

ULIVFAK'S SONG OF THE CARIBOU

(CARIBOU ESKIMO)

Eye--ova

I call to mind
And think of the early coming of spring
As I knew it
in my younger days,
Was I ever such a hunter!
Was it myself indeed?
For I see
And recall in memory a man in a kayak;
Slowly he toils along in toward the shores
of the lake,
With many spear-stain caribou in tow.
Happiest am I
In my memories of hurting in kayak.
On land, I was never of great renown
Among the herds of caribou.
And an old man, seeking strength in his
youth,
Loves most to think of the deeds
Whereby he gained renown.

From *ibid.*, p. 70. Ulivfak was old, and in his grief at having lost the agility of his youth, he felt inclined to weep, but sang this song instead.

302

DANCE SONG

(COPPER ESKIMO)

I am quite unable
To capture seals as they do, I am quite unable.
Animals with blubber since I do not know how to
capture,
To capture seals as they do I am quite unable.
I am quite unable
To shoot as they do, I am quite unable.
I am quite unable,
A fine kayak such as they have I am quite unable to
obtain.
Animals that have fawns since I cannot obtain them,
A fine kayak such as they have I am quite unable to
obtain.
I am quite unable
To capture fish as they do, I am quite unable.
Small fish since I cannot capture them,
To capture fish as they do I am quite unable.
I am quite unable
To dance as they do, I am quite unable.
Dance songs since I do not know them at all,
To dance as they do I am quite unable.
I am quite unable to be swift-footed as they are,
I am quite unable. . . .

From Koberus and Jenness, *Songs of the Copper Eskimo*, pp. 9, 12. The dance house, with the Copper Eskimo, is the center of social life. Every notable incident, every important experience or emotion in the daily life is recorded

303

THREE SONGS FROM THE NORTHWEST
(TLINGIT)

1. *Song of Cg'watc*

I always think within myself
That songs in no place
Where people do not die.

I do not know where my dear one is.
Perhaps the spirits threw down my dear
Into the spirit's cave around the world.

2. *Song of the Poet*

It is only crying about myself
that comes to me in song.

3. *Song of Hummingbird*

. . . I am feeling very lonely away.
I am singing inside.
I am crying about myself.

From *ibid.*, pp. 401, 410, 412.
288

TWO MOURNING SONGS FROM THE
NORTHWEST
(TLINGIT)

1. *Song of Here-is-a-feather*

Help me with your believing, Kágrantan's children.
It is as if my grandfather's house were turning over
with me.

Where is the person that will save me?

2. *Song of Other-water*

My younger brother has brought me a great joy of
laughter.

If I knew the way the spirits go, I would go right to
him.

From *ibid.*, p. 408.

289

SONG TO PULL DOWN THE CLOUDS

(PAPAGO)

At the edge of the world
It is growing light.
Up rears the light.
Just ponder the day coming
Spreading over the night.

From Ruth Underhill, *Singing for Power*, p. 27. "Song was not simply self-expression. It was a magic which called upon the powers of Nature and constrained them to man's will. People sang in trouble, in danger, to cure the sick, to confound their enemies, and to make the crops grow." p. 5.

202

A PRAYER

(HAVASUPAI)

Sun, my relative
Be good coming out
Do something good for us.
Make me work,
So I can do anything in the garden
I hoe, I plant corn, I irrigate.
You, sun, be good going down at sunset
We lay down to sleep I want to feel good.
While I sleep you come up.
Go on your course many times.
Make good things for us men.
Make me always the same as I am now.

This literal translation is from Leslie Spier, *Havasupai Ethnography*, p. 286.

203

FORMULA TO DESTROY LIFE

(CHEROKEE)

Listen! Now I have come to step over your soul.
You are of the wolf clan. Your name is *Ayétuni*.
Your spirit I have seen at foot of the earth.
Your soul I have put in rest in the earth.
I have come to cover you over with the black rock.
I have come to cover you with the black slabs, never
to reappear.

Toward the black coffin in the Darkening Land your
path shall stretch out.

So shall it be for you.

The clay of the upland has come [to cover you].
Instantly the black clay has lodged there where it is
at rest at the black houses in the Darkening Land.

With the black coffin and the black slabs I have come
to cover you.

Now your soul has faded away.

It has become blue.

When darkness comes

Your spirit shall grow less

And dwindle away,

Never to reappear. Listen!

From *ibid.*, p. 391.

178

ORIGIN OF THE PLEIADES AND THE PINE

(CHEROKEE)

Long ago, when the world was new, there were seven boys who used to spend all their time down by the townhouse playing the *gatayt'ssi* game, rolling a stone around the ground and striking a curved stick after it to strike it. Their mothers scolded, but it did no good, so one day they collected *gatayt'ssi* stones and boiled them in the pot with the corn for dinner. When the boys came home hungry their mothers dipped out the stones and said, "Since you like the *gatayt'ssi* stones better than the cornfields, take the stones now for your dinner."

The boys were very angry, and went down to the townhouse saying, "As our mothers treat us that way, let us go where we shall never trouble them any more." They began a dance—some say it was the Feather Dance—and went round and round the townhouse, praying to the spirits to help them. At last their mothers were afraid something was wrong and went out to look for them. They saw the boys still dancing around the townhouse, and as they watched they noticed that their feet were off the earth, and that with every round they rose higher and higher in the air. They ran to get their children, but it was too late, for they were already above the roof of the townhouse—all but one, whose mother managed to pull him down with the *gatayt'ssi* pole, but he struck the ground with such a force that he sank into it and the earth closed over him.

179

THE SONG OF THE MAIZE
(OSAGE)

Amid the earth, renewed in verdure,
Amid rising smoke, my grandfather's footprint,
I see, as from place to place I wander,
The rising smoke I see as I wander.

Amid all forms visible, the little hills in a row
I see, as I move from place to place.

Amid all forms visible, the spreading blades
I see as I move from place to place.

Amid all forms visible, the light day
I see as I move from place to place.

From Francis LaFlèche, *The Osage Tribe*, pp. 634-5.
It is the spirits of the dead who are speaking in this song. It is they who see first the joyful signs of the awakening of the earth from the long spell of winter. In the smoke that rises in the early morning from the fields where the women are planting the precious maize seeds, they sense, amid the secret processes of growing and ripening, the presence of a divine power: the mysterious footprints in the soft earth, what else do they intimate than the path of the Mysterious Ones who crossed the fields to urge onward the growing corn to maturity?

THE WEAVER'S LAMENTATION
(Shrine Ritual)
(OSAGE)

[The cry of longing and desolation uttered by the weaver in the following song is that of the weaver's companions in the joys and griefs of life.]

You have left me to linger in hopeless longing,
Your presence had ever made me feel no want,
You have left me to travel in sorrow.

Left me to travel in sorrow; Ah! the pain,
Left me to travel in sorrow; Ah! the pain, the pain,
the pain.

You have left me to linger in hopeless longing,
In your presence there was no sorrow,
You have gone and sorrow I shall feel, as I travel,
Ah! the pain, the pain.

You have gone and sorrow I shall feel as I travel,
You have left me in hopeless longing.
In your presence there was no sorrow,
You have gone and sorrow I shall feel as I travel:
Ah! the pain, the pain, the pain.

Content with your presence, I wanted nothing more,
You have left me to travel in sorrow; Ah! the pain,
the pain, the pain!

From *ibid.*, p. 697.

DREAM SONG
(CHIPPEWA)

I am thinking
A Bird
I accompany.

From *ibid.* II. This is a song which came to the mind of an Indian in a dream. "Many Indian songs," says Miss Denmore in her admirable work on Chippewa music, "are intended to exert a strong mental influence, and dream songs are supposed to have this power in greater degree than any others. The supernatural is very real to the Indian. He puts himself in communication with it by fasting or by physical suffering. While his body is thus subordinated to the mind a song occurs to him. In after years he believes that by singing this song he can recall the condition under which it came to him—a condition of direct communication with the supernatural." *Ibid.* I, p. 118.

76

LOVE SONG
(CHIPPEWA)

I am thinking
Oh
I am thinking
I have found my lover
Oh
I think it is so!

From *ibid.* II, p. 300. The Chippewa lover intersperses his songs with the music of the flute, while other songs are usually accompanied by either the drum or the rattle. The Chippewa expresses every phase of his life, every mood, in music and in song. But not the words are considered the essential part of this particular song, it is the melody, the peculiar rhythm, that conveys the meaning of the song more directly than any words could do.

77

SONG

SUNG OVER A DYING PERSON

(CHIPPENAW)

You are a spirit,
I am making you a spirit,
In the place where I sit
I am making you a spirit.

Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Music 1*, p. 95. This is a song which would be sung when a member of the *Mide-wiwin* was dying—when death was expected at any moment.