Reflexivity and Transformation Symbolism in the Navajo Peyote Meeting

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Man is a self-reflecting animal in that he alone has the ability to objectify himself, to stand apart from himself, as it were, and to consider the kind of being he is and what it is that he wants to do and become.

—David Bidney (1967:3)

Everybody's caught up in bills, everybody's caught up in having cars and houses; nobody even takes the time out to look at what's going on—"Where did I come from, where am I at, and where do I need to go?"—but this Peyote gives you the opportunity to do that.

—Dan Goodman[1]

INTRODUCTION

Each of the above texts refers to the same human action: the turning back to fundamentals that enables us to rethink our fundamental assumptions, the modeling of our existence that allows its remodeling. This action, which is the defining characteristic of the human "self," lies at the heart of both psychological anthropology and critical or "reflexive" anthropology.[2] This study examines this human property of reflexivity as it is manifest in the healing

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symbolism of the Navajo Peyote Religion, a Southwestern instantiation of the intertribal nativistic movement also known as the Native American Church (NAC).

With regard to the classic literature on the NAC, this article attempts to clarify a minor disagreement between Schultes (1938) and LaBarre (1939) concerning the Native American categorization of Peyote as "medicine" and the relation of this categorization to the physiological effects of Peyote ingestion. Schultes called attention to reported cures as the key to Peyote's widespread therapeutic reputation; LaBarre, seemingly discounting any actual therapeutic efficacy, maintained that Native Americans had been impressed by the visions brought on by Peyote, which they took to be evidence of its "medicine power."

The understanding of the Peyote Meeting outlined in this article reconciles the foci of both scholars to an extent. Schultes was correct to call attention to Peyote's therapeutic reputation, though he seemed to understand the therapeutic effect in standard (Cartesian) biomedical terms. LaBarre was correct to see Peyote's action as psychoactive rather than pharmaceutical in a biomedical sense. In defining this psychoactive property exclusively in terms of impressive "visions," however, LaBarre overlooked Peyote's ability to interrupt habitual (often maladaptive) psychological functioning and behavior, including self-image.

The most general goal of Peyotist rituals seems to be what Wallace (1956) calls "mazeway resynthesis," a radical and rapid reorganization of thought that seems to be facilitated by the induction of an altered state of consciousness (ASC) in a supportive environment. Cognitive/affective reorganization is what is interpreted as the "teaching" or "healing" of Peyote by my Navajo consultants. This ability of Peyote to increase one's susceptibility to behavior modification and therapeutic suggestion (in a context that supports self-transformation through symbolism) seems to be more valued than Peyote's ability to produce visions per se. Peyote renders the psyche more malleable, allowing it to be more effectively reshaped by the realizations one has in the course of the ritual.

In addition to its focus on the development of the self in the social context of the NAC, this article illustrates the relationship between public representations and private psychology, suggesting the ways in which Peyotist symbols represent as well as shape the

experiences of Navajos. It also contributes to the development of what Nuckolls (1991) has called "a promising, but paradoxically undeveloped theory": the concept of symbolic healing outlined by Lévi-Strauss (1963) in "The Effectiveness of Symbols" and elaborated by Munn (1969), Kleinman (1974), Moerman (1979), Obeyesekere (1981), Dow (1986), and Danforth (1989).

To conclude, the primary thesis of this article is that in the Peyote Meeting, symbolism has become a tool in the ritual generation of self-awareness, which, in turn, has become a tool in the therapeutic utilization of Peyote. As such, consideration of Peyote's therapeutic efficacy must include not only knowledge of its psychoactive properties but consideration of the Peyotist ritual process and symbolism. In the following sections, the notion of symbolic efficacy (Lévi-Strauss 1963:186–205), a very important concept to explore given growing interest in the fields of behavioral medicine and psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), is applied to the problem of Peyote's therapeutic reputation (on PNI see Ader et al. 1991; the journals *Advances* and *Psychosomatic Medicine;* and, for an anthropological approach, Colby 1987, 1991). Symbolic efficacy also provides a key to relatively stable trends in native interpretations of Peyotist ritual symbols. The relationship of ritual symbols to individuals is made clearer by Obeyesekere's (1981) category of "personal symbol" and by the notion of unconscious symbolic efficacy (Dow 1986). Finally, the most salient Peyotist symbols and their most prominently shared interpretations are outlined and their underlying associations verbalized using metaphor theory (Fernandez 1973; Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

We are guided throughout by a focus on the power of symbols in the Peyote Meeting: how they reflect and enact the teachings of Peyote, facilitating social control of emotional states. We are also guided by a focus on the power of critical self-awareness to facilitate a recontextualization and renewal of one's life.

An Area of Interpretive Consensus in the Peyote Religion

The NAC is the most widespread Native American religion in the United States. This is because it is an intertribal religion. It is called the Peyote Religion by anthropologists because the central ritual activity of the religion is the sacramental consumption of the psychedelic cactus *Lophophora williamsii,* commonly known as Peyote.

The best-known ethnographers of the Peyote Religion have focused most of their attention on macroanthropological problems of diffusion, history, legal status, and social change. Topics more related to the "insider's view," such as ritual process and symbolism, have been more peripheral. This is perhaps due to the classic anthropological opinions that symbols are so "multitudinous and vague as to defeat analysis" (cited by Fernandez 1965:925) and that the self-generated symbols of individuals, bearing no relationship to their culture, may vary without constraint (cited by Obeyesekere 1981:14). This tendency to see self-generated symbols as private symbols is especially strong in studies of religions that institutionalize personal revelation. Possibly reflecting this mainstream tendency, ethnographers of the Peyote Religion (e.g., Aberle 1991:174–182; LaBarre 1989:75) have often stressed the variety of idiosyncratic interpretations of ritual symbols encountered in native texts, sometimes missing their underlying similarities.[3]

However, though personal interpretations of symbolism are definitely encouraged in the Peyote Religion, there is the feeling of interpretive consensus at a certain level; though individual members are taught to find their own meaning in the experiences brought on by the consumption of Peyote, native texts exhibit a set of recurrent themes; and the structure of the ritual, though subject to any changes suggested by a Road Man's visions, is nevertheless very uniform throughout North America. Consensus is strongest in interpretations of the symbols that relate most directly to the ritual process and the goals and emotional experiences associated with it. Spurred on by this feeling of consensus, and by Fernandez's suggestion that "to construct theories by preventing problems from arising has no virtue" (Fernandez 1965:925), I attempted to find a clearer understanding of what is essential in Peyotist symbolism and the role symbolism plays in the Peyote Meeting.

Even though the two main traditions of Peyotist symbolism, Half Moon symbolism and Cross Fire symbolism, are very similar in structure (the Cross Fire ritual has more Christian symbolism and uses a more elaborate horseshoe-shaped moon sometimes made of concrete), I limited my analysis to the more traditional Half Moon symbolism that was observed on the Navajo reservation.[4]

A search for the least common denominators in indigenous interpretations of ritual symbols collected in fieldwork revealed a structure of astronomical and physiological significata related by

the two central themes of self and transformation. Astronomical significata included the crescent moon and the dawn or sun. Physiological significata included gestation, birth, and lifespan (the duration of a life from birth to death). The use of the term *theme* is especially suitable here because it suggests a dramatic structure as well as a rule for interpretation. In the Peyote Meeting, a powerful dramatic context is created for the Peyotist that supports reflexive self-awareness and spiritual transformation. Peyote is itself an important symbol, linking the general idea of personality with a natural substance. To my consultants, Peyote is not only a medicine that is used, it is also a spirit with which a relationship is maintained. It may be argued that, through the Peyote Religion, Native North Americans are striving to maintain a traditional mythic relationship with natural phenomena conceived of as conscious entities.

This dual identity of Peyote as medicinal substance and spirit points to the dual structure of the ritual process. Self-awareness and psychological transformation are supported not only symbolically but, more overtly, through a socially patterned method of consciousness alteration. The ritual process of the Navajo Peyote Meeting is thus composed of (1) a symbolic process and (2) what may be called a "psychotechnology" (a deliberate technique used to alter consciousness in a particular way). By the term *psychotechnology* I am thinking of a socially constructed technique of mental functioning analogous to the "technique of the body" concept described by Mauss (1936).

The symbolic process supports reflexivity and transformation in the self-image and physiological state of the patient by depicting the self and by symbolically linking the self to natural transformative processes. The psychotechnology is marked by conscious control of perception, cognition, and emotion, which helps to pattern experience in the desired directions.

The fact that Peyotists are taught to *find their own dogma* by interpreting their altered states of consciousness does not eliminate the possibility of interpretive consensus. This is because their ASC experiences are not unstructured. Clinical studies indicate that these states are very sensitive to such things as cultural and personal expectations, environment, and behavior. Ethnographic studies show that ASC-using societies do not merely respond to the experience but develop ASC-related strategies, beliefs, and utiliza-

tion methods. ASC experience thus becomes socially structured via the socially constructed psychotechnology. Peyotist ritual symbols serve to structure the ASC experience, and, in turn, these symbols are structured by the nature of the altered state of consciousness.

To say this another way, the importance of individual revelation in the Peyote Religion does not preclude an analysis of ritual symbolism because public culture is not an entity divorced from private psychology. As Obeyesekere (1981) has demonstrated, culture and personality are linked by two important processes: (1) the complex personal experiences of the individual may be crystalized in the public symbol, and (2) the public symbol may become infused with personal meaning. There may thus be symbols that operate at the levels of personality and culture at the same time.

The fact that personal experience and culture structure one another lends support to Dow's observation that myth is "experientially true" (Dow 1986:59). It is also in congruence with the thesis of Peters and Price-Williams (1980) that to begin to understand shamanism, focus must be on its most salient facet: the experiential aspects of the shaman's ecstasy during ritual performance. Although, as Dow states (1986:60), the connection between spirit beliefs in one culture and psychological constructs in another is not always easy to see, it is obvious that the technique of the Peyote Meeting is based on sound experiential knowledge of human psychological functioning. An example of this knowledge in application is the Peyotist maxim that one must acquire spiritual knowledge directly from Peyote in ceremony. This rule may be seen as a strategy, the effect of which is to allow the individual to choose those symbols that are personally meaningful. The cultural symbols are thus re-created by individuals, becoming what Obeyesekere calls "personal symbols": cultural symbols articulated with individual experience. As Obeyesekere has demonstrated, personal symbols differ from other cultural symbols in the fact that their use is linked to deep motivation in the individual.

Exploration of native interpretations of ritual symbols is significant given Geertz's definition of a religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations" (Geertz 1973:90); Turner's characterization of a ritual as "a patterned process in time, the units of which are symbolic objects and serialized items of symbolic behavior"

(Turner 1989:45); and the general anthropological view of the human as a symbol-using animal.

A focus on ritual process is not incompatible with other, more structure-oriented approaches to the appeal of the religion such as Aberle's (1991), which focuses on how forced livestock reduction along with general deprivation in power, possessions, status, behavior, and worth may have influenced the Navajo to join the religion. This article focuses more on the symbolic healing process and less on the problems that stimulated the need for healing. In fact, a more detailed investigation of the healing process is suggested by Aberle's finding that healing is the primary reason that Navajos give for joining the religion. Thus an examination of healing brings us closer to the "insider's view" of the religion. It seems logical that, before looking at the more abstract reasons for Navajo Peyote use, we must evaluate the extent to which Peyote is used for precisely the reasons Navajos say it is used.

A focus on therapeutic ritual process is also suggested by Schultes's (1938) study of the intertribal identification of Peyote as "medicine" and by his stress on therapeutic function over visual experience. This study supports the view that the function of the Peyote Meeting for the Navajo is primarily therapeutic, although it does not draw as sharp a line between medicinal virtue and visionary experience as Schultes does. In traditional Navajo thought, physical health is not considered to be separate from psychological health. Both are aspects of Spiritual Harmony. Schultes's dichotomy does, however, reveal a truth about the consciousness alteration strategy used by the Navajo Peyote Religion: long-term cognitive and emotional alterations are more valued than short-term perceptual alterations.

These findings tell us not only about the symbolism and therapeutic method of Navajo Peyotists, they reveal something about the Navajo conception of the human self. The Navajo conception of the self seems to stress the psychological aspect more than the physical aspect and sees the two as interconnected spiritually. This stands in contrast to the scientific view of Euro-American medicine, which separates the human into secularized physical and psychological selves. In Hallowell's terminology, the Peyote Ceremony is a means by which the self is culturally constituted and by which self-awareness is built up in the individual. This task is aided by the consciousness-altering effects of Peyote, which enable a powerful

experience of what Hallowell (1974) called the "self as a perceptible object."

NAVAJO BELIEFS CONCERNING SELF AND ILLNESS

The healing process of the Navajo Peyote Ceremony is more fully understood if we are aware of the fundamental differences between Native American theories of curing and the theory of Euro-American medicine. The Navajo concept of well-being is a supernatural concept in which physical, psychological, and social health depends upon spiritual harmony or balance. This holistic view of health, which seems not to distinguish the mental from the physical, is typical of nonindustrial cultures. Spiritual Harmony is called *hózhǫ́* in Navajo, and the concept occupies a central position in Navajo religious beliefs (Kluckhohn 1949).[5] If this harmony is upset, the spirit is put into a vulnerable state. This spiritual imbalance may result in health problems, as Road Man Dan indicated: "Your mind gets tired, your spirit gets tired. When your mind gets tired and your spirit gets tired, it affects your body."

These two sentences illustrate the emic causal chain proposed here: the spiritual realm is linked with the psychological realm. When the spirit is strengthened, physical problems are alleviated. Navajos classify illnesses by supernatural causes rather than by symptoms (Levy 1987:3). Harmony may be upset by violation of a tabu, such as coming into contact with the location of a lightning strike or a death. Navajos refer to this class of things as *bahadzid* ("dangerous to do") (Adair et al. 1988). Harmony may also be upset by the power of evil thoughts, as studies of Navajo witchcraft concepts and mythology demonstrate.

In a legend described by Gladys Reichard (1950), the mythological character First Woman threatens: "When I think, something bad will happen. People will become ill. Coyote will know [and presumably carry out] all my thoughts." In Reichard's opinion, the main cause of illness for Navajos is not the presence of germs but the absence of a positive psychological state: "Fear, the primary cause of illness, is established, confidence undermined. Fear may be combated by a power who will stand up to it, refuse to abandon courage. By turning inward, using one's own powers, one may find the strength to overcome evil" (Reichard 1950:106). Therefore, when we are dealing with Navajo theories of "curing," we must be

aware that what is really being treated is the spiritual or psychological imbalance.

Navajos believe that when the spiritual imbalance is corrected, a physical cure is enabled. This sort of belief has possible validity in terms of the Euro-American medical concept of "placebo effect." Though the placebo effect has been treated merely as an experimental "nuisance factor" by mainstream medicine rather than systematically explored and exploited, the connection between mind and body has begun to be seriously reconsidered by Euro-American science and is being explored in such fields as the relatively new field of PNI. PNI studies suggest that stressful psychological states, such as anxiety, grief, depression, and loneliness, may influence immune system function. This hypothesis is supported by such anatomical facts as the innervation of immune system organs by sympathetic nerves and the existence of receptors for neurochemicals on immune system cells.

The possibility that the traditional (non-Peyotist) Navajo ceremony alters consciousness to facilitate healing is supported by the statement of a consultant at a *kinaaldá* ceremony I attended that Navajo ceremonies make her "high." Another consultant explained Navajo healing in the following way:

> The more I learn about Navajo religion, the more I think that it is like psychology. When the medicine man sings, he keeps telling you that you are well and, after a while, you believe it. It's like he brainwashes you into being cured. [Emma Parker]

Naturally, viewing the traditional ceremony in this way gives a new meaning to the Peyote Religion. Rather than being something completely foreign, we may consider the addition of Peyote in terms of a psychotechnological revolution fulfilling the same goals as the traditional ceremony but in a shorter amount of time (one night versus five or nine) and with a much more profound psychotransformative impact.

The contention that Peyote is used to facilitate psychological restructuring supports Wagner's (1975) argument that Navajos use Peyote for pragmatic reasons rather than as a "flight from reality." Wagner reports that meetings were held for nervousness, excessive "tiredness," loss of spiritual focus, or loss of harmony in interpersonal relationships. Peyote helped an auto mechanic learn his trade, enabling him to see "how the engine parts fit together into an overall system."

This same recognition of the ability of psychotropic substances to reduce the time needed for psychological readjustment underlies the LSD utilization pattern of Euro-American psycholytic therapy, the intent of which was to "loosen" the mind to allow more efficient psychoanalysis (Bravo and Grob 1989). Given the traditional Navajo concern with healing, we must accept Schultes's opinion that medicinal reputation was a more important factor in diffusion than vision quest in the case of the Navajo.

RITUAL SYMBOLISM OF THE NAVAJO PEYOTE RELIGION

The ritual of the Peyote Religion, which is called a "meeting," takes place in a circular enclosure, usually a tipi, which opens to the east. Less often, among the Navajo, a hogan is used. Inside the enclosure, a crescent mound of earth is constructed and a line is drawn along the top to represent the "Peyote Road." There are four main officiants: the Road Man, who is the leader of the meeting; the Drummer Man, who is responsible for drumming; the Fire Man, who tends the central fire; and the Cedar Man, who sprinkles cedar incense on the fire.

The participants enter the tipi at sundown. The Road Man places an especially fine Peyote cactus, most often called "Mother Peyote" or "Father Peyote," on top of the moon altar. The Peyotist is taught to maintain focus on this Peyote, sending his or her prayers through it. After an opening prayer, which states the purpose of the meeting, Peyote is passed around, and drumming and singing of Peyote songs begins. The ritual number four is very important; each participant sings a set of four songs. The drum is passed in a clockwise direction, and rounds of singing alternate with the passing of Peyote, which is also clockwise. Most of the participant's time is spent in silent prayer while others are singing.

At midnight, there is a ceremony in which more prayers are said and a bucket of water is passed around. At this time, the Road Man may exit the tipi and blow a whistle made from the wing-bone of an eagle to the four directions. Rounds of singing and passing of Peyote resume and continue until near dawn, when morning water is brought in by a woman (usually a relative of the sponsor) who is often said to represent Peyote Woman, the mythological character who first found Peyote. There is a ceremonial breakfast of corn, meat, fruit, and water. The meeting ends soon after dawn, when

the participants may go outside to "greet the sun." Later, toward noon, a larger meal is served.

The focal symbols of the Peyote Religion are Peyote, the crescent moon, the dawn, the tipi, Peyote Bird, fire, eagle feather, and the various ritual implements. The Peyote Religion has taken common elements of the symbolic languages of North American tribes and fused them into a new synthesis. Euro-American symbols are also seen in some groups and may include the Christian cross, the Bible, or the American flag. It should be noted that these symbols function in a general way as symbols of an "Indian" identity. A full exploration of issues of ethnic identity in the symbolism of the NAC, however, would require a study of its own. For the purposes of this article, we can consider "Indian" identity a part of the "self symbolism" to be discussed below.

Another issue that requires further research is the role of women in the Peyote Religion. This issue is foregrounded by the importance of the female body as a source of ritual symbolism, by the importance of woman as the discoverer of Peyote, and by the references to Mother Peyote. I am also told that there have been female Road Men. My first impression from fieldwork is that, although women play a subordinate role in the ritual, they are important in enforcing the ethical code of the religion outside of the ritual.

This article will concentrate on four symbols that play an important role in the ritual: Peyote, the moon, the dawn, and the tipi. The centrality of these symbols is demonstrated by their frequent depiction in Peyotist art such as the paintings printed on the labels of Peyote song tapes or the elaborate decoration painted on the sides of the chrome water pails used in the rituals.

HEALING SYMBOLISMS

The work of anthropologists such as Dow, Lévi-Strauss, Moerman, and Turner have demonstrated that ritual symbols such as the Peyotist crescent moon are not merely decorative but may serve an integral function in the ritual process. Lévi-Strauss, examining the text of a Cuna shaman's healing song for difficult childbirth, shows how the representations evoked by the song bring about a modification in the organic functions of the woman giving birth (1963:186–205). Moerman (1979) labeled the type of process described by Lévi-Strauss "symbolic healing," and Dow (1986)

proposed a universal structure of symbolic healing in which the healer helps the patient particularize a mythic world and manipulate healing symbols in it.

Two types of symbolism associated with the ritual process of the Peyote Meeting are revealed in the texts of my consultants: what I will call "self-symbolism" (symbols of the individual human life) and "transformation symbolism" (symbols that refer to the process of change). These designations refer to cultural trends in the activity of interpreting ritual symbols that may result in the generation of a variety of related interpretations. A significant number of the interpretations of Peyotist symbols recorded by ethnographers in the literature and by the present ethnographer seem to be variations on these two themes of self and transformation.

As the opening quote from Bidney states, humans are distinguished by our ability to objectify ourselves. We may call this property "reflexivity." Reflexivity is most apparent when humans create symbols referring to the self. These self symbols demonstrate the emergence of the self as an object in a world of other objects (Hallowell 1974). Anthropology itself, especially cross-cultural anthropological studies, may be seen as part of a large-scale joint effort at a social depiction of the human self. Anthropology is thus based on the human property of reflexivity.

This depiction of the self is present in the iconography of the central moon-shaped altar of the Peyote Meeting and in the ritual behavior associated with the moon symbol. The moon altar seems to function as an aid to reflexivity, helping the individual to contemplate more objectively his or her own life and the nature of human life in the abstract. During the ritual, the Peyotist is instructed to focus on the altar and to look inward, being receptive to the teachings of Peyote. Aberle's description of Peyote's effect in terms of the feeling of "personal significance" suggests an awareness of the importance of reflexivity. As Aberle states, "One's self, one's aims, one's relationships, and one's ethics have become matters for reflection" (Aberle 1991:8). But Peyotists stress *corrective reflexivity* as well as *contemplative reflexivity*. As such, self-awareness is generated in connection with symbols of transformation.

One context in which transformation symbolism is prominent is well known to anthropology. This symbolism is associated with the liminal phase of a rite of passage between social roles (Turner 1969; Van Gennep 1960). Though certain Peyote Meetings, such as

Peyote weddings, do support socio-structural transition, the usual meaning of the term *rite of passage* does not adequately describe the central process of the Peyote Meeting. Perhaps a more general term such as *rite of transformation,* encompassing both structural and nonstructural change, could be used. Both structural and nonstructural rites of transformation have as their goal a transformation of the individual.

The all-night healing ceremony of the Navajo Peyote Religion is a good example of a nonstructural rite of transformation. The transformation here involves the restoration of *hózhǫ́,* which enables physical health and mental balance. The ritual process is, however, very similar to a rite of passage and exhibits symbolism typical of the liminal and postliminal phases. Through the symbols of the Peyote Ceremony, the healing process is linked with natural processes of physiological and astronomical transformation.

Many Peyotists report physical cures. In this case the process may follow a path similar to the one outlined by Dow (1986:59), who assumes that there are psychological processes in which symbols affect the mind, which in turn affects the body. According to Dow, mythic symbols couple the social system to the self-system of the patient, and emotions link the conscious self-system and the unconscious somatic system. Symbolic healing allows unconscious and somatic processes to be controlled by symbolic communication occuring in the social system. The fact that this process is often unconscious may be a benefit:

> It is . . . important to separate the notion of cognition from communication. Cognition as seen by Plutchik (1977) takes place unconsciously. Thus the interpretation of symbols can be mediated by the somatic system before they are processed in the self system. This limitation on communication to the self system seems to have adaptive advantages. In one sense, gene evolution is only making a tentative experiment with human consciousness. It still holds the power to change conscious symbol processing by coloring those symbols in the unconscious before they are perceived by the self system. [Dow 1986:63]

Because interpretation of Peyotist symbols may do more good for the patient when it is unconscious, it seems sensible in a study of ritual process to concentrate on the interpretations of those consultants whose role is to consciously manipulate these symbols: Road Men. This also suggests another reason why standardized interpretations are not consciously agreed upon in the Peyote Religion: unconsciously interpreted symbols may actually be more

therapeutically effective (for a discussion of knowledge of the unconscious among Navajo medicine men, see Bergman 1973).

MULTIVOCALITY AND POLARIZATION OF MEANING

An enlightening study in relation to Peyotist ritual symbols is Victor Turner's classic discussion of ritual symbols among the Ndembu of Zambia (Turner 1989). Especially appropriate to this study is Turner's study of the girl's puberty ritual *Nkang'a* because of its natural and physiological symbolism. The central symbol of Nkang'a is the *mudyi* tree, next to which the novice is placed in the ritual. Because of the white latex it exudes, the mudyi tree symbolizes breast milk and the breasts that supply it. Among the Ndembu, the puberty ritual is performed when the girl's breasts begin to ripen rather than at her first menstruation. At ascending levels of abstraction, the mudyi symbolizes for the girl being initiated into adulthood the bond of nurturing between mother and child, matriliny, tribal custom, and the unity of Ndembu society itself.

The crescent moon altar of the Peyote Meeting, like the mudyi tree of Nkang'a, is an excellent example of what Turner described as a "condensation symbol." Following Sapir, Turner identifies ritual symbols as condensation symbols rather than referential symbols. Referential symbols refer primarily to known facts, while condensation symbols are saturated with emotional quality and are more associated with the unconscious than the conscious. Condensation symbols are also characterized by the property of polysemy or multivocality (Turner 1989:50–52). A single symbol may stand for many things. The multivocal nature of the moon symbol may have caused Aberle to conclude that "the meaning of the moon cannot be pinned down; it is far too variable" (1991:174). However, the fact that the moon may signify more than one thing should not keep us from trying to identify these various meanings, their interrelations, and their significance to the ritual and to the people interviewed.

Ritual symbols, according to Turner, have three properties: the condensation or multivocality mentioned above (where many things are represented in a single formation), "unification of disparate significata" (interconnected by virtue of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought), and "polarization of meaning" (the "ideological pole," which is concerned with components of the moral and social orders, and the "sensory pole," in

which the significata are usually natural and physiological phenomena and processes).

This last property, polarization of meaning, is exemplified in the Nkang'a ritual by the association in the mudyi symbol of breast milk (the sensory pole) and matriliny (the ideological pole). Similarly, the Peyotist moon/tipi symbolic complex associates ideological significata of psychological and spiritual transformation with natural, sensory significata of the dawn, gestation, and birth. All of the major transformation symbols in the Peyote healing ceremony have, at their sensory pole, a strong connection with physiology and astronomy.

THE DUAL MEANING OF PEYOTE

We will now take a more detailed look at individual ritual symbols, beginning with Navajo beliefs about Peyote. Peyote is not easily classified as a self-symbol or a transformation symbol, but its significance to the transformative process will become apparent. Peyote may be seen as the "dominant symbol" of the Peyote Meeting in the same way that Turner (1989:31) found *nfunda* (also a ritual "medicine") to be the dominant symbol in the Ndembu boy's circumcision ritual. We may also, following Dow, classify Peyote in terms of its role as a generalized symbolic medium. In this case, it would be called a transactional symbol linking the individual to an omniscient spiritual power.

PEYOTE IS A "MEDICINE"

Surely the most important symbol in the Peyote Religion is Peyote itself. Peyote is believed to be a holy panacea, a means of restoring spiritual harmony and a means of communication with the Great Spirit. The definition of Peyote that I elicited from Dan illustrates the importance of Peyote for many Navajos:

> It's everything. It's a teacher, a protector, it's a guidance. It's everything to us. The Creator . . . put this herb down for us. We look at it as an herb. And the Creator put certain properties within that herb.

Peyote is typically defined as an herb by Navajos, and its use is described in the context of Navajo herbal medicine. Road Man Mike stated simply, "I know Peyote as an herb. There are other herbs on this reservation, and Peyote is another one of those that

you can use." The pre-Peyote Navajo word for medicine, *'azee'*, has come to be used by the Navajo to refer to Peyote. This usage follows a pattern present in other tribes. Thus, according to Schultes (1938:711), the Delaware *biisung,* the Taos *walena,* the Comanche *puakit,* the Omaha *makan,* the Kickapoo *ˌnaw-tai-no-nee,* the Shawnee *o-jay-bee-kee,* and (possibly) the Aztec *ichpatl* are reported in the literature as terms formerly meaning medicine but now meaning Peyote. Needless to say, this terminology supports Schultes's view of the medicinal appeal of Peyote.

However, though healing is undoubtedly more important to Navajo Peyotists than is the vision quest pattern of the plains, we do not need to draw as hard a line between medicinal virtue and visionary experience as Schultes draws. Given the holistic, spiritual nature of the Native American concept of illness, a vision may very well play a part in the healing process, as when a ritual infringement responsible for the illness is revealed in a Peyote-induced dream. Schultes's stress on medicinal appeal over vision quest is nonetheless supported by my Navajo consultants, whose texts indicate that, even though they may report visions, cognitive, emotional, and therapeutic alterations are definitely more valued than perceptual alterations.

Navajo use of Peyote to achieve psychological restructuring follows a well-known pattern. Many scholars support the view that ASC experience may induce long-term as well as short-term change.[6] Dow states that certain types of ASC may help the patient abandon attempts at self-transaction of emotion and allow emotions to be transacted directly by the linked transactional symbols (Dow 1986:64). My consultant Dan always emphasized the recovery of spirituality through a religious experience enabled by Peyote and its therapeutic value. Reflecting the central Peyotist stance against alcoholism, he said that, as in the Twelve Step method of Alcoholics Anonymous, spirituality is essential to full recovery.

PEYOTE IS A SPIRIT

Perhaps the most crucial thing to understand about the meaning of Peyote to many Native Americans is that Peyote has a dual identity (i.e., it is multivocal): Peyote is regarded at once as a medicinal herb with God-given properties and as a personality, or spirit, that is omniscient and that functions in various roles to help the Indian. Peyote is present in the ceremony in the form of the

Mother Peyote or Father Peyote, an especially large and perfectly formed cactus that is placed on the central crescent-shaped mound of earth. Prayers are sent through Peyote to the Creator or to Peyote itself, who is conceived of as a compassionate, helpful being. As Peyotist Wilson Aronilth (1981) writes, "This Divine herb . . . has a mind; it can see, it can move, and it grows."

This Peyote was put down with certain properties by the Holy Spirit. That's the mediator between you and the Creator. It's also got properties and a spirit of its own. And so we call it "Mother Peyote," "Father Peyote." . . . We believe that we tell our problems to this medicine here, then it's gonna help us to overcome whatever problems we're having. [Dan Goodman]

Aberle (1991:337) reports that various terms are used in the ceremony that imply that Peyote is all-seeing, such as "nothing is hidden from it from horizon to horizon." The ability of Peyote to know and communicate one's deepest thoughts, guilt feelings, or memories suggests omniscience experientially. Because nothing is hidden from it, ingestion of Peyote reveals the nature of the problem and its resolution to the meeting's participants. They partake in the omniscience of Peyote. One of my consultants told me that the person for whom the meeting is called is asking the participants, "Think to the four directions for me. Think to Mother Earth for me. Help me." The guidance of Peyote extends beyond the ceremony. One of my consultants told me of a problem his young son was having in learning how to tie his shoes. His father gave him a single Peyote button and, that day, he learned how to tie his shoes. The omniscient Peyote took the form of an authority figure for Mike's grandsons, who were taught the familiar formula "it knows if you are bad or good." In its capacity as guide, Peyote functions to keep the individual on the right path, which especially includes avoidance of alcohol: "It knows if you've smoked or drunk. [Who?] The Father Peyote—or Peyote" (Ben Parker).

Because of Peyote's dual identity as medicinal herb and spirit, we must disagree with Oswald Werner's belief that "calling it the 'Peyote Religion' is like calling Christianity the 'Wine Religion' " (personal communication, June 1990). If Peyote were merely seen as a sacrament, this would be the case. But Werner ignores the belief in Peyote Spirit. Because of this belief, calling it the "Peyote Religion" is more like calling Christianity the "Christ Religion," which is exactly what we do (*Christ*-ianity). This comparison between Peyote Spirit and Christ is, in fact, frequently made by

Peyotists who view Peyote as a savior. Wallace's (1966:138) category of "salvation ritual" is appropriate here also.

Just as "Christ Religion" could be viewed as a rough translation of *Christianity,* "Peyote Religion" can be viewed as a rough translation of the Navajo term for their religion: *'azee' bee hoogáałʔí* ("medicine, its movement") (Aberle 1991:378). The validity of this translation is supported by the fact that my consultants both identify their movement by the English term *religion* and refer to their medicine by the English word *Peyote.* This supports the protectionist view that there could be no Peyote Religion without Peyote. As the dominant symbol of the belief system (Turner 1989) and the transactional symbol of the healing system (Dow 1986), it is indispensable.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CRESCENT MOON AND THE PEYOTE ROAD

The Mother Peyote, symbolic of Peyote Spirit, sits upon the enigmatic moon symbol of the ceremonial altar (see Figure 1). Though Aberle (1991:174) finds *the* meaning of the moon impossible to pin down, individual interpretations in the texts of my consultants and in the literature seem to center on three main referents: the moon as a symbol of nature, as a symbol of birth, and as a symbol of the human lifespan. These three ideas are obviously closely related, all dealing with universal natural phenomena.

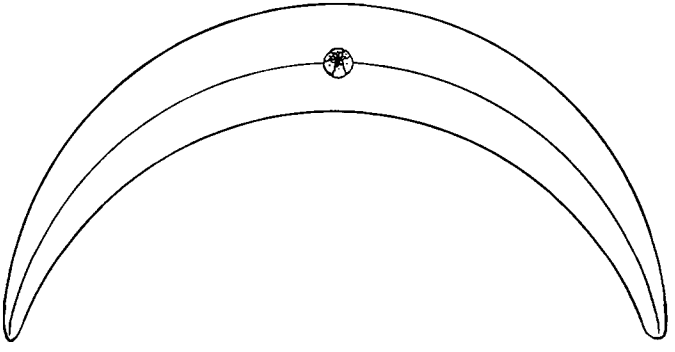

Figure 1. Crescent moon altar with Peyote Road and Father or Mother Peyote.

Transformation symbolism is present most significantly in the first two referents: astronomical transformation in the moon as nature symbol and physiological transformation in the moon as symbol of birth. With regard to the third referent, the moon is primarily a self-symbol, although the transformation process is also apparent in the passage of the self from birth to death. We see here that the meanings of the moon are not random. Rather, the moon is a nexus of the major themes of the religion: self, transformation, astronomy, physiology, nature.

THE MOON AS A SYMBOL OF NATURE

The general relationship of the moon and the natural world is obvious. As the Peyote Meeting takes place at night, the moon is the governing celestial body. Aberle's consultant Mike Kiyaani describes it as a symbol of "the universe" (Aberle 1991:174). In the meeting, the worshipper is brought face to face with the realities of nature with which he or she must come into accord. As Lamphere (1969) points out, Leach's dichotomy between nature and society does not accurately reflect Navajo beliefs. In Navajo ritual, nature becomes "an all-inclusive organizing device: a fusion of natural, supernatural, and human or social elements." Thus, it seems that harmony with nature implies social cohesion as well.

> What you're trying to do is to get in harmony with everything. Everything is there—you're part of it. As I said, you're part of the four elements of life, that's why you gotta respect it. You're part of nature, you're part of anything that lives. [Dan Goodman]

In the temporal structure of the meeting, the all-night moon-meditation sets the stage for the climactic dawn-meditation. In this way the ceremony symbolically represents the transition from night into day. This transition serves as a symbol of the healing process: the "dark night of the soul" is transformed into a new dawn of hope.

It may be argued that the crescent phase of the moon is inherently transitional. If we see the arrival of the full moon and the arrival of the new moon (when the dark side of the moon faces earth) as states, then the intervening periods of waxing and waning (growth and decline of the moon) are transitional periods between the states, what Turner referred to as "liminal phases."

THE MOON AS A SYMBOL OF HUMAN LIFE

The moon altar also functions as a self-symbol. In the construction of the moon altar, a line (called the Peyote Road) is sketched along the top. This line symbolizes the ethical code of the religion—the proper path to be followed in life. Thus the moon is a symbol of the path of a human life, "from birth (southern tip) to the crest of maturity and knowledge (at the place of the peyote) and thence downward again to the ground through old age to death (northern tip)" (LaBarre 1989:46). The Mother Peyote is placed in the center of this line, and Peyote is believed to guide the worshipper along this straight path. The Road Man also helps through his knowledge of the Road.

The Great Spirit can tell you good things of life through this herb. It can show you the right direction of life. It has life in itself. It will take you from childbirth to old age and into everlasting life. [Aronilth 1981]

The human lifespan is symbolically depicted in the context of nature, as the isomorphism of the crescent moon and the Peyote Road demonstrate. If the individual is in harmony with nature, he will avoid falling off the path:

On top of that moon there's a line drawn like that. This side of the moon on the south side, where it begins, that's the beginning of birth, and you travel along the top of this road here. You go on down into old age. That's where you become elderly and old age overcomes you. Now, the moon is such that some people say that you stay on this road. If you go this way, you're gonna fall into the fire, you're gonna hurt yourself. If you go this way, you're gonna fall off the cliff. So if you stay on this road and live a good life, then you'll reach old age down on the other side. And that's the ultimate goal—that's what that represents. [And in the middle of the road they put the Father Peyote?] Yeah. They say somewhere along the way you're gonna need help and you're gonna come up on that Peyote. And it's gonna help you out to continue on in life. That Peyote is there always to help you with your hardships. [Dan Goodman]

The ethical code of the Peyote Road has four basic rules: (1) brotherly love, (2) care of family, (3) self-reliance (especially economic self-reliance), and (4) avoidance of alcohol (Slotkin 1975:71). It is interesting to compare this metaphor of a path between extremes (the fire and the cliff) with the "middle way" of Buddhism.

THE DEATH/REBIRTH SYMBOLISM OF THE MOON/TIPI SYMBOLIC COMPLEX

The moon, particularly in conjunction with the tipi (see Figure 2), also represents the natural process of birth, which produces the individual human life. One of Aberle's consultants states, "The symbol of the quarter moon typifies the female from which all things come; the mother earth; Navajo mothers; female rain" (Aberle 1991:174). Native American ritual structures typically unite microcosm and womb symbolism. The process of gestation is referred to symbolically as the changing of the moon: "The sacred moon is right before us again. Through the changing of this moon is how we were born" (Aronilth and Ashley 1981:side 1, song 1). The development of the human takes place during the changing of nine moons. Dan explained it this way:

The moon itself represents when the female becomes pregnant, there's gonna be nine moons or nine months. So that moon, what it represents is life because after nine months, after nine moons you give birth. . . . The tent in the Peyote

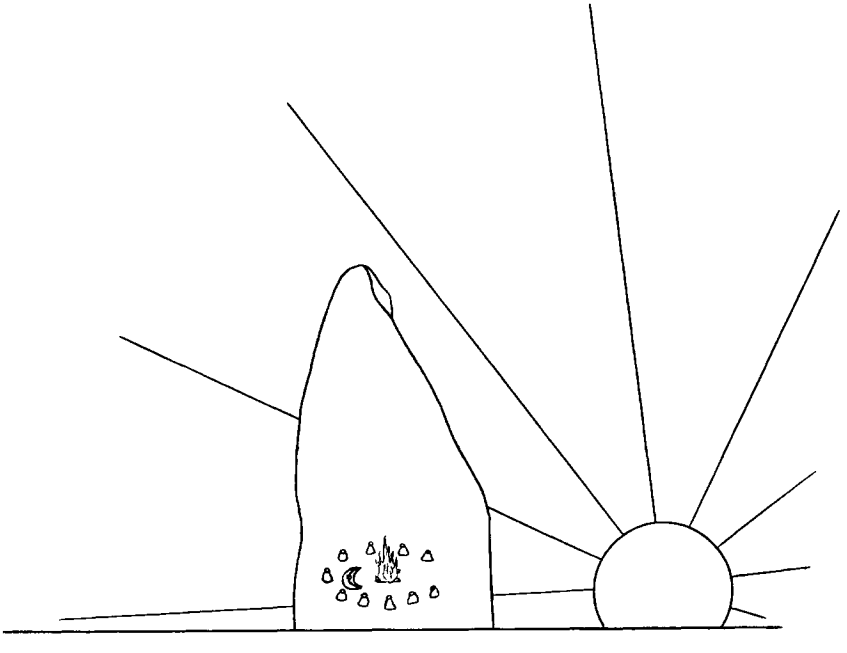

Figure 2. Tipi and dawn symbolism.

ceremony represents a female with a blanket facing east. The nine fastening pins on the front of the tipi represent the nine months that it takes for a human being to develop.

The ceremony is thus a symbolic gestation. This birth symbolism suggests psychodynamic origins of Peyotist symbols (see Obeyesekere 1981). The actual experience of death and rebirth is a central feature of shamanism, mysticism, conversion, and certain forms of psychotherapy (Bean and Vane 1978:122; Eliade 1974; Grof 1976). Surely the most familiar example of this type of imagery is the newly converted Christian's experience of being "born again." Walsh (1990) offers a plausible psychological model to account for this widespread experiential structure. According to Walsh, the death/rebirth or dismemberment/reconstitution experience occurs when intense emotional arousal and stress overwhelm the mind's habitual patterning forces and the psyche's organization temporarily collapses. This destabilizing process "is projected, pictured, and experienced as images. These are so-called autosymbolic images, which symbolize one's own psychological state" (Walsh 1990:63). Rebirth coincides with the suspension of maladaptive habitual thought patterns and self-image.

The visualization in the moon symbol of life as a finite road or arc suggests awareness of the impermanence of life. As Palgi and Abramovitch indicate, "death awareness is a natural sequel to the development of self-awareness—an intrinsic attribute of humankind" (1984:385). Just as the moon is born and dies in its cycle, contemplation of the nature of life may allow a realization of death and a new appreciation for a proper experience of life:

When I eat it I feel happy and good and thank God for his many gifts. As we use peoti in our meetings we realize we have to die and it aids us to do right, it helps us to live better lives and enjoy happier experiences. [Black Dog, cited by Slotkin 1975]

Confrontation with the possibility of death can bring about a major behavioral change, exemplified by Dan's crucial experience, given below. The presence of the moon in the following passage may be significant consciously or unconsciously. Reflecting the spiritual nature of Navajo conceptions of self and healing, we see in this passage that, in many cases, *healing* refers less to a relief from physical symptoms than to an acceptance of one's life, a readjustment, and a new hope and courage:

I went through some depression after I lost my vision in '72. . . . I was teeter-tottering back and forth. Anyway, I was in a meeting and I ate some medicine and I sat back. Something happened. I don't know if I went asleep or what. But I had a vision—or I don't know what it was—a dream. I was out somewhere with some friends and we were drinking. And I was carrying a can of beer and the moonlight was shining and I could see that can of beer open like this. And we stopped and parked the car. So, I walked away from them. And I could hear all the noise, laughing and guys having a good time, behind me, but I kind of walked away from it. All of a sudden I heard a shot. I heard two shots from a gun. Next thing I knew, where I live there's a graveyard up on a hill . . . and this voice told me, "If you don't make up your mind, this is where you're headed. If you don't decide one way or another, this is where you're headed. You can't play with this." And that turned my life completely around. I always remember that. And then I woke up and I was in that meeting. And that turned me completely around. [Dan Goodman]

This ability of Peyote to make the ritual a near-death experience for the participant seems to be a major reason for the use of Peyote in the NAC. The ritual has the character of an ordeal, and contemplation of the finite nature of life may combine with the fear that the ASC one is experiencing may be fatal (this was a common charge of anti-Peyotist Navajos according to Mike Parker). It seems likely, in the latter case, that survival of the ritual (which inevitably occurs) would be attributed to the protection of the Great Spirit or Peyote.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE DAWN

As the crescent moon is a symbol of spiritual gestation, the dawn seems to be a symbol of spiritual rebirth and renewal to Peyotists. The temporal focus of the ceremony is anticipation of the coming dawn. In a study of Peyote songs, McAllester was struck by the large number of texts that refer to the coming of dawn. Many songs simply repeat exclamations such as "Dawn is coming, wake up!" or "It is day" (McAllester 1949:29). Such texts probably refer not only to the end of the present ceremonial ordeal but also provide a more general symbol of optimism that may support the cognitive restructure. The dawn is transformed by the all-night ritual, and there are references to a renewed perception of the world as in the following informant's memory of a Tonkawa meeting he attended in 1902:

Dave said, "When you see that sun, you're going to see it come out on the best world you ever saw. It's going to make you feel young and good in every way." . . . Dave stayed there the next morning for a little to eat. I got up early and looked

at the sun. It was very, very beautiful! The sun was coming out just as if it was before my face, the rays spreading out every way. My heart surely felt good to see it, so good, such a beautiful world! I can't tell you how good I felt. [Opler 1939:437]

One final ethnographic example provides a perfect illustration of the relationship between culture and personal experience. The healing of the individual is symbolized in the central myth of the Peyote Religion, which we may call the "Peyote Origin Myth." This is Wilson Aronilth's version of the story:

As the story goes, this woman was participating in a hunting trip with fellow hunters from her tribe. . . . A group of warriors attacked these hunters and in the process many were unfortunate and others ran to safety. Among the unfortunate was this one woman. She was wounded from the war party, and was left behind by her people to die. Through all of her suffering she became lost and helpless in the desert. But, out of this desolation and terror this woman heard a voice speak to her first through a dream and after she woke from the dream. The Voice said, "Eat the sacred plant that is growing beside you, that is life and all of the richest blessings for you and your Indian people." Weakly, this woman turned her head against the earth's surface and saw the herb. Its head was divided into five points. These five points are the symbol of man, his beliefs and his religion. She reached for the plant and it seemed to extend outward to meet her fingers. She pulled out the herb and partook of it. Through the partaking of this plant her strength returned and she was healed and cured from her sufferings. [1981]

Reflecting the possible hypnomantic origin of myth (Obeyesekere 1981:181), this story serves as an adequate symbol of the experience of the individual Peyotist. The typical account of the individual member's first experience of Peyote is identical to the Peyote Origin Myth. There is thus an isomorphism between myth, ritual, and personal experience in the Peyote Religion. The story may also be symbolic of Peyote's role as savior of the entire Indian people after European domination. After being attacked by a group of warriors, the lost and helpless Indian's spirit is renewed. It is interesting that the main character is characterized as being alone, separated from the group. Peyote serves social cohesion as well as individual balance. It gives strength to those who have become isolated from the society and lost within themselves.

Table 1 summarizes the major areas of interpretive consensus in the symbolic structure of the Peyote Ceremony. It is important to note how the generality of a central meaning (e.g., transformation) allows it to be referred to from various contexts simultaneously (astronomical events, physiology, flora and fauna, social structure,

TABLE 1
SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE OF THE PEYOTE CEREMONY

Symbol[a]	Sensory Significata	Ideological Significata
Peyote	Natural substance, medicine	Omniscient spiritual entity
Moon	Gestation	Spiritual transformation
	Human lifespan	Peyote Road (ethical code)
	Nature	Nature
Tipi	Womb	Ritual context
Dawn	Birth	Spiritual rebirth, restoration

[a]All symbols refer to an "Indian" identity.

religion). This interpretive grammar is not transferred to the believer as a complete system. Its parts are referred to separately.

Once the basic elements of this symbolic language are apprehended by members of the religion, they are applied freely in interpretation. One example of this reapplication of an interpretation to a different symbol is the Wichita gourd rattle described by LaBarre, whose red tufts are said by an informant to represent "the rays of the rising sun" (LaBarre 1989:68). Another application of death/rebirth symbolism is given by one of Aberle's consultants who refers to the sitting place of the patients in the tipi as "the 'death chamber' from which people hope to emerge" (Aberle 1991:176). A reapplication of self-symbolism is Aronilth's (1981) statement that the five sections of a Peyote cactus are "the symbol of man." We see here how individual symbols and interpretations become detached from their original relationships to generate a variety of new symbolic understandings. Even the radical ritual innovations of John Wilson may be seen in terms of reapplication of self-symbolism and transformation symbolism: the face of an Indian represented in the "Moon Head" altar may work as a self-symbol, enabling a "face to face" encounter; the empty grave of Christ may be a death/rebirth symbol; and so on (LaBarre 1989:154–56).

PEYOTIST SYMBOLS AS MODELS AND METAPHORS

In order to more adequately put into words the understanding of Peyotist symbolism as outlined above, we now turn to a feature of recent studies in symbolic anthropology that suggests a link with

the field of cognitive anthropology (Colby et al. 1981): the interest in tropes, especially metaphor. Fernandez (1973) holds that metaphors, rather than symbols, should be considered the basic analytical units of a ritual because ritual and ritual symbols spring from metaphors. A metaphor is "the statement, explicit or implied, of a correspondence between some subject of thought in need of clarification and an object that brings some clarity to it" (Fernandez 1973).

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:3), our ordinary conceptual system "is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." The function of a metaphor is to give focus to an inchoate target domain through the use of a familiar source domain. As Quinn states, metaphorical source domains are "easy to think with in the sense that the thinker can readily conceptualize the relations among elements in such domains and changes in these relations that result when these elements are set in motion conceptually" (Quinn 1991:80).

The use of the metaphor concept in the study of symbolic systems seems valuable because, as Colby (1991) states, "symbolic representations form a web of meanings that jump across and link different domains of attention." Quinn, however, argues convincingly for the primacy of cultural models in generating metaphors. Quinn lists eight "classes of metaphor" that form the American cultural model of marriage. To Quinn, metaphor helps one to pursue a complex line of reasoning to its end without losing track of its logic. Quinn cites speakers who switch metaphors in midthought, demonstrating that speakers have the reasoning they want to do in mind independently of the metaphors in which they cast it. Quinn also finds that speakers prefer metaphors that map onto multiple elements of the cultural model targeted, allowing it to be "apprehended in its entirety, as an 'experiential gestalt'" (1991:80).

In the case of the Peyote Meeting, metaphor is useful for several reasons. First, the altered state of consciousness is an inchoate experience par excellence. It is consistently characterized in the literature with the word *ineffable,* and subjects often report that it is impossible to describe using language. Human life is, of course, another notoriously inchoate subject. In Peyotist ritual symbolism, familiar astronomical and physiological source domains provide models that are "easy to think with," allowing these inchoate

experiences to be grasped. Ritual metaphors also provide a "road map" for the thought process in ritual—keeping the thoughts and emotions of the Peyotist, to use a native phrase, "straight."

It is important to note that the symbols and metaphors of the Peyote Religion tend to the emotional and cognitive needs of the worshipper and are used to facilitate healing. Peyotist symbolism provides models *for reality* as well as models *of reality* (Geertz 1973). This is an area where meaning is very important. Having a positive model for the ASC experience can mean the difference between experiencing oneself as having glimpsed Ultimate Reality or as having lost touch with reality altogether.

Peyotist lifespan metaphors are embodied primarily in the moon and dawn symbols. The most central metaphor of the Peyote Religion seems to be LIFE IS A ROAD. This correspondence is apparent in the role of Road Man and in the ethical code of the Peyote Road, symbolized in the line drawn along the top of the moon altar. The Peyotist is encouraged to walk the "straight path," and deviation from this path is believed to be dangerous.

A second lifespan metaphor is LIFE IS AN ARC. In the crescent moon symbol, life is depicted as a parabolic curve—increasing in potency from birth until it reaches its peak, and then decreasing as it approaches death (this view of life corresponds to the traditional Navajo goal of a life lived into old age). To be more specific, LIFE IS THE ARC OF THE SUN ACROSS THE SKY. The arc depicted in the moon is always identified as being "in the direction the sun travels," and one of the rules of the meeting is that participants and ceremonial objects move around the tipi in a clockwise (sunwise) direction. It seems that THE HUMAN LIFE IS A DAY, with a sunrise, a noon, and a sunset. This interpretation would add significance to the arrival of the dawn after the meeting: the participants are placed at the beginning of a new day, a new life.

Transformation metaphors are embodied in the moon, dawn, and tipi symbols. The main metaphor here seems to be THE RITUAL PROCESS IS A GESTATION AND BIRTH. This metaphor may be broken down into two parts: THE ALL-NIGHT RITUAL IS A GESTATION and THE DAWN IS A BIRTH. Here, again, life is equated with day. The moon in this context refers to the realm of night and also to the process of gestation that takes place in the waxing and waning of nine "moons."

To pursue this metaphor further, the view of day (or sun) as a state and night (or crescent moon) as transition suggests the equations "sun = state of consciousness" and "moon = the unconscious or the altered state of consciousness." This hypothesis draws support from the fact that night is the time of dreams to the Navajo. This correspondence is, of course, prevalent in Euro-American usage, an example being Turner's contrast of "the brightness of conscious attention" with "the darker strata of the unconscious" (Turner 1985:36).

The context of the transformation process discussed above seems to embody the metaphor THE TIPI IS A WOMB. The tipi also has the character of a map of the Navajo cosmos, symbolically embedding the worshipper in nature at the crossroads of the four directions. The moon, and perhaps Peyote itself, point to nature via part-whole metonymy.

As Quinn stated, speakers prefer utterances that map onto multiple elements of the cultural model simultaneously, allowing the model to be apprehended as an experiential gestalt. We may see the central crescent altar as such an experiential gestalt, simultaneously embodying metaphors of life, transformation, and nature. This representation of the Peyotist cultural model is completed when the Father Peyote is placed on top of the altar, signifying that Peyote is present as spirit and medicine.

CONCLUSIONS

From the time of its earliest etymology, the Nahuatl word *peyotl* has included among its various meanings a familiar Euro-American symbol of transformation: the silky cocoon of a moth larva (LaBarre 1989:16). Today, in the context of the Native North American Peyote Religion, the use of Peyote is connected with astronomical and physiological symbols of transformation.

The symbolism of the Navajo Peyote Religion is permeated with metaphors of healing, rebirth, and the dawning of a new day. These symbols of spiritual transformation provide models of and for what Wallace (1966) called a "religious identity renewal" that may facilitate psychological and psychosomatic healing. As in the Ndembu rituals studied by Turner, values that support social harmony are linked to the universal experiences of the human body, which is "the one thing in nature that is internally experienced, the only

object of which we have subjective knowledge" (Needham 1972). Another class of symbols aid the ritual process by providing a depiction of the human lifespan. These self symbols support reflexivity: the distinctive human ability to take an objective look at one's own life and at human life in the abstract.

The symbolic process is only one part of the entire ritual process: another important part is a socially constructed technique of contemplation in an ASC. This ASC utilization technique, or psychotechnology, is marked by disciplined control of psychological functioning. As a rule, attention is focused on the symbolically structured ceremonial environment rather than lost in a completely personal visionary experience. When visions do occur, they usually reflect the goals implicit in the structure of the ritual.

The Peyotist maxim that one must learn about the religion directly from Peyote may force the Peyotist to find his or her own meaning in ritual symbols causing them to become what Obeyesekere (1981) calls "personal symbols," cultural symbols used with deep motivation. Thus ritual symbols have a role in structuring individual ASC experiences. As Dow (1986) implied, this may happen consciously or unconsciously, the latter possibly being more therapeutically effective.

Due to the interactive nature of cultural symbolism and personal experience, not only do symbols become infused with personal meaning, but cultural symbols may be seen to derive from personal experience. This seems especially possible in the remarkable types of experience encountered in ASC. The boundary line between conscious and unconscious becomes blurred. As Obeyesekere states, "it can be demonstrated that a certain class of experiences are so painful, complicated, and out of the reach of conscious awareness that the individual must express them in indirect representations and symbol formation" (Obeyesekere 1981:33).

In the Peyote Religion, the influence of personal experience on culture is most visibly seen in the type of "autosymbolism" described by Walsh (1990), in which symbols are formed that represent the psychic state of the symbolizer. The influence of culture on personal experience can be seen in terms of the psychotechnology in which symbols are used by the society to structure the individual's consciousness to maximize therapeutic benefit. Stated simply, Peyotist ritual symbols seem to be autosymbolic in origin and psychotechnological in use. For this reason, there is a relatively

high level of consensus in interpretation of symbols that relate most directly to the ritual process. As such, analysis of the symbolic dimension of the Peyote Meeting seems not only possible but necessary to a full understanding of the religion and relevant to our growing interest in the relationship between meaning and health.

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NOTES

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1. Dan Goodman, Ben Parker, Emma Parker, Mike Parker, and Dave Smith are pseudonyms. The word *Peyote* and certain other religious terms are capitalized to underscore the importance attached to them and as a courtesy to my consultants. Capitalization of *Peyote* also serves as a reminder of Peyote's status as a spiritual entity: it is treated as a proper noun.

2. See Cohler 1980, Fogelson 1982, Hallowell 1974, Kohut 1971, Kracke 1991, Mead 1934, Rosaldo 1986, Shweder and Bourne 1986.

3. See LaBarre's account of the impact of Spier's suspicion of psychology, meaning, and generalization on LaBarre's work (1989:xii).

4. The data for this study derive primarily from observations and interviews of Navajo Peyotists I recorded on the Navajo reservation during 1990 and on later visits. During my stay on the reservation, I lived with Road Man Mike Parker and his family and earned my room and board herding sheep. This living arrangement allowed participant observation, which gave me a deeper knowledge of my consultants' way of life and how Peyote fit into it. In addition, I traveled to the other side of the reservation several times to record interviews with Road Man Dan Goodman, the head of a Navajo chapter of the NAC and a professional drug and alcohol abuse counselor for a major industrial plant on the reservation. I also visited the home of Dave Smith and his family often, encountered Navajos on my walks and sheep grazing trips, and met with other members and officials of the church. All interviews were tape recorded in English except for the interviews with Mike Parker, which were translated from the Navajo by Dave Smith.

The contrast between Dan and Mike and their circles of friends provided a good view into the religion. They stand near opposite poles on many spectrums. Representing both Four Corners and Navajoland chapters of Navajo Peyotism, they cover Aberle's dichotomy of "northern" and "southern" Peyotists. Dan is an official of the NAC organization, while Mike considers himself basically a Navajo Medicine Man who has accepted the validity of the Peyote ceremony. Dan is younger and is able to draw parallels between the religion and contemporary Euro-American therapeutic findings; Mike still lives very much in the context

of the traditional culture, speaking only Navajo. For reasons that will be discussed, the input of these two ritual specialists and the other Road Men I met were especially important in an analysis of ritual symbolism.

5. As a musician, I am perhaps more likely than Lamphere (1969) to accept the standard translation of *hózhǫ́* as "harmony." It seems to me that the word harmony does not necessarily imply the "communion relationship" of two lovers as opposed to the "manipulative relationship" of two business men (Horton 1960:212). *Harmony* may merely signal a relationship of accord between parts of an impersonal system as between the strings of a properly tuned instrument. What the Navajo attempts to get in harmony with is the lawful whole of Nature, and this process may be compared to the tuning of strings to produce a sound that resonates in accordance with impersonal physical rules rather than with human relationships such as love or business. The deities invoked in a particular song are at the mercy of the impersonal rules of Nature as much as humans are. The "communion" relationship may, however, be applicable to the Peyotist's relationship with Peyote, in which case we may use *harmony* in both senses. In any case, this was the word used most often by my consultants.

6. See Laughlin et al. 1990, Maslow 1964, McGlothlin et al. 1967, and Wallace 1956.

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