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Notes on the Navajo Eagle Way

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Chatto's stature is only 10 mm. under the average stature of 1675 mm. reported by Hrdlicka for 25 "Mescalero Apache"⁴ males; on the other hand 36 Mescalero males measured by me showed a mean stature of 1665.3 mm. Hrdlicka gives the average cephalic index of 148 undeformed male Apaches (including not only Mescalero subjects, but also White Mountain, San Carlos, and Jicarilla) as 84.9.⁵ Deformation of the skull (occipital flattening) seems to have been inadvertently brought about among many Apache children through binding them during infancy onto a hard cradle board.⁶ While no cranial assymetry was observed on Chatto, his very high cephalic index and the observable flatness of his occiput, make it probable that he had undergone some effects of this process.

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NOTES ON NAVAJO EAGLE WAY

CLYDE KLUCKHOHN

Eagle Way is one of the least known of Navajo chants. Wyman and I have recently published a little general information,¹ and Newcomb has published a version of the chant legend.² The ceremonial appears to be obsolescent. I have never had a definite and specific report of a full five-night performance in recent years, and, so far as I know, I am the only field worker who has witnessed even an excerpt. I am in no position to write a comprehensive discussion of this chant, but I happen to have certain materials which ought to be spread upon the record for the use of other students. Since I do not expect to do further field work on the subject of Navajo ceremonials, it would serve no purpose to hold these data until some fabled day when they might be "complete." During the summer of 1937 two informants, one of them a curer knowing excerpts of Eagle Way, volunteered to tell me episodes from the chant legend. Both were obtained through an interpreter (David Skeet of Two Wells), and I shall give them exactly as he rendered them except that I have translated some terms which he left in Navajo. To have put them

4. Ales Hrdlicka, *Physiological and Medical Observations Among the Indians of Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 34, Washington, 1908, p. 133.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-86.

1. Leland C. Wyman and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Navaho Classification of Their Song Ceremonials* (Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, No. 50, 1938) pp. 29-30. Clyde Kluckhohn and Leland C. Wyman, *An Introduction to Navaho Chant Practice* (Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, No. 53, 1940) p. 189 and pp. 14-111 *passim*.

2. Franc J. Newcomb, *Origin Legend of the Navajo Eagle Chant* (Journal of American Folklore, 53; 50-78) 1940.

into "better English" would be to distort the data as received, and our interest in these materials is a scientific interest and not a literary interest. During the same summer, I saw an excerpt of Eagle Way (lasting several hours) performed about twenty-five miles south of Ramah, New Mexico. My notes on this excerpt will be organized according to the plan set forth in Kluckhohn and Wyman.³

Episodes from the Eagle Way Chant Legend. The first of these was told me by Jake,⁴ a singer of the Ramah area and more than eighty years old. Jake (2) does not give any part of Eagle Way but had been told this episode by a curer from Punta de Malapais who did give Eagle Way excerpts:

This is the story of the eagle and the bee and it happened many years ago. There used to be people on the earth going around to look for eagle nests to see if some young ones in it. First this man found a eagle nest with two little ones in it. He killed those two. He begin to look around for some more. Found another nest with two. He did this two more times. Killed two out of each nest. After he killed the last ones a big eagle came along and asked this man why he killed these young ones. He sure mad about that. Didn't like for him to do all that. Told him he should let those young ones go and says "come with me! Let's go up in the heaven." The other man says he didn't want to go up in the heaven with an eagle. The eagle kept saying that and so he made up his mind and went up in the heaven with the eagle.

Both went up in heaven through the sky. Sky opened up big enough so they could get through. Place they come to is some kind of place up there. He notice there is a house like this one we're in but a long one. It was on the east side and half of it was blue and the other yellow. There were other houses on south and west and north. Those houses are different colors from half to the other half. They got down in the middle of these houses. The east house was the house that the eagle people owned it. The south house was owned by some other kind of birds — ayash. The west by buzzard. On the fourth side were all these small eagles (hawks).

They put the man in the house on the east. Get him to learn, put him on the job to learn Eagle Way. Got him started so he started to learn. Got it all learned, every bit of it — every song and every pray. When he learn all these songs and prays, next year after that one of these eagles says want to go to war. Got enemies close to the east side from there. This man who learned the Eagle Way says he wants to go along. From this time this man who learned the song had a friend who started to go with him (Big Fly). All the eagles they want to go along, but Big Fly says go see Spider first. Spider has a house on one side. The man went down there and asked Spider, but Spider says he better not go. Well, he wanted to go just the same even if Spider says no. He wants to go pretty bad. Thinks there is a lot of fun in it. All these four different direction houses, the people in them, they get together and start to go. Finally the man went along. The enemies had a place down here on the east side. They came to the place. They found it was house of Big Wasp. These were their enemies.

3. Kluckhohn and Wyman, *op. cit.*

4. For information about 2 and his ceremonial knowledge, see Clyde Kluckhohn, *Some Personal and Social Aspects of Navajo Ceremonial Practice* (Harvard Theological Review, 32: 57-83, 1939) p. 62.

They come pretty close and the wasps came out of their houses and heading for these other bunch. They fight quite a while there and the wasps whip all the eagles and all the rest. Eagles full of stings in their feathers. Right into their bodies. This man, he just kept watching behind. Well, they got back to their place. This man thought he could kill these wasps by himself. The next day he didn't say a word about it to the eagles. Just started off, started to going over. Big Fly says break up some of these rabbit brush. Can use some for whip. Then he went over there and Big Fly says must keep chewing all the time on this rabbit brush. When they got close, the wasps start to get after him. He started to blow on it, start to kill it. Kept doing that on the wasp until he kill all of them. At last there came a great big one out of the house and that was the boss of all. Blow some on him — get him down until he can't do anything. Didn't kill him — just kinda weaken it up. Start to go home with it, carrying that bee. Come back to that house where the eagle people was. Heard a lot of talk going on inside, talking about him. Some already know he gone back to enemy. Says that man sure killed. Can't do anything by himself. That's what they all saying. The man walk in with that wasp — drop him before all these people and say "Here's your enemy. That's all that's left. I whip them all. I kill them all." But the people all got up and say "That's our enemy. I hope that's truth." That's what the eagle says. But they find out that it is true. Well, they kill that last one.

Next day they want to go — they have some more enemies another place. They all wanted to go over there and fight that enemies, so they all started and got there. And that was another kind of wasp — the yellow wasp. Again this man who whipped the wasps stood behind the eagles and watched how they fought. [Here the story was repeated practically as above except for substitutions of names.]

Next day they want to go out again. Got some more enemies — the flat rocks. These flat rocks will start to fight. After they got out there to that place the wind starts first and then flat rocks start flying around. Hit eagles in head. After quite a lot got hit, they went home. The man made up a club of cedar. Peeled it off and smoothed it up. [Here the story again repeated itself essentially with a final big rock (instead of a big wasp) being left and subdued.]

Next day the eagles want to go over to another place. These enemies were called Sticking Plants Moving Around. The wind blows these weeds around and sticks them to the meat of the eagles. The man used a fork stick to fight them. He piled all these weeds except one together and burned them. The one big one he took back to show the Eagles just like had had the boss of all the other enemies.

When he got rid of all these enemies, that's the end the man says. After that this man begin to think he wants to go down where he used to be, but he has no way to go back. Someone came along and gave him a sunbeam and he can stand on this sunbeam. In a minute he came right down on top of one Mountain. Came back to his old place and a little while after that, just a short time, he got sick of this place where he has been on account of what he did up there, killing these animals.

In the sky he had married an Eagle Woman. Without that head men would not have taught him Eagle Way. He had left her in the sky, but she had taught him all the Eagle Way songs. Now on earth he had another wife and her people put up Eagle Way for this man. He told them how to do it, but Big Fly helped. The life of each one of the four enemies (the chiefs) had gone into evil spirits and bothered

him. This man's body and face were painted just like man who goes into pit to trap eagles gets painted. He got well on that.

An Eagle Way practitioner living near Gallup (gd) told this story:

Eagle Way chant began with Sky White Tail and Sky Yellow Tail.⁵ They lived in the north part of the Navajo country at a place called Water Crosses. Sky White Tail arose out of the water that comes from the east. Sky Yellow Tail came up from the water that comes from the north. Sky White Tail's mother was fish. Sky Yellow Tail's mother was otter. They met at Water Crosses and Sky White Tail said "my younger brother." The other one said "my older brother." They were brothers after this.

They were little children. Then the white wind came and dressed Sky White Tail up. He grew at the same time. When White Wind finished dressing Sky White Tail up, Sky White Tail was full grown. Yellow Wind came and did it same way to Sky Yellow Tail. Both winds were Edge-of-the-Water Winds.

First thing the brothers faced to the east and looked for something they could go with. Saw nothing. Also south, west, and north. Saw nothing. East again, then south again. They saw something making a crooked line. Wondered what it was. Soon they knew it was lightning. Sky White Tail said "I'll get that one to move me around for my trip." They also saw something that was hanging down. That was a rainbow. Sky Yellow Tail said that will be his. Both started walking toward these things.

They started to walk a little way. Came on something lying right in their way. Two things. One white and straight. One yellow and crooked. Sky White Tail said "don't look at these things. I am going to jump on this one. You jump on that one." These two things moved very fast to a piece of rock. A round rock with wings. The two eagle people got off on top of that rock. Noticed one side to it had a door. Started for that door. As they got near, the door opened. They went in and saw a man and a woman. They looked almost the same. One was white, other yellow from neck and shoulders up. The one with white neck called Sky White Tail to come over and shake hands with him and sit by him. The other called the other the same way, saying "come here, my maternal grandchild."

The white-necked one said to both "I am your father." He said "Of course you don't know how you came and how you were raised. I put you over there." The white-necked one said "I have a home. I want you to go there with me. From now on you will be used by the Indians. Some will talk one language, some another. You are the eagle people. Your feathers will be used by these Indians. Now we will go eat."

They started to take a step but didn't move. Room shook. Could hear thunder noise "di-l". White-necked eagle put up wings and moved them back and forth. Woman just prayed. The white-necked one said "we are doing something and not noticing it." He told the people to bow their heads and not look around. "This white rock is flying now. The thunder is the one that makes it fly. We are flying to the east." As they flew around, the white-necked one told them they were going over Pelado Peak, Mount Taylor, the San Francisco Mountains, and the La Plata Mountains.

5. The reference is to a type of eagle and a type of hawk, respectively.

After a while they looked around and the door was open. Just as soon as door opened, brothers noticed they were right on top of the rocks where they had been before. This was near Toadlena. There the white-necked one gave them a good talk. Said this rock was his body and all the different Indians would go by it. It is a rock shaped like an eagle with tail towards north. "If we hadn't met together and come here, there wouldn't be any Indians on earth. But now the tribes of Indians will be spread out."

On the floor of this room was a pelt made of eagle feathers. He told Sky White Tail and Sky Yellow Tail to sit on this pelt. The woman sang. White-necked one gave his name to Sky White Tail; the woman gave her name to Sky Yellow Tail. White-neck told Sky White Tail and Sky Yellow Tail to stay by this rock always. "If you travel in the air, go way up in the four directions, but remember where this rock is. Always come back to this rock. This is our home. When the world starts changing, this rock will be standing here getting older and older. If this rock falls, it means no world. This rock will be called Winged Rock [Shiprock]. The different tribes should take care of this rock for always. Should go there and put turquoise away for the eagle. Sing for it and pray for it. If this is taken care of right, will last for many years. Otherwise — not long."

The white-necked reached in his feathers and pulled out a feather. Put it behind him. One was white tail for Sky White Tail and one was yellow tail for Sky Yellow Tail. "This is your mind I am giving you," he said to both. "Hold the feather up and try to look through it. In there you will notice how many people there will be. You see heads. Those are the different tribes. At the top — blue eyes — white people. All these people are strong, but the strongest is at the top. All the tribes will come under the white people." He told Sky Yellow Tail to hold feather low and then up high. Then he should look through. Saw sheep, horses, cattle, everything which grown on earth. It's all there.

At this point the curer said that this was the end of one story and that another story started there but that he didn't dare tell that until after frost.

Discussion of these episodes. The principal value of these materials is as providing documentation for that investigation of range of variation which is an indispensable aspect of any scientific study of phenomena. Both of these episodes are, to be sure, coarse and fragmentary as compared to Newcomb's recording. They were obtained quite incidentally and no effort was made to enlarge or supplement the stories by questioning. The first was spontaneously volunteered by the old man during an evening meal apropos of an enquiry of mine about some wild honey he had gathered. The second was proffered as supporting evidence when I had expressed scepticism as to Eagle Way being an independent and separate chant.

It is noteworthy that the only events of either account which enter into Newcomb's⁶ complete chant legend are the subduings of

6. The first episode shows general similarity in event sequences to a part of the Bead Way legend published by Reichard (*Navajo Medicine Man*, New York, 1939, p. 32). On the connections between Bead Way and Eagle Way see Wyman and Kluckhohn and Kluckhohn and Wyman, *loc. cit.* The correspondence of events in Reichard's

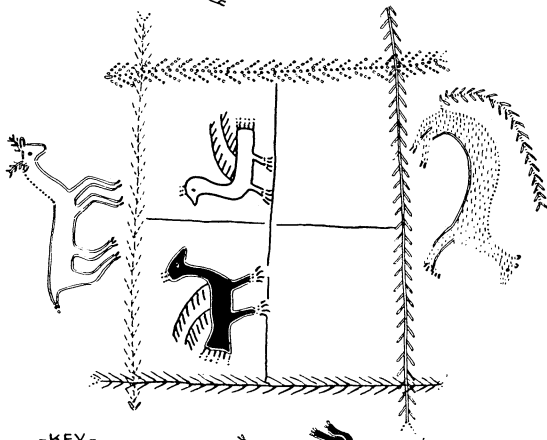
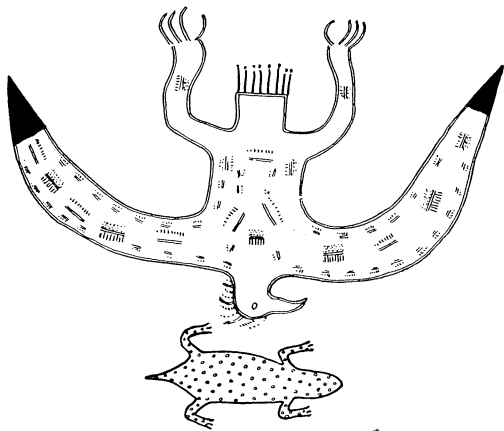
stinging insects. Otherwise, the only resemblances are certain highly generalized ones of act and symbol which can be isolated from any body of Navajo Mythic material. My informants were almost certainly much less learned in this specialty than Newcomb's. The first account, indeed, has a certain interest as representing that vulgarization of a legend known by a man of ceremonial learning but not a practitioner of the chant in question. We need material of this sort to compare with the full versions known by specialists. But because the two episodes recorded by me contain so much not even alluded to in Newcomb's recording, are we justified in inferring that my informants are utterly ignorant on this topic or even charlatans? Not at all, I think. Jake I have known for many years and his sincerity is beyond question. And "ignorance" would be a proper verdict only on the postulate that there is one and only one "correct" version of the Eagle Way chant legend. This would be absurd, although there has been not a little zealous bigotry on the part of ethnologists to defend supposedly orthodox forms of myths or ceremonies. Part of the trouble has undoubtedly been that investigators have identified emotionally with favorite informants who are held up as more learned or trustworthy as knowing "the truth." At least with a tribe so large, so geographically dispersed, with such heterogeneous cultural origins as the Navajo, such a view is utterly indefensible. To return to the concrete matter at issue: it simply is a fact that two elderly, non-English-speaking Navajo ceremonial practitioners in the year 1937 gave as parts of a chant legend events which do not appear in another version of that chant legend recorded from another Indian at a different time and place. To us, as scientists, the question as to which is "right" or "wrong" is essentially meaningless. These data can claim our attention only as elements which may be used in inductions on participation in ceremonial knowledge, on distribution of myth elements, on agreement and disagreement of Navajos on their mythology.

SANDPAINTING CEREMONY EXCERPT

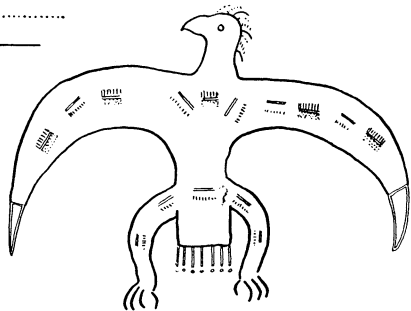
Sociological context. P was 11 (clan 18). She complained of being "sick all over," but probably had tuberculosis.⁷ She died less than six months later. The ceremony was held in the hogan of her daughter (43) who acted as H₂. The daughter's husband (39) acted as H₁. S was bb (clan 22) from Two Wells. The only spectators were my

7. Newcomb (*op. cit.*, p. 50) implies that the Eagle Way Chant was used only as an aid to success in hunting eagles. This may once have been true, but there is no doubt that at present it is carried out for curing.

Bead Way legend and in the Eagle Way episode as told by 2 should probably be regarded as further evidence for the association of Bead Way and Eagle Way. Dr. Wyman has made the following observation in a letter to me and I present it as a useful suggestion which seems to me in accord with all data which we have at present: "My hunch is that Bead Way probably existed as a Holy Way chant at a time when the Eagle Trapping Rite was purely a Game Way ceremonial, and that the latter became a curing chant by accretion from Bead Way."



-KEY-
 BLACK —————
 GREY
 WHITE —————
 YELLOW
 RED
 N ←



interpreter (ds) and myself (O). This excerpt had not been recommended by diagnosis. P had been ill for some time and had had a succession of treatments. She and her daughter and son-in-law had simply informally agreed to take advantage of the presence of S in this locality whither he had been called by another family. There seemed to be no conviction on anyone's part that Eagle Way would be peculiarly efficacious for the ailments in question. The unstated premise appeared to be "let's try everything we can."

Notes on equipment used. S's bundle included: body painting equipment; pouches containing various plant medicines; a whistle made of the femur of a jackrabbit killed by an eagle;⁸ a gourd rattle of the same type as those used in Chiricahua Wind Way; a medicine cup of turtle shell; two prairie dog skins and a beaver skin. Paints and plants had been obtained in the usual manner. The prairie dog skins were from animals trapped and skinned (apparently in no special way) by S. The beaver skin had been bought by S "from a white man in Farmington for five dollars." Other items of equipment had been purchased by S from fn, his maternal uncle and teacher. Sandpainting materials and equipment were, as commonly, provided by P's family.

Sandpainting Ceremony.

1. Sandpainting made, 10:20-12:30 a. m. by S and H₁. (Paints had been ground by H₂.) Pieces of corrugated paper from a carton were used as receptacles. SP (see Fig.) called "Eagles' nest." Represents two young eagles in nest in tree, surrounded by their food: to the north, a deer; to the south, a ground squirrel; to the west, a cottontail; to the east, a prairie dog. The parent eagles (large) stand guard to the east and west. Dimensions: about 2½' by 7'.

2. Sandpainting set-up: none.

3. P entered (12:42). Meal sprinkling.

4. Chant lotion administered. By S to P. Song 1. Rattle used by ds. (Chant lotion has been placed on tail of east large eagle.)

5. Body painting.⁹ By S only. Forehead solid white. Chin solid yellow. Ankles and wrists solid white. White dots up ventral centre of legs. Then white dots up chest and down back. White cross between shoulders. Song 2-8.

6. Prairie dog skin bound on P's right wrist. Beaver skin draped around her neck. Song 9. Whistle blown. Song 10.

7. P sits on SP (centre). Meander design drawn in black by S on top of white block on P's forehead and wrists. Songs 11-14.

8. Infusion specific (which had been placed on north wing of east large eagle) administered. By S to self, then to P with alter-

8. Cf. Kluckhohn and Wyman (*op. cit.*, p. 33). The context for all statements in this section is provided by this monograph and serious students will find it necessary to make the appropriate comparisons there.

9. According to gd, the entire legs should be painted white from the knee down, the arms white from the elbow down.

nating thrust at SP and administration 4x. Short prayer.

9. Sand application. With second prairie dog skin. All SP destroyed except west eagle.

10. Fumigation. Coal placed only for P. Song 15.

11. Eating mush. (Mush, in a Navajo cooking pot, had been placed between south wing and leg of west large eagle.) By all present. Songs 16-19.

12. P leaves SP.

13. Sandpainting erasure. Song 20.

14. Sandpainting disposal. By H₂. Song 21.

15. P re-enters. S removes prairie dog and beaver skins from her. Songs 22-3.

Odd bits of unpublished information on Eagle Way (All obtained from gd).

Eagle Way is often given first over a patient, and then followed by Bead Way. A gourd rattle is used in Eagle Way, but in Bead Way no rattle — only a basket drum. There are four Eagle Way sandpaintings: Young Eagles in the Nest, Eagles Dressed in Snakes, Eagle Trapping (two different sandpaintings). Hastin biyal badani who lives near Toadlena still carries out the five-night form of Eagle Way.



SUMMARY OF UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO FIELD WORK IN ANTHROPOLOGY DURING THE SUMMER OF 1941

From July 26 to August 23 the University will again conduct its annual field sessions in the Chaco Canyon, northwestern New Mexico, for both inexperienced and advanced students. Dr. Leslie Spier will act in the capacity of director, Mr. Paul Reiter will be in charge of excavations, and Dr. Leland C. Wyman will supervise the ethnographic studies. Among visiting lecturers, who will augment the resident staff, will be doctors Ernst V. Antevs, Harry Hoijer, Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., Walter Cline, Harold S. Colton, Wayne Dennis, Nelson Glueck, Alfred E. Hudson, Paul S. Martin, and Anne Cooke Smith.

From June 8 to August 20 Dr. Donald D. Brand will work in Mexico (partially financed by a grant-in-aid from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences) with a group of students including Robert Lister, Dan McKnight, Anita Leibel, and Mr. and Mrs. John M. Goggin. For one or two weeks the party will excavate at a site Cojumatlan on the shores of Lake Chapala in Michoacan. Following this Miss Leibel will study collections in the state museum at Morelia and the regional museum at Patzcuaro; Mr. and Mrs. Goggin will work in the Apatzingan-Tepalcatepec area; and Dr. Brand, Mr. Lister, and Mr. McKnight will conduct an archaeo-geographic survey from Toluca to Teloloapan and the Balsas River via Malinalco and Sacualpa, to be followed by excavation of one or two yacatas in the Balsas Valley