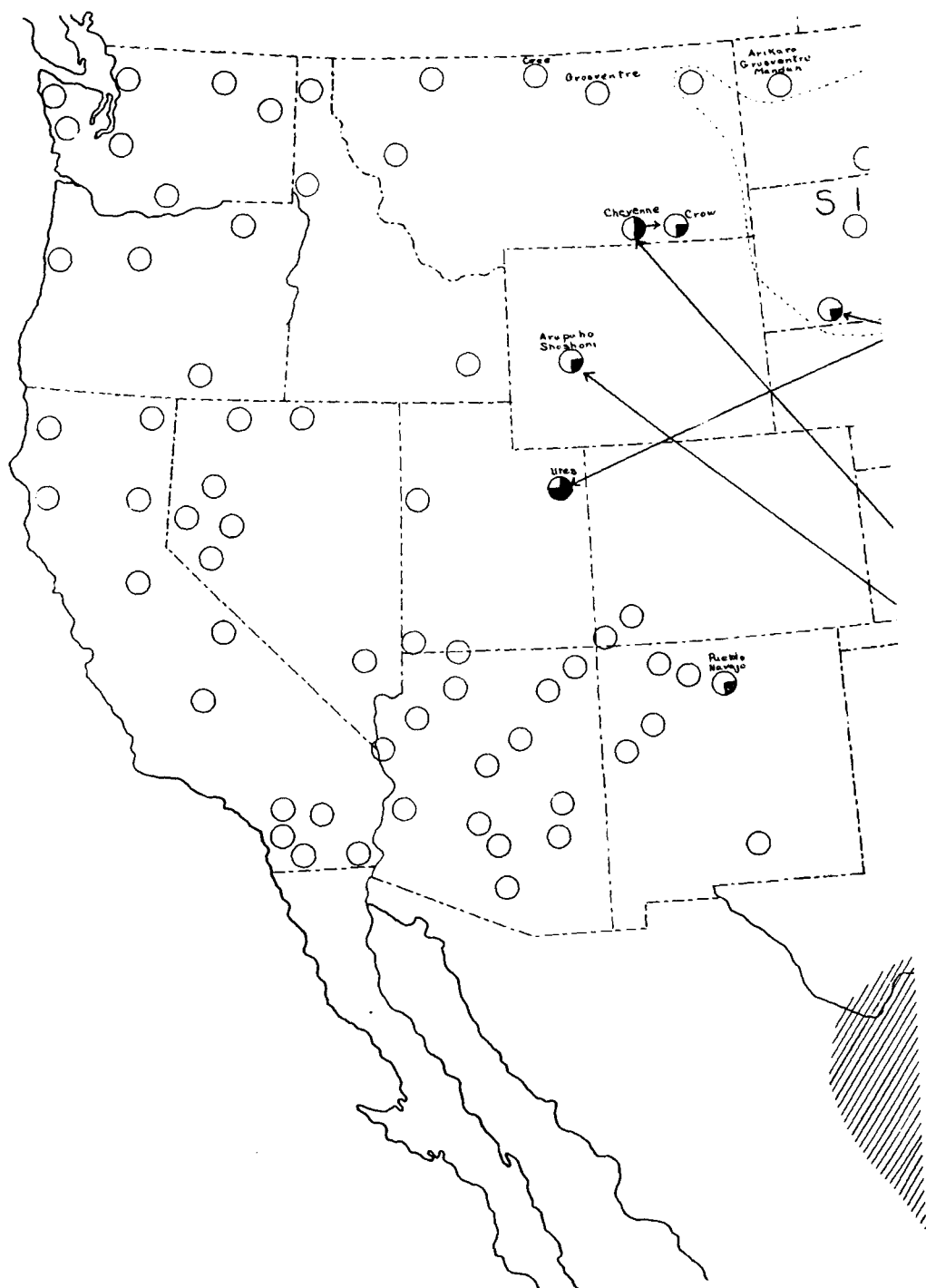
● 75-100% use peyote

→ Lines of diffusion.

 Territory where peyote
grows

This map is based on information
contained in Newberne and Burke,
"Hyle, an Abridged Compilation" and
other sources.





Visions, usually induced by fasting, have always had a place in the religion of North American Indians and are in no way confined to the plains area. But the Plains Indians made a distinctive use of visions. In other sections the vision was part of the puberty rite by which the youth gained his guardian spirit, but was rarely if ever sought upon other occasions. But on the plains the vision at puberty was but the first of many visions. Periods of mourning, desire for revenge, initiation into certain societies, the organization of a war party, called for visions of mature men. On the western plains the prevalence of visions has even contributed to the elimination of the shaman.¹⁶ Peyote did not have to win its way into a system of religion which was without visions. Rather it facilitated obtaining visions already sought. It was holy medicine given to the Indian that he might get into immediate touch with the supernatural without the long period of fasting.

Thus the underlying belief in the supernatural origin of visions is important among the factors contributing to the diffusion of peyote and in a general way defines the area of its probable spread. The period of its diffusion was determined by the possibility of easy means of communication and transportation plus the restless and almost despairing need for reorganization of religion to meet the needs of a new type of living. The cult has spread in lines which indicate contacts of a "primary" or intimate sort, often based on kinship or intermarriage, but not necessarily spatially close.

III

In speaking of the diffusion of a cult there is implied the spread not only of the material symbol but of the ritualistic complex as well. However, a comparison of the Mexican peyote ceremony with the typical Plains ceremony indicates a sharp break and raises questions as to the manner of diffusion.

The paucity of material available on the cult in Mexico makes it impossible to select a ceremony and call it typical for the Mexican tribes. The Tarahumare Indians, however, have ap-

¹⁶ See Benedict, *Vision in Plains Culture*. Conversation with Mr. Ralph Linton, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.

parently had their ceremony for many years; they are among the more northern tribes and hence may be considered to have the kind of ceremony most apt to spread north of the Rio Grande, and they have features in common with certain of the other Mexican tribes.¹⁷

The peyote ceremony of the Tarahumare¹⁸ is preluded by a ceremonial pilgrimage to the peyote country for the purpose of securing the plants. The chosen company before starting is purified with copal incense. Although several days are consumed in the journey to the peyote country the men eat nothing until they arrive, when they may eat only pinole. The first act upon arriving among the peyote is to erect a cross before which peyote are placed that they may tell where other peyote grow. Raw peyote plants are then eaten and further work is postponed until the following day, after the intoxication has worn off. Peyote are then gathered with a certain ritual and the company returns home, usually having spent several weeks or a month on the journey. Their return is hailed with songs and a sacrificial feast.

The peyote ceremony is held in connection with the other tribal dances, but not as an integral part of them. A special patio is cleared of rubbish and swept; logs are brought for the fire and arranged to lie in an east and west direction.¹⁹ Two or three women are appointed as assistants to the shaman who is to have charge of the ceremony; they grind the peyote on the metate before the ceremony, taking care not to lose any of the liquid or the water in which the metate is afterward washed. The dirty brown mixture which results is drunk at the dance.

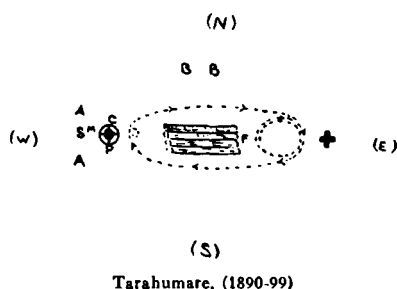
When evening comes, the shaman seats himself west of the fire with a male assistant on either side and the women assistants to the north of the fire. A cross is placed to the east of the fire. On a symbol of the world a peyote plant is placed and covered

¹⁷ The Huichol, to the south of the Tarahumares, use the same name for peyote and have a ceremony similar to the Tarahumares. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, 1, p. 357.

¹⁸ Based on Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*.

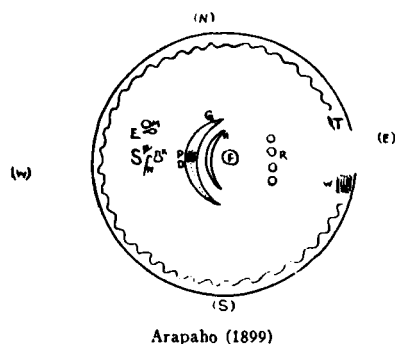
¹⁹ See attached sketch.

DIAGRAMS OF PEYOTE CEREMONIES



Held on level space in the open.

- F. Fire, logs in east and west direction.
- S. Shaman, leader.
- A. Male assistants.
- B. Female assistants.
- C. Hollow gourd over cross in earth (symbol of world).
- P. Sacred peyote on symbol of world, beneath gourd.
- M. Rasping stick, which rests on gourd.
- + Cross.
- Line of dancing by assistants.



- Held in tipi facing east.
- W. Firewood.
- T. Fire-tender with eagle feather.
- F. Fire.
- H. Crescent of ashes from fire.
- G. Crescent-shaped altar of earth.
- P. Sacred peyote on eight stems of sage.
- D. Head feather plume.
- ... Symbolic lines by which thoughts of worshippers reach the peyote.
- S. Leader.
- E. Man who drums for leader.
- M. Drum and rattle.
- N. Staff and eagle feather fan.
- K. Water brought in at midnight.
- R. Four dishes of food brought in at daybreak by wife of leader.
- ~~~~~
Worshippers (by implication, all men), sit around edge of tent.

The above sketches are based on written descriptions and hence are subject to some error in the matter of relative positions and distances. The Tarahumare diagram is based on Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, I, pp. 357-372. The Arapaho sketch is based on Kroeber, *The Arapaho*, pp. 398-410.

Diagram for the Iowa may be found in Skinner, *Iowa Societies*, p. 725, and for the Delaware in Harrington, *Religion and Ceremonies of the Lenape*, plate ix.

with a hollow gourd which is used by the shaman as a resonator for his rasping stick.

The order of the ceremony consists of singing by the shaman to the accompaniment of the rasping which continues through the night; offering of incense to the cross by assistants who kneel and cross themselves; dancing by the male assistants who wear white blankets and carry rattles of deer-hoofs (this dance follows a line contrary to the motion of the sun and occupies the space between the fire and the cross with a later extension to include the fire); dancing by the women assistants; drinking of the peyote by all who are in attendance. The only variation in the procedure comes at daybreak when the people gather near the cross for the healing service. This is accomplished not by the direct use of the peyote, which is, nevertheless, thought to have curative power, but by rasping against the person's head, the slight dust from the rasping being thought efficacious in producing health. After healing the people, the shaman rasps toward the rising sun to waft the peyote spirit home. The ceremony ends with this service and is followed by a feast.

The peyote dance is but a part of the ceremonial life of the Tarahumare. In other dances the open ground is also used, and the cross, white blankets, deer-hoof rattles, and symbolism of the east, are parts of the traditional dances. Apparently the only trace of modern innovation is found when the assistants kneel and cross themselves—the result of Catholic influence, according to Lumholtz.

In striking contrast to the Tarahumare ceremony is that which with slight variations prevails on the plains. The Arapaho ceremony²⁰ of about 1899 may be taken as typical of the pagan ceremony. This ceremony was derived from the Kiowa (for whose ceremony no complete description could be discovered) and was shared by the Cheyenne. It is then the ceremony from which many of the other tribes learned the ritual.

After preliminary preparation of the ground, a tipi is erected, facing the east.²¹ The wood for the fire is piled inside to the south

²⁰ Based on Kroeber, *The Arapaho*, p. 399 ff.

²¹ See attached sketch.

of the door. An altar in the shape of a crescent is constructed of earth around the fireplace in the center of the tent, with the horns toward the east. Sage is placed around the tipi for the men to sit on. In the course of the service there is used a drum made of skin stretched over an earthenware pot containing a little water, some ashes and three small pieces of pine-wood, and secured with the aid of seven glass marbles; a rattle made of a gourd containing small glass beads which give forth a swishing sound; an eagle wing-feather presented to the fire-tender when he is appointed; staff and eagle-feather fan held by the leader. The ceremony begins with the appointment of the fire-tender by the leader, who then conducts the company into the tipi. The first act of the leader is to take from a special purse or pouch a large peyote which he places on the middle of the crescent-shaped altar on top of eight short stems of sage placed to point to the cardinal directions and between. From the peyote a line is traced in the earth along the crescent, which marks the path of the worshippers' thoughts to the peyote. After this act the peyote, which has been soaked in water, is purified in cedar incense and eaten, in lots of four for each member. Sometimes the worshippers rub themselves with chewed sage before taking the peyote. The leader then sings four songs, using the rattle, and the man to his left drumming for him. Around the tipi the drum and rattle pass, each man singing four songs. There is no intermission until midnight when the woman present, who is usually the wife of the leader, goes out and returns with a jar of water which is placed before the leader who drinks and passes the jar on, each person being entitled to four swallows. Some ritual may accompany this part of the service, but its exact form apparently depends upon the leader. At dawn, the songs which have referred to the peyote, change in character and refer to the morning star. At sunrise the woman again leaves the tent, returning with four dishes of food which she places on the ground between the fire and the door. The singing is now at an end, the fire is allowed to die out, and the cover of the drum is loosened with certain symbolic acts with the marbles in order to ward off disease. After

eating, the men leave the tent and rest until noon when a meal is served.

The Arapaho ceremony may be compared, step by step, with that of the Tarahumare. The Arapaho have no ceremonial pilgrimage and there is apparently no ritual about obtaining the peyote. The ceremony is held in a tipi instead of in the open. The paraphernalia used consists of a drum, gourd rattle, staff, eagle-feather fan, pouch for the peyote, head-dresses of yellow-hammer or woodpecker feathers, and wrist-bands instead of the rasping stick, deer-hoof rattles and white blankets of the Tarahumare. There is no dancing. The songs are sung by each member, in groups of four, instead of by the shaman alone. The peyote is eaten whole instead of being ground into a drink (the Arapaho use the dried peyote top, the Tarahumare the entire fresh plant). The Arapaho have a midnight ceremony for drinking water. Both tribes have a ceremony at dawn, but the ritual is very different. Both tribes have one sacred peyote, but the placing of this peyote is different. The Arapaho have an elaborate altar which is not found among the Tarahumare. To sum up, the two ceremonies are alike in scarcely any particular, except that each centers about the eating of peyote and the veneration of the plant, one specimen of which is exhibited during the ceremony.

The elements of the Tarahumare ceremony which are in harmony with other tribal dances have been pointed out. The Arapaho ceremony in its turn is in harmony with the Arapaho tribal dances. The tipi facing east is the usual ceremonial site; reverence for the morning star is common to all the prairie tribes; the all night ceremony frequently occurs; purification with cedar incense occurs in other ceremonies, and the drum, rattle and other objects are usually found. Variations from the usual patterns occur in the manner of decorating and in the color designs found on some of the objects²²; the crescent shaped altar has no prototype in other ceremonies; and some of the most

²² According to Mr. Linton, the beadwork on Arapaho peyote objects differs from the tribal pattern, but closely resembles the tribal pattern of the Kiowa, from whom the Arapaho learned the ceremony. This Kiowa character of beadwork holds for the peyote objects of many tribes, even among the Central Algonkins.

sacred tribal symbols, such as the pipe, are not used in connection with the peyote ceremony. But in general the peyote ceremony of the Arapaho is typical of their culture.

No information has been discovered regarding the type of ceremony used by the tribes between the Tarahumare and the Arapaho. In the absence of such information it seems that all that can be said is that the earliest Plains borrowers learned of the value of peyote in giving visions perhaps with the implication of supernatural power and constructed about it a ceremony which borrowed largely from the tribal ceremonies for its various elements. Certainly the ceremony of the Tarahumare, foreign in all respects to the Plains culture, was not adopted.

The Arapaho may be taken as the pattern for the Plains tribes. More or less adequate descriptions are available for the ceremony among the Kiowa,²³ Delaware,²⁴ Iowa,²⁵ Pawnee,²⁶ and Winnebago.²⁷ All use a tipi, except the Winnebago, who use a house or the open.²⁸ All use a fire and the Delaware and Iowa use a crescent of earth,²⁹ the Pawnee an altar the shape of which is not mentioned (probably the crescent), and the Winnebago a horseshoe shaped altar (also probably the crescent). The description for the Kiowa is very incomplete and the altar is not mentioned. The Delaware and Iowa place the sacred peyote on the crescent, as do the Arapaho, while the Winnebago place two sacred peyote on a special mound of earth. A drum and rattle are used by all the tribes mentioned, and in addition for the Delaware, Iowa and Winnebago a staff and eagle-feather fan or ornament are mentioned. The general order of the service is observed by all, that is, prayer and perhaps a talk by the leader,

²³ Mooney, *Mescal Plant and Ceremony*.

²⁴ Harrington, *Religion and Ceremonies of the Lenape*, pp. 185-190.

²⁵ Skinner, *Iowa Societies*, pp. 725 ff.

²⁶ Murie, *Pawnee Indian Societies*, pp. 636-38.

²⁷ Radin, *Peyote Cult of the Winnebago*. Radin, *The Winnebago Tribe*, pp. 328-426.

²⁸ The ceremonial building of the Winnebago was a lodge, the tipi being used only on the hunt.

²⁹ The earth crescent is also mentioned for the following tribes in correspondence with reservation agents and Indian peyote users: Ponca and Oto.

songs in rotation, and eating of the peyote. The Winnebago confine the rotational singing to the leader and four assistants. A midnight ceremony is observed by the Kiowa, Iowa, Pawnee and Winnebago and the daylight service by the Kiowa, Iowa, Delaware, and Pawnee. The Delaware show perhaps the most complete case of borrowing. Of eastern origin, their native ceremonial lodge was the Big House, a rectangular structure of wood or bark. But when they borrowed the peyote cult from the Caddo they took it in its entirety and use the typical Plains tipi and the Plains type of peyote ceremony.

There are a number of minor variations, which fall into several types. First, are those due to adaptation to previous ideas of tribal dance ritual. Thus the Pawnee divide the tipi into the north and south halves as with their other dances. The Winnebago have added a mound similar to the one used in the buffalo dance, and a cross traced in the earth. The Delaware also use a mound near the door of the tipi representing the sun and a cross to the west of the crescent. There seems, however, to be no connection between the occurrence of these two added elements in the two tribes. Symbolic lines also differ from tribe to tribe and the symbolic meaning of various parts of the paraphernalia differs.

The second class of variations are those due to the introduction of Christianity. The ceremony described for the Arapaho for 1899 had no discernible elements of Christianity, although Kroeber says that "it contains many Christian ideas, but they are so incorporated that fundamentally the worship is not dependent on Christianity."³⁰ The ceremony as used by the Arapaho in 1912,³¹ while similar to the older ceremony in its main outline, has changed somewhat in details and greatly in its symbolic meaning. Thus four lines intersecting at one point are drawn before the erection of the tipi, dividing the ground space into eight sections and symbolizing a peyote. A flute and an otter-skin cap have been added to the paraphernalia. The fire "is supposed to represent light, just as God said, 'Let there be light'." "The

³⁰ Kroeber, *The Arapaho*, p. 398.

³¹ Description and quotations from Radin, *The Winnebago Tribe*, pp. 415-19.

reason for drinking water at midnight is because Christ was born at midnight and because of the good tidings that he brought to the earth, for water is one of the best things in life and Christ is the saviour of mankind." A little later, the leader leaves the tipi and blows the flute to the four directions, "to announce the birth of Christ to all the world." At daybreak the flute is again used, this time to represent the trumpet which is to be blown on the Day of Judgment, when Christ will appear in his crown, which is represented by the otter-skin cap. The leader represents the first created man, his woman assistant the New Jerusalem. The corn eaten in the early morning represents the feast to take place at the Day of Judgment and the fruit stands for the fruit of the tree of life; the meat is the message of Christ and those who eat it are saved.

Among the Winnebago,³² the mound, which Radin regards as originating in the mound of the buffalo dance, has become Mount Sinai; the staff, used in other tribal dances, is the shepherd's crook; the crossed lines have become the crucifix.

In other instances the entrance of Christianity into the ceremony has done more than change the symbolism. The Iowa and Winnebago both use the Bible as a sacred object, placing it near the sacred peyote, and include in the service Bible reading, sermons, confessionals and prayers as well as songs with a Christian flavor. In fact, the Iowa ceremony as reported by Skinner bears some resemblance to a revival meeting. After the initial eating of the peyote and a round of singing, while incense is burned on the fire, the leader reads the Bible and preaches and then calls upon the members to confess their sins and repent, in response to which the members rise and testify that they have given up such habits as drinking, smoking or chewing, ending each confession with the words, "And all this Jesus has done for me." There are then sermons from visiting leaders and the Bible is again read and the members urged to confess and repent. Indeed, so far has this imitating of the Christian Church gone, that in several places the peyote worshippers have organized and even

³² Radin, *Peyote Cult of the Winnebago*, p. 21.

incorporated, after the manner of Christian Churches; thus in Oklahoma the peyote users are organized into the Native American Church.

Many of the variations are due to the fragmentary way in which the ritual comes to a tribe, a little from one source, a little from another, with perhaps additions from an ingenious leader. Thus among the Pawnee,³³ two young men visited the Quapaw in 1890 and brought back to their own tribe some of the peyote which they attempted to use in a ceremony, although they knew little of the ritual. Later, a visiting Arapaho taught the Pawnee the ritual which his tribesmen used. A few years after this, a member while intoxicated with the drug, had revealed to him a new ritual and songs, Christian in character, since in his visions he saw and talked with Christ. Under the leadership of this man certain minor changes were made in the form of the rattle and the drum, but in general the tipi arrangement and the order of ceremony of the Arapaho were retained. The Winnebago ceremony³⁴ also represents a series of influences. John Rave visited among the peyote users of Oklahoma, ate the peyote and was impressed with its curative power as well as the visions. Upon his return he induced his wife and near friends to use peyote for medicinal purposes. Gradually a ceremony only partially based on the Oklahoma type was put into use, but without any Christian elements. The use of the Bible and Christianized peyote songs and the reinterpretation of old customs as Christian symbols were introduced by Albert Hensley, who brought the new ideas from Oklahoma. Instead of a direct line of influence from tribe to tribe the picture presented is that of a network of lines, crossing and meeting again and again, carrying the same general ideas but permitting much individual variation in the matter of details.

The study of the peyote ceremonies as used in Mexico and on the plains indicates perhaps one limitation to the diffusion of a ritualistic complex. In Mexico the peyote ceremony is part of a larger culture complex. The peyote myth is coordinated

³³ Murie, *Pawnee Indian Societies*, pp. 636-38.

³⁴ Radin, *Peyote Cult of the Winnebago*, pp. 8-10.

with other tribal myths and the ceremony is one of a series,³⁵ and upon its performance rests the success of the tribe in many undertakings having to do with procuring food. The Plains culture complex was radically different from that of Mexico and it was apparently not possible for one ceremony from the Mexican complex to be lifted in its entirety over into the Plains culture. Hence when the peyote plant reached the Plains tribes, it came without the ceremonial ritual and another ritual was developed about it, based on the native Plains culture complex but not an integral part of it. The peyote ceremony has even stood somewhat in opposition to the native culture, especially after Christian elements were added. It is much more in a state of flux than the older ceremonies and changes in ritual and symbolism easily occur.

From the new peyote center which developed in Oklahoma, a certain complex of ritualistic elements has gone forth and been adopted even by tribes not of plains culture. These associated elements are the selection of night as the time for the ceremony, the use of the tipi, the crescent shaped altar of earth, the exhibition of a sacred peyote, singing songs in rotation to the drum and rattle, usually in groups of four songs, eating the peyote, the midnight water-drinking ceremony, the daily songs followed by light food and the feast later in the day. Certain minor features such as the method of preparing the peyote, use of symbolic lines, sacred mounds, and extra paraphernalia and the exact number of officials, vary from tribe to tribe, from leader to leader.

The use of the Bible and the Christian interpretation of ancient symbols represents a second accretion, and usually entails no serious change in the ritual. The prayers once made to the Indian spirits are redirected to the Christian God. The Bible is

³⁵ This integration is shown very clearly for the Huichol Indians. Deer and corn are their principal food stuffs and water is of extreme importance for their agriculture. In their myths the first peyote sprang from the tracks of a deer, which afterwards became a big peyote plant; the corn in turn originated from the peyote. Each year the peyote must be secured for a ceremony, which can occur only after a certain number of deer have been killed and the fields cleared and made ready for the harvest of the coming year. If the peyote were not brought the god of fire would be offended and there would be no rain for the corn, nor would they be able to catch deer. Lumholtz, *Symbolism of the Huichol Indians*, pp. 17-18, 22-23.

added and Bible reading introduced. The talks become sermons. The songs are patterned after Christian hymns.

The peyote cult as it now exists in many of the Plains tribes represents the union of three elements—the symbolism of peyote as found in Mexico, the adaptation of the Plains ritualistic complex, and the Christian interpretation.

IV

The story of peyote is not complete without a brief statement of the effect, psychological rather than physical, which peyote has on the Indian. The vision-giving power of peyote has already been mentioned but may be discussed with more detail. Lumholtz does not emphasize the visions in his accounts of the Tarahumare and Huichol, probably because these tribes obtain the fresh peyote which has a more stimulating effect than the dried peyote used by the more northern tribes and which has therefore caused the dance to be the central feature of the ceremony rather than the quiet meditation and visions. But wherever the dried peyote is used, the vision predominates.

Sahagun, who wrote of the Aztec in the sixteenth century, says that "black mushrooms" (dried peyote) were eaten at the feasts, after which some danced, some sang, and others sank into meditation.

"Some had visions that they were dying and shed tears; others imagined that some wild beast was devouring them; others that they were capturing prisoners in warfare; others that they were rich; others that they had many slaves. . . . After the intoxication of the mushrooms had passed off they conversed with one another about the visions which they had seen."³⁶

All over the plains where the dried peyote is used, the Indians delight in the peyote visions and respond to their thrill, even when the dreams are terrifying in character. The visions reported from tribe to tribe seem to imply that a certain amount of unconscious control may be exerted over the type of vision, dependent upon the picture which the Indian expects to see. The

³⁶ Quoted by Safford, *Narcotic Plants and Stimulants of the Ancient Americans*, pp. 404-05.

following description is of the more grotesque, uncontrolled type of vision which came to a man on the first occasion upon which he ate peyote.

"After I had taken twelve beans of peyote I saw a mountain with roads leading to the top and people dressed in white going up these roads. I got very dizzy, and I began to see all kinds of colors, and arrows began to fly all around me. . . . I began to hear voices, just like they were all over the ceiling, and I looked around in the other room and thought I heard women singing in there; but the women were not allowed to sing in the meetings usually, and so this was kind of strange. After eating thirty-six of these peyote I got just like drunk. . . . I began to see a big bunch of snakes crawling all around in front of me, and it was a feeling like as if I was cold came over me. The treasurer of the Sacred Peyote Society was sitting near me, and I asked him if he heard young kittens. It sounded as if they were right close to me; and then I sat still for a long time and I saw a big black cat coming toward me, and I felt him just like a tiger walking up on my legs toward me; and when I felt his claws I jumped back and kind of made a sound as if I was afraid."³⁷

But seasoned peyote eaters who belong to the organized group and know how to control their visions have no such terrifying experiences. Gilmore relates one vision seen by an Omaha Indian which he seemingly correctly interprets as the result of expectant imagination and recent experience.

"He was an ordinary reservation Indian, who had had some schooling and had been in Washington and other eastern cities. On this occasion the opening reading from the Bible had been a story of the Hebrew prophet taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. The Indian fell into a trancelike state and afterwards described his vision. He related that Jesus had come for him in an automobile and had taken him up to heaven, where he had seen God in His glory in a splendid city; and with God he had seen many of the great men of all time, more than he could remember."³⁸

In understanding the establishment of this control over the visions which comes with constant use of the peyote, the experience of Rave³⁹ who introduced peyote to the Winnebago is significant. The first time he ate peyote he was frightened at the sensations produced; he felt as though "a live thing" had entered

³⁷ Daiker, *Liquor and Peyote a Menace to the Indian*, pp. 66-67, quoting affidavit from a peyote user.

³⁸ Gilmore, *Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region*, pp. 105-06.

³⁹ Radin, *The Winnebago Tribe*, pp. 390-91.

his body. He thought he had killed himself and would die before morning. The following night he again ate peyote and saw a big snake which threatened to swallow him. This snake had arms, legs and a long tail, spiked like a spear. He also saw a man with horns and claws, carrying a spear. He tried to dodge the spear, fearing death. At last he appealed to the peyote—"Help me, O medicine, help me! It is you who are doing this and you are holy!" His suffering at once stopped. The following night he again ate peyote and saw a vision of God, to whom he prayed and appealed for knowledge of the peyote religion. Following this he saw the morning star, his home and children.

In the course of the repeated eating and no doubt some instruction from his companions (although he does not mention this) the peyote became defined for Rave. Instead of an unknown power which dominated him he came to think of it as a "holy medicine"—a type of thing with which he had had past experience. The instant he accepted the peyote as holy medicine and prayed to it as he had been accustomed to pray to other forms of tribal medicine, his fear left him and his visions changed from those of fear to those associated with familiar medicines. This process which seemed like the influence of supernatural power to Rave consisted in his identifying the peyote with a familiar phenomenon toward which he knew how to act and from which he expected a certain response, which he at once received in the feeling of peace and self-confidence which came to him. The members of the peyote societies customarily see God, Jesus, or Heaven with perhaps some scenes from their past misdeeds. The terrifying visions of the novices are interpreted as the result of an unrepentant spirit, acceptance of the peyote as holy being in the nature of a conversion (reorganization of attitudes toward it) which carries with it pleasant visions.

Due to the vividness with which the peyote vision portrays things and the ease with which Christian and pagan elements can be combined in it, peyote is regarded as the means of interpreting the Bible. It has been identified with the Holy Ghost and thus becomes one of the Trinity and through it the Bible becomes

clear to the Indian, that is, through the visions the Biblical teachings are applied to the Indians' individual problems.

The curative power of the peyote has also made a strong appeal to the Indian. According to Radin the curative power was the primary appeal in the dissemination of the cult. Speaking of the Winnebago, he says "The first and foremost virtue predicated by Rave for the peyote was its curative power. He gives a number of instances in which hopeless venereal diseases and consumption were cured by its use; and this to the present day is the first thing one hears about. In the early days of the peyote cult it appears that Rave relied principally for new converts upon the knowledge of this great curative virtue of the peyote. The main point apparently was to induce people to try it, and I hardly believe that any amount of preaching of its direct effects, such as the hyper-stimulation induced, the glorious visions, and the feeling of relaxation following, would ever have induced prominent members of the medicine bands to do so. For that reason, it is highly significant that all the older members of the peyote speak of the diseases of which it cured them. Along this line lay unquestionably its appeal for the first converts."⁴⁰

While the foregoing discussion brings together some of the scattered material on the peyote cult, it serves also to indicate the lack of information on many aspects of the study. Radin⁴¹ has suggested the desirability of collecting accounts of peyote visions to determine whether they tend to conform to certain types among the different tribes. A collection of peyote songs would be of similar value and might also be a good index of the influence of Christianity, since in some cases the peyote songs are based on Christian hymns. Some of the Plains tribes have peyote myths; a study of their origin and diffusion would be significant. Accounts of the peyote ceremony are available for only a few tribes; not until the ritual of many more tribes is made known can the complete story be told of the diffusion of peyote. Accounts of the ritual are all the more important since the adoption of peyote by

⁴⁰ Radin, *Peyote Cult of the Winnebago*, p. 12.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

the Central Algonkin tribes, since there is here an opportunity for further modification of the ritual to conform to the Eastern Woodland culture complex.

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