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**Bakalářská práce**  
**Peyote and Native American Church**  
**Alice Kulhánková**

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**Bakalářská práce**

**Peyote and the Native American Church**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval(a) samostatně a použil(a) jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Plzeň, duben 2014 .....

## **PODĚKOVÁNÍ**

Děkuji vedoucí mé bakalářské práce, Mgr. Kamile Velkoborské, Ph.D. za ochotné a hodnotné rady a dále všem, kteří přispěli ke zpracování této práce.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of my bachelor thesis is Peyote and the Native American Church. Peyote is a small spineless cactus, which grows in Mexico and South of Texas. The main reason why this small cactus has so controversial role in the United States is because of the hallucinogenic effects caused by mescaline. The fact, that Peyote has hallucinogenic effects is not so controversial by itself, however Peyote is considered to be a sacrament in the Native American Church. Native American Church combines indigenous religion with Christianity. Many organizations come under Native American Church and during their ceremonies Peyote is used. The interesting fact is that US law allows the use of Peyote for ceremonial purposes.

The main reason for me to choose this topic is my interest in Native American culture and facts. Another reason was, that I have previously visited a course focused on American Indian culture and my thesis supervisor inspired me with this area. The third reason is, that this phenomenon is not very well known in Czech republic.

The first subject I would like to focus on is the Peyote itself. I would like to clarify the chemical make-up of this plant, places of occurrence and also the way Peyote is used now and how it has been used through the centuries.

In the next part of my thesis I would like to explain what the term Native American Church means and under which conditions the Native American Church was established. I would like to introduce important names which were involved in the foundation of the Native American Church. In the same chapter I will describe the ceremonies and rituals, which are the important part of the Native American Church members religious life. There are two ways of practicing the ceremony and I would like to introduce them both.



Hand in hand with ceremonies and rituals goes art and music. Art and music are present in a daily life of Peyote culture. Pictures, clothes and music are part of every ceremony.

Next section of my thesis will be dedicated to law and legality connected with the Peyote. I think that the legal question of Peyote use is very interesting and I will explain its history and situation of Peyote legal use in the United States nowadays.

During my preparation and research about this topic, I found a member of the Native American Church, who is willing to contribute with commentary and his view on this phenomenon. The fact, that I found an informer, who is willing to cooperate is very rare, because members of the Native American Church and also the Native Americans in general, are not so open to the white people. This member of the Native American Church is also a student from Haskell Indian Nations University. His name is Robbie Ray Wood II. Although he is not of Native American origin, he considers himself as one. He is member of the Haskell Native American Church Club and I would like to include an interview with him in my thesis. This interview should provide a view in to nowadays situation in Native American Church and also a relation of young Native Americans to the Peyote sacrament.

This topic is well literary covered, however the majority of literature was published in the United States. There is a wide range of studies about Peyote chemical structure and the effects of this plant as well as the connection with the Native American Church. The main source of my thesis will be the *Peyote Road and The Native American Church*, written by Thomas C. Maroukis and published in 2010.

Thomas C. Maroukis is Professor of History at Capital University in Ohio. He is also author of the book *Peyote and the Yankton Sioux: The Life and Times of Sam Necklace*, which will be also one of my sources. I think that the book of professor Maroukis describes Peyote and the Native American Church elaborately with many interesting notes and

pictures. The book is well arranged with well worked out chapters. In my opinion this book gives a good and very recent (2010) picture of this topic.

The main goal of my thesis is to describe and try to explain the Peyote situation and the Native American Church to European reader. I think that this theme is connected with my study program in the field of facts about United States and Native American culture. In my opinion this thesis can be a contribution to general awareness of this problem.

## 2. PEYOTE

Peyote is small unobtrusive cactus, whose name comes from the word *peyotl* (Aztec). This word refers to a caterpillar's cocoon as the plant has a shaggy fluff of white silky hair protruding from the center of white-pinkish flower petals, which appear in the spring. There are also many Spanish descriptions of peyote, thanks to deposit area. The first botanical illustration was published in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* from 1847 (Maroukis 2010: 5, Anderson 1996: Chapter 8).



Figure 1: First illustration of *Lophophora williamsii* in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* from 1847.

Peyote belongs to a genus *Lophophora* with two species: *Lophophora diffusa*, which is local cactus in central Mexico and *Lophophora williamsii*, which is peyote cactus. *Lophophora williamsii* is a small pale green cactus. It is also spineless with succulent core. Peyote grows in solitude but also in a cluster of stems. The stems are about three to six centimeters and grow six to nine centimeters above the ground (Anderson 1996: Chapter 8).

## 2.1. Peyote button

Peyote is legally used only for religious purposes. For these purposes only the cut-off tops of the Peyote are used. This part is called “button”. In this case, when only the button is cut, the root will regenerate and produce another stem. Unfortunately, plants are often cut deeply by recreational users, leaving little or no root remaining in the ground (Mercado: 1997).

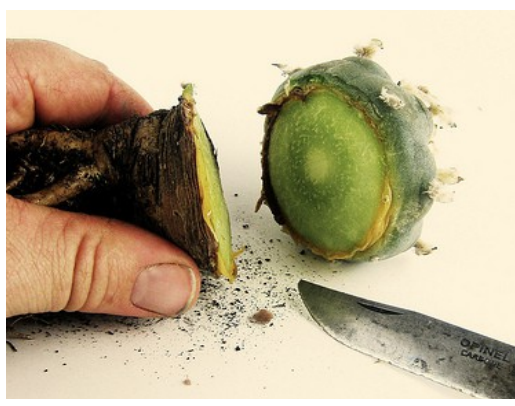


Figure 2: Peyote button. Flickr.

## 2.2. Chemical Make-up

Peyote has been studied through and through from the view of botanists, chemists and pharmacologist. What is interesting and also very controversial about this plant is the fact, that it contains a large number of hallucinogenic alkaloids. According to Collins English Dictionary, alkaloids are: “Any of a group of nitrogenous basic compounds found in plants, typically insoluble in water and physiologically active. Common examples are morphine, strychnine, quinine, nicotine, and caffeine” (Collins English Dictionary).

One of these hallucinogenic alkaloids is also Mescaline, which has similar effects as LSD. However Robbie Ray Wood, a student from Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence (Kansas), does not completely agree with this claim.

*“I personally don't agree with this, although the hallucinogenic effect may be somewhat similar in a way. I think it's statements like these that make people curious in playing around with peyote. Which in that sense its nothing like LSD. in my Experience LSD is a lot more "silly" of a "high".”*

The first isolation of mescaline was made in year 1897 by the German chemist Arthur Heffter. Thereafter mescaline was first synthesized in year 1919 by the Austrian chemist Ernst Späth. Mescaline and also Peyote are listed as a Schedule 1 narcotic (under The U.S Department of Justice §1308.11, Heffter Research Institute).

### **2.3.Places of occurrence**

Peyote grows mainly in Mexico and South Texas. The main area is Chihuahuan Desert region. Chihuahuan Desert is the largest North American desert and covers around 280 000 square kilometers. According to Thomac C. Maroukis, Professor of History at Capital University in Ohio, is this desert region the main growth area. Most of the experts on Peyote (Maroukis, Norton, Trout) agree, that the Chihuahuan Desert region has the key role for harvesting of Peyote. “The south Texas region, the only place where Peyote grows in the United states, is a crucial growth area for the Native American Church as transporting Peyote across the border from Mexico is prohibited.” (Maroukis 2010:5).

### **2.4.How is Peyote used**

Peyote buttons are usually consumed in the form of the dried powder or tea made from dried buttons. As mentioned by Robbie Ray Wood “as most of it is shipped from Mexico it is very rare and valuable to get fresh medicine”. The dried buttons can be chewed and from the powder it is possible to make a paste, which is eaten with the spoon with addition of water. The powder is also known as mescaline sulfate and contains the

purest form of mescaline. The amount of the consumed buttons is very individual. It depends on the strength of the plant, and also on the ceremony and individual. "I've seen anywhere from twenty to thirty buttons consumed by a single individual in a single ceremony... I would say that 4-12 represents an "active dose" though" (personal correspondence with Robbie Ray Wood, Mercado: 1997, Maroukis 2010: 7).

The response after the use of Peyote is different. In most cases it starts with a wakefulness, mild analgesia and usually loss of appetite. Another common reaction is also nausea and intensified sensitivity to sound and color. Some people can have hallucinations after use of Peyote and this part is exactly the part, which attracts lot of people, which desire to try something new. However hallucinations are important part of the Native American culture and religion (Native American Netroots: 2009, 312).

## **2.5. History of Peyote and its use**

In Mesoamerica (which is the region from Mexico to Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica) the usage of Peyote is thousands of years old. Archaeologist Carolyn E. Boyd wrote a publication about discoveries in the Lower Pecos River Region (south-central Texas, northern Mexico), where archeologists discovered rock-shelters with desiccated Peyote and also rock panels with ritual paintings with pictures of ritual use of Peyote. These rock panels are dated as 2950-4200 years old. Similar paintings were found also all over the Mexico. For example in Oaxaca archeologists found a painting with the deer holding Peyote in its mouth and it was dated to 400-200 B.C.E. The Aztecs knew Peyote as well and they used it mostly for medical and religious purposes (Maroukis 2010: 14-19, Boyd 2003: 82-84).

In 1519 the Spanish arrived and times of destruction of Aztec culture began. The Spanish found the Native population using large number of

psychotropic plants including Peyote. The Spanish priest and chronicler Bernardino de Sahagún wrote in year 1560 the earliest known observation to Peyote. He described the use of Peyote in the tribe of Chichimeca:

*“There is another herb like tunas [Opuntia spp.] of the earth. It is called Peiotl. It is white. It is found in the north country. Those who eat or drink it see visions either frightful or laughable. This intoxication lasts two or three days and then ceases. It is a common food of the Chichimeca, for it sustains them and gives them courage to fight and not feel fear nor hunger nor thirst. And they say that it protects them from all danger” (Schultes, Hofmann 2001: 132).*

In the second half of the sixteenth century the Spanish started the total repression and prohibition of Peyote use. In these times Peyote was called “a work of devil.” In 1620 the Inquisition hearings started and the church offered the full absolution for those who give up using of Peyote (Schultes, Hofmann: 2001).

Serious studies about the Peyote use began in year 1890 and they are connected with the name James Mooney. James Mooney was an ethnologist who researched the usage of Peyote among the Kiowa tribe in Oklahoma. He stood up in congress against Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) who were trying to completely suppress the Peyote Law and also the Native Americans religion and spirituality. With his friend Quanah Parker, who was a half-breed Chief and Medicine Man of Nʉmʉnʉʉ<sup>1</sup> tribe (Comanche), persuaded Oklahoma Native American Leaders to found Native American Church of Oklahoma, which was a step for legal protection of Native American Culture (Okleuveha NAC website).

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<sup>1</sup> Nʉmʉnʉʉ means Comanche people in the Comanche language (Healy- Native American Flags website)

Also the trade with Peyote has a very long history. Peyote has been commercially harvested in Texas for last one hundred years, nevertheless its sale is now restricted only to members of the Native American Church. The number of Native American Church members is estimated to be around 250,000 (Mercado: 1997).



### **3. NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH**

Native American Church is a combination of Christian Theology and Native American beliefs. But nothing is that simple. More other factors are combined in the term Native American Church, including Peyotism. Differences between tribes can be very significant. Native American Church took over many Christian elements. However in spite of this fact, many Christian missionaries criticize the Native American Church. One of the arguments is, that Peyote is dangerous and addictive drug. However no evidence was found for physiological dependence (Native American Netroots: 2009, 312).

The Native American Church was originally formed in the state of Oklahoma, however nowadays it is active in western states of USA and also in Canada. Catherine Beyer, professor at the University of Wisconsin, in her article about Peyote and The Native American church notices, that “The term "Native American Church" does not apply to those Native Americans who solely follow traditional tribal beliefs, nor does it apply to Native Americans who are entirely Christian.”

The theological and spiritual belief in the Native American Church is highly individualized. The ritual ceremonies are generally performed in tepees and they are prepared with accuracy and high thoroughness. There are two ways of preparation and realization of the ritual. The first one is called the Half Moon Way and the second the Cross Fire Way. Detailed description of the rituals appears in the chapters 3.4-3.7 (Maroukis 2010: 14-25).

#### **3.1. Foundation of the Native American Church**

As mentioned above, using of Peyote is an important part of the Native American religion. However the United States government started to be more and more involved in the use of this sacrament and users of Peyote started to be fettered by the laws. As stated in Catherine Beyer

research, it was the main reason for formation of the Native American Church.

The NAC was originally formed in the state of Oklahoma. It was a long developing process, but in early 1880's the ceremonies and rituals became more uniform. On 10th October 1918 the legal definition by an intertribal coalition of Peytotists was achieved through the establishment of the Native American Church of Oklahoma (Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia).

Two names are connected with the foundation of the Native American Church. Both of them were mentioned in the paragraph 2.5 History of the Peyote and its use. The first one is James Mooney and the second one is Quanah Parker.

### **3.2. James Mooney**



Figure 3: James Mooney. National Anthropological Archives.

James Mooney (1861-1921) was an American ethnologist. James Mooney was a member of Smithsonian Institution<sup>2</sup> and was well-known for his works about the Cherokee and Kiowa tribes. He was also the first non-Native American, who attended the Peyote services and described

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<sup>2</sup> Smithsonian Institution was founded in 1846 and it is a world's largest museum and research complex in the USA.

them. In Therapeutic Gazette in year 1896 an article Mescal Plant and Ceremony by James Mooney was published. In this article he mentioned: “[Peyote] is regarded as the vegetable incarnation of a deity and the ceremonial eating of the plant has become the great religious rite of all the tribes of the southern plains” (Moses 2002, Smithsonian Institution website).

### 3.3. Quanah Parker

Quanah Parker (1852 – 1911) was and still is considered as the most significant person in the progress of Peyotism in Oklahoma. He became a principal chief of the  $\text{N}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{m}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{n}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{u}$  (Comanche people). His mother, Cynthia Ann Parker, was a nine years old girl when she was captured by  $\text{N}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{m}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{n}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{u}$  raid in 1836. She stayed with the tribe, married one of the  $\text{N}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{m}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{n}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{u}$  tribe and had three children. The first one was Quanah, then she had another son and a daughter Prairie Flower. She was well integrated in the tribes society. In 1861 Cynthia Ann Parker and her daughter were captured by Texas Rangers and Cynthia was reunited with her family. In this time Quanah was nine years old (Maroukis 2010:26).



Figure 4: Quanah Parker. Heritage Auctions.

When he grew up, he had reputation of a warrior and with his strong leadership skills he soon became the leader of the  $\text{N}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{m}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{n}\mathbf{\bar{u}}\text{u}$  nation. The

Peyote was not something new for Nʌmənʌ tribes, because they had known about it from their raids and trades. After 1870 they started practicing ceremonies, which became the source of Peyotism today (Maroukis 2010: 24-27, Hagan 2012).

### **3.4. Ceremonies of the Native American Church**

Native American Church represents a combination of the Christianity and traditional Native American beliefs. This fact is reflected in the way the ceremonies and rituals are practised. Through the period of time the religious use of Peyote became complex and organized as well as the rituals. Professor Maroukis says in *The Peyote Road*: “As Peyotism evolved, it developed a theological base, a ceremonial and ritual structure, and an ethical system for its members to follow” (Maroukis 2010: 59).

According to chapter 3 and 3.3 about Quanah Parker, it is obvious that he played an important role in the forming of Peyotism as it is known today. There are two kinds of ceremony in the Native American Church. Quanah Parker's version of the ritual is known as the Half Moon way. The second one is know as Big Moon way or more recently the Cross Fire way (WRSP, VCU website).

#### **3.4.1. The Half Moon Way**

The today's ritual structure was developing between years 1870 and 1880. The Half Moon Way is known as the Little Moon, Tipi Way or Kiowa Way, and it is also the one most common. The name of the Half Moon Way is derived from the half moon-shaped altar. The altar is prepared very carefully and with thoroughness and it is situated in the central part of the tepee. This ritual contains fewer elements of Christianity, although “the Christianity is generally understood to be the foundation of the faith” (WRSP, VCU website). In the ceremony it is often referred to Mother Nature and other spirits. The Half Moon altar is ephemeral and it is built

for each Peyote ceremony. In the figure below we can see the position of ritual items and also the position of the Roadman, who is the leader of the ceremony (in Figure 5 called Father Peyote on sage), fireman, cedar man and peyote members around in the circle. The position of members and ritual objects is very important. According to Wood the position of cedar man is variable from Roadman to Roadman, sometimes the cedar man is not even used. Most of the time a block of cedar wood is used instead of the cedar man. Another important part is the position of the Water woman, who brings water during the ceremony. In Figure 5 the term “water bearer” is used, however this role is often referred to as a “water woman”. According to Wood the Water woman “is representative of the female spirit” (Maroukis: 2010).

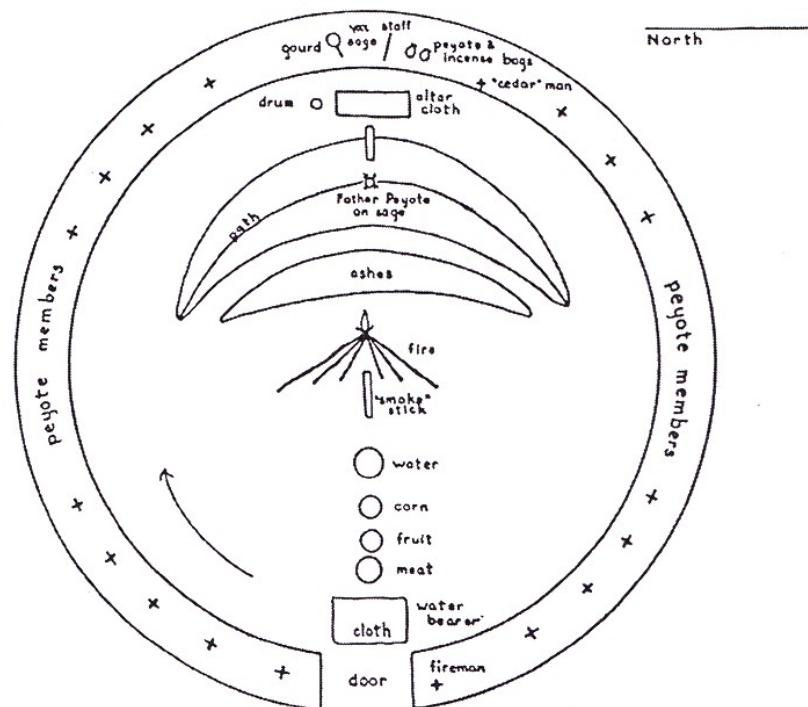


Figure 5: Half Moon altar. From La Barre, Peyote Cult, 154.

### 3.4.2. The Cross Fire Way

Beginning of this form of ritual dates in 1880, when John Wilson became a Peyote Roadman. John Wilson was a Caddo<sup>3</sup> Indian (actually Caddo, Delaware and French). According to the picture bellow, it is obvious, that Christianity is more emphasized in the Cross Fire ritual. The altar is in the shape of a horseshoe. Two imaginary lines goes through the altar. One line goes from east to the west side of the tepee and the second line goes from the north to the south. These two lines create a cross in the middle, and from this cross comes the name Cross Fire. The cross represents not just four cardinal points, but clearly the cross as the christian symbol. During the Cross Fire ritual the Bible is usually used, worshipping of Jesus and sometimes even use of crucifixes. The Cross Fire ritual has references to Jesus, not just in the songs but also in the fact that the biblical passages are delivered (Maroukis:2010, WRSP, VCU website, Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia).

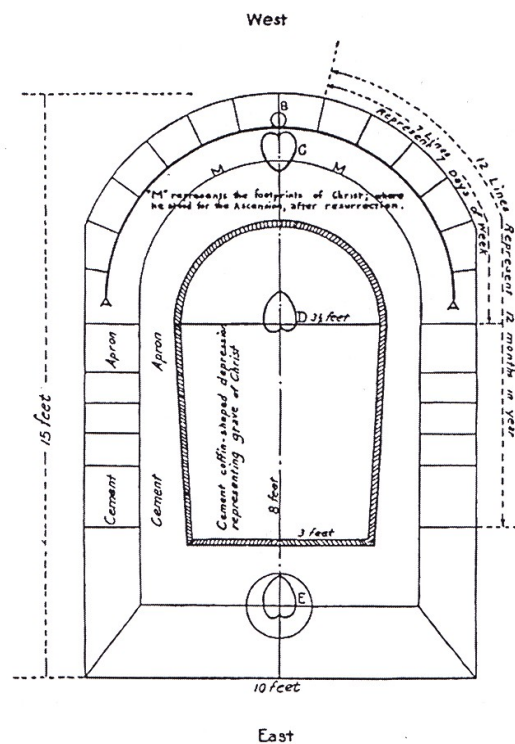


Figure 6: John Wilson Big Moon-style altar. From La Barre, Peyote Cult, 44.

3 The Caddo Nation is name for Southeastern tribes (Ann M. Early, The Caddo Indians)

### **3.5. Ritual**

Most Peyote communities have services each Saturday and they are usually held on the all night basis. Ceremonies are also related with special events such as wedding, funeral or winter and spring celebrations. For example Yankton Sioux Peyote held ceremonies once per month – every first Saturday. Ceremonies are held also in connection with American holidays for example Independence Day, New Year's Eve etc. When somebody would like to have the ceremony for some special occasion they would contact the Roadman and offer tobacco to run the ceremonial. The whole service is sponsored and arranged by the family or individual. When the date and also the sponsor are settled, the preparations may begin. The service can be held in tepee or hogan (traditional home of the Navajo; usually round shaped structure). However Robbie Ray Wood says, that ceremonies can be held just in the people's houses (Maroukis: 2010).

When the date is settled, the tepee and food is arranged. It is also necessary to prepare wood for all night of servicing. The tepee is built with opening to the east and inside wood for the fire is prepared. Men are usually leaders of the service, however women are fully participating. The Roadman comes to the tepee with his assistants about two hours before twilight and they prepare ritual instruments. All of these instruments are carried in the decorated box, Peyote box, which is used only for this purpose. Majority of NAC members have such box for their religious items (Swan: 1999).



Figure 7: Peyote Box and Contents. Osage, Oklahoma, United States, ca. 1940-1960, Gilcrease Museum 84.1166.

Fireman starts the ritual fire in the late afternoon and keeps the fire all night during the service. He sits next to the door and is in control of the entrance to the tepee and administers the wood, which is placed “in precise form of a V-shape with the apex toward the west” (Maroukis: 2010, 97). When some of the wood is burned down, the fireman moves the ashes away and arranges it to the form of the Peyote faith symbols such as waterbird, eagle or a star. However according to opinion of Wood, it is not always true “as a matter of fact the people I go to meeting with think that's "fancy" the purpose of spreading the coals in my and perhaps others opinion should be to keep people warm.” In the way of the Cross Fire ritual it is symbol of a cross or heart according to Christian cross. Symbols are important part of the altar and have their own iconic value (Maroukis: 2010, Beyer: Peyote and the Native American Church, WRSP, VCU website).

Peyote or tea made from Peyote is passed around the circle during the ceremony. Members can eat or drink and traditional songs are sung for several hours. Around midnight water is passed around and there is a little break in the ceremony. After this break traditional songs are sung again and also individual prayers are said. When Roadman starts singing



the Dawn Song, it represents the end of the ceremony. The name of this song indicates, that it is sung at dawn. After that the Water Woman comes in with water to drink. Professor Maroukis in the Chapter about Religious Beliefs, Ceremony and Ritual says that “the woman is an essential part of the service as she represents the woman of the Peyote origin narratives” (Maroukis: 2010, 101). Then the simple ceremonial breakfast is served and Roadman thanks to all who participated. Everyone then goes out from the tepee to greet the new day (Maroukis: 2010, Beyer: Peyote and the Native American Church, WRSP, VCU website, Swan: 1999).

## 4. PEYOTE ART AND MUSIC

Although Peyote is used for religious purposes, the art is an important part of all ceremonies as well. The spiritual power of Peyote is usually expressed through music and visual arts. Art and music serve as instruments of prayer and communication. In addition, they are mostly used during ceremonies. Peyote art is usually made with an intention to create some visual effect with spiritual context. These objects are not sold or used in normal day life, they are stored away and not displayed in the homes of Peyote families. However from my personal correspondence with Robbie Ray Wood, it is not always true. (Maroukis: 2010, 155-160)

*“People have pictures in their homes. It's even becoming more popular to have peyote t-shirts. The art is like a badge of honor. It is also just bad ass looking. So I don't know how to describe it. Some are very showy and flaunt it. Some are very private and hidden. It just depends on where you go. Sadly some people do sell their work. Whether it be a ceremonial fan, or bead work. I think this is sacreligious.”*

Artworks are usually produced by self-taught and informally trained artists. The result is wide range of traditional and folk art associated with the Peyote religion (Swan: 1999).

### 4.1. Visual Arts

Peyote visual arts include paintings, drawings, beadwork, stonework, metalwork, wood carvings, feather work, jewelry etc. It is possible to divide Peyote art into three categories. The first ones are objects, which were created for ceremonial use, which means used during services. Objects for ceremonial purposes are feather fans, drumsticks, Peyote boxes, smoke-sticks etc. The second category is set up from objects, which are not created for ceremonial purposes at the first place, however

can be used or worn during the ceremony. These are objects such as jewelry, beadwork, blankets and decorated clothing. The last category are objects, which are not used neither showed during services. That means paintings, stonework, drawings etc (Maroukis: 2010, Swan: 1999).

Symbols are very important and play a big role in the Peyote art. The most common symbol is the Peyote button (description in the chapter 2.1), the tepee and the waterbird. These symbols appear in almost every Peyote artwork. The iconography of the Cross Fire also includes such symbols as cross or images of Christ (Swan: 1999, Maroukis: 2010).

#### **4.2. Objects for ceremonial use**

As it is demonstrated in the Figure 7 in chapter 3.7, the decoration of sacred objects is common. The Peyote box is used for ceremonial purposes, for storing sacred items in it. Peyote boxes are usually built from cedar wood with a lid secured by metal hinges and a drawer pull on the lid that serves as a handle. Peyote boxes are decorated and painted with designs and scenes related to the ceremony and the church. The most common designs are peyote plants, waterbirds and religious phrases. Objects, which are created for ceremonial purposes and placed in the Peyote box, are often richly decorated. Peyote boxes contain basic objects needed for the ceremony. The common content of the Peyote box includes: feather fan, mescal buttons, mescal bean necklace, iron drum, eagle-bone whistle, gourd rattles, smoke stick and staff (See figure 8). (Swan: 1999, 58)



Figure 8: Paraphernalia used in a typical Plains Indian Peyote ceremony. Note the blend of Christian and pagan symbols on the smoke-stick. Schultes:1976.

Along with the production of the objects for ceremonial use comes the blessing of these objects. These objects must be blessed in a meeting and again every time they are used. The blessing is actually purification with the smoke and fire. Before every ceremony, when the altar is prepared, the Roadman brings his Peyote box into the tepee and sits to the west of the fire. Then he removes the ritual objects from the box and purifies them through the smoke (Maroukis 2010:157-160).

Another type of objects used for ceremonial purposes is the water buckets. They are used for carrying the water during the ceremony. They are decorated with Peyote symbols. These water buckets come also through the blessing and purification. In the figure 9 there is an obvious symbol of the waterbird, fire and the half moon shaped altar. Waterbird itself became a major icon of the Native American Church (Swan 1999:66).



Figure 9: Painted water bucket with the symbol of the waterbird. Flickr.

### 4.3. Non-ritual Art

Elements and symbols, which are related to the Native American Church, have come to be used beyond the ceremonial setting of the Peyote religion. Peyote art, which is not made for ceremonial purposes is still considered spiritual. This category includes objects such as necklaces, beadwork and also paintings and drawings (Swan: 1999, 66).

*“Peyote-style jewelry is not part of the ritual equipment used in Peyote meetings; however, Peyotists may wear the jewelry during the service, or at any other time as a personal, religious, or aesthetic statement...Today it has become an extremely common personal adornment worn by Peyotists and non-Peyotists.”*  
(Maroukis 2010:163).

Beadwork is one of the common style in the Peyote art. Beadwork is used to decorate fans, rattles and other ceremonial items, however also for creating the jewelry. It is very popular for its versatility. See an example of the Peyote stitch in figure 10.



Figure 10: Kiowa Peyote fan (left). Pinterest. Huichol Bead Art (right). Live Puntamita.

#### 4.4. Peyote music

As mentioned in the research by John Carlos-Perea, professor at San Francisco State University, music is an important part of the Native American culture and life. Peyote music is part of the daily life as well as part of ceremonies. The Roadman is opening and guiding the ceremony with four main songs. The first one, which opens the ceremony is called the "Opening Song", then follows the "Midnight water song", "Sunrise Song" and "Closing Song". Each of them is sung at the particular time four times. In between these four songs other ones are sung, which depends on the tribe and protocols. The main instruments are the gourd rattle and the water drum. The rattle is filled up with stones or sand or some other things which produce sound. Then it is attached to the wooden handle. The water drum is made from the small kettle, filled up with water and at the end the animal skin is tightened and affixed with the rope. Consequently for performing Peyote music at least two players are needed. A singer using the rattler and drummer.

Peyote music is a combination of repetition and fast tempo and it is indeed compelling. The demonstration of the Peyote music is in Attachment 1.

Today's Peyote music is very popular. Peyote songs were popularized thanks to Verdell Primeaux and Johnny Mike and their "Bless the People: Harmonized Peyote Songs", which won the Grammy Award in 2001 for the best Native American music. (Perea 2012; Maroukis 2010: 181)

## 5. LAW AND LEGALITY

Peyote has been significant part of the Native American culture and religion for centuries. Peyotists have suffered persecution since the Spanish Conquest. They felt fear, that use of their sacrament would be limited by laws and restrictions forever. With the intention of protecting their sacrament and religion the Native American Church was formed. That happened in 1918 with the help of James Mooney, Quanah Parker and many others.

There were no federal restrictions between years 1918-1970. However there was still some uncertainty about possible federal changes. "Some outsiders still called it a "cult"." (Maroukis 2010:6, 183).

The main document, which prohibited the use of the Peyote, was passed in 1970 by Congress under the name Control Substance Act. That meant high monitoring of use of the Peyote (Boire 2000).

During 1950-1960 there was problem with recreational users of Peyote by non-Indians.

*"The Federal Exemption...The listing of peyote as a controlled substance in Schedule 1 does not apply to the nondrug use of peyote in bona fide religious ceremonies of the Native American Church, and members of the Native American Church so using peyote are exempt from registration. Any person who manufactures peyote for or distributes to the Native American Church, however, is required to obtain registration annually and to comply with all other requirements of the law" (Control Substance Act, Title 21).*



## **5.1. Court Case-Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith**

The year 1990 was an important milestone for American Indians in relation to religious freedom.

The main figures of this trial were Alfred Smith (Klamath tribe) and Galen Black (non-Indian). They worked as the counselors for a private drug rehabilitation center. They were both members of the Native American Church and they were both using the Peyote sacrament for their religion ceremonies. However they were fired from their job because of it. Alfred Smith and Galen Black filled a claim for unemployment compensation from the Oregon Employment Division. They were declined to get these benefits and as substantiation for this the work “misconduct” was given. Use and possession of Peyote was crime in Oregon. Smith and Galen pressed charges against Oregon Employment Division, claiming, that they were protected by First Amendment.<sup>4</sup> The Oregon Court of Appeals decided that Smith and Gail had a right for unemployment compensation. However this was not the end. “State Oregon petitioned the Oregon Supreme Court to review the Appeals Court decision, which they affirmed in June 1986” (Maroukis 2010: 6,203). The United States Supreme Court left the Oregon Supreme Court's judgment and returned the case to the Oregon courts to decide if the use of illegal drugs for ceremonial purposes is in breach of Oregon's state drug laws. The Oregon Supreme Court concluded, that the law about prohibition of using illegal drugs for ceremonial purposes infringes the free exercise clause (Legal Information Institute, Maroukis 2010,202-205).

In an opinion by Justice Scalia, the Court reasoned, that the clause “does not excuse an individual from compliance with a neutral law not particularly aimed at religious conduct” (Scalia J., Opinion of the Court).

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4 First Amendment of the United States Constitution protects the right of religious freedom.

Permitted exemptions “would open the prospect of constitutionally required exemption of civic obligations of almost every conceivable kind” (Scalia J., Opinion of the Court). Other cited examples were compulsory military service, payment of taxes etc.

The conclusion was made in April 1990, and the Court ruled, that Smith and Black do not have a right on unemployment compensation, and upheld prohibition of Peyote use on Oregon. This decision meant, that the state can prohibit the use of the Peyote even if it bans a religious practice. The Court announced that the state of Oregon had the right to control the use of the Peyote, even if it denied religious freedom of two citizens (Maroukis 2010:205, Oyez, Supreme Court Media).

## **5.2. Impact of the Oregon v. Smith case**

Reactions on the Smith case were mostly in the form of protest. The final decision was taken as a threat to religious freedom, because state has a control over the Peyote use. Walter Echo-Hawk, author, speaker and attorney of the NARF<sup>5</sup> referred, that this is not threat only for Peyote and Native American Church, but for all religions. In this situation an option was to create “legislative relief in the form of a federal bill, that would restore the compelling state interest test and guarantee the free exercise of religion...” (Maroukis 2010:205). Differently there would be confusion about laws, which allowed Peyote on one side and prohibit Peyote on the other site. The idea of legislative relief had to be publicized and from that reason coalitions were formed (Maroukis 2010:205).

Reuben A. Snake Jr. was in leadership of the coalition, the goal of which was the overturning of the Smith case. He was a Winnebago tribal leader, and he was known for his nickname “Your Humble Serpent”. He created a national coalition under the name American Indian Religious

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<sup>5</sup> Native Americans Right Fund. It is the largest nonprofit law organization founded in 1970.

NARF defends the rights of the Indian tribes, organizations and individuals (NARF website).

Freedom Project, which included religious groups, tribal governments and other Native American organizations (NLM website, Maroukis 2010:206).

With the intention to speak to lawmakers and the public, two documentary films were produced. The first one was called *The Traditional Use of Peyote* and the second one *The Peyote Road: Ancient Religion in Contemporary Crisis*. Both of them were focused on Native American traditions and religious freedom, Peyotism and Peyote (Maroukis 2010:207).

The result of the Smith case led to two legislation regulations. The first one, Religious Freedom Restoration Act, was passed in 1993. RFRA required the application “of the compelling state interest test to future First Amendment cases...” (Maroukis 2010:205). However this legislation did not exactly listed the Peyote question. One year later the new bill, which was related specially to the Peyote question (*American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendment*), was submitted to the Congress. The mission was to uniform national law. The bill ensures free ceremonial use of Peyote. The result of this bill was protection for members of federally recognized tribes (Maroukis 2010:209).

## **6. NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS**

The majority of the Peyotists belong to the state, country or local organizations. The biggest one is the Native American Church of North America. However there are smaller groups too. Specially for this thesis I have chosen The Haskell Native American Church Club.

### **6.1. Native American Church of North America**

The Native American Church of North America is an alliance of church organizations in United States, Canada and Mexico. This organization alliance was founded about 1918 in Oklahoma and today's seat is still in Oklahoma. The main goal of the church is to protect sacramental use of Peyote. The church is supported by membership. The membership per chapter is around \$250.00. When someone is interested in being a member, the condition is to be at least one-quarter "Native American Indian blood" and belong to a federally recognized Indian nation, First Nations of Canada<sup>6</sup> or Indian people of Mexico. The body of the organization is formed by constituents, which choose the delegates. The Native American Church of North American played a big role almost in every trial, which was related with Peyote (e.g. Oregon v. Smith). (Maroukis 2010: 212, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development of Canada)

### **6.2. Native American Church, State of Oklahoma**

Oklahoma is important place of Peyotism. It is connected with the name of Quanah Parker and the Comanches (Nɛmɛnɛɛ), Kiowa etc. Peyotists from the Oklahoma church set the standard by proclaiming that the basis of their belief is protected by the First Amendment (Maroukis 2010: 212).

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<sup>6</sup> The term First Nations refers to Status and Non-Status "Indian" peoples in Canada. Currently, there are 617 First Nation communities, which represent more than 50 nations or cultural groups and 50 Aboriginal languages (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development of Canada).

### 6.3. Haskell Native American Church Club

This club is part of the Haskell Indian Nations University clubs in Lawrence in the state of Kansas. The history of Haskell began in year 1884. Under the first name United States Indian Industrial Training School were offered trades such as tailoring, wagon making, blacksmithing or farming for boys and cooking and sewing for girls. In 1993 Haskell became Haskell Indian Nations University. Today students of Haskell represent “federally recognized tribes from across the United States and are as culturally diverse as imaginable” (Haskell website).

The Haskell NAC club main goal is to encourage understanding of the peyote as medicine through oral tradition, philosophy and belief.

*“We hold prayer meetings for Haskell and Native students everywhere. Our goal is to have two every semester, one to bring us into the semester and one to bless our end of the semester grades, finals and/ or graduates.” (Haskell NAC Club Facebook page).*



Figure 11: Members of the Haskell Native American Church Club, 2013. Facebook.

#### 6.4. Native American Church of Navajoland (Azze' Bee Nahaghá of Diné<sup>7</sup> Nation)

Azze' Bee Nahaghá is the alliance of local groups. The main goal is to “foster, promote, and preserve the use of peyote sacrament through bona-fide religious ceremonies” (Maroukis 2010: 216). The church holds members meeting every year. For the reason of the alliance, the management of the church is complex, and the church is coordinated from the administration main office in Chinle, Arizona. The annual meetings are always the main event of the year for Diné nation. The meetings are mixture of worship and business. (Maroukis: 2010)

The Azze' Bee Nahaghá has also the Native American Church club of the Diné college. It is student based organization and the main goal of the organization is to “foster the knowledge and teachings of the traditional use of peyote as a divine herb” (Azee' Bee Nahagha of Diné Nation, Facebook).



Figure 12: Officers and members of the Azze' Bee Nahaghá of Diné College. Facebook.

<sup>7</sup> Navajo, nation of the Arizona, Utah and New Mexico area. The Navajo reservation is considered the largest in the United States (Navajo People website).

### 6.5. Oklevueha Native American Church

Another smaller Native American Church is the Oklevueha NAC. The mission of the Oklevueha NAC is the same as the mission of every Native American Church, and that is to protect sacramental use of Peyote as significant part of their religion. Oklevueha NAC is nonprofit organization and on their website it is possible to buy a membership. However there is no condition about American Indian origin. On the contrary “ONACS Members are protected even if they are NOT of American Native Heritage” (ONAC website). The membership fee of the Oklevueha NAC is \$200.00.



Figure 13: Oklevueha Native American Church Membership Card. ONAC website.

## 7. INTERVIEW WITH ROBBIE RAY WOOD II

As a part of my thesis I decided to add an interview with Robbie Ray Wood, a student from the Haskell Indian Nations University and member of the Haskell Native American Church Club. This part serves as a view in the nowadays Native American Church society.

I found Robbie on Facebook, when I was searching for information and possibly NAC clubs and organizations, which I could contact. I found Haskell Native American Church Club and I contact them through the Facebook. I received the response in the same day. It was from club's secretary Robbie Wood.

This interview was taken through Facebook chat. The first messages were guarded from both sides, but after some days of messaging we were discovering cultural differences between Kansas and Czech Republic. In the end both sides had benefits from this correspondence.

**A:** Hello, I hope that is fine to write you on your profile. I am so glad, that you answered, because it is really hard to get contact on someone.

**R:** Yes I am willing to help in anyway I can. I love talking about NAC and would love to help you with your paper. We had our club meeting last night and were all excited about contacting you.

**A:** So, can I ask how long are you involved in your club? And if I good understand you are allowed to use Peyote? I am sorry, that I am asking like that

**R:** It's fine. I understand its somewhat of an awkward topic. Yes I'm allowed to use peyote. I've been with the NAC for about four years.

**A:** Do you have some limited area, where you have your own tipi. It is on school area? I noticed that you are not Native American, I mean white.



**R:** I am a member of the Cherokee nation of Oklahoma. I'm just also white. I'm mostly German and it shines through. But I go to school here at Haskell Indian Nations University which through I found the church and found fellowship within this peyote way of life. And yes we are allowed to have ceremonies right on school property. The club as a group has their own tipi and woodshed and our own little area. The school has been very kind.



Figure 14: Haskell Tipi Grounds, 2014. Facebook.

**A:** So you are the only white man on the ceremony? How does it feel?

**R:** Yeah there are a few more white people who but it is rare. I think it is hard for me to understand as well. Being the only "white" person in a tipi full of dark skinned natives. I face a lot of adversity going into the church. I feel as if I am often alone in being a white skinned native at these ceremonies. Perhaps it some determination to change that color standard that drives me onward.

**A:** And how often do you have ceremonies? And does look your meetings?

**R:** Well it depends on the location. Here at Haskell we have ceremonies twice a semester.

**A:** I think, that in the Czech Republic, we have sometime little bit distorted picture about Native American Culture. Do you know Karel May? (I sent him a description of Karl May's work).

**R:** Nope never heard of him, but reminded me of some of the wild west stories I read as a child that equally miss portrayed Native American culture or at least nowadays. Perhaps it was truly like this a hundred years ago. I don't really know. I used to love reading these kinds of stories. Sadly most Americans also have a distorted view of what Indian culture is really like

**A:** Well, this misunderstandings are usual in every culture.

Ha good point! That's what stereotypes are for.

**A:** So, Robbie do speak any other language?

**R:** I speak a little bit of Spanish poorly, and some words in some tribal languages. Cherokee mostly O-si-yo! (hello in Cherokee).

**A:** Oh that is interesting! And you are in senior year at Haskell?

**R:** I'm in my senior year. But its like my 5th and 1/2 halfth year. I go to school at Haskell Indian Nations. So I'm like one of the only white Indians on campus. So it is strange at times. Lot of cultural barriers. But I'm used to it. I spent most of my day working on my research project about Phenology.

**A:** Well that is an interesting fact, I thought that they will be tolerant. It century of multiculturalism.

**R:** Why? Indians hate white people.

**A:** Oh, hate?

**R:** I mean most of them yeah. Maybe hate is a strong word but there is strong inherent racism. Of the 1000 students maybe 100 are white skinned, most are my tribe. So our tribe specifically gets a lot of reputation for being white or not "real".

**A:** And is there some rivalry or are some way separated?

**R:** It is separated thought! Like at the lunch hall its really obvious. All the white kids sit together and all the rez kids sit together and it's just funny and immature like that. I really am tired of going to school here at times.

**A:** That sounds really harsh. I have to say, that I am afraid to not touch some delicate topic.

**R:** Well I'll let you know if you go to far. Besides that don't hold back. It did bother me a little bit when you said " since your NOT Native American".

**A:** I am sorry.

**R:** Plus how did you now i was white? My pictures I suppose?

**A:** Of course, I took a look.

**R:** Ahhh, well but there I am putting up tipi's.

**A:** So what?

**R:** Well most white people don't put up tipis. So i guess i thought that gave me credit. My cultural identity crisis is more than i can explain shortly.



Figure 15: Putting up of tipi. Haskell Tipi Grounds, 2013. Facebook.

**A:** I have to say, that I am really glad, that you can provide me these information. So thanks again for answering my message to Haskell Native American Church Club.

**R:** The one from the church club was from my friend, who takes it really seriously and would have given you some good info. But probably less chit chat well you seem genuinely interested which is rare, most people just want to try peyote, like its a drug or something.

**A:** I don't look at Peyote as just a drug. I understand, that Peyote is an important part of your religion.

**R:** I understand and respect that you think that. I trust you when you say that. Thank you. A lot of members are really defensive and protective. So its probably good that we met.

**A:** Well I hope that you trust me, because that was the thing I was scared of. That nobody will talk to me because all of the white people, which just want to try new drug.

**R:** Ahh. Well I don't have a lot of people to talk to so maybe that's why I'm so talkative. Hahaha. Yeah I think that you might have gotten a lot less info from someone else. I'm kinda an oddity among the Native American Church.

(During our conversation Robbie Ray Wood sent me few pictures from his life.)



Figure 16: Haskell Tipi Grounds, 2014. Facebook.

**R:** This is our grounds. This is my tipi! I won it at a Native American Church conference two years ago. The club on campus has their own as well.

**A:** That sounds great! Please, can you tell me something about the ceremonies. I know there two ways – The Half Moon Way and The Cross Fire Way.

**R:** There a difference, it's just details of how the ceremony functions, the religious orientation is slightly different. Cross fire way has more of a Jesus focus, hence the cross, Half Moon is the older ceremony, I've never actually been to a Cross Fire meeting so I cant really tell you too much.

**A:** Ok.. so what you do and practise is the Half Moon way

**R:** Yes. And today we had a sweat lodge ceremony. But it's known just as a sweat. It's like a sauna but all natural. We drove around the reservation looking for giant rocks for which to heat the sweat. Took us all day. Then we stole a bunch of fire wood from some farmer guy that cut down this huge tree.

**A:** Oh, that sounds like a lot's of work. But I bet, that the result worth all the hard work. Can I ask about the foundation of the Native American Church? What do you know about it?

**R:** The founding of the NAC club happened back in the 70's, it wasn't until the 90's that it became "official" as that is when the American Indian Freedom of Religion act was passed (94). I think there was a conference here with 4 tipis set up to commemorate the legality.

**A:** And what do you think about the Native American Church as an organization?

**R:** Well, the Native American Church is not as unified as I'd like to see. There is no central doctrine. As a matter of fact I know some people that have peyote ceremonies that are unaffiliated with the Native American Church. The Native American Church represents the organization, but the actual "church" exists way outside of the legal, cultural boundaries that were set in place. I think it's the refusal by some traditionalists to incorporate Christianity into the tradition (which i really agree with keeping Jesus out of the tipi).

**A:** Great Robbie. Thank you very much for your time and answers.

**R:** Well, it was fun to talk about NAC with you. Thank you too for your interest in our culture and religion.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This thesis is about Peyote and the Native American Church. Peyote is a plant, a small spineless cactus, which is firmly connected with the Native American Church ceremonies.

In the first chapter I have described the Peyote cactus, its chemical make-up, places of occurrence, how Peyote is used and history of Peyote's use. Next part of my thesis is mainly about the Native American Church.

Native American Church is an official title for indigenous religion that considers Peyote to be a sacrament. This sacrament is used during their ceremonies to induce spiritual experience. This religion is the most widespread religion among Native Americans in the United States.

My first focal point was the history of Native American Church and historical events which led to its formation. Many people were connected with this process and I decided to introduce two of them – James Mooney and Quanah Parker, each of them representing different ethnicity and motivation for their endeavor. James Mooney, coming from academic environment, was interested in studying various Native American tribes from ethnological perspective. He spent part of his life living among Cherokees. On the other hand for Quanah Parker, son of Comanche chief Peta Nocona and Cynthia Ann Parker, an English-American, because of his origin, it was more personal matter.

In following chapters 3.4 – 3.7 I was occupied with Native American Church ceremonies and rituals. At first, when I have just started working on this thesis, I did not know how important and significant this topic is.

There are two ways of rituals. And in both of them Peyote is used during the service, however there are differences in the execution of the ritual. These two ways are the Cross Fire Way and Half Moon Way. The main difference is the degree to which rituals are influenced by Christianity. Half Moon Way being older type of ritual contains less

elements of Christian faith while in the Cross Fire Way influence of Christianity is far more noticeable.

In the next part I was occupied with Peyote art and music. Within Native American Church art and music is vital part of every religious ceremony. Outside the religious context, Peyote art and music is reflected in everyday life of Peyote members as well.

The following chapter – Law and legality was, according to my opinion, the most difficult area to process, however the question of legality is very important in connection to Peyote. I chose Oregon v. Smith case to demonstrate the situation in the 1990's in the United States and progressive development of Peyote law.

Later section of my thesis is dedicated to Peyote organizations. I chose the largest ones and then organization I was working with (Haskell Native American Church Club). Every organization differs from another in some way, e.g., different membership requirements. One thing they all have in common is their effort to protect sacramental use of Peyote.

The final part is interview with Robbie Ray Wood, student from Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas, and also member of Haskell Native American Church Club. This interview was a good way how to process today's situation in Native American Church and relation to Peyote among students and young people.

The main source of my work was *The Peyote Road and the Native American Church* by professor Thomas C. Maroukis. This book presents well arranged information about Peyote and the Native American Church as no other publication I have come across.

In the process of writing this thesis, I have been learning new information about Indian Nations culture. I have learned, that this culture area does not include only Native American Indians, but also white American People, which are interested in the history of this nation and are also part of its history and culture.



One of the main challenges I had to overcome was the fact that Native American Church religion is very region specific. It exists only Mexico and some Texas areas. Due to this fact I did not have chance to meet or talk to church member in person. This obstacle was partially solved by getting in touch with Robbie Ray Wood, member of American Church, who I had chance to communicate in written form. In my opinion his personal insight brings a lot up-to-date and real-life information which brought uniqueness to this work.

The goal of this thesis was to present the information about Peyote and the Native American Church in comprehensive way for European reader. In my opinion this goal has been met and this work presents general information and description of Native American Church in a way from which everyone can get better understanding of this topic.

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## **10. ABSTRACT**

Topic of this bachelor thesis is Peyote and the Native American Church. This topic was chosen with an intent to introduce Peyote and the Native American Church to European reader, to initiate reader to this issue, which is connected mainly with the United States.

The main objective is to present what Peyote is exactly and its connection with the Native American Church. This thesis should provide a view to this problem in the United States and its contemporary situation.

This thesis deals with the chemical compound of Peyote. The following chapters deals with the places of occurrence and history of use. The next part of this thesis is dedicated to the Native American Church and its history and important facts. The final chapter is mainly an interview with a member of the Haskell Native American Church Club Robbie Ray Wood, which provides the current view into the Native American Church society.



## 11. RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem Peyote a Církev původních Američanů. Toto téma bylo zpracováno se záměrem přiblížení této problematiky, která se týká zejména Spojených států amerických, evropskému čtenáři.

Hlavním cílem bylo představit, co vlastně Peyote znamená a také objasnění spojitost této rostliny s Církví původních Američanů. Tato práce by měla poskytnout náhled na tuto problematiku a na její současnou situaci ve Spojených státech.

Tato práce se zabývá chemickým složením Peyote, oblastmi výskytu a historií užívání této rostliny. Další část této práce je věnována Církvi původních Američanů, její historii a důležitým faktům. Poslední část sestává převážně z rozhovoru se členem Haskell Native American Church Club, který zprostředkovává pohled na současnou situaci, která se týká Církve původních Američanů.

## **12. APPENDICES**

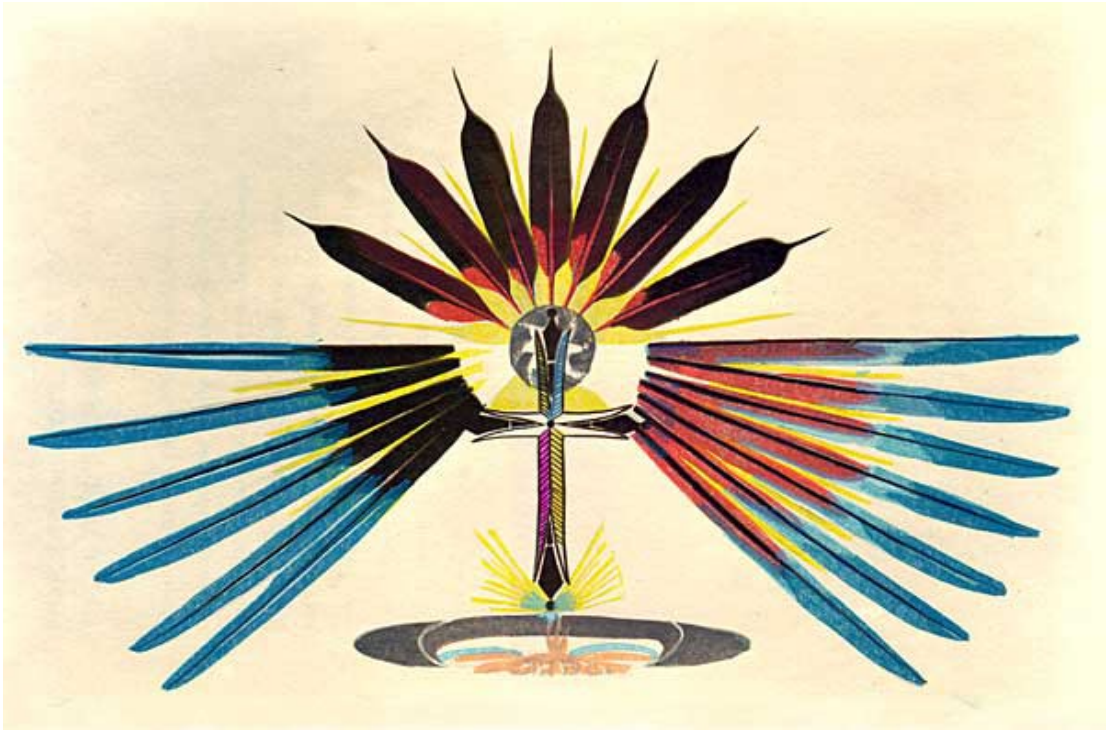
### **12.1. Appendix 1 – Audio CD**

- Track 1: Kiowa Peyote Ritual Songs
- Track 2: Verdell Primeaux & Johnny Mike  
Four Harmonized Peyote Songs
- Track 3: Verdell Primeaux & Johnny Mike  
12 Peyote Songs

## 12.2. Appendix 2 – Showcase of Peyote Art



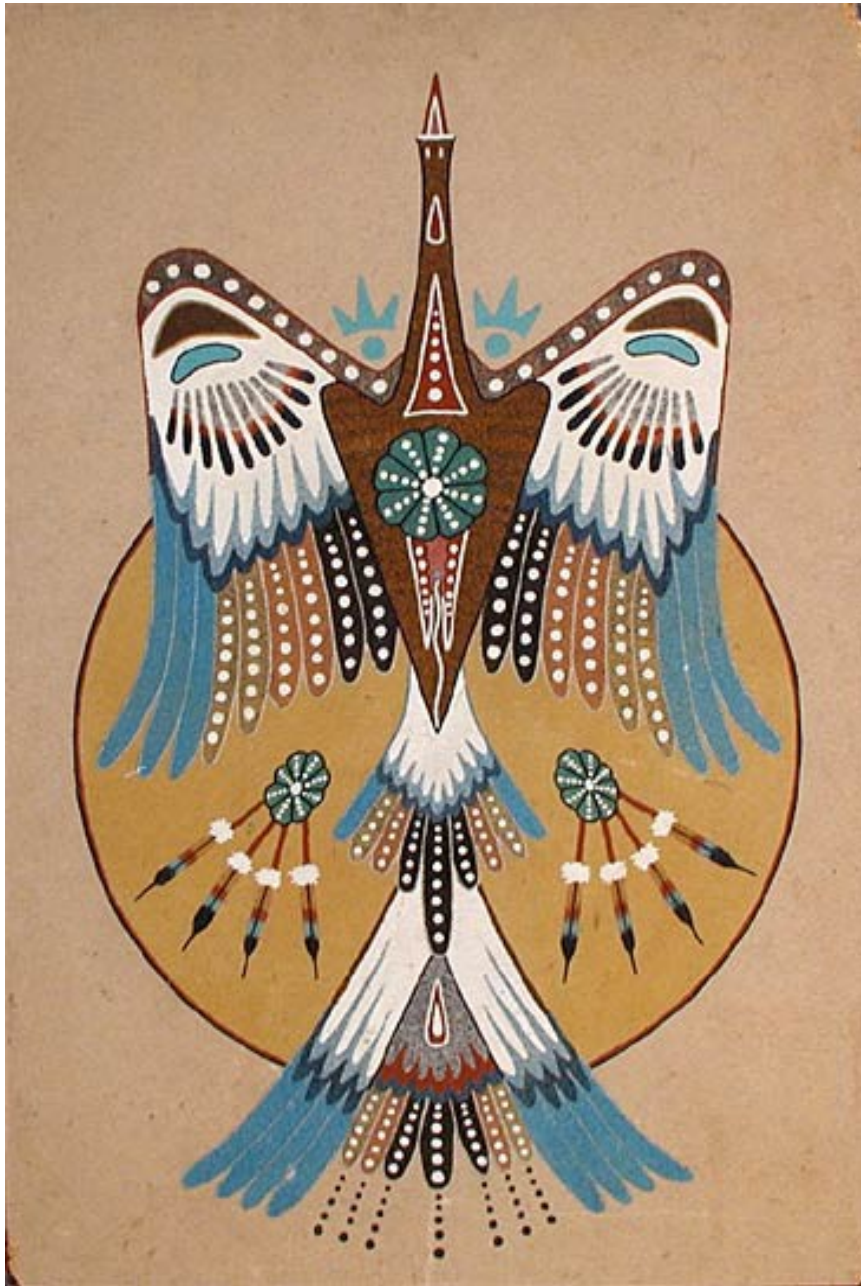
Huichol Yarn Painting by Jalisco or Nayarit Mexico



The Peyote Design – Visions and Descriptions of Monroe Tsa Toke



The Peyote Ritual – Visions and Descriptions of Monroe Tsa Toke



**Peyote Bird -Woody Crumbo - Potawatami  
Sandpainting on wood**