

## *The Omaha Tribe (Excerpt)*

by Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La  
Flesche (1857-1932)

This PDF is provided by [www.Flutopedia.com](http://www.Flutopedia.com) as part of a collection of resources for the Native American flute. The full citation for this digital copy of the original source material is provided below, as well as the specific details of the source of this reference and how it was digitized (if known).

Note that this file contains excerpts from the full reference. The portion(s) of the reference that are relevant to the topics of Flutopedia are included.

As part of the Flutopedia effort, extensive metadata (title, author, citation, etc.) has been encoded into this file. Select File/Properties in any Adobe product to view this information. You also can use text search on this document, based either on the OCR encoding done during the original digitization or during Flutopedia document preparation using the OCR facility of Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro.

Based on our best efforts, we believe that providing this material from [www.Flutopedia.com](http://www.Flutopedia.com) to users in the United States does not violate any legal rights. However, please do not assume that it is legal to use this material outside the United States or for any use other than your own personal research and self-enrichment. Also, we cannot offer guidance as to whether any specific use of this material is allowed.

If you have any questions about this document or issues with its distribution, please visit <http://www.Flutopedia.com/> for information on how to contact us.

### Citation

[Fletcher 1911] Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche (1857-1932). The Omaha Tribe, Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1905-1906, published by the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1911, retrieved March 15, 2010.

Contributing source: The Smithsonian Institution Libraries

Digitizing sponsor: The Smithsonian Institution, Biodiversity Library

Digitized by: The Internet Archive on November 25, 2009



---

# THE OMAHA TRIBE

BY

ALICE C. FLETCHER

HOLDER OF THE THAW FELLOWSHIP, PEABODY MUSEUM, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

AND

FRANCIS LA FLESCHE

A MEMBER OF THE OMAHA TRIBE

## FOREWORD

The following account of the Omaha tribe embodies the results of personal studies made while living among the people and revised from information gained through more or less constant intercourse throughout the last twenty-nine years. During this period the writer has received help and encouragement from the judicious criticisms of Prof. Frederic Ward Putnam, head of the Department of Anthropology of Harvard University, and the completion of the task undertaken has been made possible by means of the Thaw Fellowship. Objects once held in reverence by the Omaha tribe have been secured and deposited in the Peabody Museum for safe-keeping. Professor Putnam, curator of that institution, has permitted the free use of the Omaha material collected under its auspices and preserved there, for reproduction in the present volume.

At the time the writer went to live among the Omaha, to study their life and thought, the tribe had recently been forced to abandon hunting, owing to the sudden extinction of the buffalo herds. The old life, however, was almost as of yesterday, and remained a common memory among all the men and women. Many of the ancient customs were practised and much of the aboriginal life still lingered.

Contact with the white race was increasing daily and beginning to press on the people. The environment was changing rapidly, and the changes brought confusion of mind to the old people as well as to many in mature life. The beliefs of the fathers no longer applied to the conditions which confronted the people. All that they formerly had relied on as stable had been swept away. The buffalo, which they had been taught was given them as an inexhaustible food supply, had been destroyed by agencies new and strange. Even the wild grasses that had covered the prairies were changing. By the force of a power he could not understand, the Omaha found himself restricted in all his native pursuits. Great unrest and anxiety had come to the people through the Government's dealings with their kindred, the Ponca tribe, and fear haunted every Omaha fireside lest they, too, be driven from their homes and the graves of their fathers. The future was a dread to old and young. How pitiful was the trouble of mind everywhere manifest in the tribe can hardly be pictured, nor can the relief that came to the people when, in 1882, their lands were assured to them by act of Congress.

The story of their relations with the Government, of contact with the white race, of the overthrow of their ancient institutions, and of the final securing of their homes in individual holdings on their tribal lands, is briefly told in an appendix to this volume. To-day, towns with electric lights dot the prairies where the writer used to camp amid a sea of waving grass and flowers. Railroads cross and recross the gullied paths left by the departed game, and the plow has obliterated the broad westward trail along the ridge over which the tribe moved when starting out on the annual buffalo hunt. The past is overlaid by a thriving present. The old Omaha men and women sleep peacefully on the hills while their grandchildren farm beside their white neighbors, send their children to school, speak English, and keep bank accounts.

When these studies were begun nothing had been published on the Omaha tribe except short accounts by passing travelers or the comments of government officials. None of these writers had sought to penetrate below the external aspects of Indian life in search of the ideals or beliefs which animated the acts of the natives. In the account here offered nothing has been borrowed from other observers; only original material gathered directly from the native people has been used, and the writer has striven to make so far as possible the Omaha his own interpreter.

The following presentation of the customs, ceremonies, and beliefs of the Omaha is a joint work. For more than twenty-five years the writer has had as collaborator Mr. Francis La Flesche (pl. 1), the son of Joseph La Flesche, former principal chief of the tribe. In his boyhood Mr. La Flesche enjoyed the opportunity of witnessing some of the ceremonies herein described. Later these were explained to him by his father and by the old men who were the keepers of these ancient rites and rituals. Possessed of a good memory and having had awakened in his mind the desire to preserve in written form the history of his people as it was known to them, their music, the poetry of their rituals, and the meaning of their social and religious ceremonies, Mr. La Flesche early in his career determined to perfect himself in English and to gather the rapidly vanishing lore of the tribe, in order to carry out his cherished purpose.

This joint work embodies the results of unusual opportunities to get close to the thoughts that underlie the ceremonies and customs of the Omaha tribe, and to give a fairly truthful picture of the people as they were during the early part of the last century, when most of the men on whose information this work is based were active participants in the life here described—a life that has passed away, as have those who shared in it and made its history possible.

Mr. Edwin S. Tracy has given valuable assistance in transcribing some of the songs, particularly those of the Shell society. Several of



FRANCIS LA FLESCHÉ

the songs presented were transcribed and arranged for translation on the piano by the late Prof. John Comfort Fillmore, who for several years had carefully studied the music of the Omaha.

To enumerate all the Omaha men and women who have contributed of their knowledge and memory toward the making of this volume would be to catalogue the best part of the tribe. Unfortunately, but very few are now living to see the outcome of the assistance they rendered during the gathering of the material herein preserved for their descendants.

A. C. F.

## IX MUSIC

### INSTRUMENTS

The drum was the most important of Omaha musical instruments and generally accompanied most of the songs, both religious and secular. The large drum, called *ne'xegaku* (*ne'xe*, "a water vessel;" *gaku*, "to beat"), was made from a section of a tree hollowed out and partially filled with water containing charcoal. A buffalo skin, dressed or undressed, was stretched taut over the open end. A drum was always tuned before being used and if necessary during a ceremony it was tuned again. Tuning was done by tipping the drum so as to wet the skin cover from the water within and then drying it before the fire until it yielded the desired resonant tone in response to the tap of the drumstick. The tones were full and clear and could be heard at a great distance on a calm day. Drums were beaten either with a single strong stroke or with a rebounding movement—a strong stroke followed by a light one.

The small drum (*ne'xe gaku bthačka*—*bthačka*, "flat") was made by stretching a skin over a small hoop. This kind of drum was used by the "doctors" when attending the sick and in magical performances. It was beaten with a small stick, the movement being a rapid tapping—an agitated pulsation.

The whistle (*niçude*) was about 6 inches long; it was made from the wing bone of the eagle. It had but one opening and but one tone, a shrill sound, which was repeated with moderate rapidity, to simulate the call of the eagle. This instrument was used only in certain parts of the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> ceremony.

The flute or flageolet (fig. 85), *niçude tu<sup>n</sup>ga* (*tu<sup>n</sup>ga*, "big"), was generally made of cedar; it was about 20 inches in length and an inch in diameter. The holes—six in number—began about 4 inches from the lower end and were about an inch apart. The stop was placed 5 or 5½ inches from the mouthpiece at the end. This instrument had a flutelike tone but, being made by the "rule of thumb," lacked accuracy of pitch. To be acceptable, a flute must give forth a full, vibrating tone when blown with all the six holes closed. It was interesting to watch men, old and young, take up a flute to test



it; they would readjust the stop piece, bound to the top over the opening and usually carved, and if after several trials the instrument



FIG. 85. Flute or flageolet.

could not be made to give this vibratory tone the flute would be laid aside and no words would avail to make the man take it up and play a tune on it. The compass of the *niçudetung* was an octave. The intervals did not correspond exactly to our diatonic scale.

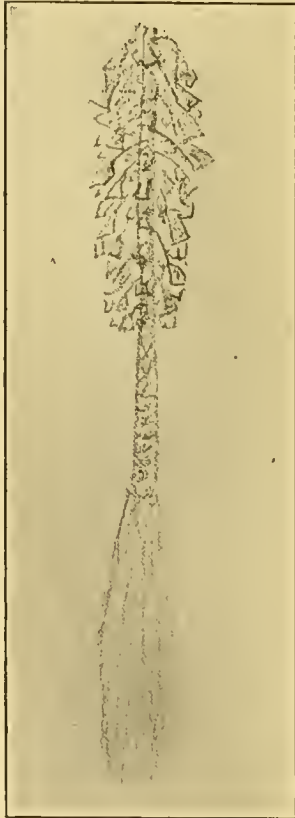


FIG. 86. Deer-hoof rattle (native drawing).

Two kinds of rattles were used: the *tasha'ge*, literally "deer hoofs" (fig. 86), and the *pe'xe*, "gourd rattle" (fig. 87, d). The *tasha'ge* was made by fastening the deer hoofs by thongs in a cluster to the sides of a beaded stick some 8 to 10 inches long, the handle being ornamented with a long tassel of buckskin thongs. The *pe'xe*, as its name indicates, was made from a gourd from which the contents had been carefully removed and the interior surface of which made smooth, so that nothing should impede the contact of the fine gravel or beads with the inner side of the gourd and blur the sound. Through the holes made in both ends of the gourd, in order to remove the contents, a stick was thrust, closing them tight. One end of the stick protruded an inch or more from the top of the gourd; the other end, which formed the handle, was bound with buckskin, so adjusted as to make it firm and not to slip from the gourd. This kind of rattle was symbolically painted and used in the *Wa'wa*<sup>n</sup> ceremony. The *pe'xe* was used

also in the *Wate'gi*<sup>tu</sup> rite, when war honors were conferred. The Shell and Pebble societies and the "doctors" used this kind of rattle.



## SONGS, SINGING, AND RHYTHM

Song was an integral part of the life of the Omaha. Through song he approached the mysterious Wako<sup>n</sup>'da; through song he voiced his emotions, both individual and social; through song he embodied feelings and aspirations that eluded expression in words. As is amply demonstrated in this volume, the Omaha did not depend on words to convey the meaning of his songs, so many have few or no words, the voice being carried by vocables only, and yet the songs were able to convey a well-understood meaning.

Songs, like the language, were transmitted from one generation to another and care was taken to preserve accurately both songs and language. No liberties were permitted with either. As to the songs, the writers have phonographic records of the same song sung by different groups of singers, the records having been taken at an interval of more than ten years, yet the songs show no variation. An interesting instance occurred some ten years ago. An old Ponca was visiting the writers, when, in a period of silence, he was heard to hum a familiar Omaha song. He was asked to sing the song into the phonograph, and did so. Then he was asked, "Where did you learn the song?" Among the Omaha, he replied. "When did you learn it?" "When I was a lad." "Have you always sung it as you sing it now?" With a look of astonishment he replied: "There is but one way to sing a song!" As he was a man then more than 70, his version of the song must have been of full fifty years' standing. On comparison of his rendition of the song with three other records of the same song from different singers in the possession of the writers, no variation was discovered. This incident, so far as it goes, indicates a fair degree of stability in the songs of this people. In many of the societies a fine was imposed if a member made mistakes in singing. As has been shown in preceding pages, a mistake in the singing of ritual songs invalidated the ceremony and made it necessary to begin again. It will be recalled that in the ceremonies connected with the Sacred Pole and the White Buffalo Hide if a mistake was made, a rite of contrition had to be performed, after which the ceremony was begun anew so far as singing the songs was concerned.

Songs were property. They belonged to a society, to a gens, or to an individual. They could generally be purchased from the last-named but the right to sing any of the songs belonging to societies or gentes could come only through membership or birth.

In singing, the Omaha was not concerned with his audience, he was not seeking to present a musical picture, his mental attitude was wholly subjective, he was completely occupied with voicing his own emotion, consequently he paid little attention, generally speaking, to any shading or what we term "expression." This statement can

be fully appreciated only by those who have sympathetically watched the faces of Indian singers when they were singing with all the power of their lungs to the accompaniment of the drum. Nevertheless, beneath the noise moved the melody of which the singer was alone conscious.

Among the Omaha there was a standard of musical tones. The tuning of the drum has been spoken of and anyone who has observed the process can not deny that there was a standard of tone sought after. Among singers there were men and women who were recognized as "good singers." Their services were sought and paid for. They formed the choir or leaders on occasions when song had an important part, as in the *Wa'wa'*, the *Hethu'shka*, and elsewhere.

Few Indian songs were ever sung solo. Almost all were sung by a group, many by a hundred or more men and women. The volume not only strengthened the tone but steadied the intervals. A single singer frequently wavered from pitch, but when assisted by a friend or friends the character of the tone at once changed and the pitch was steadied by the union of voices. It has been the constant experience of the writers that the Omaha objected to the presentation of their songs on a piano or reed organ as unsupported arias. As almost all their songs were sung by a number of singers, the melody moving by octaves, the overtones were often strongly brought out, and this may account for the Indian's preference for a simple harmony of implied chords, when their songs were interpreted on these instruments. "That sounds natural!" was their comment on hearing their songs so played, even when it was explained to them that they did not sing their songs in concerted parts; yet they still persisted, "It sounds natural."

The harmonic effects are more noticeable when women join in the singing. Women form part of many of the choirs, even of the warrior societies, and they join in the choral songs during religious ceremonies. The women sing in a high falsetto, consequently one often heard the melody sung in two octaves. When the song dropped too low for a natural tenor the singer took the octave above. In the same way, by octaves, the bass and contralto voices adjusted themselves in the unison singing.

The octave is seemingly the one fixed interval. The songs are not built on any defined scale. What has often been taken for a minutely divided scale is probably due to certain qualities in the native tone of voice, which is reedy and lends itself to vacillation of tone. The same song sung by a group, piano, and then sung forte is often hardly recognizable to the untrained listener. The noise of strenuous singing drowns the music to an alien audience accustomed to hear music objectively presented.

In a few instances the songs herein given have been interpreted by adding a simple harmony and in every instance the harmony given has been tested among the Omaha and been preferred by them when the song was played on the piano or organ. This manner of presentation has been chosen in order to give some of these songs a chance to be really heard by the average person, for only the exceptional and musically gifted can discern the possibilities that lie in an unsupported aria; moreover, the single line of music stands for a song that is sung in octaves by a group of male and female voices and therefore is not a true picture of the song itself.

Rhythm is a marked characteristic of Indian music. Most songs present one or more rhythms in their rendition, for besides the rhythm of the melody with its rhythm of phrase the singers pulsate their voices, thus adding an inner rhythm, so to speak, to the general rhythm. This custom of pulsating the voice tends to produce the effect of uncertain intonation and interval. This statement is based on many experiments with different singers during a number of years. When in transcribing a song these pulsations were noted, so that when the song was played on a piano or organ the pulsations were represented by rapidly repeated notes, the rendition was always declared to be incorrect. In every instance in which a note was pulsated by a singer the tone had to be represented by a single note on the instrument and no argument would prevail to permit the pulsation to be indicated by rapidly struck notes on the piano or organ. In love songs, which frequently have long notes, the hand is sometimes waved at slight distance from the mouth so as to break the continuity of sound and give the tone a wavering character.

Frequently the aria of a song is in triple time,  $3/4$ ,  $6/4$ , or  $9/4$ , while the drum is played in  $2/4$  or  $4/4$  time. In these songs the two conflicting rhythms are syneopated and play against each other in a bewildering manner. The precision with which these complicated rhythms are given by the Omaha is remarkable. In the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> ceremony the movement of the pipes adds another rhythm, so that the ear and the eye are addressed simultaneously by the rhythm of the melody, of the drum, and of the swaying pipes, all forming, however, one harmonious rhythmic presentation. The rhythmic movement of a song must never be altered; to do so in even a slight degree blurs or destroys the song for the Indian.

In view of the above statements, it will be seen that the mere aria can not portray an Indian song as it really sounds when interpreted by the Indian singers, and these facts seem to justify their preference for a harmonized version of their songs when translated on the piano or organ.

THE WA'WA<sup>N</sup> CEREMONY

The Omaha name for this ceremony, Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> ("to sing for someone"), refers to one of the marked characteristics of the ceremony, the singing of songs accompanied by rhythmic movements of the two peculiar objects essential to the ceremony, the *nini'ba we'awan* (*nini'ba*, "pipe;" *we'awa<sup>n</sup>*, "to sing with.")

According to the Sacred Legend, it was while a council was being held between the Omaha, including the Ponca, the Cheyenne, the Arikara, and other tribes, to bring about friendly relations, that this ceremony, with all its peaceful obligations, became known to the Omaha. The extent of country over which this rite once held sway has been referred to. (See p. 74.) It was a ceremony which made for the securing of peace between unrelated groups through the establishment of a ceremonial tie which should be regarded as of a nature as inviolable as that between father and son.

The two objects essential to this ceremony were similar to pipe-stems and ornamented symbolically but they were not attached to bowls and were never used for smoking. Still they partook of the significance of pipes in their sanctity, they were spoken of as pipes, and were held in the greatest reverence.<sup>a</sup> Songs formed an important feature of the ceremony and the singing was always accompanied by rhythmic movements of the pipe bearers and also of the pipes. This movement was spoken of as *nini'ba bazho<sup>n</sup>*, "shaking or waving the pipes."

Each stem was of ash; a hole burned through the entire length permitted the passage of the breath. The length was seven stretches between the end of the thumb and the tip of the forefinger. The stem was feathered, like an arrow, from the wing of the golden eagle. Around the mouthpiece was a band of iridescent feathers from the neck of the duck; midway the length was a ruff of owl feathers; over the bowl end were stretched the head, neck, and breast of the mallard duck, tied in place by two bands of buckskin painted red, with long, flowing ends. Beyond the owl ruff were three streamers of horsehair dyed red, one at the tip of the stem, one at the owl feathers, and one midway between. These hair streamers were bound on by a cord made of the white hair from the breast of the rabbit. From each stem depended a fanlike arrangement of feathers from the tail of the golden eagle, held together and bound to the stem by two buckskin thongs; the end, which hung from the fan-shaped appendage, was tipped with a downy eagle feather. One of these fan-shaped feather arrangements was composed of ten feathers from the tail of a mature golden eagle. These were dark and mottled in appearance and were fastened to the blue stem; this pipe (fig. 87, *a*) represented the

<sup>a</sup> Throughout this section these articles will be referred to as pipes.



feminine element. The other stem, which was painted green, had its appendage of seven feathers from the tail of the young golden eagle. The lower part of these feathers is white; the tips only are dark. These were the feathers worn by men as a mark of war honors and this pipe (fig. 87, *b*) symbolized the masculine forces. It is to be noted that among the Omaha, as among the Pawnee, the feathers which were used by the warriors were put on the stem painted green to represent the earth, the feminine element, while those which were from the mature eagle and which stood for the feminine element, were fastened to the stem painted the color of the sky, which represented the masculine element; so that on each pipe the masculine and feminine forces were symbolically united. Near the mouthpiece



FIG. 87. Objects used in Wa' wa ceremony.

was tied a woodpecker head, the upper mandible turned back over the red crest and painted blue. The pipes were grasped by the duck's neck, the mouthpiece pointing upward. When they were laid down, the stems rested in the crotch of a small stick painted red, which was thrust at the head of a wild-cat skin spread on the ground. This skin (fig. 87, *c*) served as a mat for the pipes when they were not in use and as a covering when they were being transported. The wild-cat skin was required to have intact the feet and claws, and also the skin of the head. Two gourd rattles (fig. 87, *d*), a bladder tobacco pouch (fig. 87, *e*) to which was tied a braid of sweet grass, a whistle from the wing bone of the eagle, and three downy eagle feathers completed the articles required for use in the ceremony.

Two parties, composed of persons having no blood relationship, were the principals in the ceremony. One was associated with the man who presented the pipes, the other with the man who received them. Among the Omaha the first was called *wa'wa<sup>n</sup> aka*, "the one who sings;" the second was spoken of as *a'wa<sup>n</sup> iaka*, "the one who is sung to." A man of one gens could carry the pipes to a man of another gens within his own tribe but not to a man belonging to his own gens; or he could take the pipes to a man of another tribe. The relation ceremonially established by taking and receiving the pipes was equivalent to that of father and son and the two parties were spoken of by these terms.

Only a man who had had the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> pipes presented to him four times was considered to be sufficiently instructed in the rites of this important ceremony to inaugurate a Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party. Before he could take definite action looking toward gathering the party together, he had to obtain the consent of the Seven Chiefs (see pp. 206, 376), particularly if he proposed to carry the pipes to another tribe.

A large amount of property was required to make up the gifts which must attend the presentation of the pipes; consequently the man who initiated the party was generally assisted by his relatives or close friends. The gifts that went with the pipes were eagle-feather bonnets, bows and arrows, red pipestone pipes, embroidered tobacco bags, otter skins, robes, and, in later years, brass kettles, guns, and blankets. The return gifts were horses (in earlier days burden-bearing dogs), bows and arrows, pottery, robes, and skin tent-covers. All these gifts, because they helped toward the peace and welfare of the tribe, could be counted as *wathin'ethe* either toward chieftainship or toward admission into the Ho<sup>n</sup>hewachi and thus the assistance given the "father" or the "son" of a Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party accrued to the giver's benefit by adding to his "count."

A Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party consisted of a dozen or more men. Sometimes the wives of a few of the leading men accompanied them and assisted in the work of the party. All the members contributed toward the gifts to be made and also toward accumulating provisions that would be needed on the journey, if a distant tribe was to be visited, and for the feasts to be given the receiving party during the four days and nights occupied by the ceremony. Ponies were sometimes taken as pack horses and occasionally the visiting men rode but generally the journey was made on foot. The pipes, incased in the catskin cover, were carried by their bearer, who with the leader of the party walked in advance, the other members following closely. If game was abundant, hunting was permitted to some extent; otherwise the party moved rapidly to its destination. No songs were sung on the journey but in those sung during the ceremony there were references to the traveling and the various events preparatory to the actual ceremony.

Owing to the loss of the Omaha ritual used when "tying the pipes"—a loss consequent on the death of the old men who knew it—a comprehensive comparison between the Pawnee version, already secured,<sup>a</sup> and the Omaha form of the same ceremony is impossible. While nearly all the articles used and their symbolism are identical, yet the absence of the ear of corn from the Omaha ceremony forms the most striking difference between the two. With the Pawnee the corn is spoken of as "Mother," and typifies Mother Earth, to whom the whereabouts and fortunes of man are known (op. cit., p. 44 et seq.). In the Omaha ceremony the corn has no place. With the latter tribe the eagle is the "Mother." She calls to her nestlings and upon her strong wings she bears the message of peace. With the Omaha, peace and its symbol, the clear, cloudless sky, are the theme of the principal songs and the desirability and value of peace are more directly expressed in the Omaha songs than in those of the Pawnee of this ceremony. It is the custom among the Omaha, when preparing the feathered stems, to draw a black line near the bowl end. The line does not show, for it is covered by the neck of the duck, but it is there, with its symbolism. It represents the neck or throat of the curlew. This bird in the early morning stretches its neck and wings as it sits on its roost, and utters a long note. This sound is considered an indication that the day will be cloudless. So, to all the other emblems on the stem this prophetic call of the curlew is represented as adding its song to the forces that make for the symbol of peace. In the I<sup>n</sup>ke'gábe gens, which had the keeping of the tribal pipes, the name Ki'ko<sup>n</sup>to<sup>n</sup>ga, "curlew," is found. The name refers to this symbolic mark on the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> pipes. An old Omaha explained that "the eagle, whose feathers are on the pipes, and the wild cat, whose skin is their covering, are both fierce creatures and do not fail to secure their prey; but here, with the pipes, all their powers are turned from destruction to the making of peace among men."

Another emphasis of peace in the Omaha ceremony is found in the signification of the name given the child, who plays the same part in both the Pawnee and the Omaha version of the ceremony. Among the Omaha as with the Pawnee, the child represents the coming generations, the perpetuation of the race; but the Omaha emphasize the innocent character of the child, the absence of the warlike spirit. The name given the child is I<sup>n</sup>u<sup>n</sup>'ga, the Ancient one, the one who goes before, the leader. In this name the continuance of the human family is implied but the name in this ceremony becomes the synonym for peace because "the child thinks no harm." The word I<sup>n</sup>u<sup>n</sup>'ga forms a refrain in nearly all the Omaha songs of the ceremony. The meaning of the word and of the refrain were explained to the

<sup>a</sup> See The Hako, in the *Twenty-second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, pt. 2.



writers as given above. A like refrain does not occur in the Pawnee ceremony. The prominence given to peace in the Omaha version apparently confirms the account given in the Sacred Legend, that this ceremony was introduced to the people when a great council was being held in the interest of establishing peace among several tribes. This council seems to have taken place at a period in the history of the Omaha when the thoughtful members of the tribe were concerned for the very existence of the tribe itself, owing to the breaking away of groups, and "the old men" were devising means by which to hold the people more firmly together. This ceremony, which could take place only between unrelated persons, and which had a wide recognition among many tribes scattered over a vast territory, laid special stress on peaceful relations. So while among the Pawnee we find the teachings of peace embodied in the ceremony, they were not emphasized and dwelt upon with the same degree of insistence as among the Omaha. This difference becomes explicable when we consider the internal condition of the Omaha tribe and their relations to other tribes at the time the ceremony appears to have been adopted by them.

Among the Omaha the symbols on the stems were interpreted as follows: The green color represented the verdure of the earth; the blue color represented the sky; and the red color, the sun, typifying life. The straight groove, painted red, that ran the length of both stems stood for the straight path, representing the path of life and was interpreted to mean that if a man followed the straight path the sun of life and happiness would always shine upon him. The red streamers were the rays of the sun; the white cords that bound them the light of the moon, for night was believed to be the mother of day. The eagle was the bird of tireless strength. The owl, again, represented night and the woodpecker the day and sun; these birds stood also for death and life respectively. The downy feathers at the end of the thong that bound together the fan-like appendages were sometimes spoken of as symbolizing eggs and again, as the feathers of the young eagle, which fell from the bird when it matured and was able to take its flight. The gourd represented eggs and the reproduction of living forms. The band and the four lines painted on these were symbolic of the boundary line of the sky, the horizon, and the four paths of the four winds, at the four directions over which help comes to man. The tobacco pouch was similarly painted and to it were attached a braid of sweet grass, and a mat of buffalo hair such as falls from the animal when shedding its coat. The latter symbolized food and clothing and meant: "If you accept and follow the teachings of this ceremony, you shall go forth to search for food in safety and in peace." The sweet grass was used for its scent and was added to the tobacco when a pipe was smoked during the ceremony.

As has already been mentioned, in the Omaha form of the ceremony the eagle is the prominent figure; it supplants that of the corn in the Pawnee version. In the latter the pipes are taken up from their resting place on the wild-cat skin without song or ceremonial movement. In the Omaha ceremony the pipes are taken up with movements representing the eagle rising from her nest. These motions are accompanied by songs, some of which are of musical interest and beauty.

If the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party were taking the pipes to another tribe, when they were within a days journey four men were chosen to carry the tobacco pouch, which was painted symbolically with the circle and four dependent lines, and to which the braid of sweet grass and the mat of buffalo hair were attached. All four men wore the buffalo robe with hair outside, girded about the waist; the one who carried the tobacco pouch wore a downy eagle feather tied to his scalp lock. This person was called Ninia'thi<sup>n</sup> (from *nini*, "tobacco," and *athi<sup>n</sup>*, "to carry"—"tobacco carrier"). The four passed on rapidly to the lodge of the man whom the leader of the party had designated. Having arrived there, they entered the lodge and passed around the fire by the left. The tobacco pouch was placed in front of the man visited. The four then took their seats to the right of the entrance, filled a pipe (but not from the pouch brought), and offered it to their host. He then inquired who had sent him the tobacco bag. The bearer gave the name of the leader of the party and discoursed on the value of peace and peaceful relations between the two tribes. The host then sent for his relatives and followers to consult as to whether they could make the return gifts requisite and so accept the pipes. Only the inability to give the twelve to thirty ponies required as presents, or a recent death in the family, was considered a sufficient reason for honorably refusing the honor of receiving the pipes. If, however, the consultation with his relatives and friends resulted in a favorable decision, the host said to the young men: "Bid them hasten. Come, we are ready." The leader of the party was spoken of as *wa'wa<sup>n</sup> u'zhu* but he was addressed as "Father" and all of his followers as "Fathers." The man who received the pipes was addressed as "Son" and his party as "Sons."

The messengers hastened back and met the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party, who had slowly continued their journey. When very near the village the party halted, took the pipes from their covering, and placed them at rest on the croched stick and the cat skin and sat down. They were met here by their host or one of his relatives, always a man of prominence, who bade them welcome. Then the party arose and two of the three principal singers took the pipes; the third stepped between them, holding the cat skin, in which was wrapped the croched stick. The

leader and other members took their places behind. Then the following song was sung:<sup>a</sup>

### SONG OF APPROACH

Harmonized by John C. Fillmore to translate the music on the piano

$\text{♩} = 132$  (Aria sung in octave unison)

*f*

The-thu ha - i - ba

*f Trem.*

*Con Ped.*

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It consists of four systems of music. Each system has three staves: a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment line (treble clef), and a bass line (bass clef). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/4 and back to 2/4. The vocal line is marked 'f' and 'Trem.' (tremolo). The piano accompaniment is marked 'Con Ped.' (con peds). The bass line is marked 'f' and 'Trem.' (tremolo). The lyrics are 'The-thu ha - i - ba' and 'Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga'.

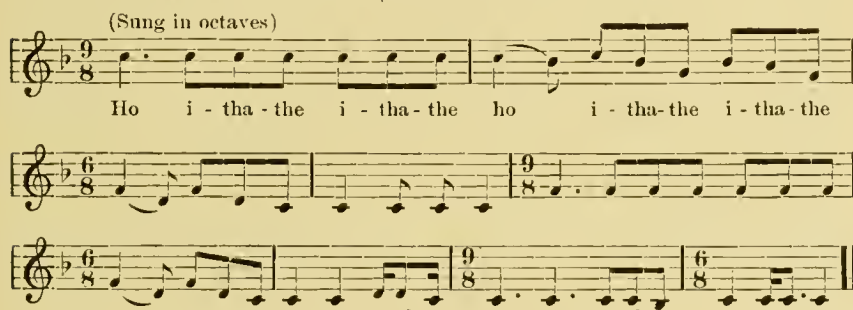
<sup>a</sup> The aria is sung in unison; the harmonization is added to translate the song to our ears and is so preferred by the Indians when played on a piano. The bass should be played lightly.

Thethu haiba  
 Thethu haiba thethu haiba the haiba a he  
 Thethu haiba the haiba  
 Thethu haiba Hu<sup>n</sup>ga  
 Thethu haiba a he  
 Thethu haiba the haiba  
 Thethu haiba Hu<sup>n</sup>ga

Literal translation: *Thethu*, here; *haiba*, they are coming: *Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga* refers to the child as a symbol of innocence, docility, and peace.

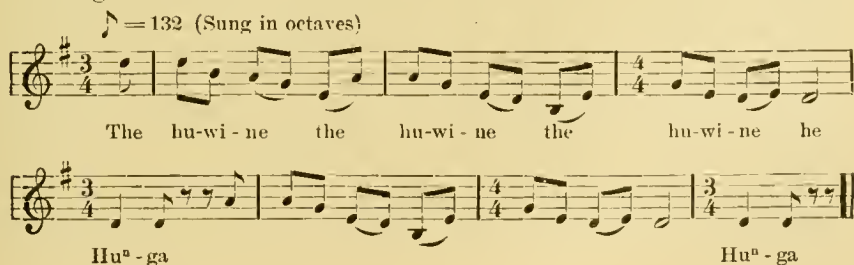
The song refers to the approach of the pipes. The people welcome the party, crying: "They are coming here!"

In singing this song the stems are waved to the rhythm of the music and the rattles are shaken with an accented beat but no drum is used. At the close of the song the party moves forward a little space, then a halt is made, and the song is repeated. There are four halts, at each of which the song is sung. The fourth halt is made at the entrance of the lodge, which has been prepared and stands ready for the ceremony. The actual entrance is in silence. When the west side of the lodge is reached, the pipe bearers stand facing the east and sing the following song:



Literal translation: *Ho!* exclamation; *ithathe*, I have found; *tha*, end of sentence. The words of the song are few but their meaning was explained to be: "Ho! I have found the man worthy to receive the pipes and all the blessings which they bring—peace, the promise of abundant life, food, and happiness." The words also imply a recognition of the qualities which make the man worthy of the selection, and which instigated the choice by the leader.

The following song was sung as the host and his relatives entered the lodge:



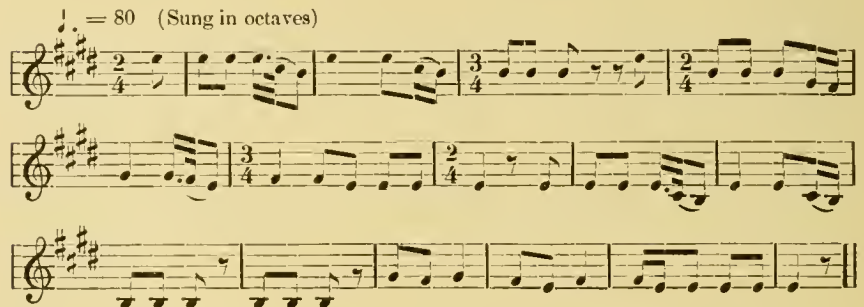


The huwine the huwine the huwine a he Hu<sup>n'</sup>ga  
The huwine the huwine a he Hu<sup>n'</sup>ga

Literal translation: *The*, this; *huwine*, I seek; *a he*, vocables; *Hu<sup>n'</sup>ga* refers to the child, here the symbol of peace.

This song refers directly to the host and again implies that the one who was sought was one to whom peace was considered of great value; that the man's character was such as to hold the respect of his people and whose influence was for order and peace. The refrain *Hu<sup>n'</sup>ga* has a double reference—to the ceremony and to the character of the one to be made a "son."

After the singing of this song the pipes were laid at rest. The wild-cat skin was spread a little distance back of the fireplace, the crotched stick thrust into the ground at the head of the animal, and the stems were laid in the crotch; the pipe with the white feathers, representing the masculine force, lay uppermost. The rattles were placed under the winglike appendages; the ends with duck heads rested on the skin. After the skin had been spread and the stick put in place, the song used laying down the pipes was sung. In swaying the pipes the rhythmic movements simulated the eagle descending, then rising and again descending, until it rested on its nest.



There are no words to these songs; only vocables are used.

The pipe bearers now took their seats behind the pipes, which were never left alone throughout the entire ceremony (fig. 88). After the pipes were at rest the host left the lodge and the rest of the party busied themselves with unpacking and getting settled. The men usually occupied the lodge where the ceremony was to take place; if there were women in the party, a tent was prepared for them near by.

Soon after sunset the host reentered the lodge and took his place on the north side not far from the door. His relatives and friends were seated on both sides, the older men nearer the center, the young men toward the door. The *Wa'wa<sup>n</sup>* party sat between the pipe bearers and their host's party; the leader's seat was toward the north.

The servers of the party sat on both sides of the entrance. It was their duty to fill the pipes and attend to the fire and the cooking.

About the door were gathered the poor and the onlookers, who had no part in the ceremony. A feast had been prepared by the Wa'wa<sup>a</sup> party but it was not served until near midnight. The pipes could not be taken up until some one of the host's party should rise and say: "Fathers, you have come to sing; we desire to hear you." This invitation required the gift of a horse. Then the leader of the Wa'wa<sup>a</sup> party and the host both arose and advanced to the man who had spoken, as the act implied a gift. The host, standing before him, lifted both hands, palms outward, and then dropped them slowly. He then



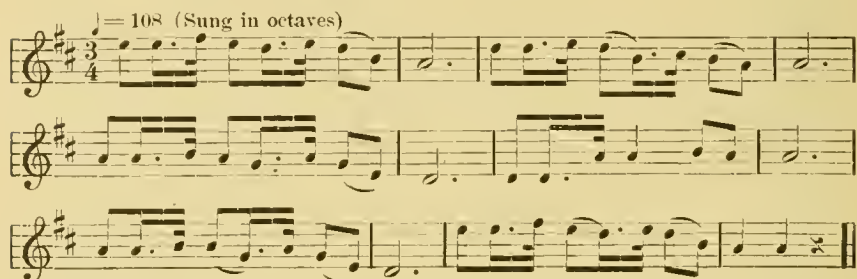
FIG. 88. Pipe bearers and pipes in Wa'wa<sup>a</sup> ceremony.

passed his right hand over the left arm of the giver from the shoulder to the wrist and repeated the movement with his left hand on the man's right arm, the sign of thanks. He then walked slowly in front of his kinsmen and friends, speaking to each man by a term of relationship, raising his right hand in further token of his thanks. The leader of the Wa'wa<sup>a</sup> party then advanced to the giver and repeated the same movement indicative of his thanks. Raising his right hand, palm outward, he turned toward the left and then toward the right, to give thanks to all the host's relatives and friends gathered in

the lodge. While this was going on within, an old man of the poorer class arose and passed out of the lodge, beginning as he went a song of thanks and finishing it outside the lodge. He introduced the name of the donor of the horse and to make sure that it was heard he called the name twice at the close of the song. This triple form of thanks was observed whenever a gift was made to the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party.

At the conclusion of the thanks the pipe bearers arose and the pipes were taken up ceremonially. The movements simulated the eagle rising from its nest and making ready for flight. There are no words to the songs used to accompany these movements. These songs were repeated four times. The beauty of this part of the ceremony was greatly enhanced when the pipe bearers were graceful and could imitate well the flying, circling, rising, and falling of the bird. The feather appendages moved like wings as the pipes were swayed and both the eye and the ear were rhythmically addressed.

The following is one of the songs sung on raising the pipes. Only vocables are now used when singing these songs. Note the closing cadence when the eagle is up and away.



When the pipes were raised the three bearers, with the two pipes and the wild-cat skin, turned to the left and circled the lodge. The other members of the party followed, bearing the drum. A rhythmic side step was taken as the party faced their seated hosts, and the pipes were swayed so that the feathers moved like the wings of a bird slowly flying. The fire was always replenished just as the pipes started, so that the flames as they leaped filled the lodge with light and the shadows cast by the moving feathered stems seem to make real their simulation of the eagle's flight. If the song was familiar, as often happened, it was taken up by all present as the pipes approached and passed before the sitting people.

The following noble choral has been heard sung by three hundred or four hundred voices, male and female; no one is excluded because of sex or age, for, it is said, "The pipes are free to all." The volume of tone, the variety of voice quality, the singing in octaves, gave strong harmonic effects, and it was not surprising that the Omaha objected to such



songs being given on an instrument as unsupported arias. The following harmonization was added to meet the demands of Omaha singers, who only gave their approval when the song was played as here presented. "Now it sounds natural" was their simple but unmistakable verdict.

(Sung in octaves) Harmonized by John C. Fillmore for interpretation on the piano  
♩ = 132 With religious feeling

The akede hiao tha  
Ho tha kede hiao tha  
The akede hia the he  
Hiao tha kede hiao tha kede hia thehe

Literal translation: *The*, this; *awake*, what I meant (*wa* omitted in singing); *de*, sign of past tense; *hia*, here it is; *o*, vocable; *tha*, end of sentence. The second line has the same meaning as the first, the sounds being changed for ease in singing. The literal translation of

the words of this song gives little idea of its meaning, but to the Omaha the song had a profound significance and its import as explained by the old men is borne out by the character of the music. The past tense refers to the teaching given in the past, to the fathers, whereby the blessing of peace could be secured, and this blessing is now brought here by the "tireless eagle" who bore it from the past, bears it in the present, and brings it to the "Son" with whom it will remain as a gift from Wako<sup>n</sup>'da. Once, at the close of this song, a venerable man turned to the writers (all had been singing as the pipes passed around the lodge) and said: "Truly the pipes are from Wako<sup>n</sup>'da."

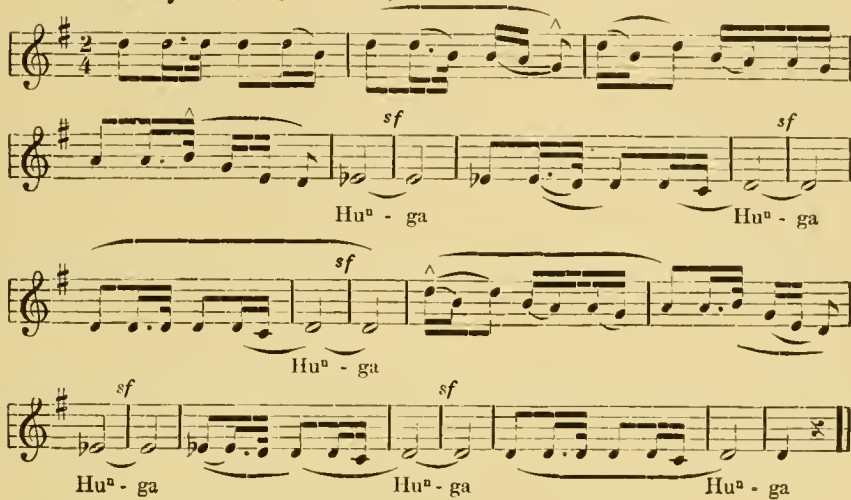
The music of this choral presents points of interest, particularly as indicating what we term modulation, that is the passing from one key to another. On this point the late John Comfort Fillmore, a musical scholar of ability, wrote in 1892: "The song begins in the key of B flat. . . . the original key is kept until the fifth measure, in which the first clause ends with the relative minor chord. The next phrase of three measures is in the key of E flat (subdominant), the third measure effecting a transition to the key of F by means of the chord of G (over-third of E flat), followed naturally by the chord of C (dominant in F). The last clause begins in F, modulates to C, in the second measure and closes the period in that key. This key, the major over-second of B flat, the original keynote, would seem to be so remote as to make it impossible to preserve unity within the limits of a short 12-measure period. But the melodic flow is so smooth and the harmonic connections so natural that I, at least, do not get from it the impression of anything forced, harsh or unpleasant, nor do I feel the need of a return to the original tonic."<sup>a</sup> Much study was bestowed on this song by Professor Fillmore and many harmonization experiments were tried on Omaha Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> singers during Professor Fillmore's visit to the Omaha reservation in Nebraska. The arrangement here given met with the expression of approval, "It sounds natural," when it was played to them on a reed organ, the only instrument there available.

<sup>a</sup> In *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, in *Archæological and Ethnological Papers*, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, 1, 295, Cambridge, 1893.

After the close of the preceding choral the pipe bearers again moved about the lodge, waving the feathered stems to the rhythm of the following song:

M. M.  $\frac{1}{2}$  = 63 (Sung in octaves)

Transcribed by John C. Fillmore



The awake tha we the awake tha we  
 Tahesha we the awake tha we  
 Hu<sup>n</sup>ga the awake tha we Hu<sup>n</sup>ga  
 The awake tha we Hu<sup>n</sup>ga  
 Tahesha we tha awake tho we  
 Hu<sup>n</sup>ga the awake tha we Hu<sup>n</sup>ga  
 The awake tha we Hu<sup>n</sup>ga

Literal translation: *The*, this; *awake*, what I mean; *tha*, oratorical end of sentence; *we*, vowel prolongation; *tahesha*, an old word the meaning of which is lost. This word appears as a personal name in the I'ke'cabe gens, which had charge of the Sacred Tribal Pipes. It probably had a symbolic meaning connected with the articles or with the teaching of this ceremony. *We*, vowel prolongation; *Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga*, the name of the child who has a part in this ceremony.

This song followed and supplemented the preceding choral, which referred to a teaching that had been handed down. In this song the subject of this teaching was enunciated: "This is what I mean" (the present tense is used)—"*Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga*," peace, which is to be accepted with the docility of the child. The song was a favorite one and was often expatiated on to the writers, particularly the teaching of the *Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga*. This word is a modification of *Ho<sup>n</sup>'ga*, a name (as already noted) which played an important part in the history of the Omaha and cognate tribes. It means "one who went before," an ancestor; also "one who goes before," one distinguished and important, a leader. The meaning of *Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga* in this ceremony is made up of many aspects, all of which go to impress on the Omaha

mind that from the beginning, down through the ages, and at the present time, that which preserves the race, even as does the child, is peace. Such was the explanation of the old men concerning this word so frequently used in these songs.

At the close of the song the pipes were laid to rest with ceremonial song and movements, as already described. Then the feast was served. Not far from midnight the company dispersed. The Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party remained in the lodge with the pipes and slept there.

At the first sign of the dawn the pipes were raised ceremonially and after they were up the bearers sang the following song as they stood in their places, facing the east, and swayed the pipes to the rhythm of the music:

(Sung in octaves)

Um - ba ya tho Ku - the go<sup>a</sup> u - ho<sup>a</sup> ga um -

ba ya tho Ku the go<sup>a</sup> u-ho<sup>a</sup> ga Um - ba ya tho

Ku the go<sup>a</sup> u-ho<sup>a</sup> ga um - ba ya tho Ku the go<sup>a</sup> u-ho<sup>a</sup> ga

Umba ya tho  
 Kuthe go<sup>a</sup> uho<sup>a</sup>'ga  
 Umba ya tho  
 Kuthe go<sup>a</sup> uho<sup>a</sup>'ga  
 Umba ya tho  
 Kuthe go<sup>a</sup> uho<sup>a</sup>'ga  
 Umba ya tho  
 Kuthe go<sup>a</sup> uho<sup>a</sup>'ga

Translation: *Umba*, day or dawn; *ya*, coming; *tho*, oratorical end of sentence; *kuthe go<sup>n</sup>*, to move quickly, to make haste; *uho<sup>n</sup>*, to cook, to prepare food; *ga*, sign of command. "Day is coming! Arise, hasten to prepare the food!" This song was repeated the second and third mornings of the ceremony.

No special ritual was observed on the second day. As gifts are generally made at this time, the songs used implied gratitude both for the gifts and for the promised success of the ceremony. The six songs that follow were sung on the second day.

Most of the *wa'wa<sup>n</sup>* songs have but few words; they are supplied with vocables only. It was explained that these vocables are syllables representing words formerly used. As it was the custom among the Omaha to secure good singers to be the pipe bearers and leaders in the music, which was a special feature of the ceremony, the songs were not in the keeping of a priest; it was explained that

syllables had been substituted for the original words to keep most of the words from the knowledge of the people. This statement may account for the paucity of words and the lack of particularity in the songs. Their meaning was general rather than related to some special and ritual action. The few words in this song and in all those sung on the second day were: *The*, this; *howane*, what I seek; *Hu<sup>u</sup>ga*, peace.

The following three songs are interesting musically. No. 1 gives the theme in its simplest form; nos. 2 and 3 are variants. These three songs are regarded by the Omaha as distinct musically and are here given in order to show how little change is required to make songs sound differently to the native ear. They also throw a side light on the accuracy demanded in rendering songs and in their transmission, a marked peculiarity in Omaha music. It would be very easy for one of the white race to interchange these three songs as the difference between them is not striking.

M.M.  $\text{♩} = 60$       No. 1      M.M.  $\text{♩} = 60$   
(Sung in octaves) Introduction      (Song.)

The ho - wa - ne ho - wa - ne

Hu<sup>u</sup> - ga ne

Hu<sup>u</sup> - ga ne

M.M.  $\text{♩} = 60$       No. 2      M.M.  $\text{♩} = 60$   
(Sung in octaves) Introduction      (Song)

The ho - wa - ne ho - wa - ne

Hu<sup>u</sup> - ga ne

Hu<sup>u</sup> - ga ne



M. M. ♩ = 60 No. 3

(Sung in octaves) Introduction (Song)

The ho - wa - ne ho - wa - ne

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga ha

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga ne Hu<sup>a</sup>-ga Hu<sup>a</sup>-ga

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga - a

The rhythm in the following song is particularly strong and lends itself finely to the customary unison singing in octaves:

(Sing in unison) M. M. ♩ = 66 *Marked rhythm* Transcribed by John C. Fillmore

The ha-wa-ne

Hu<sup>a</sup>

ga

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga

The following songs refer to peace under the symbol of the clear sky, *ketha*. This symbol embraces a reference to Wako<sup>n</sup>'da, who gives to man the sunshine, the clear sky from which all storms, all clouds, are removed. In this connection it should be remembered that the black storm clouds with their thunder and lightning are emblematic of war. The clear sky therefore represents the absence of all that could relate to war. Among the syllables sung to the music of these songs appear the words *ketha*, clear sky or peace, and *Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga*, child-likeness and peace. It is to be regretted that all the exact words of these songs are lost; they might have revealed something of the ritualistic progression of the ideas embodied in the ceremony. The

fact that the only two words that remain stand for peace—one, *ke-tha*, peace as symbolized in nature, and the other, *Hu<sup>a</sup>-ga*, peace as symbolized by a little child—indicates that the peaceful teaching of the ceremony was that which appealed most strongly to the Omaha mind. Other phases, as can be observed in the Pawnee version, if they were ever a part of the Omaha version have been lost.

*Flowingly, with feeling* Double beat ♩ = 126

(Aria sung in octaves) Harmony by John C. Fillmore for translation on the piano

Ke - tha ya Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga Ke - tha Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga ke tha Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga Ke - tha Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga Ke - tha Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga



Some of these *ketha* songs are gentle and pastoral in character, particularly this one; the words of the song were explained as meaning: "Fair as is the clear sky, the green grass, yet more fair is peace among men;" and the music bears out this interpretation.

(Aria sung in octaves) Harmonized by John C. Fillmore for interpretation on the piano

Double beat  $\text{♩} = 126$  *With dignity*

The musical score is arranged in three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 2/4, with a 3/4 section in the middle of each system. The tempo is marked 'Double beat' with a quarter note equal to 126, and the mood is 'With dignity'.

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Ke - tha ke - tha ke - tha ha'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex, syncopated pattern in the left hand.

**System 2:** This system continues the melody and accompaniment without lyrics.

**System 3:** The vocal line includes the lyrics 'Ke - tha - a Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga - a - ha'. The piano accompaniment maintains the same rhythmic structure.



The foregoing spirited choral is wonderfully stirring when sung by two hundred or three hundred voices, as the writers have heard it many times. It is spoken of as a "happy song."

When the weather was rainy, the following plea for a clear sky was sung:

(Sung in octaves)



The only words are *ketha*, "clear sky," and *Hu<sup>a</sup>'ga*. It was greatly desired to have the sun shine during the ceremony, so when clouds gathered this prayer for clear weather was sung with much earnestness.

On the evening of the third day the gifts brought by the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party were presented to the host, who distributed them among his party.

On the morning of the fourth day the ceremony in reference to the child took place. There was no song nor any cooking of food. All must fast. The leader, or "Father," and the pipe bearer went to the lodge of the host, the "Son;" as they walked thither the following song was sung:

(Sung in octaves)



If this song ever had words, they are lost. Having arrived at the door of the lodge, they paused and sang as follows:

$\text{♩} = 168$  (Sung in octaves)

A-ti - e - tha we - a - ne

Huⁿ-ga

Huⁿ - ga

Atie tha weane  
 Atie tha weane  
 Atie tha weane  
 Zhiⁿga thi uwine the Huⁿga  
 Atie tha weane  
 Atie tha weane  
 Zhiⁿga thi uwine the Huⁿga

Literal translation: *Atie tha, atia tha*, I have come; *tha*, end of sentence; *weane*, a changed form of *uwine*, I seek you; *zhiⁿga*, little one, child; *thi*, you.

The party then entered the lodge where the little child, with its parents, was awaiting them. The leader carried clothing for the child and the skin pouches that contained the red and black paint. First the child was clothed; then a member of the Wa'waⁿ party who could count honors won in defensive warfare was designated to paint the child. The pipes were waved to the following song as this ceremony took place:

$\text{♩} = 184$  (Sung in octaves)

A - ba - ha the a the a - ba - ha the - a - the

A - thi - ba - ha a - thi - ba - ha Huⁿ - ga

1

Abaha the athe, abaha the athe  
 Athi baha, athi baha Huⁿga

2

Athaha the athe athaha the athe  
 Athethaha athethaha Huⁿga

Literal translation: *Abaha*, to show; *the*, this; *athe*, I make; *athi baha*, to show you, *Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga*; *athaha*, to adhere; *the*, this; *athe*, I make; *athûhaha*, to make adhere to you.

During the singing of the first stanza the man held the paint in its receptacle over the head of the child and showed it to all present. He first made a feint as if to touch the child with it. As the second stanza was sung he put red paint over the face of the child, then he drew a band of black across the forehead, a stripe down each cheek, one down the nose, and one at the back of the head. This design had the same meaning as that on the gourds. The band across the forehead represented the line of the sky; the stripes were the paths at the four directions whence the winds start; the red paint symbolized the light of the sun and the gift of life; the lines signified the winds—the breath of life, giving motion and power. In this connection the ceremony of Turning the Child should be remembered. (See p. 117.) This style of painting was called *Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga kio<sup>n</sup>*, "Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga painting" (fig. 89). The dead of the Nini'bato<sup>n</sup> subdivision of the I<sup>n</sup>ke'cabe gens were sometimes so painted for entrance into the life after death.



Fig. 89. Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga painting.

Then was sung the song which accompanied the act of tying the *hi<sup>n</sup>xpe'*, a downy eagle feather, on the child.

$\text{♩} = 176$  (Sung in octaves)

A - gthe Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga

Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga

A'gthe Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga, etc.

Literal translation: *A'gthe*, to put on something and make it stand.

Eagle down was sprinkled over the head of the child, making it look like a callow bird. The warriors counted their honors, and while they were telling of their deeds of valor performed in defensive warfare the following song was sung:

Harmonized by John C. Fillmore for interpretation on the piano

$\text{♩} = 176$  (Sung in octaves)

Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga ha - ne no tho Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga ha - ne

no tho Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga ha - ne no tho Hu<sup>a</sup> - ga ha - ne

*Con. Ped.*

*D.C. ad lib.*

Hu<sup>a</sup>'ga hani

Literal translation: *hani*, you have. Vocables fill out the measure of the music.

The meaning of this song and act was explained as follows: The reason why only honors won in defensive warfare could be counted at this time was that those men who had won such honors had done so because they had risked their lives for the defense of the women and children of the tribe; they had done deeds to promote safety and so to secure the perpetuation of the race. The act was symbolic and was considered one of the most important. It had a direct bearing on the teaching of the ceremony. If by any chance the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party did not have a man who could recount deeds done in defensive warfare and honors so gained, then the host, "the Son," was obliged to seek a man to perform this part in the rite, for the child could not be lifted up and carried to the lodge where the ceremony was to be completed until a man had counted over it honors won in defensive warfare. This explains the meaning of the words



*Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga hani*—"you have the Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga," i. e., because of my acts the children live, "you have" them.

Note the change of key in the music and its implied harmonic modulation.

After the counting of honors the following words were sung:

Sho<sup>n</sup> wi<sup>n</sup>a tha

Literal translation: *Sho<sup>n</sup>*, it is done; *wi<sup>n</sup>a*, I carry you; *tha*, oratorical end of sentence.

The child was then taken on the back of a man, who followed the swayed pipes as this song was sung:

Zhi<sup>n</sup> - ga the u - we - ne Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga

Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga Hu<sup>n</sup> - ga

Zhi<sup>n</sup>ga thi uwine Hu<sup>n</sup>ga, etc.

Literal translation: *Zhi<sup>n</sup>ga*, little one, child; *thi*, you; *uwine*, I seek.

When the lodge was reached, the leader took his place outside at the right of the door and held the child between his knees. The singers took their seats at the left of the door. Two young men of the party were selected to perform the final dance. They were divested of clothing except the breechcloth. A red circle was painted on the breast and back, a *hi<sup>n</sup>xpe'* feather tied on the scalp lock. Each dancer carried one of the feathered stems.

Meanwhile all those who had made gifts of horses to the Wa'wa<sup>n</sup> party gathered their ponies and decked themselves in gala dress, and approached the lodge to witness the final dance. The singers started the music and the two young men, holding the feathered stems high above their heads, with a light, leaping step danced in two straight lines to and from the east, simulating the flight of the eagle. The line taken by the dancers signified that by following the teachings of the ceremony, the straight red line on the pipes, one could go forth and return in peace to his lodge and have no fear. As the young men leaped and danced—a dance that was full of wild grace and beauty—it might happen that a man would advance and stop before one of the dancers, who at once handed him the pipe. The man recounted his deeds and laid the pipe on the ground. The dance and music ceased, for the act was a challenge and the pipe could be raised only by one who could recount a deed equal in valor

to that told by the man who had caused the pipe to be laid down. This stopping of the dance often led to spirited contests in the recital of brave deeds. While the dancing was going on, the ponies were led by the children of the donors to the leader and the little *Hu'ga* stroked the arm of the messenger in token of thanks. When all the ponies had been received the final dance came to an end.

The man who had recounted his deeds and painted the *Hu'ga* entered the lodge alone with the child and closed the door. He took the pipes, which had been folded together, and made four passes on child—down the front, back, and both sides. He then turned the child four times, and led it outside the lodge. This act of blessing the child was secret and no outsider but the host could be present. The pipes and all their belongings, wrapped in the wildcat skin, were then handed by the man who had blessed the child to the leader, who presented them to the host, saying: "My son, you have made me many gifts but they will disappear, while that which I leave with you will remain and bring you the blessing of peace." The "Son" then gave away the pipes, the wildcat skin, the tobacco pouch, and the rattles to those who had taken part with him in receiving the pipes. He retained none of the articles. Only by this act could he receive all the honor and advantage to be derived from the reception of a *Wa'wa*<sup>n</sup> party and enjoy all the promised benefits of the rite. The visitors then gathered their ponies, which were apportioned by the leader, and moved off. When a mile or two away they camped and partook of their first food after a fast of nearly twenty-four hours and then made their way home as rapidly as possible.

Many are the stories told by men and women of their experiences when they were *Hu'ga*—of how tired they became, of the tidbits doled to them by the leader to keep them contented, of how when they rejoined their playmates the latter plucked at the down which clung to their hair and made sport of their queer looks. Nevertheless in after life it was regarded as an honor to have been a *Hu'ga* and the inconvenience was remembered only to make merry with.

The Omaha *Wa'wa*<sup>n</sup>, while lacking some of the elaborateness of the Pawnee version of the same ceremony, was not without beauty and dignity. It was a ceremony that was dear to the people. It was held in a reverence free of fear and strongly tinged with the spirit of kindness and happiness. Its songs, being free to both sexes and to all ages, were widely known in the tribe and greatly enjoyed.

#### THE CEREMONY AMONG THE PONCA

According to a Ponca tradition, the *Wa'wa*<sup>n</sup> ceremony was instituted at the time the seven pipes were distributed at the formation of the tribe as it is at present. This tradition would seem to place the event about the time that the ceremony was accepted by the



Omaha when peace was made through it with the Arikara and other tribes. (See p. 74.) This ceremony was known and observed by the Ponca as among the Omaha and the same songs were used, for the Ponca had none of their own composition belonging to it. According to Hairy Bear the closing act, "blessing the child," which was secret among the Omaha, was open with the Ponca and differed in some of its details. After the pipes had been folded together and wrapped in the wildcat skin they were raised high over the head of the little *Hu<sup>n</sup>'ga*, then brought down slowly so as to touch the forehead of the child and passed down the front of the body to the feet until the mouthpiece rested on the toes, which it was made to press strongly on the ground; then the pipes were laid for a moment on the ground in a line toward the east, as the following words were spoken: "Firm shall be your tread upon the earth, no obstacle shall hinder your progress; long shall be your life and your issue many." The movements with the folded pipes were repeated on the right side of the child from its head to its feet and the pipes laid in a line toward the south, as the promise was repeated. The movements were next made on the back of the child and the pipes laid in a line toward the west, while the promise was given. Lastly the pipes were passed over the left side of the child and then laid in a line toward the north, as once more the promise was given to the child, who stood at the intersection of the four symbolic lines, "in the center of the life-giving forces." The child was then told to "walk four steps toward the sun."<sup>a</sup> When this was accomplished the little one was dismissed and the *Wa'wa<sup>n</sup>* ceremony came to an end.

---

<sup>a</sup> The taking of the four steps suggests the rite of Turning the Child (see p. 121).