# BECAUSE HE MADE MARKS ON PAPER, THE SOLDIERS CAME

DENNIS TEDLOCK

## INTRODUCTION

Here is a Zuni story of two witches, a transvestite, and the U.S. Army, told by Andrew Peynetsa in 1965. In addition to the army, it is full of things that are missing from Zuni stories that took place "long ago" or "in ancient times," including a donkey, mules, writing, cannons, and a prison. Perhaps that is why it ended up as one of those numberless hidden stories that get left out of published collections, in this case my own *Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians.*[1] If I had been working in the days of Franz Boas and his students, I certainly would have included it, since they were interested in stories that told not only of the mythical or distantly historical past but also of a world in which people from the other side of the Atlantic had already appeared.

It was in the late sixties that I began working on *Finding the Center,* a time when the recovery of lost worlds seemed one way in which to change the present one. Since then the story told here has come to look more and more like a missing chapter from that book. It would go at the end, not because it is the "final chapter" but because its events are recent. As it stands now, *Finding the Center* stays safely within ancient times, though in the story titled "The Boy and the Deer," three men ride horses, and in "The Shumeekuli" a man herds sheep. The book is not without politics: as Alasdair

MacIntyre pointed out, "The Sun Priest and the Witch-Woman" is about a person in high authority who undergoes a crisis of legitimacy.[2] But nowhere does politics break out of ancient times and jump into the lap of the polite non-Indian reader, as it does here. And when writing makes its appearance on the scene, it does so as an instrument of power.

Andrew Peynetsa told this story at To'ya, or Nutria, a farming hamlet northeast of Zuni, New Mexico, on the evening of March 26, 1965. We were in his farmhouse, with kerosene lamps lit and a fire in the corner fireplace. Also present were his wife, one of their sons, a couple of their grandchildren, and Walter Sanchez, a clan brother of Andrew's who was himself telling stories that evening. Andrew said the events took place around 1898. He seems to have combined incidents from two separate U.S. Army interventions in Zuni internal affairs, one taking place in 1891 and the other involving a six-month military occupation in 1897–98.[3]

Earlier in the same evening Andrew had told the first of three consecutive installments of his version of the Zuni origin story, "Chimiky'ana'kowa," literally, "When Newness Was Made"; he told the other two parts on March 29 and 31. I included the first two parts in *Finding the Center*[4]; the third part, which concerns the origin of the medicine society called Lheweekwe, or Stick People, has yet to be published. All three parts take place at a time when the earth was still soft, rather than hardened as it is now, and all three take place before the arrival of Europeans. Andrew considered a number of other stories, including the present one, to be further parts of "When Newness Was Made," though he did not attempt to construct narrative bridges that would connect them directly to the end of his long, three-part narrative. He remarked that in the present story, when the soldiers came along the edge of the valley that leads from Nutria down to the town of Zuni, their horses and wagons made deep tracks, meaning that the earth was still soft, as it was "when newness was made." On another occasion he commented, "There's a spot near Nutria where the soldiers camped; they fed hay to their horses, and there were tumbleweed seeds in it. Now only tumbleweeds grow on that spot, and they've spread all over."

The most important "newness" in this story is the abrogation of Zuni sovereignty by the U.S. Army. The Aapi'lha Aashiwani, or Bow Priests, a society of warriors that had long been the center of military and police power in the traditional Zuni government, suffered a blow from which it has never recovered. The most important result is that the Zuni were left defenseless against the internal ene-

mies known as *aahalhikwi,* "witches"—or, as Andrew Peynetsa liked to put it, "the wicked people." The accused witch named Tumahka in his story, known in English as Nick, later became the head of the secular Zuni government (an institution set up during Spanish rule); he also served as a major informant for such ethnographers as Elsie Clews Parsons, Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Bunzel, and Ruth Benedict. The man named Weewa, a transvestite, served as an informant for Matilda Coxe Stevenson. The Society of Helical People, or Shumaakwe Tikyanne, is a medicine society that once included an order named Ts'u' Lhana, or Big Shell, devoted, as in the present story, to the subtler arts of warfare. Thunderers, or *towo"anaawe,* is the Zuni term for guns; "big" thunderers are cannons.

Bear Water, or Anshe Ky'an'a, is the Zuni name for Fort Wingate, which is located a short distance east of Gallup, New Mexico. "Midpoint," or *itiwan'a,* is the term for the solstice (in this case the winter solstice); it is also one of the names of the town of Zuni, which is located at the middle of the earth (as is explained in the second part of Andrew's version of "When Newness Was Made"). The place "where the Shalakos race" is an open area on the south bank of the Zuni River, opposite the central part of the town of Zuni, where the ten-foot kachinas called Shalakos race at the close of a ceremony that takes place shortly before the winter solstice. When Andrew says that "the soldiers passed through here," he is referring to Nutria, which lies on an old wagon road that connected Fort Wingate with Zuni. Luuna is the Zuni name for Los Lunas, south of Albuquerque, formerly the site of a prison.

### *Guide to Reading Aloud*

Of all the features of oral storytelling, the suspenseful pauses, sudden shouts or prolonged whispers, and harsh or gentle tones are the easiest to translate from one language to another. Yet these are precisely the features most translators have left out until recently, even when they were working from sound recordings. In 1970, I began publishing narratives with a system of transcription designed to remedy this situation.[5] Since then others have used similar formats for oral performances in such Native American languages as Yupik, Koyukon, Tanacross, Chipewyan, Tlingit, Navajo, Hopi, Yaqui, Nahuatl, Yucatec Maya, Kuna, and Quechua. The conventions used in the present translation are given below; the duration of the original performance was eight minutes.

*Pausing.* A new line at the left-hand margin is preceded by a pause of at least half a second but no more than a full second; indented lines run on without a pause. Longer pauses are indicated by strophe breaks, with one dot (·) for each full second.

*Amplitude.* **Boldface type** indicates loud words or passages; softness is indicated by small type.

*Intonation.* A lack of punctuation at the end of a line indicates a level tone; a dash indicates a rise; a comma, a slight fall; a semicolon, a more definite fall; and a period, the kind of fall that marks a complete sentence.

*Comments.* Most of Andrew Peynetsa's longer pauses serve as silent metaphors for the passage of time in his story, and the two that are doubly long, one of which is followed by a sigh, mark a mood of grave uncertainty. His voice turns gravelly when he speaks of what Bow Priests do to witches, what witches feel about their intended victims, and what an American prison did to the Bow Priests, forging a chain of force and the threat of force. When he tells of medicine-society members who were on a quiet religious retreat when the invasion came, he sounds as though he were in their house with them, speaking slowly and, again and again, in a soft voice that serves as a sonic metaphor for the passive acceptance of the possibility of violent death. It is in the very middle of this passage that he speaks in the voice of a child who prepares for death without knowing what it is.

After telling the story, Andrew said, "A long time ago they used to hang witches where the church is," referring to the ruins of a seventeenth-century Spanish mission abandoned in 1820. He explained that witches were not hanged by the neck but with their arms pulled back over a wooden rail and tied behind them, their legs dangling. As for the army occupation, he said he knew of a photograph in which "you can see the cannons all facing the village. Wicked people might be less so if they still had to go out to the old church in the daytime. They might be ashamed to go around doing things at night. Even if I catch a witch right now, I can't do anything." It should be noted that witches were strung up mainly in order to extract confessions; those who made convincing confessions were considered to have lost their power and were released.

Joseph Peynetsa, Andrew's nephew, who went over the tape of the story with me during the making of a transcription and a literal translation, offered further comments. When he heard how Suchiina

had called a donkey to stand under her, he said, "Probably people said, 'She's a witch for sure.' " The way he had heard this story from his grandfather, "Suchiina confessed that she had made a powder from dead bodies and had sprinkled it down chimneys to cause the people to get sick." When we came to the part about what witches do "when you're living well," he cited a certain Zuni couple as an example of potential victims: "They have a nice car, sheep, money, clothes. They're respected, and the witches don't like people who have a lot of things." On hearing Tumahka mentioned, he said, "Another famous witch." At the point where the springs were poisoned and animals died, he said, "My grandfather said a lot of soldiers died, and horses and mules."

After we were finished with the tape, Joseph said, "Why *did* those soldiers come to Zuni? It was none of their business." He was reminded of a cartoon he'd seen recently: one Bureau of Indian Affairs official rushes into the office of another saying, "The Indians have got the bomb!"

NOTES

1. Dennis Tedlock, *Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians* (New York: Dial Press, 1972; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).

2. Alasdair MacIntyre, review of *Finding the Center* by Tedlock, *New York Times Book Review,* December 24, 1972, 4.

3. See Watson Smith and John M. Roberts, *Zuni Law: A Field of Values,* Harvard University, Papers of the Peabody Museum no. 43 (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), 45–47, and C. Gregory Crampton, *The Zunis of Cibola* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1977), 150–51.

4. Tedlock, *Finding the Center,* 223–98.

5. Tedlock, "Finding the Middle of the Earth," *Alcheringa* 1 (original series; 1970): 67–80; see also Tedlock, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983) and "From Voice and Ear to Hand and Eye," *Journal of American Folklore* 103 (1990): 133–56.

## BECAUSE HE MADE MARKS ON PAPER, THE SOLDIERS CAME

Well
it seems
some time ago, it was the usual thing,
with Zuni people,
that there were **witches** in their **town,**
and when one of them was **caught**
he was **strung up,** they **strung** him up themselves;
this, it seems, was the way they lived
and someone, it was Suchiina,
she was caught somewhere, it seems;
when she was **caught,** it seems, the **Bow Priests strung her up.**
They **strung her up**
that's how
Suchiina got strung up,
at that time donkeys wandered around town
she was calling the donkeys; when she called the donkeys
she went "chk-chk,"
the donkeys gathered around her,
[*tense voice*] she stood on one of them
on the back of a donkey, on its back,
resting her weight.
[*normal voice*] It seems that the **Bow Priests,** when this came to
**light**

. .

they drove her donkey away;
[*gravelly*] and while she was up there she cried;
they beat her head with their clubs while she was up there—
[*normal*] this, it seems, is the way they were living
then
**Tumahka,**
it seems, was caught someplace in the same way.
When he was caught
he was **strung up.** Once he'd been strung up
that man stayed up
until he was **let down.**
Suchiina was let down first, then she was questioned;
[*evenly and close mouthed*] "When someone has handsome
children,

. .

this is something
[*gravelly*] that just shouldn't be," she said, probably
that's the way it probably **happened**
when she was **caught;**
she **told** about herself, when someone has handsome children
witches don't feel good about it.
That's why witches, if you're living well,
if you're just living well
witches will [*smooth, almost whispering*] test your strength.
[*gravelly again*] This is the way they were living

. .

[*normal*] when this **Tumahka** was caught,
**strung** up,
and let down, then it was his turn to talk about what he'd done,
he was strung up there,
then **released;**
because he knew the **ways** of the **Americans** quite well,
he made marks on paper
calling the soldiers to come from Bear Water;

. .

time went **on**
until it reached the **Midpoint;** when the medicine societies went
into seclusion at the Midpoint
the **soldiers** came, they passed through here—
and it was down there
where the Shalakos race, that's where the soldiers camped.
At that time there were no houses, no stores in that place
and that's where the soldiers set up their tents.
**Thun**derers, **big** ones
were **set up** facing the **town.**

. .

The chief of the soldiers

. . . .

[*sighing*] now
went looking for
someone, the chief of the town.
Kwantooniyu, he's the one
who was singled out.
**Some**one, a
relative of his, it was **Weewa,**
a mere transvestite

but it seems he was **strong,**
had a fight
with the chief of the soldiers.
They fought **because of what this**
**Tumahka** had **done,** because he'd made **marks** on **paper** the **soldiers** had **come,**
but it **came** to be **known** just how **that man** had been living,
that it **wasn't just**
out of a **lack** of **goodness,**
or just because of **cruelty** that he came to be **strung up,** no such words
were behind all this.
The **truth** became **known,**
that he was **strung up** for being a **witch, that's** what
the chief of the soldiers **told** the other **soldiers—**
the matter of the Zuni people was settled.
And the **Society** of **Helical** People,
they had **fixed** the **springs.**
They notified the people;

. .

when **everyone** had **hauled water, all** the **springs** were fixed.
Once they were fixed,
when the **horses** drank, **mules** drank, they were **dying,**
**there** at **Zuni,**
by the time things were settled and the Zuni people were calm,
the **soldiers** wanted to **break camp,**
a lot of the mules they had brought were just stretched out;
the **springs** had been fixed, **right** around here **all** the springs had been fixed,
as the **soldiers came by here their mules** drank, **dying** as they **came,**
and it seems they came through here again when they

. .

went back to where they were stationed.
And the **Bow Priests** were captured. Having been captured, they were **taken** away to **Luuna.**
The Bow Priests were locked up at Luuna. Having been locked up, they lived on that way
[*gravelly*] they ended up stretched out.
[*normal*] Because of **Tumahka's** way of thinking.
Well, one **might** have **thought** he was just **living** a **peaceable** life,
**given** the way the **Americans** got word of it—

Because of **Tumahka's** way of **thinking**
the witches were saved.
The **way** things are going **now**
if a witch is caught, he doesn't get **strung up,**
because of the **American** way of thinking.
[*sharply*] **Things were going perfectly well** when **this** happened,
when he just had to expose his people. The **truth** of the **matter**
came to **light.**
He wasn't strung up for no **reason.**
He got **strung up** because he was **caught** as a **witch**
and because the **true word** became **known,**
they were released, released—
the Zuni people were not mowed **down.**
That's all.

living a peaceable life,
and **just** for **minding** his **own business** he got **strung up,** he was getting himself killed, strung up there,
so he got angry and sent paper with marks on it.
The **truth** was **brought** to **light,**
that it wasn't that way,
it was because he was not living a peaceable life that he was captured, then there was talk;
and that man
called the soldiers out of spite, in order to get the whole town stretched out;
[*gravelly*] the Bow Priests were locked up;
[*normal*] they **strung that man** up, so they were **locked** up.
Ever since they were **locked up at Luuna,**
our Bow Priests have been in decline.

. .

And **this** was when the **Midpoint** had come. The **medicine** societies were in **seclusion.** Well, what happened wasn't happy.
A **life** was being threatened, and so

. . . .

the **soldiers** came.
The townspeople weren't happy, given that the whole town might end up stretched out. Since the medicine societies were in seclusion
**food** was brought to the **members,** but no one was thinking
"Yes, I'll eat," given that the whole town might end up stretched out.
They were not happy,
**this** is the way it **was**
when the medicine societies were in seclusion.
In the society we belong to now
our
late father
was a small boy then
and when **food** was brought **no one ate.**
[*in a child's voice*] "Let me eat now,
so I'll be good and full when I die."
[*normal*] That's what
our
late father said—
being a small boy, one doesn't know very much—
**such** were the words he **spoke**
while he sat there **eating;** the members of the society were not happy.