

ALASKAN ESKIMO AND INDIAN MUSICAL PERFORMANCE:
ITS MANY PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL RAMIFICATIONS

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Alaska's native population of about 34,000 Eskimos and 20,000 Indians constitutes almost one fifth of the state's total and resides mainly in small remote rural communities where many traditional subsistence patterns are still followed. Among older individuals, and even among the young on ceremonial occasions, traditional songs and dances are important and are still performed. Examples of musical occasions are the Eskimo inviting-in dances held jointly by Pilot Station and St. Mary's, the Saint Lawrence Islanders' walrus celebration, the Point Hope and Wainright whaling feast, the Nulato and Kaltag Feast for the Dead (hi'o) stick dance, and the Alaska Native Brotherhood Christmas festivities in the southeast.

Studying the psychology of Alaskan native musical behavior reveals clues to deep-rooted attitudes which are sometimes elusive to social scientists using conventional methods of approach. Such study can aid in furthering understanding between different cultural groups and, if properly applied, can aid in the reduction of culture clash in education and other social spheres. This paper is not intended as a description of the sound and style of the various Alaskan native musical systems, but is rather a brief survey of the many native musical factors which possess strong psychological implications and warrant further study on this basis.

The Role of Native Music in the Affirmation of Cultural Identity

Alaskan history has produced differential musical persistence among the Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut groupings, according to the relative force of such adverse factors as Russian occupation, missionization, Bureau of Indian Affairs assimilationism, and Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) acculturationism. For instance, the first edition of the Brotherhood Constitution specifies that "English-speaking members of the native residents of the Territory of Alaska are eligible to membership."¹ In 1944, the Indian mayor of Hoonah, Alaska pushed through a municipal ordinance making the potlatch--a highly musical institution--illegal within the city limits. Men who spent their lives preparing for an old age of power and plenty found that musical gift exchanges could no longer be fruitfully initiated since there was no certainty of eventual reciprocity. In any case, the deliberate de-emphasizing of native languages caused the partial loss of the ceremonial songs essential to the potlatch.

A dramatic reversal of policy came when the Native Land Claims movement gained momentum. When the Tanana Chiefs (representing twenty-three Athabascan villages) affiliated with the ANB and the Eskimo Inupiat in June 1963, the native newspaper Tundra Times symbolically exalted the Athabascan Nuchalawoyya musical festival, and emphasized the retention of enough land to support traditional lifeways. The Native Land Claims Act of 1971 caused the development of strong

local political chiefs whose major function is to get federal monies and to disburse them to their constituencies, thus gaining power. Rivalries, alliances and the traditional role of the musical potlatch is being rediscovered as a result of this activity.

Further emphasis upon traditional music was fostered by changes in educational direction. At the Senate Subcommittee Hearings on Indian Education in 1969, Margaret Nick (a Kuskokwim Eskimo) had told Edward Kennedy, "If my children are proud, if my children have identity, this is what education means. It's a must we include our history and our culture in our schools, before we lose it all."² Native languages gained status when on 9 June 1972 the Alaska State Legislature passed a series of momentous bills "to provide for the development and dissemination of Alaskan native literature," and "to train Alaskan native language speakers to work as teachers and aides in bi-lingual classrooms." Thus, where musical tradition had been continuous, as at Gambell, Savoonga, Point Hope, Wainright, and many interior localities such as Nulato, Kaltag, Minto, Nenna, Tanana, and Tanacross, it was reinforced. Where it had waned, such as in parts of the southeast, a musical renaissance saw the emergence of young dance teams such as the Chilkat Dancers, the Marks Trail Dancers, and the Cape Fox Dancers. Almost everywhere native musical performance epitomizes cultural identity by symbolizing "otherness" in a white-dominated world. Rural Eskimo and Indian people are environmentally oriented with a great awareness of sound, thus the existence of a variety of psychological uses of music is not surprising. Music also becomes a primary coding device, its meaning being derived from learned associations with the extra-musical world and all that it contains of objects, events, experiences, reactions, and emotions.

A Brief Consideration of the Physiological Aspects of Musical Learning

Responses learned from social interaction and experiences such as music are more significant in the long run than the innately determined behavioral patterns in humans. These responses originate in cultural concepts which transcend the lifetimes and experiences of the individuals whose lives they mold. This is not to deny the physiological aspect of musical learning--the physiological serves the cultural, and its mechanism is worth a brief discussion here, for it explains the psychological importance of music in culture.

Musical sound is received through the reticular system and transmitted to the cortex. The ultimate auditory receptor and the storehouse of the musical experience is located in the temporal lobe. Significantly, it has been shown that stimulation of the temporal lobe evokes a high level of recall.³ Furthermore, the temporal lobe is close to that part of the brain which stores information related to perceptual judgement. As a result, musical stimulation may invoke not only a re-experience of associated social and interpersonal events, but correlated emotional assessment.

A brief examination of the neural mechanisms involved in the internalization of musical meaning helps to explain music's prime role in the contemporary Alaskan native's affirmation of cultural identity. Neural tissue is by nature active,

with its own characteristic rhythms and synchronies of firing sequences which can be recorded on the electroencephalogram for the infant at birth. These patterns, which form a basic substratum of neural activity, are consistently broken into by sensory activity associated with outside stimuli.⁴ Music is one such stimulus. Instead of supporting the rhythmic, long, slow waves already being discharged at birth, the internalization of outside stimuli has the opposite effect. It breaks up the established firing sequences and gradually changes them throughout life.⁵ It is perhaps significant that among the senses of withdrawn psychotic patients, that of hearing is the one least amenable to withdrawal from outside stimulation. It is also noteworthy that the sense of hearing was highly exploited by the Eskimo and Indian shaman-curiers, whose drum rhythms and musical scales were based on mathematical and acoustical order and apparently helped in restoring order in a malfunctioning schemata sorting system. In this connection it is informative to examine the psychological function of drumming and other musical behavior in present-day native ceremonies. Much of such behavior occurs within the enclaves of the village community hall, a locale possessing significant historical antecedents in the Eskimo men's ceremonial house and the Tlingit Indians' lineage house. The village community hall is frequently the scene of ceremonial communal immersion in organized musical sound and movement, the psychological implications of which are the subject of this paper. The following topics will be discussed in turn, stressing those elements which are amenable to psychological assessment: drumming, dancing, singing, dance uniforms, instruments, and musical change.

Psychological Aspects of the Drumming

Both Eskimo and Indian dance utilize a loud rhythmic accompaniment upon a low-pitched, untuned drum. The non-specific pitch of the drum may be functional, for its steep-fronted sound waves comprise many different frequencies impinging upon the ear's receptors simultaneously. Each frequency takes a different nerve pathway to the brain, stimulating a different area of the temporal lobe. Thus the transmission of the sound of an untuned drum contrasts with that of a flute, whose relatively pure tone takes a single course. The low frequency ear receptors are robust and more damage-resistant than the high frequency receptors. Great volume of low-pitched sound can be transmitted without significant discomfort, suggesting that the drum's overall low pitch, also, is functional. In any case, low frequencies favor sound stimulation because the auditory area of the cortex exhibits the low frequency theta rhythms. Maximum musical volume is transmitted via many different pathways to stimulate a large area of the temporal lobe and produce optimum psychological affect. One eyewitness report of a Western observer read thus:

The drum looms with a hollow, mysterious sound, and its monotony batters on the nerves until they reach the breaking point. Ever more wildly the dancer beats on the edge of the drum till it would seem certain to break. His gaze grows distant.⁶

If this description is considered suspect due to ethnocentricity, consider the following, which is taken from the autobiography of Herbert Koozata of Gambell, Alaska:

I was filled with a thrill and a strange desire that was entering me, or it might have been the spirit of the thing. I couldn't keep still now, my interest was so high. I found my arms in movement and my feet stomping in rhythm to the tune of the drums. I couldn't stand it now, so I dashed in front of the singers, all full from inside out of the sport of dancing. The music haunted me greatly.⁷

In Alaskan native ceremonials involving drumming there may be a significant relationship between the frequency of the drumbeat and the frequency of alpha waves, the basic human brain wave (8-13 c.p.s.). The blocking of alpha waves via rhythmic sensory stimulation has been demonstrated experimentally. Additionally, in Alaskan Eskimo and Indian music, the frequent occurrence between vocal rhythm and drum rhythm of displaced accents yielding polyrhythm may be an attempt to extend psychological control to include manipulation of the disparate brain wave frequencies shown to exist within a human group (no two individuals possess identical alpha waves). In this connection it is important to note that in experiments using two rhythms sources simultaneously, subjects experienced considerable hallucination.⁸

Psychological Aspects of the Dancing

Sustained energetic dancing increases adrenalin flow, lowers blood glucose, and in some instances produces hyperventilation. These biochemical changes are intensified in the community hall by the overheating of the stoves and the lack of ventilation. The latter results in prolonged inhalation of carbon dioxide. Additionally, inhalation of carbon monoxide results from the incomplete combustion of cigarette smoke. Thus sound, movement and locale bring complementary forces to bear on the psychology and the physiology of the group.

An important aspect of native dance is the communal immersion in rhythmic kinesthetics. This form of intense group action provides tactile reinforcement of group identity. Another aspect is the cultural symbolism of the dance movement; among Eskimos the latter consists of formalized representations of strategic subsistence activities. Such dance movements--scanning and making directional indications--reflect the fact that Eskimo learning is mainly non-verbal and based upon keen observation and sensory perception, as in weather and ice prediction, and the drift of game. Rural educators in Alaska are beginning to take this perceptive ability more fully into account. Eskimo children's learning of dance movements reveals yet another way in which modern education may clash with indigenous culture and may produce psychological problems in the growing native schoolchild. Among many Eskimos, a first correct performance of a series of intricate dance movements is highly praised, while nothing is said about the previous blunders. This childrearing system of positive reinforcement contrasts with the frequent pointing out of errors in the white-run rural schoolroom.

Differentiation of sex roles in Eskimo dancing reflects social norms. Women dancers invariably keep their eyes cast down to the floor in deference to the men dancers and men drummers, and their feet remain immobile, making no sound. The stamping, aggressive, gesticulating dance movements of the men appear to serve the function of intimidation of the other men present, and thereby provide incentive for the curbing of intraclan hostilities. The use of comic masks, grotesque gestures, cousin-ridicule, amusing hunting incidents, and other forms of humor in Eskimo dancing is likewise an anti-conflict mechanism, for one learns not to fear individuals who openly demonstrate their goodwill by happy (quvia) behavior. Historically this derives from the blood feud, a grim face being a violation of social norms and (formerly) considered a sign of vengeance-seeking for some past wrong. Eskimo musical humor may also derive from nurturance patterns, for the permissive childrearing fosters a contented, oceanic worldview and a smiling acknowledgement of a benevolent universe. An examination of the use of psychological space within the dancing area serves to explain differences between Eskimo and Indian dance. The former is expressive and expansive, reflecting strong Eskimo values placed upon independence, individuality, and social equality. The indulged infant in the hood of the mother's parka becomes the omnipotent adult who never loses the feeling of oceanic involvement with all life, the interconnectedness of all things, and the powerful boost of a secure ego. The high level of Eskimo field independence--tested experimentally by J.W. Berry--is probably best explained by referring to locational experience gained in the rather featureless Arctic ecological environment, but it may nevertheless be related to social independence and, through this, to dance style.⁹ Alaskan Indian dance, on the other hand, is usually tight and restricted, perhaps reflecting chieftainly authoritarianism and a defined scale of social statuses. This scale is found particularly among the Tlingit. The limited movement and clenched fists of the Athabascan dance style may be related both to the less-than-nurturant disciplinarianism in Athabascan childrearing and to the inter-band hostility which, in pre-contact times, was functional in maintaining territorial spacing within the harsh and unfruitful environment of Interior Alaska.¹⁰ Norman Chance noted Eskimo opinions on local Indians thus: "They are not friendly. They walk with fists doubled up."¹¹ Behavioral scientists recognize, of course, that such statements may represent the ethnocentric perception of a people who are taught to smile constantly within their own culture.

Another way in which an examination of the use of psychological space can explain differences in Eskimo and Indian dancing is in regard to the contrast between linear and circular disposition of the dancers. Eskimo dancers, whose world is that of the flat horizon and desolate tundra, dance in straight lines which, furthermore, inhibit overt directives from a leader. They do this in front of a straight line of four to six drummers. Indian dancers, whose world is that of the forest clearing, dance in a circle where, to further the comparison, a leader's signals can be followed by all. This difference in dance style may, therefore, reflect differences in both the natural environment and the social structure.

Eskimo dancers often mimic the actions of Arctic birds and sea mammals. This mimicry originates in ceremonies where animal spirits were entertained and then returned to the sea in the shape of their bladders. They were thereby enticed to return soon and to allow themselves to be killed again. Margaret Lantis believes the ceremonial entertainment of animal spirits is related to guilt. She states: "drawing the animals to oneself by these techniques reduced not just guilt but the source of guilt--the force of the hostile act, the inevitable physical aggression."¹² I do not wish to dwell on the possibility of this relationship, but instead wish to point out that Eskimo animal mimicry in dance is related to those unusual perceptive skills which have been pointed out by psychologists. J.W. Berry reports that "in a task of reproducing pictures that contained figures with slight discontinuities in them (geometric figures with a small gap at some point) the Eskimos were more sensitive to the gap than the Temne."¹³ Laurel Bland reports that "Eskimos possess a greater ability to demonstrate visual memory than do the dominant population of Alaska."¹⁴ Judith Kleinfeld reports that "Village Eskimo children scored significantly higher than urban Caucasian students in visual memory . . . visual memory scores increased significantly with age."¹⁵ Carol Feldman and R.D. Bock obtained the same sort of findings in a study at Wainwright, Alaska where they administered a revised form of the Guilford-Zimmerman Spatial Visualization Test IV.¹⁶ Spatial visualization skills result not only in the ability to recall precisely the movements typical of various Arctic fauna while dancing, but also the ability to remember long sequences of fixed dance movements once they have been invented by a member of the community. This type of choreographed dance is common in Alaska under the name of sayuum.

Psychological Aspects of the Singing

In many Tlingit songs, while the melody hovers around and gravitates towards a main tonal center, it frequently descends to a secondary tonal center from which it makes excursions, appearing to vacillate between the two tonal poles consequently established. This musical dichotomization appearing within Tlingit songs may be related to social structure, for in Tlingit society there are defined bipartite divisions across which marriage and other social relations and transactions must be directed according to formal rules of balance and reciprocity. A Raven clan member should ideally marry an individual belonging to the Eagle clan or other affiliation. Potlatches manifest clear, formal cleavages between interacting social groups. If (as is the case) potlatch singing and dancing is performed according to social prescriptions ensuring balance and reciprocity, it may not be surprising to find this reflected in the actual sound of the music. Bitonality has been used by various Western composers in various decades to symbolize social and/or psychological polarities; the contemporary French composer Milhaud employed two simultaneous tonalities in his ballet L'Homme Et Son Désir in order to symbolize psychological conflict between man on the one hand and his desires on the other. More difficult to explain is the process by which, in a society without a tradition of formal intellectualizing about musical composition, social phenomena become reflected in pure musical sound. The perception of unwary Western musicologists is possibly misled by their own cultural experiences. Perhaps Lorraine Koranda's observation that "the melodic pattern

(of one particular skin toss song) suggests the flight of the contestant as he is tossed twenty or more feet in the air" is more the result of a coincidence than of an Eskimo attempt at musical symbolism.

Eskimo singing is always in unison, as is Athabascan singing. Tlingit singing is possibly the only North American Indian example which occasionally features simple harmony, or the occurrence of two vocal lines simultaneously, one above the other.¹⁷ Present-day Aleut singing features much harmonization and is generally in four sung parts. The striking fact about this minimum-to-maximum continuum of harmonic use is that it parallels a scale showing increasing social stratification: from Eskimo egalitarianism, through Athabascan acephalous hunting bands occasionally exhibiting leadership by a strong, wealthy, or otherwise influential man, through the Tlingit system which until the turn of the century ranked societal members as nobles, commoners, or slaves, to the present-day assimilated Aleut, in whom the four part harmony of Russian Orthodox hymns gained acceptance early.

To endeavor to relate a people's cultural patterns to the profile of musical characteristics found within their songs is a particularly elusive task, and Alan Lomax's statement that the music of a given culture reflects the values, structure, and interaction patterns of the society, is a statement of much controversy in both ethnomusicology and the social sciences.¹⁸ Lomax is referring primarily to music's sound which can be studied as an isolate and then compared with other cultural elements. Being intangible and often based upon natural phenomena such as the partials of the harmonic series, musical sound does not easily reveal its cultural determinants. Musical behavior, on the contrary, bears more obvious relationships to other cultural phenomena. There is perhaps one aspect of musical sound which is more amenable than most to cultural explanation: melodic contour. The rise and fall of melody in many non-Western societies is related to the rise and fall of the speech tone of the song words. In southern Africa, for instance, it has been shown that the preference for small ascending and descending melodic intervals is due to the ease with which they accommodate minute variations of speech tone. Eskimo melody features many wide leaps. This may or may not be related to the unimportance of speech tone as a factor in the Eskimo language. The probability is that it derives from a multitude of psycho-historical factors embedded deep in the Eskimo past, to which Siberian ethnomusicology may have something to contribute in the future. Concerning Alaskan Indian languages, E. Sapir discovered tone in certain Athabascan languages (although Ingalik, for instance, has none). Franz Boas ascertained that Tlingit had tone of sorts.¹⁹ Wide melodic leaps are present in Tlingit music, but less so than in Alaskan Eskimo music. The possibility of tone influencing melody is under study in Alaska.

Alaskan Eskimo and Alaskan Tlingit melody appears to possess longer structural spans than is found in Athabascan melody. Songs of the latter group tend to be shorter with emphasis upon prolonged repetition of the same short melody. This is in contrast to the multi-sectioned melodies of the former groups. James Houston suggests a psychological function for continuous repetition when he generalizes the following about North American Indian music: "Their song

phrases are short and to the point, but some of the songs last a whole night, relying on their hypnotic repetitions to entrance the singer and his listeners and carry them to the doorposts of the other world."²⁰ While the meaning of this generalization is not clear, it does suggest the possibility of hypnotic effect.

The most accessible information concerning the cultural determinants and psychological aspects of Alaskan Eskimo and Indian music is to be found in the song words. Surprisingly, Eskimo song words stress interpersonal relations more than the dangers and severity of the environment. These song words are a projective system both validating and compensating for cultural patterns. For instance, the many songs relating personal achievement embody a cultural ideal and at the same time provide fantasy success for those who fail. Some song words assist social control, as in the case of the bogeyman songs, the singing of which by the men and by the old women tends to keep young children in the house at night. A common feature of Eskimo song words is the proliferation of real and fictive kinship terms, many of them no longer understood by present generations. This reflects cultural imperatives concerning the establishment of interpersonal networks of various types: partnerships, namesakes, betrothal, adoption, age mates, dance mates, and joking relationships. In story-songs, the unfortunate who characteristically is deprived of the social and psychological advantages of these--the orphan--symbolized Eskimo values placed upon belonging.

Another feature of Eskimo song words is the frequent occurrence of terms connected with brightness. Several Point Hope songs refer to a bright light appearing in the sky. An adopted child who is asked to observe a bird finds it so bright that he is dazzled. Occasionally people shine so bright that their skeleton is visible. Such references to brightness may represent an expression of emotionality in terms determined in part by the dayless or nightless Arctic environment.

Yet another feature of Eskimo song words is the proliferation of directional terms. The singing of these directional terms accompanies significant dance movements of indication and pointing, and is a reflection of the ability to specify with great precision where things and places are located and how to reach them in a landscape devoid of trees and other landmarks. Many Eskimo people still travel over vast, uninhabited reaches; their language is the underpinning for the cognitive maps they have developed. Briefly, the spatial world of many Eskimo people appears to be divided into three basic pairs of opposites: hereness/thereness; upness/downness; and insiderness/outsiderness.²¹ The variety of gradated directional terms found within song texts which relate hunting adventures is related to the well-known Eskimo ability to write his name upside-down, backward and forward, and mirror-image with equal facility. It is also related to his ability to observe and feel comfortable with pictures and diagrams viewed from any direction, and the ability to repair internal combustion engines after minimal experience.

More often than not, Eskimo song words refer to subject matter which is at the same time concerned with both interpersonal relations and the environment, as though these two elements were inseparable. As Margaret Lantis suggests, "feeling toward the animals, especially in a hunting culture, becomes basic to much of the individual's behavior."²² She goes on to point out that in western Greenland, with its commercial fishing, sheep raising, and new religion, there is probably a new folklore in the making. Alaskan cross-cultural psychosocial studies have in the past taken two main viewpoints: ecological determinism and nurturance determinism. Both are useful (as we have shown) so long as one bears in mind their pitfalls: (a) the theoretical base is so flexible as to permit different (sometimes contradictory) interpretations of the same data; (b) the theories are not easily amenable to the empirical testing which is a necessary preamble to the drawing of firm conclusions and the creation of a series of derived propositions; and (c) they present the temptation to generalize from one Eskimo group to another living a radically different lifestyle, as from sedentary groups living on the mammal-rich Arctic coast to nomadic inland groups.

Folkloristics is a useful tool in the interpretation of song words, providing the findings are checked against available anthropological data. Taking the story-song about how Mother Duck leads her ducklings to safety on the open sea by singing the appropriate magic song facilitating passage via an underwater channel, we can note with justification that this appears to fall within one particular common core of Eskimo story-songs in which the following events occur: the protagonist departs; there is a lack of an object (water?); the protagonist escapes from an enclosure of some kind; the protagonist flees (this is an episode transition eidon--the resumption of travel simply by having overcome a delaying situation is a continuation of initial departure); the lack is satisfactorily resolved; and the protagonist is united with wife, children, or sibling. The song's meaning may be taken as representing both the hero-overcomes-obstacles theme (perhaps the most common Eskimo story-song plot) and a complex reflection of the frequency of death from environmental causes. Such is reflected in their belief in the efficacy of power songs, a spiritual dichotomy between land and sea, the mystical attributes of the ocean floor, the humanization of birds and animals with whom Eskimo people share their habitat, and solidarity of the consanguineal group. It may also be read as an example of the Good Mother theme, which throughout Eskimo oral literature contrasts with the Bad Wife theme. One possible explanation for this contrast is that, formerly, boys grew up in the men's ceremonial house, at the age of about thirty taking a wife aged about twelve. Early mother loss and disappointment in marriage due to the young bride's incapacity (which frustrated male hopes for a cherishing maternal figure) may have caused the emergence of the folk narratives stressing the Good Mother and the Bad Wife.

Indian song words are less amenable to examination due to the fact that, with the wane of the language, song words are either nonexistent or difficult for even the introduction of song words related to the occasion for which the song was composed. Examples are the use of the title words in "The Firefighting Song" and "The Helicopter Song." One function of the song words employed in

certain Athabascan villages is hypersuggestibility--singing the "Happy Day, Happy Day!" song at post-funeral potlatches is considered the most effective way of alleviating bereavement. The author was informed of this song's use while attending the ceremonies following the death at Nenana of the well-known ex-Chief Alphonso Demientieff.

Common throughout Alaska is the use of vocables. These cannot properly be referred to as nonsense syllables, for not only do they serve as a mnemonic device (aiding the recall of melody and of dance movements), but in some cases they are abbreviations of real words.

Psychological Aspects of the Dance Uniforms

Regardless of the heat within the community hall, Eskimo dancers invariably wear gloves or mittens when dancing. This is said to be a way of showing respect for the animal spirits in whose honor the dances were formerly given. Decorative parkas are also frequently worn, the long, pendulous tassels of which sway rhythmically during the dance, imparting an intentional visual effect. Another use of the parka is its use by bereaved persons as a cloak; during the singing of highly emotional "sorry-songs," an Indian mourner may withdraw her arms and face into the roomy parka, the face becoming invisible and the arms wrapping around the body. A similar gesture occurs within appropriate context in certain Eskimo story-dancers where it signifies cold and fatigue.

Tlingit dance uniforms are highly symbolic with elaborate artwork depicting important clan emblems and signifying both the rank and affiliation of the dancer. These dance uniforms include the Chilkat blanket, beaded dance bibs, the octopus bag with floral designs probably deriving from the French, dance tunics, and elaborate dance hats. Cylinders mounted upon the dance hats indicate the number of prestigious musical potlatches given by the wearer. Photographs of Tlingit potlatch dancers in the years 1890-1910 indicate that borrowing was a cultural value: in evidence are many Russian sailor hat styles and Japanese kimonos.

Psychological Aspects of the Musical Instruments

The skin of the Eskimo frame drum is a thin, transparent, membraneous covering from the liver of the whale, or, if this is not available, walrus bladder. Both substances are difficult to obtain today and in any case are rather fragile and susceptible to weather variation, requiring much dampening and adjustment during performance. Even upon old, much-used frame drums, the substance retains a strong salty odor and natural appearance. Although plastic is beginning to be used for drumheads in certain areas, these appear to be in the most acculturated areas. In the areas of greatest ceremonialism (the western and northern Arctic coastline) there is still a strong attachment to the membrane drumhead, reflecting a mystical association between the sea mammal (benevolent subsistence source) and the drum dances which dramatize the whale hunt. There may also be solar symbolism in the large round shape which occurs around the world in folk-healers' drums.

Eskimo mitten-rattles in use at Point Hope are made from sea mammal gut and gunshells which rattle when shaken. Both substances reflect environmental adaptive skills (i.e. skin sewing, sealing). The long-beaked loonskin head-dress commonly worn by Alaskan Eskimo dancers reflects Eskimo mythology concerning the loon's "supernatural" diving ability and corresponding ability of the loonskin wearer to dive to the ocean floor to converse with the whaling spirits.

The elongate Tlingit Raven rattle with its reverse side bearing a carving of Frog imparting power to a masked, reclining shaman, may carry historical implications concerning the possible former use of hallucinogenic drugs obtained from frogskins or from mushrooms, thereby aiding achievement of the trance-like state necessary for the journey to recover lost souls. Such hallucinogenic usages have not been conclusively shown for either pre-contact or post-contact Alaska.

While not a musical instrument, dance masks were, and in some cases still are, a common dance accessory. Some of them are survivals from early shamanistic ceremonies when differently designed masks served specific psychological purposes furthering the goals of the shaman. They can be placed on a natural-to-abstract continuum with regard to form. Interestingly enough, this continuum parallels a sacred-to-secular continuum with regard to social function; the more complex and extraordinary the facial distortion or contortion, the more complex the combination of animal with human features and the more complex the addition of perimentral rings bearing symbolic miniature carvings, the more religious the intended application of the mask.

Psychological Implications of Musical Change

Musical change has followed social change, for new social values have produced new attitudes toward music. An example is to be seen in the weakening of Tlingit matrilineality; sons are now heard to sing the family songs of their father (formerly inheritable only by the father's sister's offspring).

The demise of indigenous religious systems has resulted in changes in death-rite musical protocol. Earlier emphasis on prolonged incantation during the first part of a post-funeral potlatch has given way to prolonged singing and dancing during the last part, so that these latter now predominate. The psycho-social explanation of change in both song inheritance and potlatch protocol lies partly in the persuasiveness of the white behavior model since contact times. Urbanization and job mobility have loosened family ties, while Christianization and assimilationism have cast early indigenous cosmology into disrepute. This is not to deny that acculturation is selective. Too often one reads solely of the negative effects of contact and must search deeply to find evidence of acculturation by choice and preference. The demise of the shaman-drummer together with his large body of power songs must be attributed at least in part to the coordinate religious role offered by the missionaries to that traditionally subordinate half of the population--the women. The advent of the rifle constitutes another example of selective borrowing affecting musical

tradition, for the demonstrated superiority of the rifle over the power song and the individualization of the land animal hunt may have undermined to some degree the perceived utility of the group musical ceremony and its psychological affect.

Hand-in-hand with the loss of early musical forms due to acculturation and to the selective borrowing of new ideas, came a process of socio-musical substitution. The music of a people is not necessarily a zero sum which gradually erodes over time: while the white newcomer disparaged and destroyed certain Alaskan Eskimo and Indian musical forms, he also provided new and different opportunities for musical performance, such as the Eskimo Olympics, the dance exhibition for tourists, and the college Native Art Festival. One of the more interesting aspects of these events is the small extent to which they have resulted in the dilution of indigenous but separate musical systems, the sounds of which remain clearly distinct in their ethnicity.

The rate of cultural accomodation and musical change has proceeded unevenly among Alaskan native groups, varying according to cultural proclivities. Athabaskan and Eskimo people, particularly, appear to differ in this regard: "Tanaina Indians occupying the Kijik site were extremely receptive to Russian and American trade goods, whereas Eskimos inhabiting the Crow Village and Kijik sites showed marked conservatism."²³ Likewise, within the conglomerate Athabaskan-speaking peoples of Alaska, there were differential preferences concerning the perpetuation or rejection of tradition, including music:

The Koyukon, who are almost as acculturated as the Kutchin, retain a strong interest in traditional Indian culture. They talk often and with enthusiasm about previous times, events, and customs; but their concern is largely historical, and they maintain a sense of identity with the older lifeways while still moving quite readily away from them. The Koyukon are more aware of their Indian identity, and feel more positively toward it.²⁴

Today one notes with interest that it is among the Nulato and Kaltag Koyukon that the Feast For The Dead (hi'o) stick-dance is still strongly celebrated during four boisterous, rousing days every March. Certain nativistic differences between Alaskan Indian groups can be explained by Alaskan history while others must lie deep within the collective psyche. Differences between Eskimo and Indian groups can be explained in part by cognitive attitudes: "one characteristic of epistemological thinking stands out clearly, the relativistic nature of truth. The Indian does not regard his thinking as absolutist, or universal terms of validity. 'That's what Injun believe,' Old Man would say."²⁵ Eskimo people, on the other hand, tend toward absolutism when discussing the superiority of their culture--in their language they commonly use a noun qualifier which means "genuine" as opposed to "ordinary," (i.e. a "genuine" song).

Conclusion

Alaskan Eskimo and Indian music, then, is one of the more powerful and easily recognizable aspects of native cultural identity, and, furthermore, fulfills a

variety of important social functions. For the individual and for the group, it possesses strong psychological significance because of the fact that a specific event in cultural history may be identified and retained through the oral tradition of music more emotionally than via other media such as the printed word. Alaska's native musical systems are changing, but not unilinearly. As we have seen, musical renaissance can be generated by political developments. Some areas (notably the Aleutians and the Cook Inlet area) exhibit more musical assimilation than do others, reflecting not merely Alaskan history, but psycho-social proclivities. As a society's music becomes more complicated and specialized, it becomes less directly meaningful to the carriers of the cultural context in which it was composed. Hence, any acceleration of musical assimilation in the still-traditional Eskimo coastal villages and in the Athabascan villages of the Interior, via school, church, and radio, would result in a considerable intellectual and esthetic loss. This loss would result not only in an increase of personality problems among the native population, but also in an impoverishment of the white population in that it represents attrition of Alaska's overall cultural wealth.

Study of Alaska's native musical systems serves not only a salvage cause and the scientific cause which is concerned with cross-cultural musical comparison, but aids understanding between cultures. Alaskan Eskimo and Indian musical systems are partly a projective system reflecting the socializing principles of native childhood and adulthood. Study of both the sound and the words gives the student an opportunity to observe a large cross section of the subjective projected into a stereotyped form without his having to use artificial clinical tests that the subjects may resist. Songwords in particular yield otherwise elusive clues to modal personality, for the composition of song word and the acting-out (in motion-dancing) of stories, myths, and events provide a group-supported means of expressing individual asocial urges in a non-anxious fashion. Both the song word and the miming are pregnant with cultural and psychological symbolism, and they are both embedded in settings of infinite beauty--the unique singing styles and graceful dance movements--which ensure maximal impact upon, and emotional communication with, the peers, the allies, the rivals, and the social judges who comprise the intended audience.

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