

reputation as one of the really significant writer-painters of today. The brief appreciation of Hiler by William Saroyan is no better and no worse than the usual literary explosion by this sometimes genius-touched writer. The letter by Henry Miller is a superb piece of creative writing, and brings out the painter Hiler as a three-dimensional personality of creative importance.

"Why Abstract" is a definite addition to books upon this subjective form of plastic expression. It should take its place beside works by Kandinsky and others who have chronicled their discoveries and sounded their hope for an art independent of the limitations imposed by the world of objective reality.

ALFRED MORANG

A MESCALERO APACHE ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN OF THE PEYOTE CEREMONY

MORRIS EDWARD OPLER

IN AN ARTICLE printed some years ago¹ I pointed out that the Mescalero Apache Indians of the American Southwest, though they used peyote, credited other peoples with discovering the supernatural qualities of the plant and with establishing the peyote ritual. This I interpreted as a recognition on the part of the Mescalero of the recency and intrusive character of the peyote ceremony which they practiced. After this article describing Mescalero peyote was already in press, I secured from a 55-year-old Mescalero a tale of the origin of peyote which ascribes its discovery and first ceremonial use to a member of the Lipan Apache tribe. The chronology and line of diffusion implied in the tale are probably close to historical truth, for La Barre accepts that the Lipan introduced the rite to the Mescalero Apache not long before 1870.²

The story has a typically Mescalero cast and flavor. It illustrates the tendency for the Mescalero religious quest to be concerned with health and to end in the acquisition of curing rites.

¹ Morris Edward Opler, "The Influence of Aboriginal Pattern and White Contact on a Recently Introduced Ceremony, the Mescalero Peyote Rite," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, Vol. 49, Nos. 191-92, 1936, pp. 143-166.

² Weston La Barre, *The Peyote Cult*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938.

It utilizes the Mescalero belief in the possibility of obtaining supernatural power from personifications of plants (as well as from personifications of animals and natural forces).³ Apparently the Mescalero, even in their first reaction to peyote, interpreted its qualities and benefits in terms of their established religious ideas and forms. The account, as it was given to me, follows:

They say peyote eating all began with a Lipan Indian. Peyote had never been known before. This Lipan was about fifty years old when his people began to die out. There were ceremonial people among the Lipan, but they did no good. No kind of medicine was found that did any good.

This Lipan was far out on a raid for horses. He was thinking of how his people were dying from sickness and how no one had been able to help them. He was a good man, eager to help his people. He began to look for something that would do them good. He prayed to anything that looked pretty and which he thought might help. He went from one kind of plant to another.

He happened to come to a place where many peyote plants were growing. The plants were bearing flowers and he stood in the midst of them. He said to the peyote flower, "What a pretty thing you are! There must be something to you, or you wouldn't be so beautiful. Whoever made you, made you very plentiful and very beautiful." He prayed in the midst of these flowers. He said, "I'd like to see my people as thick as you are. I'd like to hear you speak if you can. You are the prettiest thing I have ever seen." He did all he could to get this plant to speak to him. Soon one of these beautiful flowers spoke to him.

It said, "Pull me. Pull as many of me as you can. Take us home. Make a tipi. Have the doors towards the east. Then eat me. Then give me to anyone who takes an interest in me and wants to eat me."

His people were dying day and night. He hurried home with this peyote. As soon as he got there he told the chief and all the people to come to his camp. He explained to the people what he had learned, how he had got it, what he was to do

³ Morris Edward Opler, "The Concept of Supernatural Power Among the Chiricahua and Mescalero Apaches," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1935, pp. 65-70.

with it, and how it was to be used. He went ahead and did just as he had been told to do. He went into a tipi with the people and fed them all they wanted of it. He didn't have so much of it and thought the supply he had brought back would not be enough. But the supply didn't diminish. Though he gave peyote to many, the pile was as before. He fed all of them. This man had been told to take one big one home and to put it in the center and to pray to that one and talk to it. He did so and afterwards this was always done in peyote meetings.

Everyone was feeling good. The different kinds of sickness went away. That is where their belief in peyote started.

•

NEW GUINEA MATERIAL EXHIBITED

FOR THOSE who wish to know more about the peoples of the Pacific and of their cultures, a gallery has been opened in the Hall of Ethnology of the Museum of New Mexico featuring collections recently received from New Guinea—that second largest island on the globe, which has the distinction of being the point where Oceania meets the Orient.

The specimens on display were collected by Dr. J. G. Manser, of Albuquerque, who served as a Captain in the dental department of the medical corps, U. S. Army, in New Guinea, from the early days of the American occupation of the Milne Bay area until autumn of 1944; and by Miss Caroline Kelly of Santa Fe, who is serving overseas for the American Red Cross. The Manser collection comprises 140 individual items. One of the outstanding features of the exhibition are the photographs which Dr. Manser took, showing his native friends using, wearing, or displaying many of the articles which he secured. His wife, Lillian Bossout Manser, prepared the photographic prints that are shown.

Dr. Manser not only made his splendid collection with view to loaning it to the Museum for exhibition, but he delivered the items personally, and spent several days here, directing the installation, providing label information, and assisting Miss Bertha Dutton, curator, with all preparatory work.

Mrs. John Rankin produced the art work of the exhibit—life-size figures of New Guinea natives carrying on their daily pursuits