

Word Distortions in Delaware Big House and Walam Olum Songs

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From hearing the Big House songs repeatedly, every Delaware Indian theoretically knew everyone else's song, but it was unthinkable that anyone should sing anyone else's song, or for that matter, that anyone should sing his own vision song publicly except during the Big House ceremony.¹ After some reluctance our informant, Mr. Longbone, sang his own vision song for us.² Then he included in his repertory songs which he remembered from a lifetime attendance at the Big House, explaining that the individuals whose songs he was singing were now deceased. We have reason to believe also that he altered the songs somewhat in order to mitigate the feeling of trespassing on the property of others which he was frank to admit made him uncomfortable.

In this way, Mr. Longbone "remembered" over a dozen songs which he sang on successive nights while we transcribed them, no doubt with many impressionistic errors; certain real variants also appeared. At the same time Mr. Longbone gave us what he thought were the equivalent spoken words for the song words, and the names of persons to whom the songs belonged. Finally, he sang the entire repertory twice over in the laboratory, so that we could make phonograph records.

These records were subsequently taken to Oklahoma and played to Mr. Longbone's drum-partner, Mr. J. Parks, and to two nephews, Roy and Jesse Longbone, who gave us additional data on spoken word equivalents of the song words. The repertory of songs as sung on the first phonograph record is transcribed below.

Frank Wilson's song:

- A. he peciwite tanilie
 peciwī tani
- B. heyupeta haniti
 heyupeta haniti
- C. hayayane hayuni
 hayuyane hayu
- D. ketomake hayuki
 ketomake hayu

¹Harrington, M. R., "Religion and Ceremonies of the Lenape," *Indian Notes and Monographs*, Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, N. Y., 1921. Speck, Frank G., "A Study of the Delaware Big House Ceremony," *Publications of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission*, volume 2, Harrisburg, 1931.

²Grateful acknowledgment is made to the 1939 Linguistic Institute at the University of Michigan for providing Delaware informant and phonograph recording equipment; and for Oklahoma field funds administered by DePauw University grateful acknowledgment is also made.

- E. wanilena hewite
 wanilena hewite
 F. wi hehei

In this song line A begins with the burden syllable [he] followed by [peciwite] which is said to correspond to the spoken language peecihileew "he comes here"; then [tanilie] for the spoken form canilə'su "he did wrong". In line B the burden syllables [heyu] are followed by [peta] and [haniti] which stand for mpéettuun 'I wait for it'. The next line is said to consist of burden syllables only. Line D is the song equivalent of nkattəmaakkéeləma "I take pity on him". Line E is equated with wáni lənáappe "this Delaware". And the last line is said to be an exclamation of rejoicing. The song as a whole says that someone came and did wrong; then in the words of the guardian spirit, "I am waiting for it [namely, to help someone on a vision quest]; I take pity on this Delaware."

Colonel Jackson's first song:

- A. hetantilu honani
 sesantilu
 B. kwenamuwa kaniwo
 kwenamuwa kani
 C. wanilena pewite
 wanilena pewite
 D. wi hehei

The first line is equated with ntihilúuxolaan "I take him", line B with kweenamuwáakkanink "place of worship". Line C is a slightly variant song approximation of wáni lənáappe "this Delaware". Line D is the final exclamation. The song says, in the words of the guardian spirit, "I will take this Delaware Indian to the place of worship."

Colonel Jackson's second song:

- A. helidi hənámən
 dili hənámən
 B. heli leele
 C. heya yane
 D. oli tena
 E. pewi tane
 F. hiti hehe

Line A is the song equivalent of ntihilipənámən 'I look at it this way'. Line B stands for eelileheléxeet "the way he lives". Line C is said to consist of burden syllables only. Lines D and E together stand for wáni lənáappe "this Delaware". Line F shows another form of the final exclamation. Altogether, the song gives the words of the guardian spirit as, "I am looking at the way this Delaware Indian lives."

Ice Wilson's song:

- A. henayonileheyomən aikwe
 B. kenamuwohowohonu aihonilenaohewi
 C. haiahi hahe

- C. hanilena pewite
- D. yahi hahehe

Mr. Parks did not agree that this was one of the songs sung by the Masked Dancer or *məsínkw* of the Big House ceremony. He thought it was another vision song belonging to an individual, perhaps to Tom Bill. Mr. Parks could not find a spoken word equivalent for line A, but Mr. Longbone gave *haləmíhílee* "it goes up". Both men agreed that line B stands for *kweenaamuwáakkan* "this kind of worship", line C for *wáni lənáappe* "this Delaware", line D for final exclamation.

George Washington's first song:

- A. haleciluwi kame yuni
- B. hule hewo'kohənu wane
- C. honi lena pehwi tane
- D. yehe hehei

The spoken word equivalents are for line A, *mpeciluuwíkamən* "I crowd it passing by"; for line B, *yúuni wəleexéeyon* "his breath (= life) here"; for line C, *wáni lənáappe* "this Delaware"; for line D exclamation.

George Washington's second song:

- A. nihanuli hokaye
nihanuli hokaiineye
lihanuli hokaiine
- B. heyunpemitanikee
heyunpemitanikeeye
heyunpemitanikeeye
- C. kwi

Spoken word equivalents are for line A, *nuulihókain* "my body"; for line B, *yuuní peemíitaniik* "is this which flows by, a stream of water"; for line C, an exclamation which is more abrupt than the other final exclamations.

Silas Longbone's song:

- A. he nanuwenci šluweya
nanuwenci šluweya
- B. niyanoli šlumuhuku
niyanu'ule šlumuhuku
- C. wanilena pewite
wanile'ena pewite
- D. wayeyi hahei

Spoken word equivalents are for line A, *nananə'nci luwéeya* "that's why I say"; for line B, *níita nuuléeləmkw* "he should think well of me"; for line C, *wáni lənáappe* "this Delaware"; for line D, exclamation.

Charlie Elkhair's song:

- A. he halami hewie
halami
- B. wi wenamuwoowo'oho'onu

- C. ai honile?ena ohewi
 D. haididi haidi hahe

Spoken word equivalents are for line A, halámihilee "it begins to go up"; for line B, kwenamuwáakkan "his worship"; for line C, wáni lanáappe "this Delaware"; for line D, exclamation.

George Wilson's song:

- A. yanilahsomiine
 B. kwenamuwa kanuwa
 C. wanilenah pewite
 D. yahae hahehe

Spoken word equivalents are for line A, nnihiláattamən "I own it"; for line B, kwenamuwáakkan "his worship"; for line C, wáni lanáappe "this Delaware"; for line D, exclamation.

Departing hunters' song:

- A. he halamilehweeye
 halamilehwiye
 halamilehwiye
 halamilhwiya
 hwiya ho
- B. patamiwiwoowo konuwhiyi
 kotamwiwoo konuwhiya
 hiya ho
- C. wanilenooo pewitehiyi
 wanitenoo pewitehiya
 hiya ho

Returning hunters' song:

- A. he pecithweee
 pecilehweyi
 pecilehwiyi
 pecilehwiya
 heya ho
- B. patamwiwooo kenuwhiyi
 kotamwiwoo konuwhiya
 heya ho
- C. wanilenooo pewitehiyi
 anilenoo pewitehiya
 heya ho

These last two hunters' songs were not gained by individuals on the vision quest, but belong to the Big House ceremony as a whole: they are sung to speed the departure of the hunters and to welcome their return. Line A differs in the two songs. The spoken word equivalent for the former is halámihilee "it begins to go up"; for the latter, peecíhilee "it comes here". Lines B and C are not quite identical phonetically in the two songs, but they stand for the same spoken words, namely, pootamweeyóokkan "his prayer", and wáni lanáappe "this Del-

aware". In both songs, lines A, B, and C end separately with an exclamation which repeats, after the fashion of an echo, the final pair of syllables of the song proper. Otherwise the line final exclamations of the hunters' songs bear a general resemblance to the song final exclamations of the vision songs.

Consonants used in all song words include [p, t, c, k, h, x, s, š, l, m, n, w, y]. Song words lack the long consonants found in the spoken language. The glottal stop [ʔ] and a voiced [d] in prevocalic and intervocalic position are found in song words but not in the spoken language.

A broad transcription of the vowels in song words gives [i, e, ə, a, u, o]. This agrees essentially with the vowel phonemes in speech as far as quality is concerned. A short and long contrast should probably not be made for the vowels in song words; several degrees of length are observable, but these appear to be determined by the song rather than by the word. In songs, it is difficult to establish a single main stress for each word, and hence difficult to guarantee word boundaries which remain arbitrary.

Only a few of the numerous consonant clusters are found in song words: [hs, hw, kw, mw, np, nt, nc]. Besides these, [tw] has been found in songs, but in speaking neither t, nor c, s, š, n, l appear before w. So also, [xl] and [šl] have been found in songs, but a voiced consonant (other than w) never appears as the final member of a cluster in speech.

Song words show a greater preference for consonant initial words than does the spoken language. Favorite initials are [h], [k], [w], [p].

Spoken words frequently end in consonants or even consonant clusters; a few song words are found to end in [n], [k], [l], [h], [y], while all others come to an end in vowels.

This summary of the phonetic peculiarities of song words is based on all the variants of some fifteen Big House songs. We can gain only a gross impression of phonetic detail in Walam Olum songs, for these songs were recorded in the early 19th century and were no less crudely recorded than other Indian documents of the period.³ The Walam Olum songs did not, apparently, favor burden syllables empty of meaning which appear above as characteristic of Big House songs. Other modern Delaware songs, such as those associated with the peyote ritual, employ meaningless syllables to the exclusion of even slightly suggestive words.

Morphological distortions in both the Walam Olum and Big House songs include rather systematic losses and innovations. Thus, final syllable losses are especially noticeable in the Big House songs. This means, in almost all cases, loss of inflectional endings. Compare the song and the speech forms for "place of worship" (CJ's first song); for "he comes here" (FW's song); for "the way he lives" (CJ's second

³ Brinton, Daniel G., "The Lenape and Their Legends; with the Complete Text and Symbols of the Walam Olum, a new Translation, and an Inquiry into its Authenticity," Brinton's Library of Aboriginal American Literature, Number V, Philadelphia, 1885.

song); for "I take pity on him" (FW's song). The song form often lacks the 1st person prefix of the speech form (see FW's song line B, the A lines of CJ's first and second songs, GB's song line A, GW's first song line A). But it cannot be said that the 1st person prefix is absolutely excluded in the song style (see GW's second song line A). The 1st person suffix also appears in the songs (GB's song line B), as does the 2nd person prefix (GF's song line A).

The Walam Olum songs show similar inflectional losses. And these older songs show a certain greater freedom in song than in speech form, namely, in the use of suffix in initial position. For example, in modern Delaware dialects we may isolate -tuulpe or -tuulpi "turtle" as a suffix from piisəlatuulpe besides piisalaptuulpi "soft shell turtle". But in the Walam Olum, tulpewik "turtles" is sung without prior member (song I, verse 13).⁴

Another suffix, -alánieew "to have tail feathers", occurs both with a prior member, and initially (song III, verses 12, 19). In the spoken language, the form in question is of course always a suffix. Here again, Delaware violates the habits, or rather some of the habits, of the spoken language in song.

⁴ Additional examples will be available in a volume dealing with various aspects of the Walam Olum (including the philological) now being prepared by certain members of the Indiana Historical Society. A musical transcription of the Big House songs discussed in this paper is now being prepared by Professor George Herzog, and it is hoped that this transcription will appear in the Historical Society's volume.