

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Anapao: An American Indian Odyssey. By Jamake Highwater.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4md294d6>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 6(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

May, Jill P.

Publication Date

1982-06-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

cessful cavalry techniques of General Stonewall Jackson. His troops developed a formidable hit-and-run method of warfare, with a ten-minute rest period in each hour of hard marching and campaigning. Picked up by French military observers during the American Civil War and soon adopted by the French armies, a liquid refreshment was added to this schedule. At first this was an elixir of coca leaves in sherry. Later, extracts of *Cola nitida*, to which French Sudanese troops were addicted, were added. After 1865 caffeine and sugar drinks had a growing popularity. Technology brought the process of carbonation, mass production, and aggressive marketing. Coca was eventually prohibited by federal narcotic controls, but a great change in the dietary habits of a large part of the world had begun.

The final chapter by William C. Sturtevant is a comparative study of black drink and other caffeine-containing beverages among non-Indians. Chocolate, for example, was introduced into Europe soon after 1528 by the invaders of Mexico. Asian tea from Persia and China reached Europe about 1559, coffee about 1582. Maté, which has (like *yaupon*) never travelled far, was found and adopted by the Spanish in Paraguay beginning soon after the invasions of 1540.

This is a well-written, well-researched, authoritative book on a subject of interest to botanists, cultural anthropologists, and students of American ethnology and history.

Thomas H. Lewis, M. D.
Billings, Montana

Anapao: An American Indian Odyssey. By Jamake Highwater. Illustrated by Fritz Scholder. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1977. 256 pp. \$3.95 paper.

Most of the Native American historical, cultural and religious heritage which reaches White audiences is based not upon Native American interpretations of their past and their present, but upon the European understanding of those Indian thoughts which they have shared. Much of the information presented is little more than folklore. Often it is based upon White society's popular myths about the Native American. Concerned White

and Red scholars have continually argued for a different interpretation, one closer to the Native American experience.

At a speech given in Chicago during the summer of 1978, before the American Library Association, Jamake Highwater observed, "For White people there have been two images of the Native American—the Noble Savage and the Savage Savage." Highwater, a gifted Native American author, had earlier written about Native American painting and about Native American Ceremonial dance.* In 1977 he related another aspect of Native American culture in his book *Anpao: An American Indian Odyssey*. This time he wrote the history of American growth as interpreted by Native Americans.

Jamake Highwater's ancestors were Blackfeet and Cherokee. He has used the stories of Plains Indians as the basis for his epic tale which contains Indian religious, social and historical beliefs. *Anpao: An American Indian Odyssey* is a poetic book. Highwater, who holds degrees in cultural anthropology, comparative literature and music, says of his book:

The character called Anpao is a fabrication. There is no such central Indian hero. In fact there is no Pan-Indian history, for Indian cultures are far too diversified to accommodate a uniform view of history. I created Anpao out of many stories of the boyhood of early Indians, and from my own experience as well, in order to make an Indian "Ulysses" who could become the central dramatic character in the saga of Indian life in North America. (p. 240)

To the reader unschooled in oral literature, in mythology or in hero tales, this is a most difficult book. Although much concerning social customs, religious beliefs, and historical events is included in Highwater's Indian Saga, the casual reader might see these stories simply as good legends with little meaning. Yet, Highwater has created an introduction to a different world that can be easily followed by Native Americans and by Whites alike.

* *Songs from the Earth: American Indian Painting* (New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1976), *Ritual of the Wind: American Indian Dances and Ceremonies* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), Etc. [Ed.]

The story begins with the holy man Wasicong pointing out the shimmering drowned village. Like many epics, it ends in the same locale. A circle has been drawn and a journey completed. In Highwater's first chapter he includes this portion of Native American Poetry:

The world is dangerous.
. . . dangerous for Indians.
Come with me, my people,
and I will show you the way to safety.
Here, under the water. . . here
is a magical place.
Here is the place created by him
to keep his people safe forever.(p. 13)

With this ceremonial beginning Highwater has begun to bring to life the diversity of Indian culture, the complexity of its tales, and the continual life which it holds dear. Highwater weaves into his tales not only a hero epic, but some of the very elements which can be found in Plains Indian cultures.

Anpao begins as a part of the four quarters which join the Indian world together. He is a hero, but he is a lost one because he cannot trace his matriarchal beginnings, and because he does not belong to an Indian family. Thus, though he loves the daughter of a chief, he cannot court her. And because he has no one to speak for him, he cannot ask if he might someday be considered a worthy man. But when Anpao does approach Ko-ko-mik-e-is, he does it in the evening as she goes to draw water, as was the Sioux custom. When, at last, Ko-ko-mik-e-is is approached much to everyone's surprise, this most sought after girl agrees to marry Anpao if he can travel to the Sun and have the scars removed from his face as a blessing of their union. Anpao fears this journey, but after Ko-ko-mik-e-is explains that she has promised the Sun she will not marry without his permission, he agrees to go. Thus, it is a quest for an earthly love that first causes Anpao to begin his journey. Traveling with Anpao is Oapna, his identical twin. This youth is a "contrary" lad whose conversation is always opposite from his beliefs. He is a character drawn from the Plains Indians tradition of using antonyms during a spiritual quest or special celebration. Like the Sioux contrary, he is safe from destruction when he views the world backward. Anpao loves his brother, and at the beginning of the journey he saves Oapna. While neither brother

understands his past, neither is free nor whole. It is only through the use of the spiritual Peyote that Anpao hears who his parents are, where his twin came from, and what his journey must be. Anpao is the son of the Sun and an earth woman. He is hated by the Sun's real wife, the Moon. She wants his death since he is the only reminder of her husband's early infidelity. Oapna is not a real twin, but is one half of Anpao. Now that he is aware of his past, Anpao once again becomes a whole person. Highwater describes how this happens saying:

[T]his cocoon-brother rolled upon him and gradually dissolved, finger by finger, leg by leg, eye by eye, into Anpao's body. . . And finally Oapna vanished utterly, and where there had been two boys there was now only one.(p. 83)

Thus, in Jamake Highwater's story Native American symbolism is used, and religious beliefs are explored. Many comparisons of Native American religious explanations and other cultural beliefs are evident. The hero of this tale, like the Christian Jesus,** must "die" to be reborn again. The dominant powers, like Greek mythology, are males; all have some symbolic relationships to the natural elements. Anpao's marriage to Ko-komik-e-is, a Moon person, is a solid visual ring of the unity of the Sun and Earth (as represented in Anpao's parentage) and the Moon. The children from their marriage will be children of all the elements complete in their mystic heritage. They will possess the strengths and virtues of all three.

Yet, there are distinct Indian strains running through this epic that relate not only to religion but to Native American culture. Anpao constantly is warning the young braves who travel briefly with him that all living creatures deserve respect, and that those who disregard nature will suffer. Those who pay no respect are physically punished. Thus, one brave turns into a large reptile after eating the eggs of an unknown creature without offering a prayer, and two braves are drowned for taunting an old tortoise.

Anpao is often engaged in conversations with animals as well as with people. The animals are described in the same terms as are the people, and their dialogue is much like that of the peo-

** As well as other epical heroes [Ed.].

ple. Highwater's book demonstrates the Indian's belief that animals are spirit people to be listened to. Anpao's encounter with Deer Woman is a testimonial to the belief that evil spirits can disguise themselves in both human and animal forms.

Since *Anpao* is also a narrative folk history of the Native American, Highwater describes the European invasion, and the smallpox epidemics. When Anpao meets Smallpox he is described as "black everywhere except for a little white collar which made a perfect ring about his neck." (p. 223) This description implies that smallpox alone did not kill the Indian spirit. The visage of smallpox is Christianity. Smallpox explains to Anpao that he is the friend of the Big Knives, an Indian term for the European invaders, and that they are his People. Anpao sees the future, and because he is part of the spirit world, he realizes what history will bring.

After he returns to the village of Ko-ko-mik-e-is and is married to her, he then implores the People to follow him to a new land lest the Big Knives cause their death. The villagers refuse to believe Anpao's stories of smallpox and death. At last, Anpao and Ko-ko-mik-e-is gather their belongings, waken Ko-ko-mik-e-is's father and beg him to go with them. The chief is, however, a wise and true warrior who knows that he must remain until his People no longer seek his council. Highwater writes:

The old man's eyes filled with sorrow as he looked at the two people. "I would gladly go, yes, for I do believe in Anpao, and though I do not understand what he says, I trust his power. . . But, my children, I am old, and I am the chief of all these foolish people who only know laughter and wonderment. . . They are like butterflies—how will they live if what you say is coming descends upon them? How will they bear the ugliness and the greed, they who are children of this fertile Earth and own nothing and give everything away as children do?" (p. 223)

Thus, Highwater symbolically describes the Indian's need to be free, his desire to control his own fate without desiring to control nature, and his willingness to share his material goods with his clansmen. In the end, Highwater's cultural conflict is resolved with Native American death on the continent as it is, and its rebirth in "the drowning village."

Anpao's journey reflects Native American cultural beliefs. It is more than mythology; it is a contemporary interpretation of Indian religion. This legend, in varying forms, lives in the hearts of many present day Native Americans. It is a story which allows White people a glimpse into the cultural beliefs and traditions of Native Americans and an understanding of their living religious beliefs.

Jill P. May
Purdue University

The Seneca World of Ga-no-say-yeh (Peter Crouse, White Captive). By Joseph A. Francello. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1980. 215 pp. \$9.25 paper.

Across the Alleghenies in the spring of 1778, the frontier and its turmoil had become the serious test and the searing edge of the new republic when Peter Crouse, a young White boy, was captured by an Iroquois. Age-old cultures in this revolutionary period were colliding. Defiant individuals on both sides acted quickly. Long seething and politically abetted, bloody violence became the normal order of the day, but in this instance the dreaded tomahawk did not fall and a life was spared.

The incident, not too unusual on the border, raised questions about these adversaries, these forest-dwellers. The issues in anthropological terms come down to our present time. The author presents, therefore, some informative but also some rather pedestrian views on the Seneca way of life and recounts as fully and almost as unevenly as possible the story of the young White captive.

It was a time in which human scalps had a market value and when aggression against the "tawny serpents" and their "pagan" customs was generally felt to be justified. More puzzling to the early settlers were the workings of the matriarchal society as reflected in its views of the land and of the various intruders who were themselves locked in conflict. But the lasting shock came with the "Indianization" of captives, for Peter Crouse was only one of a group of people, young and old, who had decided