

The picture, like all of youth's impressions, was still strong with him, and his dim eyes watched the end played out as vividly as in that far-off time. Koskoosh marveled at this, for in the days which followed, when he was a leader of men and a head of councilors, he had done great deeds and made his name a curse in the mouths of the Pellys, to say naught of the strange white man he had killed, knife to knife, in open fight.

For long he pondered on the days of his youth, till the fire died down and the frost bit deeper. He replenished it with two sticks this time, and gauged his grip on life by what remained. If Sit-cum-to-ha had only remembered her grandfather, and gathered a larger armful, his hours would have been longer. It would have been easy. But she was ever a careless child, and honored not her ancestors from the time the Beaver, son of the son of Zing-ha, first cast eyes upon her. Well, what mattered it? Had he not done likewise in his own quick youth? For a while he listened to the silence. Perhaps the heart of his son might soften, and he would come back with the dogs to take his old father on with the tribe to where the caribou ran thick and the fat hung heavy upon them.

He strained his ears, his restless brain for the moment stilled. Not a stir, nothing. He alone took breath in the midst of the great silence. It was very lonely, Hark! What was that? A child passed over his body. The familiar, long-drawn howl broke the void, and it was close at hand. Then on his darkened eyes was projected the vision of the moose—the old bull moose—the torn flanks and bloody sides, the matted mane, and the great branching horns, down low and tossing to the east. He saw the flashing forms of gray, the gleaming eyes, the lolling tongues, the slavered fangs. And he saw the inexorable circle close in till it became a dark point in the midst of the stamped snow.

A cold muzzle thrust against his cheek, and at its touch his soul leaped back to the present. His hand shot into the fire and dragged out a burning fagot. Overcome for the nonce by his hereditary fear of man, the brute retreated, raising a prolonged call to his brothers; and greedily they answered, till a ring of crouching, jaw-slobbered gray was stretched round about. The old man listened to the drawing in of this circle. He waved his brand wildly, and sniffs turned to snarls, but the panting brutes refused to scatter. Now one wormed his chest forward, dragging his haunches after, now a second, now a third, but never a one drew back. Why should he cling to life? he asked, and dropped the blazing stick into the snow. It sizzled and went out. The circle grunted uneasily, but held its own. Again he saw the last stand of the old bull moose, and Koskoosh dropped his head warily upon his knees. What did it matter after all? Was it not the law of life?

1901, 1902

## NATIVE AMERICAN CHANTS AND SONGS

## THE NAVAJO NIGHT CHANT

The Navajo migrated to the American Southwest from points further north somewhere between A.D. 1000-1300. Once settled, the Navajo learned farming and weaving from the Pueblo peoples; they later acquired livestock from the Spanish and developed silver-working skills from contact with the Mexicans. When the United States took possession of the southwestern territories in 1848 after the Mexican war, it inherited the problem of raiding Navajos. In 1863, the government hired the well-known scout Kit Carson to subdue the Navajo by destroying their crops and livestock. One year later starving Navajo people began to make their way into Fort Defiance. Later that year, some eight thousand Navajo were forced to make the Long Walk from Fort Defiance in western Arizona three hundred miles to Fort Sumner in east-central New Mexico, where they were imprisoned. This traumatic event is remembered by the Navajo as the Trail of Tears is remembered by the Cherokee and Wounded Knee by the Sioux. In 1868 a new treaty established a three-million-acre reservation for the Navajo in New Mexico and Arizona—and the people began to return to their homes. Despite food shortages, drought, and further land cessions, the Navajo gradually grew in number. Today they are the most populous American Indian group in the United States.

Ceremonies are a central part of Navajo culture. They are used to enhance life—to promote a successful hunt and good crops—to cure physical illness, and to remedy misfortunes of all kinds—a fire or miscarriage, lightning striking sheep. Although songs, dances, and sand paintings are important parts of Navajo ceremonies, it was the intoning of long, complex prayers that led the first recorders of these ceremonies to call them chants. An individual desiring that a ceremony be performed first consults with a seer, a ritual diagnostician who determines which chant is likely to address the problem at hand. The initiator of the ceremony is referred to as the "patient," regardless of whether she or he is sick in the Western sense. The chants may last from one to nine nights. They are conducted by an expert in a particular ceremonial, a person endowed not so much with special power (as is the seer) as with special knowledge. Each ceremonial requires elaborate preparation by the chanter and the patient's family. The chanter must renew or refresh ritual objects to be used during the ceremony—masks, prayer sticks, and the like—and the family must provide such things as the baskets used as drums that the chanter will require and food for the many invited guests.

The Night Chant is one of the most elaborate of Navajo ceremonials, taking a full nine nights to perform. It begins at sunset, when the chanter enters the house of the patient and a crier, standing at the door, calls, *Bike hatdli haku* ("Come on the trail of song"), enjoining both the patient and the guests to participate. The patient seats himself or herself west of a fire that has been kindled for the ceremony; the place of honor. At sunrise on the ninth day, after an elaborate series of songs, dances, and chanted prayers, the patient is invited to look eastward and greet the dawn in newfound health and wholeness.

The earliest and still most detailed version of the Navajo Night Chant was published in 1902 by Washington Matthews (1843-1905), an army surgeon assigned to Fort Wingate, New Mexico, in the 1880s. Drawn to the culture of the Navajo, Matthews learned their language and published his first study of a Navajo ceremonial, *The Mountain Chant*, in 1887. After witnessing a Night Chant in the fall of 1884, Matthews devoted the last twenty years of his life to its study. Although he worked with many priests of the Night Chant, one in particular, Hatali Nattoi (Laughing Chanter), contributed to the version Matthews published in 1902.

Today, the chants are commonly referred to in English as ways: Night Way, Mountain Way, Enemy Way, Blessing Way, the Red Ant Way, and so on. The change of name points to the fact that these are dramatic acts not limited to chanting alone. We retain the name Night Chant, originally used by Matthews and still used by John Bierhorst, whose edition of Matthews's version we print here.

## The Night Chant<sup>1</sup>

### Concluding Rite, First Day

#### THE SACRED MOUNTAINS

Sprinkling dry pigments on the floor of the lodge, the chanter prepares a small sand painting featuring the four sacred mountains of the Navajo world; a trail leads into their midst. At the doorway the crier issues his usual call: *Bike hatli hakri*.<sup>2</sup> The patient enters, walking slowly along the "trail" to the "mountains," followed by *Hastshéyalt*.<sup>3</sup> The singers begin:

In a holy place with a god I walk,  
In a holy place with a god I walk,  
On Tsismadzhini with a god I walk,  
On a chief of mountains with a god I walk,  
In old age wandering with a god I walk,  
On a trail of beauty with a god I walk.

The stanza is repeated three times, changing the name of the mountain, in turn, to Tsotsil, Dokosild, and Depéntsa. The patient reaches the center of the picture; the chanter recites:

From the base of the east,  
From the base of Tsismadzhini,<sup>4</sup>  
From the house made of mirage,  
From the story<sup>5</sup> made of mirage,  
From the doorway of rainbow,  
The path out of which is the rainbow,  
The rainbow passed out with me.  
Through the middle of broad fields,  
The rainbow returned with me.  
To where my house is visible,  
The rainbow returned with me.  
To the roof of my house,  
The rainbow returned with me.  
To the entrance of my house,

1. From John Bierhorst's *Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature: Quetzalcoatl, The Ritual of Condolence, Cuedo, The Night Chant* (1974, 1984). Bierhorst's version of Washington Matthews's text condenses it somewhat and slightly alters the original spelling. The descriptions of ritual procedure are also condensed from Matthews.  
2. Come on the trail of song (Navajo).  
3. The Talking God, principal figure of the Night Chant.  
4. "Tsismadzhini is probably Pelado Peak, New Mex-

The rainbow returned with me.  
To just within my house,  
The rainbow returned with me.  
To my fireside,  
The rainbow returned with me.  
To the center of my house,  
The rainbow returned with me.  
At the fore part of my house with the dawn,<sup>6</sup>  
The Talking God sits with me.  
The House God sits with me.  
Pollen Boy sits with me.  
Grasshopper Girl sits with me.  
In beauty *Estsanalehi*, my mother, for her I return.<sup>7</sup>  
Beautifully my fire to me is restored.  
Beautifully my possessions are to me restored.  
Beautifully my soft goods to me are restored.  
Beautifully my hard goods to me are restored.  
Beautifully my horses to me are restored.  
Beautifully my sheep to me are restored.  
Beautifully my old men to me are restored.  
Beautifully my old women to me are restored.  
Beautifully my young men to me are restored.  
Beautifully my young women to me are restored.  
Beautifully my children to me are restored.  
Beautifully my wife to me is restored.  
Beautifully my chiefs to me are restored.  
Beautifully my country to me is restored.  
Beautifully my fields to me are restored.  
Beautifully my house to me is restored.  
Talking God sits with me.  
House God sits with me.  
Pollen Boy sits with me.  
Grasshopper Girl sits with me.  
Beautifully white corn to me is restored.  
Beautifully yellow corn to me is restored.  
Beautifully blue corn to me is restored.  
Beautifully corn of all kinds to me is restored.  
In beauty may I walk.  
All day long may I walk.  
Through the returning seasons may I walk.  
*[line untranslated]*<sup>8</sup>  
Beautifully . . . will I possess again.  
*[line untranslated]*  
Beautifully birds . . .  
Beautifully joyful birds . . .  
On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.  
With grasshoppers about my feet may I walk.  
With dew about my feet may I walk.

6. I.e., the front ("forepart") of all Navajo houses, or hogans, faces east.  
7. *Estsanalehi* is Changing Woman, a personification of the earth. The return to the mother (or grandmother) is a motif typical of Navajo as of many other myths. Pollen Boy symbolizes male generative power

and Grasshopper Girl, female generative power (adapted from Bierhorst's note).  
8. Matthews's 1902 publication gives the Navajo for these lines, because he could not arrive at a satisfactory translation of them.

With beauty may I walk.  
 With beauty before me, may I walk.  
 With beauty behind me, may I walk.  
 With beauty above me, may I walk.  
 With beauty below me, may I walk.  
 With beauty all around me, may I walk.  
 In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk.  
 In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk.  
 It is finished in beauty.  
 It is finished in beauty.

The prayer is thrice repeated, substituting in turn the names of the other three directions (south, west, north) and their corresponding mountains (Tsołsil, Dokosild, Depentsa). Kneeling, Hasshéyalti takes sand from each of the "mountains" and applies it to the patient. The patient kneels: coals are removed from the fire and placed before him; over these the chanter sprinkles a powder of feathers and resin, giving rise to an incense inhaled by the patient. The coals are extinguished, the picture obliterated. The party withdraws.

### Concluding Rite, Ninth Day

Four great fires are kindled on either side of the level space, or "dancing ground," in front of the lodge. Facing the lodge at a distance of some hundred paces stands the newly constructed "arbor," a circle of evergreen boughs to be used as the performers' changing room. Spectators, numbering in the hundreds, gather just beyond the fires along both sides of the dancing ground.

### DANCE OF THE ATSALEI, OR THUNDERBIRDS

The chanter's assistants paint with white earth the bodies of dancers who will represent the four thunderbirds (of corn, of child-rain, of vegetation, and of pollen). The chanter sings:

Now the holy one paints his form,  
 The Wind Boy,<sup>9</sup> the holy one, paints his form,  
 All over his body, he paints his form,  
 With the dark cloud he paints his form,  
 With the misty rain he paints his form,  
 With the rainy bubbles he paints his form,  
 To the ends of his toes he paints his form,  
 To fingers and rattle he paints his form,  
 To the plume on his head he paints his form.

As the dancers repair to the arbor, the basket is turned down [overturned, used as a drum] and singing begins anew. Fully costumed, the thunderbirds, led by Hasshéyalti, approach the dancing ground. A crier calls: Come on the trail of song [*Bike hatdi haktil*]. The patient emerges from the lodge and sprinkles the dancers with meal. (Singing within the lodge continues unabated.) Addressing the thunderbird of pollen, the patient recites after the chanter, line by line:<sup>1</sup>

9. "Wind is the precursor of rain. Before he becomes rain, the dancer must be wind (or 'Wind Boy,' emphasizing his youthfulness)" [Biehno's note].

1. "In the great prayer that follows, the Night Chant reaches its climax; the prayer for rain is the prayer for salvation" [Biehno's note].

In Tseglti,<sup>2</sup>  
 In the house made of the dawn,  
 In the house made of the evening twilight,  
 In the house made of the dark cloud,  
 In the house made of the he-rain,  
 In the house made of the dark mist,  
 In the house made of the she-rain,  
 In the house made of pollen,  
 In the house made of grasshoppers,  
 Where the dark mist curtains the doorway,  
 The path to which is on the rainbow,  
 Where the zigzag lightning stands high on top,  
 Where the he-rain stands high on top,  
 Oh, male divinity!

With your moccasins of dark cloud, come to us.  
 With your leggings of dark cloud, come to us.  
 With your shirt of dark cloud, come to us.  
 With your headdress of dark cloud, come to us.  
 With your mind enveloped in dark cloud, come to us.  
 With the dark thunder above you, come to us soaring.  
 With the shapen cloud at your feet, come to us soaring.  
 With the far darkness made of the dark cloud  
 over your head, come to us soaring.

With the far darkness made of the he-rain  
 over your head, come to us soaring.  
 With the far darkness made of the dark mist  
 over your head, come to us soaring.  
 With the far darkness made of the she-rain  
 over your head, some to us soaring.  
 With the zigzag lightning flung out on high  
 over your head, come to us soaring.

With the rainbow hanging high over your head,  
 come to us soaring.  
 With the far darkness made of the dark cloud on  
 the ends of your wings, come to us soaring.  
 With the far darkness made of the he-rain on  
 the ends of your wings, come to us soaring.  
 With the far darkness made of the dark mist on  
 the ends of your wings, come to us soaring.  
 With the far darkness made of the she-rain on  
 the ends of your wings, come to us soaring.  
 With the zigzag lightning flung out on high on  
 the ends of your wings, come to us soaring.  
 With the rainbow hanging high on the ends of  
 your wings, come to us soaring.  
 With the near darkness made of the dark cloud, of  
 the he-rain, of the dark mist, and of the  
 she-rain, come to us.  
 With the darkness on the earth, come to us.  
 With these I wish the foam floating on the  
 flowing water over the roots of the great corn.

2. Tseglti is a distant canyon, site of the shrine known as House Made of Dawn (cf. N. Scott Momaday's novel of that name), considered to be the dwelling place of the sun on earth.

I have made your sacrifice.  
 I have prepared a smoke for you.  
 My feet restore for me.  
 My limbs restore for me.  
 My body restore for me.  
 My mind restore for me.  
 My voice restore for me.  
 Today, take out your spell for me.  
 Today, take away your spell for me.  
 Away from me you have taken it.  
 Far off from me it is taken.  
 Far off you have done it.  
 Happily I recover.  
 Happily my interior becomes cool.  
 Happily my eyes regain their power.  
 Happily my head becomes cool.  
 Happily my limbs regain their power.  
 Happily I hear again.  
 Happily for me the *spell* is taken off.  
 Happily may I walk.  
 Impervious to pain, may I walk.  
 Feeling light within, may I walk.  
 With lively feelings, may I walk.  
 Happily abundant dark clouds I desire.  
 Happily abundant dark mists I desire.  
 Happily abundant passing showers I desire.  
 Happily an abundance of vegetation I desire.  
 Happily an abundance of pollen I desire.  
 Happily abundant dew I desire.  
 Happily may fair white corn, to the ends of the earth, come with you.  
 Happily may fair yellow corn, to the end of the earth, come with you.  
 Happily may fair blue corn, to the ends of the earth, come with you.  
 Happily may fair corn of all kinds, to the ends of the earth, come with you.  
 Happily may fair plants of all kinds, to the ends of the earth, come with you.  
 Happily may fair goods of all kinds, to the ends of the earth, come with you.  
 Happily may fair jewels of all kinds, to the ends of the earth, come with you.  
 With these before you, happily may they come with you.  
 With these behind you, happily may they come with you.  
 With these below you, happily may they come with you.  
 With these above you, happily may they come with you.  
 With these all around you, happily may they come with you.

Thus happily you accomplish your tasks.  
 Happily the old men will regard you.  
 Happily the old women will regard you.  
 Happily the young men will regard you.  
 Happily the young women will regard you.  
 Happily the boys will regard you.  
 Happily the girls will regard you.  
 Happily the children will regard you.  
 Happily the chiefs will regard you.  
 Happily, as they scatter in different directions, they will regard you.  
 Happily, as they approach their homes, they will regard you.  
 Happily may their roads home be on the trail of pollen.  
 Happily may they all get back.  
 In beauty I walk.  
 With beauty before me, I walk.  
 With beauty behind me, I walk.  
 With beauty below me, I walk.  
 With beauty above me, I walk.  
 With beauty all around me, I walk.  
 It is finished in beauty,  
 It is finished in beauty,  
 It is finished in beauty,  
 It is finished in beauty.

\* \* \*

The grand ceremonial concludes: The basket [used as a drum] is turned up and the drumstick (of twisted yucca leaves) taken outside by an assistant, who pulls it apart, sprinkling pollen on the shreds, repeating in a low voice the benediction:

Thus will it be beautiful,  
 Thus walk in beauty, my grandchild.

The patient, facing east, inhales the breath of dawn.<sup>3</sup>

3. The description of the patient's gesture as the very last action of the Night Chant, Biehorst notes, is not from Matthews, who probably never witnessed it in the late-19th- and early-20th-century performances he attended. Later writers note the patient's inhalation of the breath of dawn as typical of the Night Chant's conclusion.

## CHIPPEWA SONGS

The Chippewa, one of the largest Indian groups in North America, are also known as the Ojibwe or, in their own Algonquian language, the Anishinabe. Their territories once ranged along the shores of Lake Huron and Lake Superior, across Minnesota, and west to the Turtle Mountains of North Dakota. In summer Chippewa bands gathered into villages where they fished, planted small gardens, and collected wild foods. In fall Chippewa living on the lakes cultivated large wild rice fields, paddling the lakes in their canoes and harvesting the rice by striking the plants with a stick. In winter bands moved to their hunting grounds in pursuit of deer, moose, bear and small animals like rabbits, otter, and beaver. The most important cere-