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Peyote and Peyotism

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PEYOTE AND PEYOTISM

Brian P. Akers, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1986

The purpose of this study is to provide a general comparative discussion of the native use of peyote, past and present.

Historic sources and ethnographic accounts are reviewed in light of relevant botanical, pharmacological, and ethnological considerations.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was made possible through the kind assistance of the professors on my thesis committee: Dr. Robert F. Maher; Dr. William Garland; and especially Dr. Robert Jack Smith, who has repeatedly pulled such strings as to substantially aid my studies in the WMU Anthropology Department. For whatever merit this work may have, I gratefully commend it into the hands of these distinguished gentlemen, and the department as a whole.

Brian P. Akers
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scientific interest in peyote has not subsided after more than a century of steady inquiry. The excessive public concern of the late 1960s "psychedelic drug controversy," on the other hand, seems to have largely disappeared, perhaps in the face of the unfortunate spread in society of the abuse of various addictive illicit drugs. Peyote appears not to play much of a part in the drug abuse problems of contemporary Western society, that is, it is not chic. In addition, the right of Native Americans to the dignified religious use of this hallucinogenic cactus is generally no longer questioned from outside. Along with advances in our scientific knowledge, this relaxed societal attitude toward peyotism is beginning to make a fresh view of this phenomenon possible.

Peyote has been the object not only of public and scientific interest, but confusion and disagreement as well. Much of this has no doubt reflected historic factors such as the northward spread of peyotism around the turn of the century, the discovery of LSD and similar drugs and subsequent clinical research on them in the 1950s, and the "counter-cultural" usage of peyote and LSD in the 1960s. What is our current understanding of peyotism and how have we arrived at it? Amidst the accumulated profusion of undemonstrated claims, what facts can be sorted out?
To answer these questions, we shall examine peyote, first the cactus itself, then the history of Westerners' slowly but steadily evolving awareness of it, from early Spanish reports in Mexico to the modern era of scientific investigation. We shall then examine the archaeological roots of peyotism and proceed therefrom to the ethnographic context of Mexican peyotism. Finally, we shall recount the historically recent and significant spread of peyotism through the United States and its cultural importance here.

In Western societies, religion is generally a matter of utmost sobriety, and the effects of hallucinogenic drugs would necessarily seem to preclude any possibilities which might be termed religious. Perhaps for this reason, claims to mystical experience or noesis in connection with LSD-like drugs (e.g., Huxley 1954: Masters and Houston 1966; Watts 1962) often provoke skeptical reactions from some corners (e.g., Zaehner 1974). Native hallucinogen cultism, such as peyotism, seems to turn Western values upside-down; it presents us with a collapse of any cultural dichotomy between spontaneous and drug-induced religious experience. For in such cases, the spontaneous, model experience is itself drug-facilitated.

Anthropologists are in a unique position to shed light on remaining scientific disagreements about hallucinogenic drugs (e.g. therapeutic utility and indications, psychosis-mimicking versus mind-manifesting models of activity), for they can present a socially integrated context for the usage of such drugs which, relative to culture, is naturally occurring. But apart from the greater importance of the cross-cultural perspective, peyotism is
quite fascinating from a standpoint of pure inquiry, as a feature of native North American culture, most notably religious life. It is quite unlike anything in our culture, and a better understanding of it should contribute to a better general understanding of native culture. Toward such understanding, this paper will attempt to provide a broad and informative view of peyotism.
CHAPTER II

PEYOTE, ITS HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The peyote cactus, Lophophora williamsii, is perhaps the foremost representative of the so-called New World Narcotic Complex. It was one of the first native hallucinogens encountered by the Spaniards during the Conquest of Mexico and was in widespread use throughout Mexico (Furst 1976:109-110). As a sacramental drug, this plant now lies at the heart of the Native American Church, the "peyote religion" which links past with present and native cultural forms with white. It is also probably the first native hallucinogen to come under close scientific scrutiny, and to date the most intensively studied. The extensive interdisciplinary literature on peyote taken together probably outweighs that on all other native mind-altering drugs combined.

As a focus of both scientific and public interest, peyote has been the object of considerable confusion and heated debate. Mescaline, peyote's active ingredient, is said to have been misnamed (Furst 1976:112); peyote has been confused with both the mescal bean (Sophora secundiflora) and the distilled liquor mezcal; other cacti have been called peyote in some references. Many have challenged the right of the Indians to their use of this cactus. And while the botany of peyote seems to be resolved since the work of Bravo in 1967 and Anderson in 1969 (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974:353), clinical debates...
over the properties of LSD-like drugs must inevitably still hold for peyote as well.

A Botanical Overview

Peyote is one of the Cactaceae, a family of about two thousand species mostly native to the New World. In terms of hallucinogenic activity, there is only one species, Lophophora williamsii, which is found in the rocky desert regions of the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and northern and central parts of the Mexican Plateau. In Queretaro, however, another species of Lophophora occurs in an exclusive, locally limited distribution. This species, L. diffusa, closely resembles williamsii in habitat and morphology but lacks the characteristic hallucinogenic quality. Nevertheless, a great deal of the confusion surrounding early peyote research can be resolved in light of this finding (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974).

Taxonomy

Although peyote and its native usage were discovered as early as the sixteenth century, scientific research on the plant did not begin until the nineteenth century. Echinocactus williamsii was an early binomial for peyote used by the European botanists Charles LeMaire (Slotkin 1955:208, 226) and Prince Salm-Dyck as early as 1839; the first illustration of peyote was published in 1847 (Anderson 1980:135). In 1886, Theodore Rumpler reclassified peyote as Anhalonium williamsii. Shortly thereafter, peyote's botanical status was confused even further when a supposed new species, called
A. lewini, was described on erroneous grounds by Paul E. Hennings of the Royal Botanical Museum. Represented by a shipment of dried "muscale buttons" (an early transcription of mescal buttons), this supposed new species was investigated in 1887 by the German pharmacologist Louis Lewin. His studies made A. lewini a name frequently used in chemical and pharmacological literature on peyote. After further reclassifications as a Mammilaria (in 1891) and an Ariocarpus (in 1894), peyote was finally and decisively classified all by itself into a new genus Lophophora by the American botanist John Coulter in 1894 (Anderson 1980:137).

Nomenclature and Etymology, Native and White

Peyote is a Hispanicized rendition of the Nahuatl word peyotl (or peiotl) which, as we learn from early Spanish accounts, the Aztecs used in the Conquest era. This name is generally thought to mean "silk cocoon" or "caterpillar's silk," and evidently refers to a distinctive tuft of white, woolly flocculence which crowns the apex of the plant (Anderson 1980:139). In native West Mexico, peyote is called hikuri or hikuli by such groups as the Huichol and Tarahumara, amongst whom it is still used in more or less aboriginal fashion. Many Indian tribes north of the Mexican border, which use the cactus in Native American Church context, also have common names for peyote in their own languages, which are used in addition to the widely accepted Aztec-derived term. Anderson (1980:140) gives a partial list of these names.
Multiple References to Peyote

It must be noted that the term peyote has been used to refer not only specifically to *Lophophora*, but more generally to a wide variety of plants on account of (a) a similar pharmacological effect and utility, or (b) a superficial resemblance, or (c) a comparable silk-like or hair-covered appearance. As early as the sixteenth century the Spanish botanist Hernandez mentioned two types of peyote, "peyote Zacatecensi" (peyote of the Zacatecs) and "peyote Xochimilcensi" (peyote of the Xochimilca, or highest grade of shamans) (Slotkin 1955:203). The former was *Lophophora*; the latter is thought to refer to *Calalio cordifolia* of the Compositae (sunflowers), which was also used medicinally and has "velvety tubers" (Anderson 1980:142). Other species of this family (genus *Senecio*) have been called by such names as "peyote del Valle de Mexico" and "peyote de Tepic." Slotkin (1955:203) lists some of these other peyotes.

A number of these peyotes (or peyotillos) also are Mexican cacti, of various genera. Anderson (1980:141) lists some of these. Many have been found to contain alkaloids. Trace amounts of mescaline have been detected in at least one, *Pelecyphora aselliformis* (Anderson 1980:122), but there is little evidence that any could be considered hallucinogenic (Bruhn and Bruhn 1973:248-249). Nevertheless, usage of a number of these false peyotes has been reported in a native medicinal context. For example, the Tarahumara use a cactus they call *hikuli sunami* (*Ariocarpus fissuratus*), claiming it to be more powerful than peyote (Schultes 1970:591-592). The Huichol, on
the other hand, carefully avoid a related species, *tsuwiri* (A. retusus). According to their tradition, this cactus is capable of deception and sorcery and is likely to be mistaken for peyote and eaten accidentally by those who have not fully submitted to proper ritual purification (Furst 1971). Another type, *hikuli walula saeliami* (hikuli of greatest authority) is said to be among the most powerful hallucinogenic cacti, but has not yet been botanically identified (Schultes 1976:124-125). La Barre (1974:132) has expressed the opinion that this cactus, first described by Lumholtz in 1902, is probably "an occasional polycephalous specimen of L. williamsii."

Early Non-Indian Names for Peyote

As white awareness of peyote grew in the nineteenth century, a number of English names came to be applied to it, such as "whiskey root" in the 1860 edition of Bartlett's Dictionary of Americanisms, "dry whisky" by Havard in 1885, and "white mule" by Lumholtz in 1902 (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974:354). The best known of these early names is mescal button or simply mescal, button in this case referring to the dried irregularly discoidal tops of the cactus. Unfortunately, this name has also caused peyote to be confused with mezcal (or mescal), a distilled liquor made from Agave americana (the maguey or century plant) on the one hand, and with the seeds of Sophora secundiflora, the so-called mescal bean, on the other. These seeds contain a toxic alkaloid, cytisine, and have historically been
utilized ritually by a number of native groups of northern Mexico and the southern plains of the United States.

The term mescalism thus refers to the usage of these seeds, although Troike (1962:961) has argued persuasively for the usage of the less ambiguous term sophorism in this reference. Nonetheless, mescal became a term widely used for peyote by missionaries, reservation agency and government sources by the end of the nineteenth century. In some references, peyote is characterized as a bean and called mescal bean. In a U.S. Census Office report dated 1894, peyote is described as a bean, called by the (Comanche) Indians wo-qui or wo-co-wist. When dry, this bean, which is the fruit of a certain species of cactus, is hard and about the color of bright tobacco and not unlike it in taste. (Slotkin 1955:218)

(Anderson [1980:140] gives wohoki or wokowi as the Comanche word for peyote.) In the same breath, the Census Office report states that this "bean" must not be confused with a "fruit" the Indians obtain from Mexico, "called by the white people mescal" and which "many of the Comanches and (Kiowa) Apaches have become addicted to" (Slotkin 1955:213). Depending upon one's reading of this garbled report, peyote is evidently not to be confused with itself! These early reports tended to confuse facts and often ended in recommendations of governmental prohibition of peyote. The term mescal, however, achieved a broader usage and made its way into early scientific literature on peyote. It was a "mescal rite" which Mooney first described among the Kiowa in 1892; Havelock Ellis wrote about "mescal, a new artificial paradise" in 1898 (Anderson 1980); and when peyote's
active hallucinogenic ingredient was first isolated, it was likewise named mescalin (or mescaline).

**Peyote in the Conquest and Early Historic Era**

The first European descriptions of peyote came from sixteenth century Spanish accounts of the Indians of New Spain. Apparently, the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagun was the first to write about the native use of this cactus. In his *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva Espana* (dated 1585) he states:

(The Teochichimecas) also possessed great knowledge of herbs and roots, and knew their properties and virtues: it was they who discovered and first used the root they call peyotl, and those who ate it and took it, made it serve in place of wine, and in place of what are called nanacatl (mushrooms). (Wasson and Wasson 1957:225)

Later in the same text, Sahagun writes that this peyotl is white and grows in the northern part (of Mexico). Those who eat or drink it see frightening or ridiculous visions; this intoxication lasts two or three days and then disappears. It is like a food to the Teochichimecas, which supports them and gives them courage to fight, and they have neither fear, nor hunger, nor thirst, and they say that it protects them from every danger. (Anderson 1980:3)

Another sixteenth century reference to peyote occurs in *De Historia Plantarum Novae Hispaniae* written by Francisco Hernandez and dated ca. 1570-75. As already noted, Hernandez spoke of two types of peyote, only one of which referred to *Lophophora*. His report describes peyote as a

root . . . of medium size, sending forth no branches or leaves above ground, but with a certain wooliness adhering
to it, on which account I could not make a proper drawing. They say it is harmful to both men and women. It appears to be of a sweet taste and moderately hot. Ground up and applied to painful joints it is said to give relief. Wonderful properties are attributed to this root (if any faith can be given to what is commonly said among them on this point). It causes those eating it to be able to foresee and predict things: for instance, as whether on the following day an enemy will make an attack upon them? or whether they will continue to be in favorable circumstances? who has stolen their household goods or anything else? And other things of like nature which the Chichimecas try to know by means of medication. (Anderson 1980:4)

Another early account of peyote, published in 1591, is by a physician, Juan de Cardenas, in a work titled Problemas y Secretos Maravillosos de las Indias. Cardenas contributes a general discussion of such native drug-plants as peyote, poymate (Quararibea funebris), hololisque (seeds of Rivea corymbosa) and piciete (tobacco). He carefully distinguishes their inherent pharmacological activity from the "witchcrafts" and other native uses to which they are put (Anderson 1980:4-6).

The sixteenth century accounts of peyote, which came primarily from learned men, seem fairly informative and not too inaccurate in retrospect. Later research would confirm the early descriptions of peyote's effects and cultural utilizations, in divination and warfare, religion and medicine. It is notable, however, that one of our earliest comprehensive sources on Aztec medicine, The Badianus Manuscript (An Aztec Herbal of 1552) makes no mention of peyote, nor nanacatl. (Wasson and Wasson [1957:232] call this omission a "deafening silence.") Evidently, the Spaniards reacted to the native usage of these unfamiliar drugs with a curiosity mixed with apprehension of the unknown. As the Spanish Catholic clergy became
established in Mexico, apprehension gave way to religious outrage, and the use of peyote and other hallucinogens became the target of zealous opposition in a sort of witchhunt. The Spaniards equated the Indians' native practices with devil-worship and sought to uproot and replace them with Christianity. In their determination, they destroyed many early records of Aztec culture. The use of hallucinogens was thought to represent direct communion with the devil, and users were, therefore, persecuted with special fervor. Thus, many seventeenth century references to peyote take the form of righteous condemnations by the clergy.

One such source, Camino del Cielo, written by a Father Nicolas de Leon and published in 1611, suggests that the Spaniards' objections were motivated not just by religion, but as well by superstitions of native European provenience (e.g., belief in a malign supernatural, witches, vampires, etc.):

Dost thou know certain words with which to conjure for success in hunting or to bring rain? Dost thou suck the blood of others, or dost thou wander about at night, calling upon the demon to help thee? Has thou drunk peyotl, or hast thou given it to others to drink, in order to find out secrets, or to discover where stolen or lost articles were? Dost thou know how to speak to vipers in such words that they obey thee? (Anderson 1980:6-7)

Psychologizing, it might be said that the Spaniards projected their own superstitious beliefs and fears onto the Indians, who then became an ideal container for them.

Spanish opposition to the use of peyote in Mexico represented an early wave of white anti-peyotism, and foreshadowed later developments. This wave persisted until almost the end of the nineteenth
century and the advent of scientific inquiry into peyote. Eighteenth century sources show that the Spaniards continued to regard peyotism as a heinous crime. A confessional written by a Father Bartholome Garcia in 1760 poses the following questions to the penitent: "Have you killed anyone? How many have you killed? Have you eaten the flesh of man? Have you eaten peyote?" (Anderson 1980:7). Another source in which Ortega describes a peyote fiesta among the Cora in Nayarit in 1754 refers to peyote as a "diabolical root (raíz diabolica)" (La Barre 1974:36).

The Spanish Inquisition, which came to Mexico in 1571, officially condemned and prohibited peyote in 1620, however, the Church had already relinquished jurisdiction over the Indians by 1575. This suggests an early usage of peyote by non-Indians (Slotkin 1955:208). Nor should this be surprising in light of the general impact of native culture upon the Spanish in Mexico. Evidence of this usage is found in a case recorded in 1632 by Perea in which a Spanish soldier admits having prescribed peyote for a broken arm, and a mulatto farmer recounts the recovery of some missing items through divination with peyote. This occurred in what is now New Mexico, near Santa Fe, showing an early presence of peyotism north of the Rio Grande (Slotkin 1955:213-214). Other early sources (e.g., Velasco in 1776) place peyotism in Texas as well (La Barre 1974:110).

Despite the intensity of Spanish opposition, peyotism has survived and evolved into the present day among many Indian groups of western Mexico. This survival attests to its importance in native Mexican culture. In some cases, peyotism has been affected by a
heavy infusion of Catholic elements. In other cases (e.g., the Huichol), there appears very little exogenous influence, a fortunate circumstance for ethnographic posterity.

An Emerging Nineteenth Century Awareness of Peyote

The early historic and post-Conquest sources on peyote did not receive much attention in their day, and peyote did not really begin to emerge into contemporary awareness until the nineteenth century when its use north of Mexico was beginning to spread. As we have seen, the issue of peyote's botany was first addressed in Europe at this time. An early awareness of peyote is also evidenced in some nineteenth century medical circles. It was listed in several Mexican medical sources, such as the 1846 edition of Farmacopea Mexicana (but not subsequent editions) and Oliva in 1854 (Slotkin 1955:208, 225).

Peyote also attracted early medical experimental interest in the United States. In 1889, Dr. S. F. Landry recommended Anhalonium as a cardiac and respiratory tonic (Anderson 1980:93-94). Parke-Davis, who pioneered pharmacological research on peyote, made "Tincture of Anhalonium lewinii" available the same year, listing it in their catalog dated February 25 (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974:363). In 1896, Dr. D. A. Richardson reported the successful use of Anhalonium in the treatment of nervous pain and headache and suggested it might have a future as a morphine substitute (Anderson 1980:94). Drs. D. W. Prentiss and Francis P. Morgan described in detail their research on peyote in 1895 and 1896. They noted a variety of
therapeutic indications, including potential use "as a cerebral stimulant in the treatment of depressed conditions of the mind, such as melancholia, hypochondriasis, and in some cases of neurasthenia" (Anderson 1980:95). Despite this early research interest, medical use of peyote did not become very widely accepted in this period. Although *Anhalonium lewinii* was included for several years in the *United States Dispensatory*, it was no longer listed after 1920 (Anderson 1980:96).

There is also some evidence that peyote may have enjoyed a limited usage by whites in this era as an intoxicant in a nonmedical context. Lumholtz in 1902 recorded that the Texas Rangers called peyote "white mule" and, according to his informant Major J. B. Pond of New York, used it during the Civil War to become intoxicated when taken prisoner and deprived of alcohol (Slotkin 1955:215). As previously noted, *Bartlett's Dictionary of Americanisms* described peyote in 1860 as "whiskey root" (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974:354). A similar designation, "dry whisky," is applied to peyote in at least two other contemporaneous references: Havard in 1885 and Coulter in 1891 (Slotkin 1955:204, 219). Not only are these terminologies novel, but peyote's use (or misuse) as a purely secular intoxicant may have been the cultural innovation of the non-Indian as well.

Ritual usage of peyote was already spreading rapidly on the Indian reservations of the southern plains before the turn of the century, especially in Oklahoma. Early reports from government agencies represent another source through which an awareness of peyote diffused into white culture. Unfortunately, these reports
generated and perpetuated much misinformation about the supposed injuriousness of peyote. As previously noted, these official reports were more concerned with policy determination than information, and in fact marked the beginning of a second historical wave of white anti-peyotism. This wave came to pose a serious threat to Indian religious freedom and eventually led to the formation of an incorporated Native American Church, in which Indian peyotism finally found a legal defense.

Slotkin has explained the basis of this wave of opposition on dual grounds. First, as an element of native culture, peyote conflicted with the government policies of forced acculturation and offered strong competition to Christianity. Second, the effects of peyote intoxication were perceived as incongruent with white mores (Slotkin 1956:50). Thus, official anti-peyotism of this period represented but one more facet of the subjugation of the Indians and their culture to the white man.

The single most fateful account of peyote from this era, however, was probably that of John Raleigh Briggs regarding his experience with muscale buttons, published in the April 9, 1887 Medical Register and reprinted in the following month's Druggist's Bulletin. This account caught the attention of George Davis, Secretary and General Manager of Parke, Davis and Company of Detroit, who immediately initiated a correspondence with Briggs, and subsequently obtained a supply of peyote buttons for research. Samples from this shipment were forwarded to various investigators, among them the noted German pharmacologist Louis Lewin. It was Lewin who sent them to Paul...
Hennings, the botanist who introduced the spurious *Anhalonium lewinii* designation. Nonetheless, mescal buttons were for the first time identified with the dried tops of the peyote cactus of the Aztecs mentioned in the early Spanish sources. Furthermore, Lewin's pioneering pharmacological research on peyote in 1888, which represented the first report of alkaloids from the Cactaceae, established an early high standard and sound basis for later peyote research. His work inaugurated the modern era of scientific investigation of peyote (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974:354-365).

The decade before the turn of the century saw a stirring of scientific interest in peyote from several directions. In 1894 Coulter firmly established for the first time an independent taxonomic status for peyote. As well, the first good ethnographic accounts of the surviving and spreading native use of this plant began to emerge. Anthropologist James Mooney described peyotism among the Kiowa, first in 1892 and most thoroughly in 1897 (Slotkin 1955:219). Lumholtz reported on peyotism among the Tarahumara in 1894 and later in 1902 among the Huichol. This ferment of interdisciplinary interest helped to sustain pharmacological research on peyote. In 1892, Arthur Heffter, another German pharmacologist, obtained specimens of peyote from European cactus merchants (and later from Parke, Davis) representing both the supposed types *williamsii* and *lewinii*. After systematic studies, he isolated but a single alkaloid from the *williamsii* material, which he named "pellotine" and which acted pharmacologically as a sedative. From the *lewinii* material he isolated three alkaloids. In 1897 he
discovered by self-experimentation that one of these was the primary psychoactive constituent of the cactus; he named it mescaline (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974:364-376).

Genus *Lophophora*, as we now understand, is composed of two species; it is apparent that Heffter's *williamsii* material represented *L. diffusa* which contains pellotine as its major alkaloid constituent. The *lewinii* material is referable to the true peyote cactus, *L. williamsii*, by virtue of its significant mescaline content. Mescaline is present in *diffusa* only in trace amounts. Bruhn and Holmstedt (1974) have cited other early studies in which *diffusa* was evidently confused with *williamsii*. A 1905 botanical report on a field trip to Queretaro indicates that local populations of *diffusa* were known long before its taxonomy was clarified, and that it was exploited in local commerce as a medicinal plant (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974:381).

Heffter's achievement represented the first chemically pure isolation of a hallucinogenic drug and made mescaline the first drug of this kind to come to pharmacological attention. Indeed, it was initially regarded as a completely novel and unique kind of mind-altering drug, although it had already been compared in its natural form to others such as *Cannabis* or "bangue" (Slotkin 1955:216), *nanacatl* or psilocybin mushrooms (Wasson and Wasson 1957:225), opium by Richardson in 1896, alcohol, and *Fly Agaric* (*Amanita muscaria*) by Burton in 1862 (Bruhn and Holmstedt 1974:354).

Subsequent research on mescaline has been so extensive that even a minimal sketch would be beyond the scope of this discussion. In its effect, mescaline is prominently like the more recently discovered
synthetic LSD. LSD is generally regarded as the most definitive hallucinogen because it produces mescaline-like effects at one to two ten-thousandths the dosage. The average active dose of mescaline is from 0.2 to 0.5 grams (Longo 1972:103). Mescaline is present in the dried cactus in concentrations probably averaging around one percent (Anderson 1980:124).

Peyote has never been known to be poisonous in the dosages utilized in the native context (which average between 10 and 25 buttons per does, with an upper limit of probably 75 to 100). Mescaline's chemical structure (3,4,5-trimethoxyphenylethylamine) was first worked out by Ernest Spath in 1919. Subsequent work has shown that the peyote cactus is a "veritable factory of alkaloids" (Furst 1976:111). To date more than fifty different alkaloids and related compounds have been isolated from peyote, only some of which have been investigated pharmacologically (Anderson 1980:104).

Archaeology and Antiquity of Peyote in Mexico

The prehistoric use of peyote in Mexico is well evidenced, at least over the past 2500 years or so. Among the oldest archaeologically recovered remains of actual specimens of peyote are those from a cave in west-central Coahuila, Cuatre Cienagas. Excavated by Taylor in 1941, this cave contained a single-component burial site, designated CM-79, and culturally identified as Mayran mortuary complex. This site yielded a number of peyote buttons strung on a cord which were associated with radiocarbon dates of A.D. 810-1070 (Bruhn, Lindgren, Holmstedt, and Adovasio 1978:1437-1438). Alkaloid
analysis of one of these buttons revealed the presence of mescaline and at least four other peyote alkaloids, confirming the botanical identification of these specimens and showing a remarkable persistence of these compounds in dried whole plant tissue.

The oldest direct evidence of peyotism in the archaeological record comes in the form of West Mexican mortuary ceramic artifacts, which unmistakably depict peyote. One such piece, a snuffing pipe from Monte Albán, shows a deer holding a peyote cactus in its mouth. This piece (dated 200-400 B.C.) relates to an ancient Mexican "snuffing complex" which seems to have largely disappeared by A.D. 1000 (Furst 1976:155). In addition to the indication of an early usage of peyote, this artifact is interesting for its association of the cactus with the deer, a symbolic configuration which, as we shall see, has been well documented in contemporary and historic Huichol peyotism.

Ethnographic analogy provides for an even older ritual use of a hallucinogenic mescaline-containing cactus in Andean South America. The tall columnar cactus, *Trichocereus pachanoi* (San Pedro cactus), an integral surviving feature of contemporary Peruvian *curanderismo* or folk healing (Sharon 1978) is ubiquitously depicted in textile art and stone carvings associated with the Chavin cultural horizon of Peru. These depictions occur in all periods of Chavin art, which is dated from 1200 to 300 B.C. (Furst 1974:56). Insofar as the Chavin remains, with their monumental architecture and chronological longevity are generally thought to represent the first wave of Peruvian civilization, this presents the interesting association of...
the use of a hallucinogenic cactus with the rise of civilization in the New World. We might also note that while the San Pedro cactus is most often associated in this context with the jaguar (an animal of prime shamanic significance in much of South America), at least one ceramic piece, stylistically characterized as Chongoyape variant, portrays the cactus on the back of a deer, echoing the North American association (Cordy-Collins 1977:357-360).

Another possible analogy reinforcing the antiquity of peyotism comes from the archaeology of Red Bean cultism. In northern Mexico and the American Southwest, evidence of Red Bean (Sophora secundi-flora) cultism extends continuously back into prehistory all the way to the Upper Pleistocene, making Sophora the oldest known New World hallucinogen (Furst 1976:8). This establishes a very early use of plant hallucinogens within the area of peyote's native distribution and in adjacent areas of the Mesoamerican periphery.

In light of such considerations, Furst (1976:9) states that ritual peyotism is "likely to be far older still" than the earliest direct evidence for it. La Barre (1974:109) argues great antiquity for peyotism among the Huichol on the basis of the "deep-rooted" nature of their peyote symbolism. This argument is well supported historically as well; the Huichol's peyote symbolism and rituals have changed very little in nearly a century of investigation, demonstrating a remarkable chronological stability.
Two Forms of Peyotism

Broadly speaking, there are two basic forms of Indian peyotism which can be distinguished by surface form, underlying religious structure, and cultural-geographic provenience. First we have the older Mexican tribal form, as seen among the Tarahumara and Huichol. In this form, called the "old peyote complex" by Slotkin (1955:210), peyote is but one element out of many in a yearly or seasonal cycle of religious activity, which is centered on the tribe as a whole.

Standing in contrast to this Mexican peyote complex is a northern, intertribal, more historically recent form variously known as the "cult" or "religion," or "plains-type peyote rite." This form seems to have originated in the southern plains of the United States and has spread to encompass most of the United States and Canada over the past century (Anderson 1980:20). In 1918, it was chartered as the Native American Church to provide a legal defense against white opposition. Thus secured, this newer form of peyotism has assumed a significant role as a reservoir of traditional Indian belief and ritual, and conversely, a "modern destroyer or supplanter of older native religions" (La Barre 1974:9). To the Indian, it has also been a social, psychological, cultural and religious buffer against the devastating loss of cultural heritage and identity which has resulted historically from the intrusion of Western civilization.
CHAPTER III

MEXICAN TRIBAL PEYOTISM

As the term complex suggests, Mexican peyotism, unlike its plains counterpart, is not a form sui generis of peyotism, but rather a series of culturally related forms, all resembling each other to some degree. As we have seen, peyotism was well established in Mexico at the time of the Conquest, with archaeological roots going back more than two thousand years. In the Mexican context, peyote is regarded as an item of both religion and medicine. Medicinally, it is held to be a sort of panacea; it is taken internally and used externally to treat various types of injuries and conditions. Plains beliefs are similar.

Medical research has not always supported the sometimes extravagant Indian claims about the therapeutic value of peyote, nor has peyote found much of an application in modern medicine to date. However, it is interesting to note that apart from the strong activity of mescaline, another peyote alkaloid, hordenine, has a strong antibiotic action. At least one study has found that this substance (also called peyocactin) inhibited the action of the infective bacterium, Staphylococcus aureus, in mice (McCleary 1964; McCleary, Sypherd, and Walkington 1960). Other peyote alkaloids possess pharmacodynamic properties, and medical research possibilities are far from exhausted.
Peyote is used in a wide variety of contexts in Mexico. Tarahumara distance runners take peyote, no doubt benefiting from peyote's strong centrally stimulating effects (Roseman 1963:50-52). The association of peyote with all-night dancing rituals is also understandable in light of this aspect of its action. Although mescaline is fundamentally LSD-like in effect, it is, unlike LSD, chemically related to the amphetamines. In his 1902 study, Lumholtz relates an incident in which, on a long march with a company of Huichols, he suddenly found himself greatly fatigued at the bottom of a deep canyon. Unable to continue walking, he was given a single peyote button to eat, whereupon he recovered dramatically.

As an element of tribal religion, peyote is often the object of a yearly pilgrimage and festival, in which the procurement and eating of the plant is a solemn religious function, in contrast to its purely medicinal use (La Barre 1974:37). Here again, however, Mexican peyotism differs from that of the plains, for in the plains rite, peyote is the central element of a cult which is voluntary and inter-tribal and does not necessarily involve the tribe as a whole. In Mexico, peyotism is a feature of a yearly religious cycle which is centered upon the tribe. Slotkin has characterized the role of peyote in the Mexican context as that of a "mere component" in what is essentially a "tribal participation in a dancing rite" (1956:28). Bennett and Zingg (1935:294-295) have observed that among the Tarahumara peyotism is part of the broader concern of curing disease.

We may also note that Mexican peyotism is part of a general distribution of hallucinogenic plant utilization, and peyotism...
tends to resemble usages of other hallucinogenic plants throughout Mexico and Central America, such as the psilocybin mushrooms (Agaricaceae) and morning glory seeds (Convolvulaceae). Another contextual factor is the veneration of various types of cacti other than peyote by groups like the Tarahumara. In contrast, the plains-type peyote rite, with its northern diffusion, represents a more culturally anomalous manifestation, with relatively few precedents for plant veneration or hallucinogen usage. However, there is some evidence to suggest that peyote was known, at least to some degree, in areas north of Mexico at early dates. For instance, Velasco recorded in 1716 that the "Texans" drank "pellote" in connection with dancing rites (La Barre 1974:110). Since the plains-type rite seems to have appeared only toward the end of the nineteenth century, these older reports of peyotism north of the Mexican border probably refer to the old peyote complex.

**Syncretic Influences in Mexico**

Exogenous cultural influences seem to have had little impact on peyotism among some of the more remote native groups of northwestern Mexico, such as the Huichol. But in other cases, Catholicism and Spanish culture have had an obvious influence. The church authorities denounced peyote and other hallucinogens along with native magic and religion in general. Yet, missionary efforts among the Indians of Mexico have, in most cases, been unable to eliminate the use of peyote, no doubt owing to the deep-rooted nature of native culture. In many cases, the Indians have "nativized" the elements of Christian
religion. Native beliefs and rituals have absorbed and neutralized European teachings, resulting in a compromise for missionary interests. Slotkin (1955:206) gives a list of Mexican place-names which include peyote; among them are a Franciscan Mision del Dulce Nombre de Jesus de Peyotes in Coahuila, a Jesuit Mision del Santa Rita Peyotan in Jalisco, and a Santa Nina de Peyotes in Coahuila. Catholic elements have made their way into Mexican curanderismo, which often utilizes peyote and other hallucinogenic plants. Sometimes a curandero may concurrently be a lay official or even a priest of the Church by day (Wasson 1965:164). Syncretic influences are also evident among the Cora of western Mexico, who stage a ritual dramatic performance in which peyote is taken by dancers representing the "Borrados" or Judeans, forces of evil (Aldana E. 1971). Christian influences in Mexico have generally been Catholic. Plains peyotism, in contrast, has been more affected by Protestant sects.

Tarahumara Peyotism

Medicinal usage of peyote to treat injuries was first observed among the Tarahumara before the turn of the seventeenth century by Francisco Javier Alegre (Anderson 1980:15). It was Lumholtz in 1894 who first reported in detail on the religious significance of peyote and other medicinal cacti of the Tarahumara. Bennett and Zingg (1935) supplied further information. Cactus veneration reaches its height among the Tarahumara, who reportedly ascribe magical or medicinal qualities to various species of Mammilaria, Ariocarpus, Epithelantha, and Pelecyphora, as well as other unidentified species.
(La Barre 1974:131-132). Only among the Huichol has Mexican peyotism been more closely studied.

Tarahumara peyotism is relatively simple from a ritual perspective, but rich in colorful exegetical beliefs. It is said to be on the decline among some local groups in Samachique and Quirara. Another, apparently unidentified cactus, Bakanawa (or Bakanori) is more venerated in Guadalupe (La Barre 1974:33). However, Lumholtz reported that the greatest Tarahumara healers are the peyote (hikuli waname) specialists.

To obtain peyote, the Tarahumara conduct a periodic pilgrimage to a collecting area near the mouth of the Rio Conchos in northeastern Chihuahua. The trip involves two or three dozen men, who first are ritually purified with copal incense. The journey is fairly informal, with commercial trading along the way and no dietary restrictions until they reach the collecting ground, where speech is refrained from and only pinole (powdered corn mush) is eaten. A cross is put up near the first plants found. As the harvest continues, the pilgrims eat fresh peyote over a period of several days, taking shifts so that some may sleep while others continue collecting. At night, they build a fire near the cross and hold the dutuburi dancing rite. The roots of harvested plants are left in the ground; only the tops are cut off. Unharvested plants in the field are said to sing beautifully, helping the pilgrims to locate them (La Barre 1974:33-35).

A ritual fiesta is held when the pilgrims return. The fresh peyote buttons are put out to dry on a blanket under a cross, with
the blood of a sacrificed sheep or goat sprinkled on to "feed" them. A feast is prepared, with the meat of the sacrificed animal, _tesvino_ (native corn beer), and fresh peyote tea. A curing ceremony is performed, in which each pilgrim receives a spoonful of _agua-miel_, _sotoli_, or mescal into which the shaman has dipped his necklace of Job's Tears seeds (_Coix lachryma-jobi_). All-night dancing ensues (La Barre 1974:33-34).

The Tarahumara also hold other _hikuli_ feasts, in which the shaman employs a special "rasping stick" to keep time. Sitting west of the ceremonial fire with his assistants, the shaman draws a circle around a cross on the ground. The cross symbolizes the world and four directions among the Tarahumara and is probably aboriginal. A fetish peyote is placed upon the cross, with a gourd-cup inverted over it to serve as a resonator. A notched stick is placed upon it, and the smoother rasping stick is rhythmically rubbed against it to create the desired tone and tempo. The fetish peyote is said to enjoy the music. The rasp is also used to cure toward the end of the ceremony. Wetted in _palo hediondo_ medicine (_ohnoa_ root steeped in water), the stick is drawn across or rasped on the head of the patient. The peyote tea used in these rituals is a thick pulpy liquid made by grinding the peyote with water on a metate. Again, the ritual is one of all-night group dancing of a ritually prescribed style, ending with curing ceremonies and a feast (La Barre 1974:34-35). The Tarahumara rites recall a Cora peyote fiesta described by Ortega in 1754 in his _Historia del Nayarit, Sonora, Sinaloa, y_
Ambas Californias (Anderson 1980:8), and a Tamaulipecan peyote rite described in 1873 by Prieto (La Barre 1974:36).

Huichol Peyotism

Tribal peyotism in Mexico reaches its cultural peak with the Huichol, whose native semi-agricultural way of life remained surprisingly intact through the 1970s. The Huichol peyote fiesta and pilgrimage were first described in detail by Lumholtz in 1900. More recently, Huichol peyotism has been examined by Myerhoff (1974), Benitez (1975), and Furst (1972), having apparently changed little in almost a century.

Huichol religion involves a yearly calendar of rituals. The most important of these is the peyote hunt, a three hundred mile pilgrimage north to the collecting area Wirikuta (Real de Catorce, a colonial mining district in San Luis Potosi). Along with maize and deer, peyote is central in a cluster of sacred symbols which lie at the heart of Huichol belief (Myerhoff 1974:189). The pilgrimage which usually takes place in the fall, involves a re-enactment of mythic events and thereby a symbolic return to an original, primordial state (Myerhoff 1974:241). As such, it displays a marked religious structure; the pilgrimage is a solemn and austere event involving many hardships and deprivations. However, if successful, it insures the success of the coming year for the whole tribe and to this extent resembles certain Plains Indian ordeals (e.g. the sun dance). Complete ritual purity is required. The participants—eight to seventeen people of either sex or any age—observe various
dietary restrictions (e.g. no salt or meat) and sexual continence. There is also a ritual of confession of sexual transgressions (Furst 1972:154-156). For each confession, a knot is tied in a ceremonial cord. At the end of the ritual, it is burnt in a fire.

The trip is begun after sacrifices of food (considered a gift of the gods) are made. Along the way, there are various regions which are considered sacred because of the role they played in the mythic first peyote hunt in which the mara'akame (shaman and leader) was Tatewari, Our Grandfather Fire, the most venerated Huichol deity. Taken together, these special places constitute a kind of sacred geography, and appropriate ritual activities occur at each. One of the most important of these is Tatei Matinier, Where Our Mother Dwells. First time participants (matewamete) are made to wear blindfolds from the beginning of the trip up to this spot, presenting a ritual initiatory aspect. The participants bathe for the last time before the end of the journey and fill their gourds for ritual needs, for the water from this area is considered especially sacred (Furst 1972:166-168).

When the pilgrims arrive in Wirikuta, the peyote hunt begins. Hunt is an appropriate term because the symbolism is literally that of a hunt, with peyote assimilated to the deer. When found, the first peyote is shot with a bow and arrow on four sides, as in the mythic time (Furst 1972:141). It contains the essence of Tamatsi Wawatsari, Elder Brother Principal Deer, representing the "master of the species." The hunters pray to the spirit of the dying "deer" not to be angry, and make offerings of tortillas and tobacco or
water-filled gourds. Nearikas (or nierikas), colorful wax and wool portraits on boards, are burnt in sacrifice (Anderson 1980:13).

A Huichol story of the first peyote hunt illustrates the mythic link between deer and peyote (Lumholtz 1900:18-19). When the Kakao-yarixi or ancestral dieties first arrived in Wirikuta, they saw a deer which took five steps and then disappeared. In each of its five tracks was a peyote plant. In this story, peyote enables the Kakaoyarixi to "find their lives," initiating the balance of human existence and instituting order and health out of a disordered, chaotic cosmic illud tempus. Five is a sacred number of completeness to the Huichol, hence the five steps taken by the deer. Concomitantly, five-ribbed peyotes are considered the most sacred.

For several days, the peyote harvest goes on. As with the Tarahumara, only the tops of the plants are harvested, allowing the root to survive and grow back, usually in a multiheaded or caespitose condition (Anderson 1980:144, 151). In the evening, there is singing, dancing, and peyote eating around the ceremonial fire; the mara'akame recites mythic stories. An interesting feature of the peyote hunt is the conversational use of formally reversed designations or figures of speech, emphasizing the separate and sacred nature of the event. Besides continual reference to peyote as "deer," participants claim to be well fed, or even over full when they are really on rigorous fasts, or claim that the bitter-tasting peyote is in fact sweet. In this context, hot means cold, earth means sky, and so on (Myerhoff 1974:148-149).
On the return leg of the journey, the participants eat nothing but peyote (La Barre 1974:31). They also engage in a three to six day deer hunt, during which they are obligated to obtain enough meat to provide for the coming hikuli feast, in order to insure the arrival of the rains, so necessary for the crops. The deer meat is dried and strung on a cord, along with peyote (recalling the cord-strung peyote from the Cuatre Cienagas site). Only when this obligation has been met are the participants free to bathe, marking the end of the pilgrimage.

The hikuli feast which ensues is a three-day event which generally takes place in January (Myerhoff 1974:136). Peyote is seldom eaten outside this setting. In the yearly round of Huichol ritual, this is perhaps the most important event, because the blood of the ritually hunted deer is necessary for the planting of the maize crop; without the peyote hunt, the deer cannot be sacrificed, nor can rain ceremonies be held for the maize, etc.

Furst was impressed by the gravity and obvious emotional impact of various ritual observances upon participants in the peyote hunt, quite apart from the ritual drama (1972:166). Peyote ritualism appears deeply rooted in Huichol culture and invokes many mythic themes of obvious antiquity, often linked with shamanistic beliefs associated with pre-agricultural lifeways. The "master of the species" figure (Tamatsi Wawatsari), the ritual disposal of the peyote's "bones" (roots) (Furst 1976:128), and a point in the Huichol sacred geography known as the "gate of the clashing clouds," embodying the well-known mythic motif of the dangerous or difficult
passage (Furst 1972:161-163), are examples, as is the complete authority and performance virtuosity of the mara'akame. Peyote figures centrally in Huichol religion, as opposed to being a mere element in what is principally a dancing or curing rite. This is evident objectively, and from the comments of the mara'akame, who eloquently emphasized in Furst's reportage (1976) that peyote is the very heart of Huichol life. This is especially remarkable considering that unlike the Tarahumara, the Huichol tend to avoid other psychoactive cacti and plants (except native tobacco), although the Solanaceous Datura is recognized and animistically personified in Huichol myth as a treacherous sorcerer, Kieri Tewiyari (Kieri Person) (Furst 1976:134).
CHAPTER IV

PLAINS PEYOTISM

The contemporary peyote religion of the American Indians north of Mexico has been variously referred to as the peyote religion, peyote cult, or plains peyote rite. Native Americans often refer to it as the peyote "road" or "way." It represents an elaborate, historically recent form of peyotism, derivative of but distinct from the Mexican. As stated, it originated in the southern plains toward the end of the nineteenth century and has since spread to encompass much of the United States and Canada (Anderson 1980:20).

Unlike Mexican peyotism, which is a feature of tribal religion and ritual, the peyote religion is an intertribal, pan-Indian voluntary association, connected with nativistic beliefs about peyote as an incarnation of animistic power, enabling direct communion with God or the Great Spirit, and lightly syncretic with Christian influences. The rapid diffusion of the cult has engendered the spread of peyotism, once a localized Mexican manifestation, throughout most of North America. This has provoked a great deal of opposition both from within native traditionalist circles and from the external white society on various grounds. This ultimately led in 1918 to the incorporation of a Native American Church as a legal defense under the constitutional right to freedom of religion. A number of anthropologists have submitted testimony before federal and state governments...
defending the right of the Indians to use the hallucinogenic cactus in their rites (La Barre, McAllester, Slotkin, Stewart, and Tax 1951).

The plains peyote rite, unlike the older Mexican peyote complex, consists largely of singing, prayer, contemplation, and eating peyote in an all night group meeting. It is centered squarely upon peyote as both a symbol and a sacrament (Slotkin 1955:210-211). A great deal of ethnographic attention has been focused on the plains rite, no doubt owing to its remarkable diffusion and proliferation. It has become perhaps the single best documented instance of native hallucinogenic cultism.

The Psychological and Cultural Appeal of Peyotism

The plains rite has exerted a sustained attraction to Native Americans in the twentieth century, if one is to judge by the rapidity with which it has taken root and grown. The overwhelming success of this cult stands in marked contrast to the fate of others which emerged at the same time (most notably the Ghost Dance) and apparently in response to many of the same critical cultural variables (Slotkin 1956:19-21). Why has peyotism persisted where other native "crisis cults" have faded, and what is the basis of its appeal? Various anthropologists have discussed this issue in some depth in the past few decades in terms of peyote's appeal to both the individual and the group.

One of the broader facets of peyote's success is the notion that it offered the Indians at the turn of the century a middle way between the extremes of resigned despair and complete loss of culture.
on the one hand and futile, militant, nativist rebellion on the other. Peyote enabled the Indians to adapt to a white-dominated society without having to surrender their cultural identity completely. Slotkin (1956:20-21) states, "The Peyote Religion was nativist but not militant . . . (its) program of accommodation, as opposed to the Ghost Dance's program of opposition, was the reason for the success of the former and the failure of the latter." Thus, peyotism functions to allow a positive expression of Indian identity in a historically changed situation.

Particular features of peyotism contributed to its viability at this time. The Ghost Dance had a pan-Indian character and resulted in many intertribal contacts. The peyote cult benefited greatly from these prior contacts. In addition, visions figure prominently in the peyote cult, and this helped it to fill a gap formerly occupied by the plains "vision quest." The ordeal aspect of the vision quest is also present in the peyote ritual in that peyote intoxication often entails severe nausea and emesis, as well as subjective states of dysphoria, fear, and even panic. This fit the plains tradition of having to "suffer to learn something" (Shonle 1925).

Two other observations on the general appeal of plains peyotism come from Aberle (1966). First, the religion supplies a strong ethical code which mediates the conflict between the externally imposed economic requirements of individual employment and self-subsistence and the traditional pattern of mutual reciprocity; it strikes a balance between individualism and collectivism. Second,
plains peyotism has a "polyvalent character" or a certain diversity of appeal: "For some individuals it can be a religion of miraculous curing; for others, one of special and transcending knowledge; for still others, an incentive to work; and to yet others, a release from guilt" (Aberle 1966:16).

This principle appears to operate also on a group level, for the peyote religion has become the object of many different concerns from one tribe to another. Peyote meetings are held primarily for healing among many groups, such as the Washo-Northern Paiute (Stewart 1944). Among the Mescalero, peyotism lent itself to shamanic rivalries of long standing. Each peyote shaman asserted his individual authority by numerous slight variations in ritual procedure (La Barre 1974:63).

At Taos, the most "plains-like" pueblo, Parsons (1970) described how peyotism became embroiled in a traditional concern. The elders initially opposed peyote, saying that it "does not belong to us. It is not the work given to us. It will stop the rain. Something will happen." Tribal legislation was passed against peyote. But with the drought of 1922 came the response, "Now it is so dry this summer because the peyote boys can't have their meetings; they used to bring so much rain" (Parsons 1970:66-68). Peyote meetings are thus held for a wide variety of purposes from one tribe to the next; from curing to commemoration of events, divination (frequently in war), to identify a sorceror or wrong-doer, to combat sorcery, etc. The peyote religion separates from one set of cultural needs and attaches to another in a ready way.
Peyote's appeal on the individual level is at least equally powerful and diverse. A rich body of beliefs endow peyote with many desirable characteristics; as a sentient agency peyote can protect one from many dangers and reward one with power, knowledge, or good luck. But conversely, it can punish, if one does not properly heed the peyote way. The communal nature of the peyote meeting probably provides a special social incentive for attending. Sometimes public confession of sins is a feature of the meeting, a "powerful mechanism for the liquidation of anxieties" (La Barre 1974:99).

Peyote figures in many stories of personal conflict resolution and moral victory. However, one of the most convincing appeals to the individual, according to Aberle (1966) lies in the very nature of the peyote intoxication which is, as has been noted, specifically hallucinogenic (i.e. LSD-like). Far from merely inducing hallucinatory imagery, "the peyote experience is characterized by a feeling of the personal significance of external and internal stimuli. The user is prompted to ask of everything, 'What does this mean for me?'" (Aberle 1966:6). Peyote is religiously important because in this context the individual can receive solutions to personal problems in the form of "revelations . . . of the utmost importance for the individual which yet have a banal quality when related" (1966:8). This may account for the influential Caddo peyote leader John Wilson's claim that visions are not a goal; rather, they are signs of bad self-adjustment, sin and impurities (Anderson 1980:50). In any event, this noetic quality of the peyote experience helps make it extremely personal and impressive to the individual. La Barre speaks of the
"emotional immediacy of peyotism to the present-day Plains Indian" (1974:103). Clearly, the appeal of peyote is not that of a simple hedonic experience.

Part of the rapidity with which peyotism spread can be understood historically as a result of increased intertribal contact. Government policies played a role in this process by bringing people from many tribes together on reservations, speaking English as a common language and suffering the same injustices from whites, serving to reinforce the pan-Indian sentiment. In reference to peyotist teaching, Petrullo states that rather than trying to prevail over the whites (as in the Ghost Dance), "the greater goal that the Indian should attempt is a loftier spiritual realm which is beyond the reach of the Whites to destroy" (cited in Anderson 1980:32). If there is any irony, it may be that in disturbing the native cultural context so profoundly, the intrusive white culture prompted in the former the formation of a cultural defense, which thus far seems powerfully resistant to white invasion (La Barre 1974:113).

Opposition to Peyotism

Plains peyotism has been greeted historically with a certain degree of controversy, on the grounds that peyote is intoxicating and possibly harmful or addictive. A certain amount of opposition has come from native traditionalists, who view peyote as culturally foreign. There was a brief period of such opposition among the Kiowa before peyote became firmly established (La Barre 1974:112). Aberle (1966) has noted opposition among the Navajo by both traditionalists
and modernists; the Tribal Council wanted peyote "extirpated." The opposition at Taos pueblo has been previously noted. In recent years the position of the cult there has changed, so much so that in 1960 its members held major religious and civic offices, including that of governor (Aberle 1966:309). Taos is one of the few cases in which formal tribal legislation against peyote has been passed, if only temporarily. By far the most serious opposition has come from the external white culture.

The Spanish condemned the use of peyote in Mexico, but were unable to abolish it. A second independent wave of white anti-peyotism began before the turn of the twentieth century, when the use of peyote first began to be observed by missionaries and government agents in the southern plains. As noted, their early reports seem biased and misinformation. This wave of opposition grew from talk and unofficial harassment to legal action and has at times posed a serious threat to Indian religious freedom. Aberle (1966:18) states:

The first efforts at suppression date from 1888 in the form of arbitrary action by an agent; the first organized efforts by the Indian Bureau in the absence of specific legislation began in 1908, and the first efforts at federal laws against peyote commenced in 1907. . . . A good many laws have been passed forbidding the sale, use, or possession of peyote, beginning in 1899 in Oklahoma.

State laws against peyote were generally upheld in the first few decades of the twentieth century, but a federal law was never passed. A determined effort to pass such legislation came in 1918, when the House Committee on Indian Affairs held hearings on House Resolution 2614. In response to this threat, an intertribal peyotist conference was held that year in Cheyenne, Oklahoma, at which delegates
discussed incorporating a Pan-Indian Peyotist Association as a legal defense measure (Slotkin 1956:58). Four years earlier, a group of Omaha and Winnebago peyotists had incorporated in such a fashion. Led by Jonathon Koshiway, they called themselves the Firstborn Church of Christ. James Mooney, the anthropologist from the Smithsonian Institution who first described the Kiowa peyote rite, participated in the 1918 conference. On October 10, 1918, the Native American Church (originally of the United States, now of North America) was incorporated, uniting several hitherto independent peyotist groups and instituting a formal church organization. The church now claims over 225,000 members (Anderson 1980:39).

For a while, state laws against peyotism enjoyed the upper hand. The peak of state level anti-peyote legislation was from 1917 to 1923, when a total of nine states passed such laws (Aberle 1966:18). Efforts at federal laws against peyote continued unsuccessfully through 1937, when the ninth such effort failed. By this time, white anti-peyotism was on the decline. The Bureau of Indian Affairs adopted a policy of noninterference with peyotism under the administration of John Collier in 1934 (Slotkin 1956:55). During the 1950s most state courts began supporting the right of Indians to their religious use of peyote. More recently, decisions in Arizona (1960) and California (1962) have overturned anti-peyotism laws (Aberle 1966:18). Thus, recent years have fortunately seen something of a turnaround in white opposition to the peyote cult. Although federal legislation in the 1960s against LSD-like drugs resulted in the classification of peyote as an illegal hallucinogen under the

Origin and Diffusion of the Peyote Religion

We have seen how the Native American Church originated in an effort on the part of peyotists to legally defend their right to religious freedom. And we have noted the antiquity of ritual peyotism in northern Mexico. The plains type rite, in contrast, is very different from Mexican peyotism in form and was not observed until the 1880s. Where and how it originated has been an enduring topic in peyote studies.

Details of the origin of the plains rite are sketchy. Tribes of the Oklahoma Reservation, among which it was first observed, acquired the rite from various Apache groups. La Barre states, "The Plains rites ... derive from the Mescalero Apache (whence the diffusion traces back to the Lipan and Tonkawa through the Carrizo perhaps to Tamaulipecan groups)" (1974:121). The Kiowa, Comanche, and Caddo in western Oklahoma became the primary sources of its diffusion, primarily through the agency of energetic and dedicated converts such as Quanah Parker and John Wilson, who sought to promote the religion in an evangelistic fashion (La Barre 1974:77). A certain amount of prestige accrues to these tribes in peyotist circles because of their precedence in the spread of the religion.

La Barre (1974) passes on Mooney's account of how the Kiowa acquired peyote. A Kiowa raiding party was on its way to a Mescalero
camp, where the latter were holding a peyote meeting. Through peyote's divinatory power, the leader of the meeting foresaw the approach of the Kiowas. In a gesture of magnanimity, he invited the enemies into the meeting and presented them with peyote and ritual props. La Barre states, "This widespread origin legend is also Mescalero and Lipan, and from certain indications I suspect it is Tamaulipecan also" (1974:111). The Comanche have a similar story, but it involves the White Mountain Apache (1974:113). The historic significance of the story is obscure, but it clearly may be based on an actual event.

The first Comanche peyotist was the husband of an Apache woman, who supposedly learned the rite from the Mescalero (La Barre 1974:112). The most important early Comanche peyotist, Quanah Parker, was at first opposed to peyote, but he was converted when a Mexican curandera cured him with it. The Comanche held peyote meetings by about 1873 (La Barre 1974:113). McAllester (1949:15-17) records a Comanche story in which a slain Comanche warrior returns from death to instruct a group of enemy Carrizo Apaches in the correct way to hold a peyote meeting. The Apaches in the story already practiced an "incorrect," presumably older, form of peyotism.

There are indications of an awareness of peyote in parts of Texas and the Southwest, which preceded the plains religion. Shawnee informants have claimed the cactus was known and used to relieve fatigue and hunger and to moisten the mouth when dry-camping, before the rite was adopted from the Comanche in the late 1890s (La Barre 1974:119). The Wichita had peyote as an item in a medicine bundle.
before they acquired the religion (La Barre 1974:120). The Kiowa Apache used peyote medicinally and shamanistically before 1875, according to one account; its religious veneration came later with Mescalero or Lipan influence (Beals 1971:45-47). We have also seen some early historic descriptions of peyotism north of Mexico, which suggest a general background of usage out of which the peyote religion proper emerged. Velasco wrote in 1716 that the "Texans" drank "pellote" (La Barre 1974:110).

Anderson (1980:25) suggests a "developmental sequence" in which the old Mexican peyote complex influenced the formation of the plains rite. Mescalero peyotism, now extinct, may provide some evidence for this sequence. On the basis of Opler's data, La Barre (1974:42) regards the Mescalero rites as "truly transitional" between the old peyote complex and the plains type rite. The rival nature of peyotism between competing shamans and an absence of Christian syncretism distinguish the Mescalero rite, which never evolved into a regular group activity. Nevertheless, the diagnostic earth altar is present. La Barre states, "On the whole, the standard plains ceremony appears to have taken shape among the Lipan-Mescalero" (1974:56). It probably diffused to the Caddo first, but their rite was strongly influenced by variations introduced by John Wilson (Moonhead). The Osage, Quapaw, and Delaware acquired this altered form (La Barre 1974:123). The Kiowa and Comanche became the most important tribes in the diffusion of the religion. "We might call the Kiowa the original standardizers and teachers, who have departed only in the
most minute ways from earlier forms; the Comanche the proselytizers and missionaries of the new religion" (La Barre 1974:77).

The importance of the Comanche in the diffusion of the plains rite is due in large part to the peyote ministry of Quanah Parker, who stands as an excellent example of the kind of peyote leaders who helped spread the religion. Quanah was a strict traditionalist, originally opposed to peyote. In 1884, his relatives (his mother was a white woman) required him to learn cattle care and breeding in Texas, and he fell ill with what seems to have been a sickness caused by cultural deprivation (Marriott and Rachlin 1971:28). He became converted to peyote after he was cured with it by a curandera. He enthusiastically initiated his friends, first among the Comanche, then other tribes such as the Kickapoo (La Barre 1974:116). One of the reasons suggested for the magnitude of his influence is the fact that he combined a religious life with economic success, attributable partly to his experience with cattle, making him something of a model to his peers. In addition to spreading the Comanche peyote rite far and wide, Quanah composed many peyote hymns which are still sung. In 1908, testimony from Quanah before a government committee was instrumental in the repeal of Oklahoma's anti-peyote law of 1899 (La Barre 1974:223). A famous quotation about peyote is attributed to Quanah: "The white man . . . goes into his church house and talks about Jesus, but the Indian goes into his tipi and talks to Jesus" (La Barre 1974:166).

Peyote meetings generally vary more from one ministry to another than from one tribe to the next. Each ministry is represented by the...
office of the road man or road chief, so called because he shows the
peyote road. Since the organization of the Native American Church,
there has been a general trend toward standardization of practice.
In the early days of the rite, however, there arose variant forms
associated with particular individuals, who introduced alterations
and elaborations in the procedure and form of the altar. Perhaps
the best known of these is the Big Moon rite of John Wilson, Moonhead.
Wilson was an influential and charismatic peyote leader who brought
elements of his prior involvement with mescalism and the Ghost Dance
to bear upon Caddo peyote worship. The importance of the Caddo in
the spread of peyotism is largely traceable to Wilson's impact. In
his prominence, he became a controversial figure, largely because of
charges by his detractors that he took improper advantage of his
status to advance his personal interests, but also because his fol­
lowers have tended to venerate him along with his teachings (La

Wilson, a Caddo-Delaware, early on became a Ghost Dance leader
and shamanic healer with both peyote and mescal beans. In this
connection he must not be confused with Jack Wilson, Wovoka, the
Paiute founder of the Ghost Dance. On the advice of a Comanche
peyotist, Wilson went on a two to three week retreat, during which
time he continually ate peyote to see what he might learn. This
resulted in a profound conversionary experience, which left him a
teacher and leader of his own version of the peyote rite for the
remainder of his life (La Barre 1974:151-156).
Wilson's peyote visions showed him celestial markers of events in the life of Christ and the configuration of spiritual entities, the Moon, Sun, Fire, and Elder Brothers, as well as the empty grave of the resurrected Christ and the road leading therefrom to the moon, which Christ had taken in his ascent (La Barre 1974). Wilson was instructed by peyote to walk this road and was told that it would eventually take him into the very presence of Christ and Peyote. Wilson's revelations also provided instructions for proper face-painting, hair-dress, and lay-out of the moon altar. He also received peyote hymns in this way. Despite the obvious Christian elements of his visions, Wilson taught direct communion with God rather than Bible study. He proposed that peyote stood as the salvation of the Indians; Christ was strictly for the whites, who bore the responsibility for the Crucifixion.

Wilson's moon progressed from a small and simple version to a larger, symbolically elaborate one. The crescent altar was divided to resemble an Indian's parted hair, and facial features were added, for example, two mounds of ash between the moon's cusps to represent eyes, and a nose in the form of a heart-shaped figure. Another heart at the hair-part held the fetish or Father Peyote. The heart imagery may reflect a Catholic influence. Wilson also brought minor liturgical differences to the rite, such as the introduction of special functionaries to blow away evil influences from around participants at each re-entry to the tipi, using feather fans; also, the opening prayer was smoked only by the road man. The Big Moon rite ultimately gained favor among the Osage and Quapaw (La Barre 1974:155-158).
Wilson accepted large gifts of considerable value in exchange for his services, which led to some criticism and controversy. The story of his death illustrates this (La Barre 1974:159). After conducting a meeting among the Quapaw, Wilson (who was a married man at this time) was returning home with some horses and a Quapaw woman as payment. At a railroad crossing, his horses pulled backwards, preventing his buggy from crossing the track, and he was struck fatally by an oncoming locomotive. Wilson's peyotist critics claim this was a punishment for his excesses and failure to live up to his own moral teachings. It also illustrates the plains belief that peyote, as a sentient power, can guard its own interests, and can reward or punish its follower.

Wilson's supporters, especially among the Osage and Quapaw (and formerly Caddo and Delaware as well), not only continue to observe the Big Moon rite, but have also elevated his status almost to that of divinity. Wilson's portrait is placed on the altar next to the Father Peyote, and portrait lapel buttons are worn (La Barre 1974:160). It may also be that prayers are addressed to him. This presumption of divinity has provoked further criticism, but Wilson himself apparently had no part in it. Wilson claimed not to be a messiah or emissary of God, but simply a man to whom had been revealed knowledge of how to conduct the peyote rite. Prayers, he taught, should be directed not toward peyote, but through it, to God above (La Barre 1974:151-162). In any event, the unique Wilson rite illustrates the tendency toward divergence in form in the early peyote religion, which contrasts with the trend toward standardization and
return to more traditional forms following the organization of the Native American Church.

Another early peyote leader, (Oto) Jonathon Koshiway, is worth mentioning here for several reasons. For one thing he was an early church organizer. With the approval of his senior Oto peyotists, he obtained an official charter signed by the Secretary of State on December 8, 1914 for an Oto First-Born Church of Christ. His example, and that of other early peyote churches (such as the Union Church organized among the Omaha and Winnebago of Nebraska in 1909), helped lead to the organization of the Native American Church (La Barre 1974:167-170).

A chief point of interest about Koshiway is the influence of Christian sects upon his rite. A former Mormon, Koshiway assimilated many aspects of peyotism to Christianity. For instance, peyote was likened to the Sacrament. Koshiway became fluent in such syncretic interpretations of peyotist practice. The Russellites, an obscure, probably extinct Midwestern sect which rejected secular government, also influenced Koshiway. As a result of this influence, he abolished ritual tobacco smoking; prayers were smoked only with burning cedar. When his church was integrated with the Native American Church, he revoked this rule; but many of his followers, whom he himself had converted away from smoking, never again embraced it (Anderson 1980:38; La Barre 1974:172-177).

Apart from the generally standardizing influence of the Native American Church on the practice of plains peyotism, variant forms of the rite have continued to emerge. A well-known example is the
Navajo V-way. Instead of the crescent moon altar and fire, this rite uses burning coals arranged in the shape of a V. The V is said to signify "V for victory," a World War II slogan significant to many Navajos who were in military service during the war. Alternatively, it is said to refer to Christ's victory over death (Anderson 1980:56). This version of the peyote rite emphasizes personal confession of sin and daily devotion involving the eating of small amounts of peyote everyday (Aberle 1966:157). Other variant forms of peyotism occur among the Navajo, such as water way, star way, and eagle way, but there is little information available on them. The fact that these variant forms exist, however, "should not obscure the fact that the ritual of Navajo peyotism resembles very closely that of various Oklahoma peyotist groups. It is the identity of Navajo ritual with what might be called standard peyote ritual which should be stressed" (Aberle 1966:175).

Christianity as an Influence on Peyotism

Elements of Christian influence are visible in both Wilson's and Koshiway's rites, as well as in contemporary variants like the Navajo V-way. Such elements are generally thought to be a secondary development in the peyote religion, being absent from the basic Kiowa-Comanche rite and earlier Apache peyotism (La Barre 1974:162-166). As the religion has diffused, however, local syncretisms with Christianity have tended to proliferate. Such syncretisms often take the form of symbolic representations and assimilations. We have seen how peyote is assimilated to Christ, standing as an intermediary
between man and God. Likewise, God is identified with the aboriginal celestial divinity or Great Spirit. Many peyotists also recognize common points between peyotist and Christian morality, such as abstinence from liquor, brotherly and familial love, etc. (Anderson 1980:50-52).

Pressures from Christian missionaries may have facilitated this blending of Christian elements with peyotism. Peyotists have made their practice more Christian in aspect in order to defend it better against criticism from whites. Slotkin (1956:65) states:

Since peyotism, as a syncretic religion, contains many White religious traits, emphasizing these traits makes it easier for Peyotists to defend their religion against White proponents of cultural uniformity. Peyotists maintain that Peyotism is essentially similar to White religions; in fact, that it is simply one among the innumerable variants of Christianity.

Some peyotists have even learned to provide a scriptural basis for their practice. Exodus 12:8, for example, refers to "bitter herbs," interpreted as referring to peyote. Romans 14:1-3 enjoins a "man who eats" not to pass judgment upon one who does not, and vice-versa (Anderson 1980:51). Koshiway, as discussed earlier, became a leading expert on assimilations of peyotism to Christianity.

Christian influences on peyotism, thus, often reflect an effort on the part of the Indian to defend his religion against the seemingly sanctimonious assaults of the external society. Christian symbolisms, where they occur, function on behalf of purely Indian interests. La Barre (1974:166) states, "Despite the apparent and superficial syncretisms with Christianity, peyotism is an essentially aboriginal American religion, operating in terms of fundamental
Indian concepts about powers, visions, and native modes of doctoring."
The recent trend toward the older, less elaborate rite has also been
a trend away from the mixing in of Christian beliefs. Thus, Chris­
tianity cannot be considered a very significant influence on the
peyote religion.

Mescalism and Its Influence

The cultural roots of peyotism have been debated, but many
scholars have agreed that mescalism has had an influence. Mescal
beans, the seeds of the Texas mountain laurel, Sophora secundiflora,
contain a toxic alkaloid, cytisine. Sophora cultism is known to have
preceded peyotism historically in the southern plains, and Howard
(1957) proposed that certain features of the peyote rite derived from
it. Troike (1962) argued that the kind of similarities cited by
Howard are mostly generic features of plains ceremonialism and do
not indicate such derivation. However, mescalism may have introduced
the idea of usage of a hallucinogenic plant in the plains, and thus
prepared the way somewhat for a ready acceptance of peyote. Further,
mescalism and peyotism may both derive from a common cultural source
which Troike calls "North Mexican ceremonial narcotism," in which
bean and button were used almost interchangeably:

From similar beginnings, these complexes diverged somewhat
before being diffused into the plains area, entering at
different times and by different routes. There both com­
plexes were remolded to fit the patterns of plains ceremo­
nialism and the modified peyote complex finally replaced
the use of the mescal bean. (Troike 1962:960)
Other Cultural Roots of Peyotism

The primary cultural sources of plains peyotism, broadly speaking, are probably the old peyote complex of Mexico and southern plains ceremonialism, both of which show many continuities with the plains peyote rite. Underhill (1952) suggested the Kiowa ceremony of the sacred stones as a source for the crescent-shaped earth altar of the peyote rite. La Barre (1974) has cited several older Kiowa ritual patterns which correspond to the peyote rite, such as the smoking ceremony of the old women's society. Other features, such as the drum and rattle, the feather fans, and white sage and cedar for purification, are of obvious plains origin as well. We have seen how peyotism fit with firmly established plains traditions such as vision-seeking, suffering to learn, and animistic powers residing in natural objects.

As for the influence of Mexican peyotism, the similarities of belief are numerous. The story of how the Apache leader foresaw the approach of a Comanche war party recalls peyote's use in warfare and divination, as described in the accounts of the early Mexican chroniclers. In both Mexico and the plains, peyote is hailed as an unsurpassed medicine by virtue of its inherent properties and ascribed powers. La Barre (1974:56) cites many elements common to both plains and Mexican peyote ritualism, including the procurement pilgrimage, the nocturnal meeting time, the fetish peyote, feathers and bird symbolism, the ceremonial fire and incensing, etc. The Tarahumara peyote rituals, with the shaman and his assistants sitting west of
the fire, the placement of the fetish peyote and shaman's instruments, foreshadow similar aspects of the plains rite. Ritual features of plains and Mexican origin stand out against each other upon examination of the rite.

Context of the Peyote Meeting

The practice of the plains peyote religion revolves around the all-night meeting at which participants gather to pray, sing, and eat peyote. The meeting is a semiregular Saturday night event among some groups; special meetings can be called at any time, and for a wide variety of occasions. Besides the common reasons of doctoring the sick and seeking power, knowledge, and resolution of personal problems, meetings have also been held to obtain rain, to divine the location of missing properties or the outcome of military campaigns, to celebrate holidays, birthdays or other auspicious events, to mourn deaths, to name children, etc. In fact, "so various are the stated purposes of meetings, that one is led to conclude that when a man wishes to have one, he ordinarily finds little difficulty in discovering a reason for it" (La Barre 1974:58).

The peyote meeting is a pan-Indian event at which participants from any tribe will be welcomed. Women were formerly restricted from meetings among some tribes, but this has eased. Generally, however, women play only a limited role; they do not take turns singing and beating the drum, nor do they use feather fans. Special functions of the ritual, however, such as bringing water into the tipi at midnight and dawn, are customarily reserved for women, frequently selected

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specifically by the sponsor or road man to be so honored:

Among the plains tribes the women attendants at the ceremony held much the same place as had the ceremonially adopted "sisters" of the members of men's dancing societies. They were not only respected, but were sometimes given gifts of clothing or ornaments. (Marriott and Rachlin 1971:44)

Apparently, early plains peyotism was similar to a warriors' society (La Barre 1974:60).

Many tribes, especially in the north, use dried peyote buttons obtained by legal purchase and postal distribution (Schultes and Hofmann 1979:140). Others make a collection pilgrimage to the Texan Rio Grande region, where peyote grows wild. Plains pilgrimages tend to be ritually simpler than Mexican, with only tobacco smoking and prayer at the collecting site. A Comanche pilgrimage described by Hoebel appeared to be patterned after a war party. The first plant found is marked, to be used as a fetish or Father Peyote. It supposedly shows where to find more, again recalling Mexican belief (La Barre 1974:57-58).

Meetings may be sponsored by anyone who wishes to call one. The sponsor usually procures the peyote and food for the breakfast which follows the meeting. He also obtains the services of the ritual leadership, the road man and his assistants--the drummer, cedar man, and fire man. The road man (or road chief) is the leader of the ceremony and has complete authority over it. He may vary the procedure in small ways according to his own dictates; peyote rites vary more with this kind of individual direction than they do between different tribes (La Barre 1974:63). The authority of the road man
is symbolized by his ritual staff, which may be an echo of the Mexican rasping stick.

The meeting place is prepared by the road man and his assistants. The road man directs the construction of the moon-altar, which is dismantled after the meeting. In some cases there is a permanent cement altar. Most tribes hold their meetings in a special tipi which is put up specially for that purpose; often it has symbolic figures painted on it. Other tribes have polygonal "round houses"; Navajo meetings are held in a hogan (La Barre 1974:61). The road man also supplies his own set of ritual tools or props, which is standard and includes the feathered staff of authority, an iron kettle or pot and piece of buckskin (which is assembled to become the water drum), a drumstick, a gourd rattle, an eagle wing-bone whistle, mescal bean necklaces, smoking tobacco and cornhusks (or papers to roll cigarettes), smoking sticks to light the cigarettes, bird feather medicine fans, a cluster of sage, a bag of cedar incense or needles, an altar cloth, and a fetish Father Peyote (or Peyoté Chief) for the altar, carried in a special case usually made of buckskin. The Father Peyote is placed on a cross or rosette of sage near the center of the altar at the beginning of the meeting (Schultes and Hofmann 1979:142-143).

Among some tribes, preparation for the meeting involves ritual purification by traditional sweatbath or complete dietary abstinence from salt the day before the meeting. Usually, however, there is no such purification. Participants simply observe proper hair-dress and attire, often wearing modern "Sunday" clothes. Some wear more
traditional native clothing or special peyote accoutrements, indicating membership in the cult and worn only to its meetings, for example, "crawdad" earrings, peyote neckties or neckerchiefs decorated with appropriate motifs, tie clasps or tacks, etc. (Anderson 1980:45; La Barre 1974:62; Marriott and Rachlin 1971:98).

Procedure of the Meeting

The peyote meeting begins after dark with entry into the tipi. Participants may enter informally one by one, or formally, following the road man single file through the entrance, which faces east. Circling the perimeter of the tent in a clockwise direction, the worshippers arrange themselves in a circle around the altar. The road man situates himself west of the fire, which has been started by the fire man, sitting north of the entrance, in a shelving depression east of the altar. The fire man carefully tends the fire, continually maintaining the ashes in a smaller crescent shape between the fire and the altar. The drummer sits to the right of the road man, the cedar man to the left. When the road man places the Father Peyote upon a cross of sage sprigs on the altar, all conversation ceases; the ceremony is formally begun (La Barre 1974:46-47).

The first ceremony is the smoking of the opening prayer (La Barre 1974:48). With tobacco and cornhusks, blackjack oak leaves, or rolling papers, the road man rolls a cigarette, and then passes the materials around until everyone has likewise rolled one. A hot smoking stick or fire stick is then passed around and everyone lights a cigarette. The road man prays, asking the indulgence and blessing
of the Great Spirit upon the meeting and participants, especially the sponsor, who may have a special concern. Older participants may also voice their prayers aloud. The cigarettes are then put out and placed near or on the altar.

The next ceremony is the blessing or purification of the peyote buttons in cedar-incense smoke. After this, the peyote is distributed, and each participant takes four buttons, eating them after carefully removing the woolly apical hairs (La Barre 1974:48-49). More peyote may be called for throughout the meeting. The rules of passing peyote and other items in the meeting dictate that they move clockwise and in certain logistical configurations; for example, the drum is always passed with the right hand, close to the body; the staff is held with the left hand, at arm's length. La Barre (1974:80) functionally characterizes these rules for passing, perhaps unfortunately, as having an "obsessive, involutional quality." Structurally, these rules seem to represent an augmentation of symbolic function and express, rather eloquently one would think, a marked depth of formality and gravity, rather than an obsession.

After the peyote has been eaten, the road man renders the standard Opening Song (Hayatinayo), accompanied by the drummer, who keeps time on the water drum, which consists of a kettle with a buckskin head lashed thereto (La Barre 1974:49). The drum contains some water, and the head is repeatedly moistened to create and maintain the appropriate timbre. After the road man has sung four songs, he exchanges instruments with the cedar man and drummer successively, each of whom takes a turn singing four songs. The drum and rattle
are passed around until each participant has performed, accompanied by drumming from the man on his right.

Peyote songs are reverently regarded as gifts embodying the power of peyote. Lyrically these songs often consist of sequences of seemingly meaningless syllables interspersed with intelligible words. Some of these apparently improvised phonetic "words" may derive from the language of a tribe from which the cult emanated (Nettl 1953:162). Others may have originated in the synaesthetic properties of peyote intoxication; one well-known song, "Heyowiniho" (originated by John Wilson) is reportedly based on the "sound" of the rising sun (La Barre 1974:20). The musical style of these songs has three sources: Indian music of the South and West, Ghost Dance music, and white gospel music (Anderson 1980:52-53). Most of the meeting is taken up with the singing of these songs. Intermittently, there are prayers from the older men, which are marked with strong, affecting shows of unrestrained emotion, often loud weeping, with no sign of shame or impropriety.

A midnight ceremony interrupts the singing and prayer (La Barre 1974:50-51). Cedar incense is sprinkled into the fire, and participants purify themselves in the fragrant smoke. The fire man exits the tipi and blows four loud blasts with the eagle-bone whistle in each of the four compass directions. He then re-enters the tipi and the road man sings the Midnight Song. Presently, the fire man again leaves, this time returning with a bucket of water which he places before the fire. He then rolls a cigarette and puffs on it four times with a prayer. The cigarette is then passed to each of the
other three officials, each of whom takes a turn smoking and praying. The cigarette is then extinguished, and everyone receives drinking water. An informal recess ensues, during which there may be conversation. Participants are also permitted to leave the tipi and stretch after midnight. Subsequently, they return to the tipi; singing resumes and continues until dawn.

At first light, water is brought in by a chosen woman, representing Peyote Woman, who discovered peyote in an origin story. The road man signals her arrival with four blasts of the whistle, then collects the instruments and sings the four Morning Songs. The woman rolls a cigarette with which she smokes and prays, before passing it to the other officials, who do likewise. Curing ceremonies may be held at this time, after which there is again water to drink. Informality now prevails, with older men sometimes lecturing to younger ones (La Barre 1974:51-52).

Next, the food—parched sweetened corn, fruit, and meat—for the peyote breakfast is brought in by female attendants and placed in an east-west line with the fire and altar. The water drum is disassembled and the Father Peyote taken down from the altar, concluding the rite. Breakfast follows and is generally marked by a spirit of friendship and brotherly goodwill. Finally, the fire man leads the worshippers out of the tipi. The fire is put out, and the altar and tipi are taken down. Later in the morning, the sponsor usually gives a larger feast (La Barre 1974:53).
Plains Peyotism: Present and Future

Through the organization of the Native American Church and the personal efforts of dedicated road men, the peyote religion continues to spread, displacing more traditional beliefs, impeding missionary efforts to fully Christianize the Indians, and insuring a future for peyotism in North America as it goes. The religion now extends geographically and culturally as far east as the Cherokees of North Carolina and as far northwest as the Quinalts of Washington. According to Marriott and Rachlin (1971:54), "it is only a matter of time until it reaches that stronghold of Indian religious die-hardism, the Hopi mesas." La Barre (1974:121), somewhat more summarily, states:

The cult may be expected to spread for some time in the future, but when its inevitable decadence and probable ultimate disappearance have been accomplished, we may have witnessed in it the last of the great intertribal religious movements of the American Indian.

In terms of function, many have agreed that the peyote religion reflects and to some degree adapts to the profound sense of cultural crisis inflicted historically upon the Indian. Slotkin (1956:7) argues that socially, the cult is an example of accommodation rather than militancy, and that it represents "an Indian defense against the consequences of White domination." Aberle (1966:340) calls peyotism a religion of transition, in that . . . peyotists in each tribe stand between non-peyotist traditionalists and more Westernized types..... . It is not an effort to retain the past because it is familiar. Nor is it a self-conscious effort at achieving a transitional stage. It is an effort at personal integration, achieved through a ritual and symbol system which is self-consciously not that of the dominant culture, and not that of the peyotist's native culture.
In this respect, the religion can be viewed not narrowly as a mere symptom of a cultural crisis, but more broadly and positively as an expression of Native American spirit, forever altered by history, but surviving and perennially primal.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The study of peyotism reveals the American Indian from a unique vantage point which has no exact cultural counterpart in Western society, where religion and chemically-induced intoxication are generally considered to be antithetical. In peyotism, we see a combination of religion and magic, medicine and divination. Peyote is a historically recent force in Native American awareness in the United States. In Mexico, however, peyote is part of an ancient and broad native tradition of utilization of hallucinogenic plants, which extends throughout much of Central and South America.

As a native medicine, peyote holds an amazing diversity of appeal. This is primarily due to its hallucinogenic effects, which dramatically illustrate the plant's power or mana. The abundance of potentially active alkaloids in peyote, apart from mescaline, may also contribute to its reputation. We have noted various properties attributed to some of these secondary peyote alkaloids in a few studies, such as sedative, antibiotic. Considering how little extensive research has been done, it is reasonable to suppose that some of the native uses of peyote as a topical medicine could have a practical basis.

One of the more interesting features of the history of peyote is the opposition of the white man to its usage. The Spanish in Mexico were the first to denounce peyote, but it was vigorously and
independently opposed early in the twentieth century in the southern plains by a generation largely unfamiliar with its earlier unsavory reputation in Mexico. The survival of the peyote rites through this suppression testifies not only to their importance in native culture, but also to the determination and persistence of Native Americans in their struggle for religious freedom.

This pattern of white opposition to peyotism is consistent with the suppression of native utilization of other hallucinogens and of Indian religion and culture as a whole. Something of this same phobic response is perhaps evident in the historically recent reactions of skepticism and apprehension toward the "counter-cultural" use of hallucinogenic drugs like peyote and LSD and the sometimes grandiose sounding claims about their effects from authors like Huxley (1954), La Barre (1974), and Zaehner (1974). Yet, several decades of research with LSD-like drugs have confirmed their profound and challenging effects on the human psyche and serendipitously contributed to the understanding of their role in native culture in a significant way.

A number of studies have shown that, although the "transcendent state" is not as common as has been claimed by some (e.g. Leary 1973), even in a relaxed and supportive setting, it does occur in some subjects and closely resembles in form and degree certain types of religious experiences, especially mystical, which can occur spontaneously without drug facilitation (Masters and Houston 1966:257).

This yields a picture of native hallucinogen cultism which is far removed from antiquated notions of drugged ritual frenzies. It
permits a view of the peyote cultist not as an uncivilized savage engaging in incomprehensible, pagan behavior, but as a dignified human being exercising his religious freedom within a certain cultural setting and in a way which is quite practical from a pharmacological point of view. Indeed, one is led to wonder if the white man, whose drug abuse and addiction problems appear as serious as ever, can learn anything from the Native Americans who have so well managed their usage of the hallucinogenic cactus peyote.
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