

Ceremony as Performance: The Western Mono Cry-Dance

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ALFRID Kroeber, the father of California anthropology, wrote (1925:859-60) that the California mourning ceremony "bulks so large in the life of many California tribes as to produce a first impression of being one of the most typical phases of Californian culture." The ceremony is found among all tribes from the Maidu in the Sacramento Valley southward (Kroeber 1925:429). Kroeber hypothesized that the ceremony most likely originated in the southern California coastal area, since this is where the ceremony took its most complex form (1925:860).

Although the ceremony varied in many details from one tribe to the next, there were certain basic rituals found in all its various forms. It is clear that the funeral ceremony and the mourning anniversary were seen as two separate ceremonies by the tribes that had both, but generally the two ceremonies were very similar in ritual, if not exactly alike. One of the main differences was the presence or absence of the corpse. In either case, however, the ceremony was held at night, and the participants danced around a bonfire. At the end of the night they burned the possessions of the deceased or other goods that had been made specially for the ceremony, and there was a ritual washing of the mourners. Whether the ceremony was performed on a yearly basis, or only sporadically, seems to have varied from tribe to tribe. The frequency also depended on the economic resources of the host village, since the ceremony required the outlay of considerable wealth, not only in terms of food for all the guests, but in gifts for the guests and payment to the

ritual specialists.

The mourning ceremony, in fact, represented a very important link in the economic and social interaction between different groups, since neighboring bands and villages usually were invited, and often people would travel for several days to attend a mourning ceremony at an important village. Blackburn (1976) has looked in depth at the role of the mourning ceremony and other ceremonies within the economic and political system of aboriginal California.

In this paper I attempt to show how a particular sociolinguistic method applied to ethnographic research can be valuable to the fieldworker and scholar alike. It aids the fieldworker to see the interpersonal systematics at work within a culture. It aids the scholar by giving ethnography a single, uniform method of analysis that can easily be used in cross-cultural comparisons. It also aids both to see the functions of ceremony not only from the outsider's perspective, but also from the insider's point of view. In the sections that follow, I will introduce the reader to the Western Mono, review other descriptions of the ceremony among both the Mono and surrounding tribes, describe the contemporary version of the ceremony which I experienced, and then apply a sociolinguistic method to the event for both description and analysis.

In order to understand the place of the mourning ceremony within the overall picture of aboriginal California, it is necessary first to document and analyze the various traditions concerning the mourning ceremony of the

different tribal groups of Native California that still practice it. This paper focuses mainly on the mourning and funeral ceremonies as practiced today by the Western Mono Indians.

THE WESTERN MONO

The Western Mono still reside within their aboriginal territory, which encompasses the upper foothill country of the Sierra Nevada mountains, at 450 to 2,100 m. (1,500 to 7,000 ft.) elevation in Madera and Fresno counties, California (Fig. 1). When first described, the Western Mono consisted of six bands: the Northfork Band along the San Joaquin River and its tributaries; the Entimbich and Wobonuch bands along the Kings River; and the Patwisha, Michahay, and Waksachi bands living on the tributaries of the Kaweah River (Spier 1978:426). Today, the Western Mono (also known as the Monache or Sierra Mono) number about a thousand persons, and have developed a reputation (especially among their Indian neighbors, the Foothill Yokuts and Sierra Miwok) of being the most traditional of the Sierran Indians.

There is very little ethnographic literature concerning the Western Mono. The primary documents consist of the work of Anna Gayton (1929, 1930, 1945, 1948), who worked with the five southern bands during the 1920s, and Edward Gifford (1923, 1932), who worked with the Northfork band during the 1910s. Their work is discussed below.

Aboriginally, the Western Mono bands had a yearly cycle of six ceremonies: the Jimsonweed Ceremony, the Rattlesnake Dance, and the First Salmon Ceremony, all in the spring; and the Bear Dance, the Acorn Dance, and the Mourning Ceremony in the fall (Gayton 1948:261). In addition to these tribal ceremonials, there were lineage and totem dances, such as the Eagle and Vulture dances, as well as curing ceremonials and funerals (Gifford 1932:39-41). Today, the

funeral and mourning ceremonies are still held, along with curing ceremonies and an annual tribal powwow called Indian Fair Days, held the first weekend of August in North Fork. The other ceremonials are no longer performed, although many still believe in and practice the traditional religion.

I attended a funeral ceremony held April 9-11, 1984, on the Cold Springs Rancheria near Tollhouse. I then attended the mourning ceremony held for the same person on May 4, 1985. Unlike the earlier descriptions given by both Gayton and Gifford, I have tried to do more than just "salvage ethnography," as I am sure both of these ethnographers thought of their work, even at this early period in California Indian research. I have approached the ceremonial complex as a dynamic, living tradition of the Western Mono, which even today plays an important part in their world view and belief system. I have taken a micro-level approach to ethnography, using some of the most promising theoretical tools available to the ethnographer, especially those of sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication.

THEORETICAL BASES

Blackburn (1976) joked about the defensiveness of researchers in California ethnography, maintaining that they sometimes felt like the stepchildren of North American anthropology because of a perceived dearth of materials typically associated with Native California studies, both physical and theoretical. He went on to clarify that this situation actually was due in part to the shortcomings of the researchers' own theoretical tools.

Too often in the past ethnographers have seen their research in terms of "salvage ethnography." The notion of "salvage ethnography" is the result of two separate assumptions on the part of ethnographers. The first assumption is what Binford (1965) called the

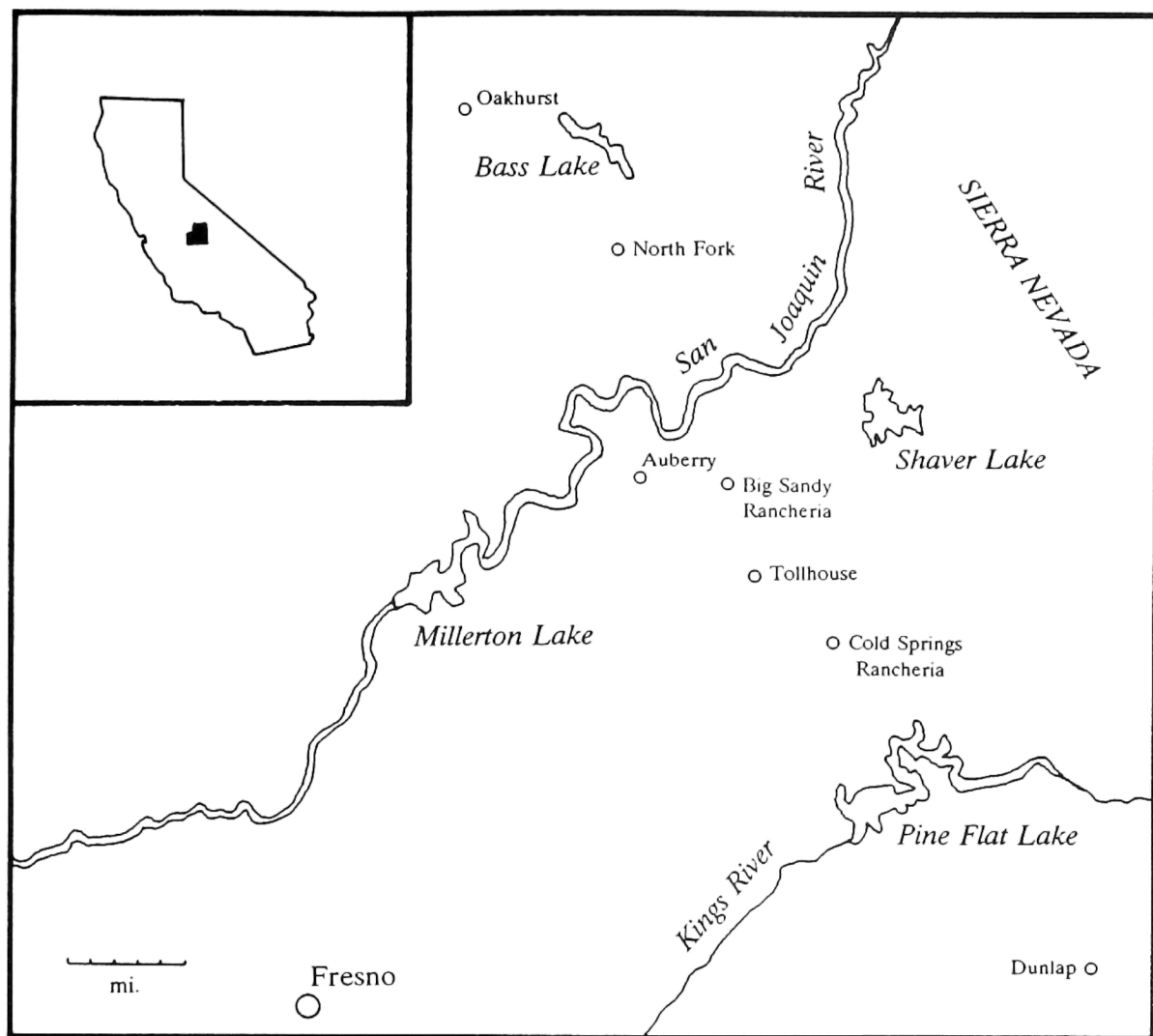


Fig. 1. Modern distribution of the Western Mono.

“normative” view of culture. For a normativist,

culture is a historically derived system of shared ideas, values and beliefs underlying behavior; it is the anthropologist’s task to abstract this ideational basis or set of normative concepts from the cultural products or behaviors which are their objectification. . . . Emphasis is placed on shared traits characterizing homogeneous units [Blackburn 1976:225].

Blackburn (1976:226) concluded that “the normative view thus tends to call attention to

similarities while masking differences.”

Both Blackburn and Binford proposed use of a “systemic” view of culture which tries to identify subsystems that are not only independent systems unto themselves, but also are integrated in an adaptive fashion with other subsystems to form a holistic supersystem.

The second assumption on the part of researchers, which leads to the notion of “salvage ethnography,” is what Nagata (1973) called the “assimilationist model.” The “assimilationist model” looks at culture in

terms of the acculturation and assimilation of native cultures when they come in contact with Western culture. In this model, the researcher measures the non-Western culture by examining the Western characteristics it has adopted and the native characteristics that remain. This model perceives a unilinear direction toward assimilation, which non-Western cultures follow in the wake of an onslaught by Western culture.

In the past, several scholars have proposed models of culture that enable the ethnographer to move away from the ever-present notion of "salvage ethnography." One such model is the interactionist model of culture. As Shibutani (1955:76) wrote, to the interactionist "culture is not a static entity but a continuing process; norms are creatively reaffirmed from day to day in social interaction." Goffman (1956), perhaps the best-known spokesman of the interactionist model, showed how social reality is really socially negotiated reality. Interactionism has helped the ethnographer focus on the micro-level of culture, of which everyone is aware yet unconscious at the same time.

Bauman (1975) wrote extensively on the ethnography of verbal art. He borrowed the oppositional concepts of "residual" and "emergent" culture from the Marxist writings of Williams (1973), and applied them to the interactionist model. Williams (1973:10-11) wrote that "residual culture" comprises those

experiences, meanings and values which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture, but are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue - cultural as well as social - of some previous social formation.

"Emergent culture," on the other hand, is a culture in which "new meanings and experiences are continually being created" (Williams 1973:11).

In applying the concept of emergent

culture to an examination of verbal art, Bauman (1975) showed how the ethnographer, whether examining ritual or folklore, must begin to see culture as the dynamic process that it is to its participants. In his model, Bauman suggested the useful analogy of a performance. This seems especially appropriate for considering ritual, which, like a performance, has both performers and an audience.

Also popular among anthropologists are insights into the nature of culture employed by members of the symbolic school as represented by Geertz (1973:5):

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after.

In order to unwind these layers of webs of significance, Geertz (1973:9) proposed "thick description," since after all "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to."

The method I have mentioned that can enable the ethnographer to do "thick description" is that described by Hymes (1972), one of the founders of sociolinguistics. He recognized that anthropologists lacked a general model that could be used cross-culturally to compare communicative systems and communicative events, such as ritual. Toward that end, Hymes devised a model called the "ethnography of communication," to aid the researcher in studying any social interaction involving communication, both linguistic and paralinguistic. One aspect of his model consisted of a number of variables which are present in all speech events and should be noted by the ethnographer in order to capture all the relevant details of the

situation to make it qualitatively comparable with other similarly specific ethnographic descriptions. These variables include: settings, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norms, and genres, all of which are discussed below; Hymes (1972:65) referred to them as a group by the acronym SPEAKING.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CEREMONY

I now re-examine the ancient aboriginal California mourning rituals as practiced today by the Western Mono, being attentive to the emergence of culture in the negotiated reality of interaction, and cognizant that these particular rituals are part of many integrated subsystems that make up the modern belief system of the Western Mono.

The funeral ceremony and the mourning anniversary may have been separate ceremonies in the past, with the mourning anniversary being held in honor of all those who had died during the previous year. Today they are two parts of a ceremonial complex. The funeral ceremony is performed as soon as is physically possible after someone has died, allowing enough time for the mourners to hear of the news and then assemble at the home of the deceased. It lasts for two nights over a period of three days. This ceremony is called the *nayaqaqwee*¹ in Mono,² which usually is translated into English as the "cry-dance." A literal translation of the Mono into English would be something along the lines of "where there is crying" (*na-yaga-qwee* RECIPROCAL-cry-LOCATIVE).

On the first night of the cry-dance, the dancers dance around the corpse, which is buried in the morning. After the burial, all the participants go home and rest for one night. Two nights after the burial, the cry-dance resumes. This time the dancers dance around the bonfire, each of them holding a possession of the deceased. At the end of the

ceremony, just as the sun is coming up, the dancers throw all the possessions into the fire. After this, there is a ritual washing of the mourners by the singers. This ends the cry-dance. The mourners traditionally abstain from meat and salt, washing, and attending happy events, such as dances, gambling games, or powwows. The period of abstinence depends on the individual mourner, but the food taboos usually are observed for a month, while the abstinence from fun generally is observed for a full year.

The second part of the ceremony occurs a year after the death, and marks the end of the traditional period of mourning. This part of the funeral ceremony is called the *patsibuhiwaiti* in Mono. It is referred to as the "coming-out" ceremony in English, and a literal translation of the Mono is "which will climb out of water" (*pa-tsibuhi-wai-ti* water-climb-FUTURE-ABSOLUTIVE). The coming-out ceremony is ritually very similar to the cry-dance, the main difference being in the psychological setting or scene. At the end of the ceremony, more of the deceased's possessions, saved for this occasion, are thrown into the fire. Traditionally, baskets specially made for the ceremony by the mourners were burnt. After they were thrown into the fire, anyone who wanted was free to fish them out and keep them before they burned. Next comes the ritual washing, at which point the mourners are given new clothes (generally shirts and blouses), to symbolize their new beginning. Finally, there follows a general celebration, which includes dancing, partying, and gambling.

Certain ritual procedures are common to both the cry-dance and the coming-out ceremonies. Both the cry-dance and the coming-out ceremonies begin at sunset, after all the guests have eaten. Everyone brings some food for the "feed," or potluck, and these dishes invariably include certain foods

seen as symbolic of Western Mono culture, especially acorn drink (*yimina*'), acorn biscuits (*qonowoi*'), and deer meat. After all have finished eating, and everyone has arrived, the singers begin by singing over the body if it is the first night of the cry-dance, or over the deceased's possessions if it is the second night. The coming-out begins in the same way, with the singers singing over some of the deceased's possessions that were not burned during the cry-dance, or traditionally over baskets specially made for the ceremony. The singers use what is called a "personal mourning song." This is a song handed down within one's family. It is used both at the beginning of the funeral and mourning ceremonies and by the women of the household to which the deceased belonged. In earlier times, the women sang this song as they made their way to the chief's village to announce the death of their kin.

After this song, the dancers move outside where they continue the ritual, dancing around a huge bonfire built by someone not from the family of the deceased. Among the Northfork band (but not among the five southern bands) there exists a moiety system,³ and someone from the moiety opposite that of the deceased builds and tends the fire all night long. Among the five southern bands, usually it is someone close to the family of the deceased, who is not a member of the family. If the body is not present, then the singers distribute the personal belongings of the deceased to the mourners, who dance with them throughout the night. The singers then assemble around the bonfire in a semi-circle, and begin singing the song cycle, which takes until sunrise. There are ten funeral songs in all, and they are used by all bands of the tribe (as well as by the Eastern Mono in Owens Valley, who claim they got their present funeral ceremony from the Western Mono) with only slight variations in the songs.⁴ Each

song is sung in two complete sets before going on to the next song. While the singers sing, the mourners and other members of the audience dance around the bonfire clockwise with a certain dance step used only in this ritual, swinging the deceased's possessions into and away from the fire with each new step.

The singers take several breaks during the night. During these breaks, the singers as well as other participants seem visibly detached from the funeral, and much socializing and drinking occurs.⁵ At first, the behavior of some of the participants seemed incongruous to my (Western) notion of what proper funeral behavior should be, but I have since realized this was because I was judging the ceremony from the standpoint of my own norms of behavior.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC LITERATURE

The Monos' own explanation of how the funeral ceremony began is contained in a myth which Gifford (1923:364-365) called "Wild 'Shrimp'." Wild "shrimp" actually refers to the Pandora moth chrysalis, called *piyagf* in Mono. *Piyagf* was a beautiful woman, who was married to Crested Jay. Because some of the men in *Piyagf*'s village desired her, they murdered Crested Jay. She was so upset that whenever a suitor came to her house she beheaded him. Finally, a delegation from the village went to *Piyagf*'s wickiup to see what had happened to all the missing men from the village.

When they arrived they stood about in amazement at the sight of so many heads. When all had arrived they began to sing and dance around the heads. The funeral songs of these birds (people) are employed to-day [Gifford 1923:364-365].

Kroeber wrote little on the Western Mono and only briefly mentioned their funeral practices:

The southern Yokuts report that the Mono cremated their dead; but it is not clear to what subdivision this statement refers. The eastern Mono about Bishop buried.

The mourning anniversary of south and central California was probably made by the western Mono. The eastern Mono burned considerable property over the graves of dead chiefs and possibly of other people, too; and saved their remaining belongings in order to destroy them a year later. This is an echo of the standard mourning anniversary [Kroeber 1925:589].

As is evident from Kroeber's statement, not much was known about the Western Mono by 1925. Even so, it is possible to recognize some similarities between what he wrote and what is known now. The Western Mono burned considerable property over those who had much material wealth (i.e., the few rich people, mostly chiefs and shamans). The burning of the deceased's property is a prerequisite of the funeral ceremony. The Mono believe that by destroying a dead person's belongings, there will be no reason for the deceased to linger around places familiar to him or her while alive, bothering the living. In former times, all personal belongings were burned, including the house where the dead person had lived. Today, this practice is no longer followed because of the tremendous expense in constructing a new house. The Western Mono always save a portion of the deceased's belongings in order to burn them at the mourning anniversary a year later.

Gifford, who wrote his ethnography (1932) on the Northfork band, devoted only about a page to description of funeral practices. He mentioned (1932:43) that in precontact times the dead were cremated, which my consultants have confirmed. He also mentioned that ten different songs were used in the ceremony (1932:43). Gifford noted that there were similarities in the funeral observances between the Western

Mono and the Chukchansi Yokuts (the Foothill Yokuts band living closest to the Northfork band). He wrote (Gifford 1932:45) that the moiety opposite that of the deceased would take care of the arrangements for the cry-dance, buy and prepare the food, and attend to the fire during the ceremony.⁶ Gifford also quoted a page from his field notes, in which he described a dance step that is still being used today. The mourning ceremony that Gifford described is one that he attended on December 22, 1915.

The women danced by hopping or jumping with both feet together. The arms were alternately shot obliquely downward and the body rocked from side to side at the same time. This violent rocking and arm movement were accompanied by an expulsion of the breath which sounded like escaping steam. The arms were held perfectly straight throughout, not flexed. The dancers followed one behind the other [Gifford 1932:44].

There are only two minor differences between this description and the dancing that I witnessed. The first is that the hopping step was not made with both feet together, but with only one foot at a time. The second is that the expulsion of breath was made by the singers during certain songs, and not by the dancers.

Gayton (1948:236-238) offered a more thorough treatment of the funeral practices, but her emphasis was on the Foothill Yokuts as a whole, and she treated the five southern bands of Western Mono as a political and cultural appendage of the larger Foothill Yokuts bands.

There seems to be some difference between the mourning ceremonies of the Northfork band and those of the other bands south of the San Joaquin River. According to Gifford, the Northfork band held a mourning ceremony only on the anniversary of someone's death, whereas according to Gayton, a mourning ceremony was held every year at a

particular camp in the fall. This mourning ceremony lasted six days, while that described by Gifford lasted from two to five days.

According to Gayton's description, not much happened on the first four days, except preparations for the sixth night. On the fifth night a shamans' contest was sometimes held in which shamans from other tribes, as well as from the Mono bands, would compete against each other. On the sixth night the actual ceremony was held. A large bonfire was made, and the dancers danced around the fire with effigies of their deceased relatives hung on sticks that they held in their hands. At the end of the ceremony, half the dolls were burned on the bonfire and the other half were burned on the graves. Gayton also mentioned the ritual washing at the end, and the payment to the mourners. It seems that this annual mourning anniversary was highly organized and fixed. Each band took turns hosting the ceremony, since it was a major expenditure for the hosts. Baskets and gifts had to be made, as well as enough money to provide all the food that would be needed for the six days. Both Gifford's and Gayton's informants differed on the composition of the participants, but generally it seems that anyone who wanted could attend the ceremony.

Gayton (1948:238) also mentioned that there was a "little mourning ceremony" held among the five southern bands to mark the end of mourning, and stated, "When a mourner felt that he had observed the full restrictions sufficiently long, he told his chief that he wished to end them." Gayton described the various mourning practices in some detail:

The house in which death occurred was always abandoned; although it was not invariably burned, no one else would move into it. . . .

The observances of mourning were as follows. The hair was singed off close to the

head with a hot charred stick. . . . Dirt was allowed, even encouraged by the use of pitch, to accumulate on the face and body; only the hands were washed. No meat or grease might be eaten. . . . No visiting was done save among relatives, and attendance at any ceremony was unthinkable. A brooding attitude was maintained, and old women frequently released their melancholy in wailing outside the village at dawn and dusk.

Verbal observances by others not themselves mourners were: a tabu on the name of the dead person, the changing of one's name if it were that of the deceased, and the changing of kinship terms for relatives connected with the speaker through the deceased [Gayton 1948: 237].

The "little" mourning ceremony was basically the same as the annual mourning ceremony, although it generally lasted only one day and one night. Gayton (1948:238) wrote, however, that "if it was thought that there would not be a 'big' tribal ceremony during the forthcoming year, the 'little' ceremony was made more elaborate."

Although, according to Gayton, the five southern bands celebrated the mourning anniversary as part of the yearly cycle of ceremonies, the Northfork band aboriginally used the mourning anniversary as a rite of passage, marking the first anniversary after a person's death, just as is done today. In this the Northfork band resembles its closest Foothill Yokuts neighbor, the Chukchansi band, whereas the five southern Western Mono bands resemble their Foothill Yokuts neighbors, the Dumna, Gashowu, Choynimni, Chukaymina, Gawia and Wikchamni bands, in holding an annual mourning anniversary (Gayton 1948:200). This apparent difference in the frequency of the mourning ceremony is not the only example of the cultural divisions among the various bands of the Western Mono. As mentioned before, the Northfork band has a moiety system, similar to its neighbors the Chukchansi Yokuts and the

Sierra Miwok, whereas the five southern bands have patrilineages, symbolized by a totem, as do their Foothill Yokuts neighbors. This is further proof of the very close relationship that existed in precontact times among the Western Mono and their neighbors.

The last study on the Western Mono to be discussed used the primary sources already reviewed. Spier (1978:433) stated that there was a "little" mourning ceremony held a year after the death to mark the end of mourning, as well as a yearly mourning ceremony. He did not make it clear whether both practices co-existed, or whether they were different for different groups. He did state, however, that "the annual mourning ceremony was held more or less regularly though the frequency was linked to deaths and the affluence of the mourning families, who paid most of the costs" (Spier 1978:434). He also noted that the mourning ceremony "was more developed among the transitional Monache-Yokuts [the Patwisha, Michahay and Waksachi bands] than among the unequivocal Monache" (the Northfork, Entimbich, and Wobonuch bands) (Spier 1978:433). Other than this, Spier added nothing new to what the primary sources had already stated.

In summing up all the ethnographic literature on the Western Mono, it seems there are quite a few contradictions in the data. But if one takes into account the theory of a cultural cleft between the Northfork band and the five other bands, some sense can be made from all the confusion. Certain practices do stand out as being universal among all the Western Mono bands, whether the ceremony was performed annually or only after a death. The literature also makes clear that those Western Mono groups who were made up of a mixed Mono-Yokuts population had more elaborate funeral ceremonies than those "unequivocal" Western Mono groups.

As Kroeber stated in the quotation at the beginning of this paper, the mourning ceremony is seen as one of the common features of the California culture area, at least for the southern two-thirds of the state. Kroskrity and Reinhardt (1985) showed through the linguistic evidence of Spanish loanwords a possible link that existed between the central California and southern California areas.

An examination of other tribes' traditions bear out this fact. Though differing in the various particulars, there are always recognizable constants: for example, the burning of possessions and the ritual washing after the ceremony. Among the Tübatulabal, only the face-washing ceremony was held at the funeral, after the body had been buried in tule mats. The possessions were held for a whole year before there was a burning ceremony (Smith 1978:440). Among the Southern Valley Yokuts, at the time of death the corpse was buried (although wealthy people or those away from home were cremated), and only a face-washing ceremony was held for the closest of kin. Aside from this there was an annual mourning ceremony which "ranked as the most conspicuous religious festival" (Wallace 1978:456). Here effigies as well as property were burned.

The most elaborate version of the ceremony is that found among the southern California tribes, most notably the Chumash, Gabrielino, Luiseño and Diegueño. Kroeber (1922:309-310) hypothesized that this was the most likely place of origin of the ceremony:

The greatest development of mourning practices is found among the Gabrielino, Luiseño, and Diegueño. It is not that their anniversary is much more elaborate than that of other groups—the use of images representing the dead is common to the great majority of tribes—but these southerners have a greater number of mourning rites. . . .

It is a fair inference that the anniversary received its principal development among the same people that chiefly shaped the toloache [jimsonweed] cult, namely, the Gabrielino or some of their immediate neighbors. It is even possible that the two sets of rites flowed northward in conjunction, and that the anniversary outreached its mate because the absence or rarity of the jimsonweed plant north of the Yokuts checked the invasion of the rites based specifically upon it.

Following is a short description of the ceremony among the Gabrielino:

Possessions of the deceased not destroyed or buried were kept for use in the annual mourning ceremony, the biggest event celebrated in the year. Held in the fall following the acorn harvest, eight days were spent instructing the inexperienced in correct ceremonial procedure, songs and dances. The beginning of the ceremony was signaled by the construction or consecration of the *yuvaar*, the special ceremonial enclosure, followed by ceremonial feasting. . . . On the fourth day a ritualist brought forth all the children born during the year and the chief gave them names selected from their fathers' lineages. On the fifth day life-size images of the deceased were made, the men's images usually decorated with bows and arrows, the women's with baskets. Either on the evening of the fifth day or during the sixth day, an eagle-killing ceremony was held accompanied by special dances and songs.

In the predawn light of the eighth day the images were brought into the *yuvaar*, carried by the dancers while they performed, then thrown onto a fire with personal items saved at the time of death [Bean and Smith 1978:545-546].

There are other descriptions of the mourning anniversary as practiced by various tribes of the Sierra Nevada. These include Dixon's (1905) account of the Maidu ceremony, Powers' (1877) account of the Chukchansi Yokuts ceremony, and Merriam's (1955) account of a mourning ceremony among the Northern Sierra Miwok.

Although Gifford and Gayton wrote about the same ceremony that I witnessed, there are still differences between all three. The most

notable difference is the complexity of the early ceremonies in comparison with those of today. No longer are effigies made and burned on the graves, nor is there a shamans' contest. No doubt, the radically changed economic conditions in the Sierra, which no longer permit a hunter-gatherer life-style, played a large part in bringing about certain cultural changes. But to describe the ceremony only in terms of the aboriginal traits that still exist would be to look at the modern Western Mono from a strictly normative point of view. The Western Mono funeral ceremony must be looked at in terms of an emerging Mono culture, examined in the next section.

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

So far I have described the funeral ceremony and mourning anniversary that I witnessed, and discussed the literature on the ceremony by other authors. Although the ceremony has been described and discussed at length, the systemics behind the ceremony have yet to be mentioned. These include the motivations of the different participants for partaking in this particular social event, as well as the benefits each participant reaps through his or her attendance in these social networks. This is precisely where ethnographic description has been weakest, that is, in capturing the various interpersonal networks operating within any given culture. The ethnography of communication attempts to fill this void.

Hymes' SPEAKING model, mentioned above, gives the ethnographer, linguist, and folklorist a useful formula for describing communicative events. It is important that ethnographic descriptions be conducted along these lines in an attempt to capture the whole of a speech event in a way that makes thick description possible.

Ultimately, the functions served in speech must be derived directly from the purposes and

needs of human persons engaged in social action. . . . The formal analysis of speaking is a means to the understanding of human purposes and needs, and their satisfaction [Hymes 1972:70].

It is now appropriate to give a description of the Western Mono funeral ceremony according to this descriptive model.

The setting for all three nights of the ceremony is the same, that is, the home where the deceased was resident while alive, generally beginning around sunset and continuing until sunrise. The scene (or psychological setting) is that of a funeral. Whether viewed emically or etically, the setting and scene remain the same.

An outside observer's description of the participants involved in the funeral ceremony includes the singers, the dancers, the corpse (present only on the first night of the cry-dance), the mourners (including both kin and friends), and everyone else present (referred to simply as the audience). From the Western Mono perspective, the participants include all those mentioned above, plus those in the spirit world, particularly the spirit of the deceased. At this point it is necessary to introduce a concept in the notion of audience, which is particularly useful when discussing the Western Mono funeral ceremony.

Becker (1979:234) distinguished between the "essential" and "non-essential" audience. The essential audience is that part of the audience necessary for the performance to be valid, whereas the nonessential audience is that part of the audience whose presence or absence does not affect the performance. In the Mono funeral ceremony, the essential audience consists of the immediate kin of the deceased (the mourners) and the spirits (or *tso'apE* in Mono), including both the spirit of the deceased and other spirits; the nonessential audience includes everyone else. There is good evidence supporting this distinction

between the essential and nonessential audiences, and this explains why some people present at the funeral I attended seemed to be paying no attention to what was going on. The norms and expectations of behavior are different for the two types of audience, as discussed below under "norms."

The next variable in the SPEAKING model, ends, is divided into goals (motives) and outcomes, but this is really an emic/etic distinction. Goals are emic, what is hoped to be accomplished by those involved, while the outcome is etic, reflecting what can be observed to be the result. Here there is a difference in goals and outcomes between the cry-dance and the coming-out ceremony. The goals of the cry-dance are to keep the spirit of the deceased from returning to bother the living, and to comfort the living kin from fear of being haunted by the deceased. The outcome is a public show of solidarity on the part of the community towards the kin by attending the ceremony, and an attempt on the part of those attending to comfort the kin. The goal of the coming-out ceremony is to mark the end of the period of mourning on the part of the kin; the outcome is a public recognition of this rite of passage which the mourners have undergone.

At an annual mourning anniversary the goals, perhaps, would have been to preserve the memory of the dead and to ensure, by reenacting the burning, that their spirits would not bother the living. The outcome of an annual mourning ceremony would be social, that is, the gathering of different groups (from the Western Mono as well as from their neighbors), which would, in effect, strengthen alliances and other ties between these groups.

Blackburn (1976) discussed the useful functions such ceremonies served, both economically and politically, in precontact California. Political alliances between groups, as well as economic reciprocity, were strength-

ened by ceremonials:

Since ceremonialism provided a context for wide-scale social interaction involving several theoretically autonomous local groups, and since ritual involvement had important political implications and/or functions, the degree of political interaction existing aboriginally . . . may have been greater than we have heretofore assumed [Blackburn 1976:240].

Continuing with the SPEAKING model, the act sequencing (or temporal ordering) of the ceremony has already been discussed above in the description of the cry-dance and coming-out ceremonies. Hymes (1972) analyzed each act sequence into a message form and message content, which are discussed below under instrumentalities.

The key (or mood) of the event differs between the cry-dance and the coming-out. The cry-dance is sad and mournful, while the coming-out is a much happier occasion, since it marks the official end of the mourning period.

The instrumentalities are the different channels used to deliver the message contents. The message forms, or the various ways in which the message contents are sent, are inextricably tied to the channels, which are song, dance, speech, and ritual action. Although it is impossible to give a complete list of all message contents and the appropriate message forms used, one is of special interest. The message form of song is used to communicate with the spirit world. This explains the message contents of the songs, which consist completely of vocables,⁷ whose meanings are not understood by the participants. The code, however, does not restrict the spirits from understanding. Perhaps the songs are in an esoteric register precisely so that those of the material world will not understand. This fits a general emphasis on the theme of immaterialness that pervades the whole ceremony. The deceased's possessions are burned to put them into immaterial form;

otherwise, they are useless to the spirits in the Land of the Dead. The dancing, too, is seen as a message form. Its message content is the energy which is sacrificed by the dancers for the spirit of the deceased.

There are two types of norms in Hymes' (1972) model: norms of interaction and norms of interpretation. The norms of interaction can be thought of as statistical norms, whereas norms of interpretation are ideal norms. As mentioned above, the norms of interaction (or participation) differ depending on whether one is part of the essential or nonessential audience. It was permissible for those in the nonessential audience to ignore the ceremony, as many did. Especially during the coming-out ceremony, people were clustered in groups around the cars in the driveway, drinking and socializing, seemingly oblivious to what was taking place. On the other hand, those in the essential audience were expected to take part in the dancing, and during the cry-dance to publicly show their grief. The essential audience was also expected to evaluate the singers and their performance, which the nonessential audience never did. These different norms of interaction clearly explain what appeared to be a puzzling phenomenon to the outside observer, namely, the nonparticipatory nature of a large part of the audience. The drinking and socializing never upset anyone, nor did it interfere with the performance, since the actions of the nonessential audience do not directly affect the ceremony.

When these norms of interaction are violated, then a problem arises which must be dealt with. I have named this type of problem "performance breakdown" when it affects the performance in some way. This happened during the coming-out ceremony, when members of the essential audience did not participate in the dancing. Thus, when there

were no dancers during the singing, one of the singers changed roles and danced around the fire. A necessary part of the ceremony is some form of sacrifice on the part of the singers and essential audience. This sacrifice is given in immaterial form through the sacrifice of energy, in the forms of singing by the singers and dancing by the mourners. When this necessary sacrifice of energy was not being made, it affected the ceremony and had to be corrected. This was accomplished by one of the singers changing roles, and becoming a dancer. At one point, early in the morning before the sun had begun to rise, the same lack of dancers occurred. This time, instead of one of the singers changing roles, the singers just cut short the set. Perhaps at this point the singers were too tired to go on.

One method of dealing with performance breakdown is the switching of roles. Another is the enforcement of norms. The methods used by those at the funeral ceremony to enforce the norms of participation provide insight into Western Mono interpersonal behavior, which is noninterfering and nonproscriptive. Like many other Native American groups, the Mono are keenly aware of another person's individuality, and it is very rare to hear a Mono speaking for another person. Because of this great respect for a person's free will, the methods employed by the Mono to enforce norms are different from those used in the dominant Euro-American society. Whereas commanding, scolding, and punishment are common methods in our culture, the Mono use verbal persuasion and shaming. When there were not enough dancers, one of the singers shouted to those on the fringes, as she danced around the fire, "I'm seventy years old and can still dance better than any of you young folks." The son of the deceased also shouted at those on the sidelines, saying: "We hold a ceremony and no Indians come. Where are all the Indians?"

Because of the different norms of interaction for the different classes of participants, plus the Monos' different methods of enforcing those norms, what seemed inappropriate to an outside observer was quite in keeping with expected behavior at a funeral ceremony.

A concept closely related to performance breakdown is the notion of "performance error." A performance error was committed at the coming-out ceremony when the dancers threw the bundles into the fire one song too early. Although this error was discussed by the singers and the essential audience, it was decided that it did not seriously affect the outcome of the performance. This attitude contrasts sharply with that of some California tribes. Keeling (1982) discussed what he termed "Yurok orthodoxy," that is, the belief on the part of some old Yuroks that it is better to have a ritual die out and not be performed at all, than to have it performed incorrectly.

The final category in Hymes' SPEAKING model is that of genre. Hymes (1972:65) was very vague when discussing the notion of genre, and simply stated that "Genres often coincide with speech events, but must be treated as analytically independent of them. They may occur in (or as) different events." Duranti (1983:20) dealt specifically with the nature of genre in relation to Hymes' SPEAKING model, defining genre as:

a recognized (by its users) unit of discourse with some well-defined features such as sequential organization (*viz.* which part should come before what), constraints (and expectations) on (some of) its content and form, and socially defined appropriate contexts of use.

The only genre in the funeral ceremony is that connected with the songs. Funeral songs constitute one genre, comparable to songs used in other (nonfunerary) contexts. For example, while living in Mono territory, I was able to witness a ghost-chasing (curing)

ceremony in which the songs were completely different, both musically and functionally, from those used during the funeral ceremony; these constitute another genre of songs.

CONCLUSION

There are always more details that could have been included in any ethnographic description. Films and tapes of the actual events described are helpful, but it is not always possible for the researcher to make these. One must also respect the wishes of those one is studying, and many Western Mono find video cameras and tape recorders at their religious ceremonies offensive. This is also why I have not included texts of the funeral songs in this article. Thus, the advantage of using Hymes' SPEAKING model, along with the other sociolinguistic concerns discussed here, becomes self-evident. The question every ethnographer must ask is: how can I enhance my data so as to make them of maximum use to other scholars, while at the same time capturing the essence of the event, both emically and etically? This is what Geertz was getting at when he spoke of "thick description" as being the goal of the ethnographer. Hymes' "universal descriptive theory,"⁸ as he admitted himself (Hymes 1972:52), is a tentative first step toward a cross-cultural ethnography of communication. It is in the spirit of building a body of ethnographic descriptions done in the Hymesian manner, that I have presented the reader with my "own constructions of other people's constructions," as Geertz (1973:9) would have it.

NOTES

1. The orthography used in this paper is the same as the standard Americanist orthography employed in the *Handbook of North American Indians* (Heizer 1978), with the following exceptions: *g'* (voiced velar fricative), *d* (alveolar flap), ' (glottal stop), long vowels are represented by double characters, voiceless or whispered vowels at the ends of words are represented by upper-case letters.

Stress in Mono commonly falls on the penultimate syllable when the word ends in a vowel (e.g., *natenabi* 'assistant to the chief'), and on the last syllable when the word ends in a glottal stop (e.g., *tsiipa* 'bird'). There are many exceptions to this rule, one being the word *patsibuhiwaii* 'coming-out ceremony', which is accented on the last syllable. For more detailed information on Mono phonology, the reader is advised to consult either Lamb (1958) or Bethel et al. (1984).

2. Mono, along with Northern Paiute, forms the western branch of the Numic family, which is part of the Uto-Aztecan language phylum. Mono consists of three dialects, each of which consists of two or more subdialects (Lamb 1958). The western dialect is spoken on the western side of the Sierra Nevada mountains in the foothill towns of North Fork, Auberry, Tollhouse, and Dunlap. The eastern dialect is spoken on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada mountains in the Owens Valley. The southern dialect is no longer spoken, but according to Lamb was spoken in the southern Owens Valley along Owens Lake, as well as on the western side of the Sierra along the Kaweah River and its tributaries. In conducting a census in 1988, I was unable to locate more than 50 speakers of the western dialect, and there are fewer speakers still of the eastern dialect (Sven Liljeblad, personal communication 1987).

3. The Northfork band resembles its immediate neighbors, the Chukchansi Yokuts and Sierra Miwok, in several cultural traits, which it does not share with the five southern Western Mono bands. These cultural traits include the moiety system (Gifford 1932:34) and the existence of bird cults (Gifford 1932:39-41). Inter-marriages, as well as ritual and economic relations, were common among these three groups, as reflected in the fact that all three have cognate words for the term "co-in-law" (*maksi* in Mono) (Kroskirty and Reinhardt 1985), though the Miwok languages and the Yokuts languages represent separate language families respectively within the Penutian language phylum.

4. I collected all ten funeral songs from both moieties (the Eagle and the Coyote moieties; Loether 1985). While the songs are recognizably the same, there are slight differences between the two sets of songs.

5. I was told by one Western Mono consultant that drinking at the funeral ceremony is highly inappropriate, and that this is one reason the performance of the ceremony was suspended for a number of years in several Western Mono communities.

6. One of the anonymous reviewers wrote:

As knowledge of the moiety system faded among Chukchansi in this area, the "washers" at the Mourning Ceremony became simply "others" (often from neighboring tribes) instead of being assuredly of the proper (opposite) moiety. These people then became both audience (important to any ceremony) and participants. All the casual background action is common in many circumstances from modern country auctions to Navaho sings.

7. For an enlightening treatment of the emotive quality of vocables in American Indian songs, see Hinton (1980).

8. Hymes used the term "universal descriptive theory," even though this is, in fact, a method. He was trying to stress the fact that ethnography has traditionally been mostly descriptive, with not much theory. Instead, Hymes was calling for a new, more theoretically founded, brand of ethnography. Although he recognized this theoretical need, in his own writings he did not clearly distinguish method from theory.

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