

## *Some Zuni Ceremonies and Melodies*

by Reid Stacey

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# Some Zuni Ceremonies and Melodies

By REID STACEY

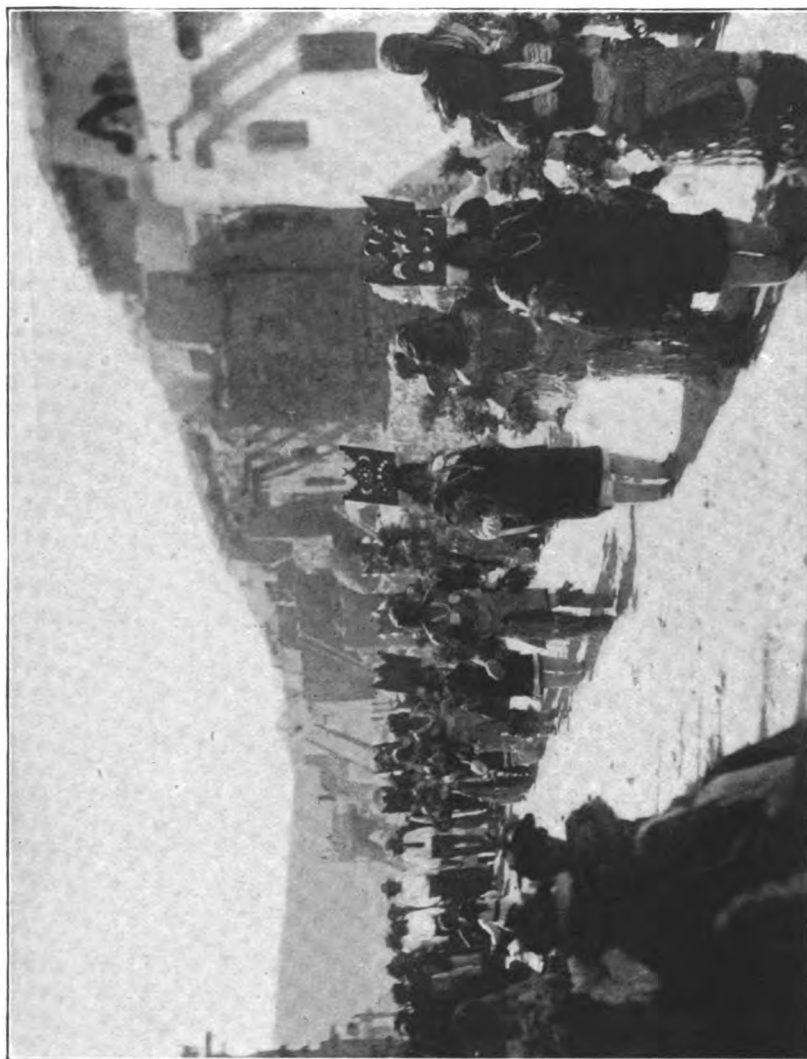


AN authority on Indian lore very tersely suggests that though we do right to educate the Indian, we ought to make his education profitable to himself and to us. We ought to encourage him to keep on manufacturing his blankets, baskets and pottery, instead of instructing him in the arts of blacksmithing and deviltry. In the light of the splendid ethnological work of the past fifteen years, no one doubts any longer the force and value of the Indian in his arts and crafts, his designs, his legendary and mythical invention. And, finally, we discover his music and learn that here, too, he has a vast and unexpected legacy for us.

American Indian Music, often strangely beautiful and impressive, can more reasonably be termed American music than the folk-songs of the negroes, because its sturdiness and force are more congenial with the national mood. ¶ Until recently, little has been known of the ceremonial music of our native races, and few efforts had been made to secure correct records of it. Now, at what appears to be the eleventh hour, when the oldest members and most truthful and trustworthy chiefs are rapidly dying, a more humane and brotherly feeling is manifest among cultured people, and some reliable data is being secured. A few years ago it was said: "The Indians have what is by courtesy called music, the ostensible purpose of which is either to appease their gods or frighten the spirits away." The little we had previously heard that

was representative of Indian song deceived us as to its real nature and extent, for indoor musical culture tends to make one slow to understand the music of plain, forest, and sky. We had so long taken it for granted that their chants and folk-songs were without genuine musical value, that it may require a little time to appreciate the fact that the Indian sings songs of unlimited variety and scope. There are stirring songs of the Thunder God as he prepares to meet the enemy, peaceful chorals in the circle of friends, weird melodies to reach the spirits of the departed, rallying songs in the face of death, rhythmic and jubilant songs at his games — innumerable plaintive, quaint or thrilling chants not trimmed to the measure of the musical theorist, but sung from the earth to the sky, from men to men in the open, and to the gods above.

Though the descendants of the red man are lapsing into a condition of nonentity — the warlike ones having been slain and the tamer ones herded upon isolated reservations, some tribes still adhere to the customs and ceremonials of their ancestors, even where Christianity has been at least outwardly accepted. The Pueblo Indians — so-called from their village (pueblo) life — attained a considerable degree of civilization, though the diversity of culture is not so great as that of speech. There are (belonging to the Shoshonian stock), beside the Hopi tribe, three linguistic stocks — Keresan, Tanoan and Zunian, and ethnologists claim their culture is largely the reflex of environment. The



THE GREAT SUN-DANCE



mystery that envelops a people who built their homes on precipices 2,000 and 3,000 feet above the beds of canyon streams, and at what period in the world's history these buildings were occupied first or whence came the builders are problems that have so far baffled scientists.

Among the various tribes of the Southwest, the Zuni and Hopi deserve special consideration. The Zunis are among the foremost in intellectual attainments and dramatic ceremonials, in which they display strangely fascinating sentiments and song. They have, as musical instruments, the drum, flute, pan-pipe and "musical bow," and songs and dances to the accompaniment of these were in vogue in pre-Columbian America, if we may judge from the tribes now surviving. The Hopi Indians have a flute festival lasting nine days, participated in by a flute priest, a flute boy, two flute girls and a man with a sun emblem, who also plays a flute. The entire ceremony appears to represent and to commemorate the coming of the corn maids. According to Moqui mythology, the Sun God is said to have drawn these maidens to himself and the growth of the national food is symbolized in this ritual. Mr. George Wharton James says the songs used in this ceremonial are the most melodious of the Hopi, and are invariably accompanied by the flute.

There is much food for thought by the archeologist that Egyptians, Greeks and Romans also used the flute in the worship of those deities credited with providing food from the soil and the art is still practiced by American Indians. ¶ The structural and melodic character

of Zunian music differs so notably from that of their adjoining neighbors, the latter's songs receive little attention. The Quechuas are said to have developed songs of a romantic order, and a few of the Moqui songs are interesting, but the beauty and originality of Zuni music is beyond comparison.

What constitutes the strange and difficult character of the melodies of these aboriginal cliff-dwellers is the fact that they always start with a fixed intonation of tone, but almost immediately begin to rise (though almost imperceptibly) in infinitely chromatic or fractional intervals, and after ascending to the compass of a tetrachord, gradually descend in similar fractional intervals of a 32nd and even a 64th, yet return accurately to the first tonality. In consequence of this peculiarity, the recording of their choral chants is a laborious task. To the untrained listener, it appears as if they were trying to find the right pitch.

The expressions of tone also change frequently, and often suddenly, from that of great shouting at high pitch to the softest murmur and low monotone. ¶ As they are an emotional and deeply, religious people, their music partakes strongly of the descriptive character. All their sacred ceremonials are supported by a variety of drums, large and small, and the vibrating of the chime and storm plates — metallic sheets of different length, width and thickness. ¶ In consequence of a peculiar physical characteristic, the Zunis, both men and women, are able to pitch their voices to extreme heights, as well as to reach the deep sonorous tones. The larynx and vocal ligaments are broader than in

Caucasians, and the hyoid bone is turned outward instead of down and back, as in the white races.

¶Through the untiring enthusiasm of Mr. Carlos Troyer, the music of this fast-vanishing race has been preserved, and from it an idea of their nobility of character may be obtained, as it gives clue to higher life and aspirations incident of the origin of music by the sun rays which they perceive and formulate their melodies from.

During a visit in South America Mr. Troyer made a special effort to record all the songs of prominence and tradition of the Indians of Peru and Bolivia. He was induced to visit the fierce, yet highly developed, Incas, and while captive among them, made valuable records of their music. Mr. Troyer states that these people have a rhythmical and melodic conception as distinct from North American Indians as the best European composers' music differs from the Zunis.

Mr. Troyer went to San Francisco to live in 1870, and, through his friendship with Frank Hamilton Cushing, was led to visit the Zunis, probably the most reticent and uncommunicative of all the Indian peoples. During three preliminary visits he learned almost nothing of the traditions or secret ceremonies of the Zunis, but in the four succeeding trips, after being initiated into the secret order of the Koh Koh, and having learned the sign language, Mr. Troyer was enabled to accomplish what probably no one before had succeeded in doing.

Though the common language of the Zunis is spoken by the people at large, all initiated members of secret lodges

speak a different language, and also sing and recite in this secret language—Aztec or Mayan. In their ceremonies, only members of the Koh Koh, or the priesthood of the bow, participate with the young braves of the highest caste and daughters of the chiefs. Because of his ability also to play many of their melodies on the violin, Mr. Troyer had access to many hitherto inaccessible traditional songs. The music of these ceremonies, both vocal and instrumental, is now given out in a simple and available form, and is found to be impressive and dignified, but withal simple and beautiful.

When asked where they got or from whom they learned their music, the invariable reply is "From our forefathers." And when questioned as to who taught their forefathers, they say: "Oh, we listen to the rays of the sun, and we are filled with the beautiful sounds that fill our hearts. Come listen yourself to the sun when she bids us good-night. Hear how she speaks to us in tones of comfort, joy and peace. Have you never listened to them? Don't you hear them now?" And standing in groups, silently listening to the music of their Mother-God, the sun, these people seem to be at times entirely governed by the vibrations and sounds of the sunlight.

The Zuni mother does not put her baby to sleep by rocking and singing a lullaby. She simply lays it in a hammock, and, gazing at it with an intent, steady look, repeats the chant on opposite page.

¶As the Zunis believe the spirit is temporarily freed from the body during sleep, the mother thinks her earthly





care has no power to protect the child while sleeping, so as soon as the little one closes its eyes, she begins the Invocation to the Sun-god—the music of which is very dramatic—

woven blanket, which he gracefully waves as he dances, to induce his beloved to take a walk, which will confirm her acceptance of him as her lover. He will cautiously approach her dwell-

#### INVOCATION TO THE SUN-GOD



¶Before the opening of the annual spring festivities it is the custom of the braves to seek a wife who must be a maiden of high standing to be eligible for the sons of the chiefs and high priests. With decidedly romantic instincts the Zuni brave considers the most propitious time for offering his devotion to be in the silent hours of the night at the approach of, or during, the full moon. Arrayed in gorgeous attire, with a handsome headgear of colored feathers, and profusely decorated with ornaments, his special pride is in his

ing, watching keenly for any sign of her presence, and begin his song and dance. Though coyly keeping herself concealed, if the maiden likes his personality (or his blanket), she will toss down a bear's tooth, arrow, or some colored feathers—emblems of fearlessness, bravery or love, but an ardent wooer is expected to repeat his serenade at least a third time before the maiden can determine the state of her mind. It will be noticed his request is not directly stated, but indirectly and poetically implied.

## Some Zuni Ceremonies and Melodies

The Sunrise Call is one of the most inspiring of the ceremonials. Just before daybreak the whirl of the vibrating chime-plates reaches the outermost dwellings of the pueblo, bringing the people to the roofs and tops of the houses. Men, women and children

monial seldom ever reaches the ears of the common people, much less any stranger not a member of the tribe. Only by special order and under guarded supervision of the sun-priest who has charge of the training of the high caste children, is the Children's

### ZUNI LOVER'S SONG

May I hope it is, my young maid - en, sit - ting all a - lone and a -  
 Shu - a - tchi - a - ma, ho - mi sho - kia, ho - thl lash - to - ki, teth - lin -

wait - ing me; Will she come then? Will she walk with me? 'neath one  
 ee - man - i; Shan - e - lu - lu, Shan - e - tan - da - mey? shan - e -

blank - et, we to - geth - er be, We, . . . We two, . . . We two . .  
 lu - lu, pa - ku lu - u - ku. Ku, . . . Lu ku, . . . Lu ku . .

uen - - do rallen - - tan - do f risoluto  
 . . . We two, . . . We two, . . . Will she come?  
 . . . Lu ku, . . . Lu ku, . . . Tan - a - lu?

all appear to obey the summons of the Sun-priest to rise and greet the Mother of Life, the rising sun. With his great tuma, and amid the roar of big drums, the priest blazons forth the "call to rise" to the surrounding mesas, receiving a prompt and faithful response. Having fulfilled his first duty, he next makes a fervent appeal in the form of a morning prayer to the "Mighty Sun-God," imploring, in a low and tremulous voice, aid and guidance for his people, and concluding by repeating his first sunrise call. But the most sacred and exclusive part of the morning cere-

Greeting to the Sun performed. The first of their Hymn is more of a response-chant in short phrases sung by groups, all joining in the jubilee chorus at the close. The feature that distinguishes this ceremonial from any other is the practice of "*listening*" to the sound of waves of the sun by means of perforated shells, which the younger children hold to their ears, while the more sensitively-trained obtain more perfect results by standing in close groups with foreheads touching. At the close of each verse they "listen, just listen," for a few minutes in

THE SUNRISE CALL

*f a tempo.* *poco*

Wake ye, a-rise, life is greet-ing thee, Wake ye, a-rise, ev-er watch-ful be. Moth-er  
Wah! ut-ta-ho na-wi tan-a-lo. Wah! ut-ta-ho ta-hi man-a-lo. Ma-ya

*lento* *molto* *lento*

Life-god, she is call-ing thee! Moth-er Life-god, she is greet-ing thee.  
na-wi, zu-mi teth-lan-il Ma-ya na-wi, zu-mi tan-a-li.

*f* *pp* *Echo*

All a-rise— a-rise— a-rise! Rise! a-rise a-rise!  
Quan-ta-ho— ta-ho— ta-ho! Wah! ta-ho ta-ho!

silence; then, at a given signal, resume the chant till the end of the next verse. ¶A brief literal translation of the Morning Hymn to the Sun follows: The opening of the ceremonial begins with the "call" by drum, flute and gong, summoning the children of the Koh Koh, who march in rows of five, facing the sun, to the secluded place appointed for the ceremonial. Addressing the sun, they sing:

Early in the morning we waken,  
When Mother Sun-God rises,  
We welcome her with joy.  
She greets us with a radiant face,  
She meets us with a warm embrace.  
So sweetly, merrily, we sing and dance,  
In happy spirit we advance.  
We are children of the sun;  
Arm in arm together run.  
Round a ring we steady move;  
Our hearts will faithful prove  
As the sun comes near to us—  
Listen, just listen.

THE CHILDREN'S MORNING HYMN OR  
GREETING TO THE SUN

What a wondrous shower of sounds,  
Countless beats in rapid rounds,  
Ever changing, ever new,  
Constant strains of high and low.  
They are messengers of love,  
Spirit voices from above

Bringing light and life and joy,  
Telling us of bliss on high.

Listen, just listen!  
Whence come all these distant sounds?  
Echoes — where the light abounds.  
Crystal streams in murmurs faint,  
Bursting forth without restraint.  
They are golden grains of thought,  
Silent whispers faintly caught;  
Filling us with joy, content.  
Pathways of our soul's ascent.  
Listen, just listen!  
Glory to the sunlit rays!  
Glory to the Sun-God's ways!  
They command us to endure,  
To be silent, chaste, and pure,  
To be faithful, true, and brave  
To the law our fathers gave.  
O! harken to the Sun-God's voice  
Beckoning your soul to rise.  
In radiant light, the source of song,  
The origin of thought has sprung.  
As light and song in one unite,  
Let us forever seek the light.

Listen, just listen!

The Ghost Dance is probably better known than any other of the Zuni ceremonials. It is clearly distinct from the Ghost or Spirit Dance of the Plains Indians, for the latter call up the memory of their former free and happy life and invoke the pity and aid of Wakonda in their present wretchedness. The ostensible object of the Zuni Ghost

### *Some Zuni Ceremonies and Melodies*

Dance is the calling into their presence the spirits of the departed, which they hold is best accomplished by strenuous exertion. They have the Fire Dance, and make loud and urgent appeals to the spirits to appear and join them in the dance. The melodies, motives, calls and rhythms are very suggestive of the ceremonial.

The oldest traditional song-dance known among the Zunis is the Great Rain Dance, which has for its special purpose the supplication to the Rain and Thunder-God for rain and the production of rain by means of the sacred fires. Extensive preparations are made, and great care is exercised, in carrying out this ceremonial. At sundown numerous fires are lighted on the housetops of all the cliff dwellings, as well as on the heights of the surrounding mountains and mesas. The rain-priests ignite a certain firewood, which develops a thick smoke, and immediately incantations and entreaties are made to the Rain-God to give the needed rains. The chants are sung by " virgin " maidens of high caste and the sons of chiefs, or those risen to high degree, and the dance and song lasts for days, as the endurance of the participants is almost beyond belief. The grand master of ceremonies personally directs all the exercises with great minuteness, accuracy and zeal, and the slightest defect either in modulation, rhythm or motive is instantly and severely reprimanded. Through the influence of what power or the observation of what natural law their aim is accomplished, we may not know with certainty, yet this rain ceremonial invariably results in abundant rainfall.

The wolf-drums announce the opening of the rain-dance ceremonials, and after seven measures the chief rain-master calls the maidens to open the dance.

Stand in line, Virgin-maids, sing and dance.  
See! the clouds are forming, down below 'tis  
storming.

**Watch the lightning flashing,  
Hear the thunder crashing;  
Clouds arise up the skies.  
Do you see them rising yonder?  
They are coming, filling up the skies.**

The distant muttering of thunder is represented by striking the chime plates. Then comes the Virgins' song:

**Come again, come good rain,  
Fall upon the mountains, and on the plain,  
Sink into the ground, where the springs  
abound;**

Drop by drop, springs are made;  
See the clouds, coming nigh, nearer, lower,  
Hail them! Hail them!  
Rain drops sink 'neath the hills;  
There they hide, soon to come out into the  
light.

**Running down the steep rocky cliffs they leap.  
Look on high, clouds near by,  
Hanging low, there they go, coming close,  
Flood the valleys and the pueblos coming  
nearer,  
Hail them! Hail them!**

The invocation to the Rain-god is very interesting, with considerable of the chromatic effect in both melody and accompaniment, and is followed by the jubilant "rain chorus" which is quite choral.

The most joyous of the traditional sacred dances, however, is the Festive Sun Dance. The women carry beauti-

fully carved tables on their heads, which display in transparent symbols the celestial gods they worship — the sun, moon, stars, and lightning. The men also are brilliantly attired in brightest colors and feathers, and beat their tar-coneas in rhythmic accord with the special inflections of the song.

The greatest and most important of the Zuni ceremonials is the Coming of Montezuma. Indeed, this ceremonial is practiced by other of the Pacific coast native races, though to the Zuni it is the all-important one. Though the sun is worshipped as their Mother-God—the giver and protector of life and health while on earth—Montezuma is looked upon as their Father-God, as having once lived among them on earth. He not only ruled over them, but gave them their moral codes and laws. He was their Messiah who promised to re-

The Sun-priest of the highest order summons the people to watch the clouds rising with the sun, and to await with joy and the highest acclamations of welcome the appearance of Montezuma.

The ceremonial opens with a vigorous drum solo executed by a corps of drummers, each commanding a set of nine drums placed in a semi-circle before him, and is played in perfect unison. The summons of the priest follows the chorus joining in the two phrases:

We'll watch the golden clouds,  
The clouds above the sun.  
They rise above the sun of life  
When Montezuma comes.

Archaeologists as well as musicians are indebted to Mr. Troyer for giving us the melodic structure, manner of expression and descriptive character of the music of these prehistoric people,

#### THE COMING OF MONTEZUMA

*f* *ferocently.* *dolce*

He's com - ing, Mon - te - zu - ma, Mon - te - zu - ma, he comes.  
Yan - a - ku, Mon - te - zu - ma, Mon - te - zu - ma, a - ku.

*p* *sotto voce.*

Bend low - er, he is com - ing Mon - te - zu - ma, he comes  
Ta - po - na, yan - a - lu - ku, Mon - te - zu - ma, a - ku

*p* *f* *ff*

He . . . comes, He . . . comes, comes, comes, comes, He . . . comes.  
A . . . ku, A . . . ku, ku, ku, ku, A . . . ku.

turn some day to deliver them from their enemies and sufferings, and take them to happy homes beyond the clouds. The ceremonial occurs in June and follows immediately after the Sunrise Call.

at one time undoubtedly the most powerful in America—for did not Napoleon say: "I care not who makes a nation's laws so long as I can make its songs?"