

Abstract: *The 'Contest Powwow' - a cultural expression of 'Pan-Indianism'?*

As will be demonstrated, the terms 'powwow' and 'pan-Indianism' and their meanings are an disadvantageous starting point to answer the central question stated in heading. Therefore, no specific answer is sought in this paper.

On one hand, we have the term 'powwow.' Because of the historical evolution of this term, and its plethora of everyday connotations, the term is in and of itself nondescript. Thus, I have limited my interests to the more concrete notion of 'contest powwow' to be used as a prototype concept of 'powwow' in this article. As will be argued, this is a notion also shared predominantly by Native Americans themselves today.

On the other hand, two extreme positions exemplify different theoretical traditions of thought in respect to the concept of 'pan-Indianism.' The concept went through a parallel theoretical reorientation as it was taking place in the general American anthropology at that time. With a changing interest from acculturation and assimilation processes towards topics related to and centered around the term 'ethnic identity', not only the general meaning of the concept 'pan-Indianism' changed. Both theoretical traditions left, even beyond the academic context, basic assumptions concerning the general relations between the two phenomena 'contest powwow' and 'pan-Indianism.' At both of their cores is the thought that the phenomenon 'powwow' represents a cultural expression of 'pan-Indianism.'

In dealing with the first set of assumptions, which is basically centering around the general understanding of cultural exchange, I will try to get away from the burdened discussion concerning the terms acculturation and assimilation. Instead, I will try to push questions concerning the people involved, the purpose of adoption (actually adaptation), general opportunities, attractivity and thus, bringing cultural compatibility to the forefront, as factors for cultural exchange.

Starting point of the second group of assumptions centering around the term 'ethnic identity' was the implication that the phenomenon 'powwow' is an expression of a new identity as Native Americans. This notion is caught in the characterization of the 'powwow' as a 'vehicle of pan-Indianism.' In accordance with the examples cited, I will argue that the phenomenon 'powwow' is not so much an expression of a new 'ethnic identity', even though it is definitely producing a new quality of an existing identity as Native Americans. Rather, I will stress the point that 'powwows' as a field of action and interaction as well as a stage offer the opportunity to meet new needs in a state of drastically changing social conditions. Furthermore, the cited examples will show that one cannot reduce the event 'powwow' to the factors 'ethnic identity' and 'meeting new needs.' Factors immanent to the event itself, as the aspect of contest, show an obvious motivating and activating impact.

The Contest Powwow - a cultural expression of Pan-Indianism?

by Rainer Hatoum

It is not hard to imagine that the question raised in the title should be of interest only for the fewest of 'powwow' participants. After all, the 'powwow' constitutes for many of them first of all, a 'way of life.' Nevertheless, the question is an interesting one, because it actually deals with the nature of human perception of 'culture.' With it, it could not possibly be more typical of the academic tradition of anthropology.

Part of anthropological work is the constant reflection of one's own results, a process which will not exclude this article. As such, it is only a grasped moment of a general continuing discussion in writing. In this light, I would like to have my reconsideration understood of the connection of the concepts 'pan-Indianism' and 'powwow.'

At this point, it should be clear, that I am not striving to really answer the posed question in the sense of an academic-authoritarian 'yes,' or 'no.' Rather, a critical dealing with its basic theoretical implications as well as with some of the general assumptions based on their mutual relationship is sought. That this attempt may subjectively seem to be overdrawn or irrelevant at times should not be surprising, bearing in mind the range of topics affected and the diverse trains of thoughts which are of course not shared by everyone. Still, the goal of this paper remains: It is an attempt to question differently conditioned and (in my opinion) established trains of thought as well as some of their intellectual components.

The question whether one can consider the 'powwow' as a cultural expression of 'pan-Indianism' or not, relates therefore to a discourse in anthropology based on theoretical grounds, which goes beyond specific examples. The discussion on the concepts and phenomena 'pan-Indianism' and 'powwow' demonstrate, therefore, results of anthropological work on a regional basis. In this context it is interesting to note that the specific theoretical foundations of the concept 'pan-Indianism' were laid mainly in the course of a period of about twenty years. The 60s and early 70s witnessed in this respect the most intensive period of theoretical discussion on this concept. This is even more interesting in so far as there was a major theoretical new orientation within the American anthropology at the same period of time.

As a result, the examination of acculturation and assimilation were increasingly taken over by the analysis of factors, which were obviously working against these processes.¹ The core of these factors was going to be the concept of 'ethnic identity', which is very often used synonymous with 'ethnicity.' The concept of 'pan-Indianism' itself was able to outlast this 180 degree-turn in content, but not without changing its theoretical focus. This would finally be reflected in the scientific reception of the phenomenon 'powwow.' But I will come back to this point later.

¹ The reasons that led to this change were among other things examples of groups which had lost their 'traditional' culture and even had a positive attitude toward the dominant society but continued to exist as distinctive social units (Newcomb 1956, Vogt 1957:137ff.).

It is generally agreed upon that in 1955 James Howard, who was pursuing the theoretical focal points of that time, acculturation and assimilation, released the first printed definition of the concept 'pan-Indianism'² (Young 1981:69; Powers 1990:86; Lassiter 1998:236). In it the phenomena 'pan-Indianism' and 'powwow' were laid out for the first time with a fundamental connection with one another. Until the present-day they could not detach themselves from it, even though, as stated above, the discussion on acculturation and assimilation was covered largely by new theoretical thoughts.

Howard, bearing the social and cultural conditions of Oklahoma in mind, defined the concept of 'pan-Indianism' as follows:

By pan-Indianism is meant the process by which sociocultural entities such as the Seneca, Delaware, Creek, Yuchi, Ponca, and Comanche are losing their tribal distinctiveness and in its place are developing a nontribal "Indian" culture. Some of the elements in this culture are modifications of old tribal customs. Others seem to be innovations peculiar to pan-Indianism. (Howard 1955:214)

Continuing on this matter he argues:

Pan-Indianism is, in my opinion, one of the final stages of progressive acculturation, just prior to complete assimilation. It may best be explained as a final attempt to preserve aboriginal culture patterns through intertribal unity. How long this pan-Indian culture will continue is dependent on a number of largely unpredictable factors, such as economic conditions, population shifts, and future miscegenation. (Howard 1955:220)

In this definition it is apparent, that 'pan-Indianism' is for Howard in this article not only a process but a cultural process, which represents a transitional stage toward complete assimilation. That Howard views the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' as being very closely related to the phenomenon 'powwow', is explicit in the following:

With continued acculturation there has been a tendency toward the loss of tribal identity...Instead of complete assimilation to white "American" culture, however, a pan-Indian culture has arisen. The principal secular focus of this culture is the powwow, centering around the war dance, stomp dance, and certain other dances and Indian activity. Its principle religious expression is in the peyote cult. (Howard 1955:219f.)

Even though Howard discusses the dissolution of sociocultural entities and mentions a tendency towards the loss of tribal identities - he even talks about 'factors fostering this Intertribal solidarity' (Howard 1955:218) - one can establish in summary that the focus of his definition clearly rests on the term 'culture.' 'Pan Indianism' for Howard is markedly a cultural phenomenon, which may be determined in the first place through traits of material culture. 'Pan Indianism' represents a 'supertribal culture' and 'the powwow' is one of the central forms of this cultural expression (Howard 1955:215).

² The term 'pan-Indianism' itself was most likely coined by Karl Schmitt, of the University of Oklahoma. According to Howard (1955:215), one can assume that the term was introduced to the general academic public in 1948 by Karl Schmitt in the course of a paper presented to the American Anthropological Association. It was titled: "A Possible Development of a Pan-Indian Culture in Oklahoma".

In Howard's definition there are two popular core elements in particular which - standing for a theoretical tradition in anthropology - are still widely accepted. They have made their way out of the academic context and have developed into commonly accepted assumptions, to established facts beyond the theoretical discussion.

One of these assumptions is the notion of the phenomenon 'powwow' as being a product of acculturation and assimilation processes pressed ahead by the dominant Anglo-society. Therefore, the phenomenon 'powwow' is associated in the first place with the non-Indian society. According to this logic it does represent a 'burdened' cultural expression. The 'powwow' is not tribal, moreover heterogeneous (and it could be even discussed, whether the term 'hybridity' is actually meant) and for these reasons it hardly seems 'traditional.'

A second and closely related assumption is that the phenomena 'pan-Indianism' and 'powwow' are viewed as belonging together. The total phenomenon 'pan-Indianism', and its sub-phenomenon 'powwow' are both regarded as being a product of Indian and non-Indian interaction.

Interestingly enough, not much has changed even in the anthropological discussion in regard to the principal association of both phenomena. For most anthropologists today the 'powwow' remains essentially a 'vehicle of pan-Indianism.'

This unchanged association of both phenomena seems to be even more interesting in light of the mentioned fact that it continued despite an essential change in regard to the theoretical orientation of the concept 'pan-Indianism.' However, in dealing with the concept of 'pan-Indianism' in the 60s and 70s it was not only a 'new' theoretical focal point that emerged³ (Lurie 1965 and 1971, Thomas 1965, Eggan 1966, Price 1968, Hiribayashi, Willard and Kemnitzer 1972, Howard 1995, 1976). This major shift in content allowed furthermore a transfer of this concept to 'new' modes of application⁴ (Howard 1995:165; Hertzberg 1971).

³ It was the increasing literature on the ever growing phenomenon 'urban Indian' and the reaction to powerful media coverage of political actions (e.g. Alcatraz, Wounded Knee) that led, beginning in the 50s (Newcomb 1953), but especially in the 60s and 70s to the recognition of a phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' outside and independent from Oklahoma (Young 1981:69; Powers 1990:90ff.). The generalization of this phenomenon as well as the critical dealing with the assimilationists' implications of earlier works (Ablon 1964, Lurie 1965, Powers 1968) finally led to the mentioned basic theoretical change in content.

Actually, this so-called 'new' content was an old one, associated with the term 'pan-Indianism' even in Howards article. Citing Petrullo and his early work on the peyote cult in Oklahoma (1934) - besides, he does not speak of 'pan-Indianism' -, Howard follows implicitly his opinion in that 'This constant interchanging of ideas is giving rise to a novel feeling of Indian nationality' (Howard 1955:215). But the latter is for Petrullo, as for Howard - to exaggerate - a side product and not the main characteristic of the new modes for interaction in the reservation period. Both authors have their focal point on young cultural phenomena, which evolved on the basis of these new conditions. Thus, it is not astonishing that Howard (1995:158) associates the development of the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' with a certain period of time, 1915-25.

However, it has to be emphasized, that the grounds for this shift in contents were laid even before Howards definition was printed. Referring to the dissertational manuscript of Newcomb (1953), of the University of Michigan, Howard obviously ignores or opposes the characterization of 'pan-Indianism' by Newcomb as chiefly a social phenomenon. Newcomb describes a so-called 'Pan-Indian Society' and mentions its reflections on a cultural level (Newcomb 1955:1041f.). Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that Vogt defined the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' by 1957(:146) as "a social and cultural framework". According to his opinion, this framework serves the end that "...acculturating Indian groups can maintain their sense of identity and integrity as Indians...".

⁴ Thus, it can be seen that this shift of focus was rather a shift toward a meaning already described by Petrullo as a "novel feeling of Indian nationality". It also covers what could provocatively be labeled the former basis of the cultural phenomenon 'pan-Indianism', the aspect of intertribal cooperation. Both fields of meaning allowed as a result not only the recognition and exploration of 'new' forms of 'pan-Indianism', for example in the political

As one early and prototypical definitions for this 'new' content one can cite Robert Thomas (1965). As with Howard's definition, it should also be viewed in the first place as representing an intellectual tradition. In it, Thomas summarizes the essential 'new' ideas with regard to the concept 'pan-Indianism' as follows:

One can legitimately define Pan-Indianism as the expression of a new identity and the institutions and symbols which are both an expression of that new identity and a fostering of it. It is the attempt to create a new ethnic group, the American Indian; it is also a vital social movement which is forever changing and growing (Thomas 1965:75)...Pan-Indian institutions such as Indian centers in cities, Pow Wow committees and so forth are institutions through which Indians can have some productive relationship to the general society. (Thomas 1965:81)

and further:

Pan-Indianism is the creation of a new identity, a new ethnic group, if you will, a new "nationality" in America. (Thomas 1965:82)

As central statements of this definition one can mention on one hand, and first of all, that the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' is an expression of a new 'ethnic identity.' With this, Thomas also includes all the institutions through which this identity is expressed, such as the 'powwow.' On the other hand at the same time the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' also represents for Thomas a complex social movement.

Even though one can detect this association of whatever kind of movement in connection with several concepts of 'pan-Indianism'⁵, one has to state clearly that - as in this definition - it is not as prominent as the notion of a 'new ethnic identity' or however this is described. One of the reasons might be the failure to settle or agree upon possible basic characteristics of a movement 'pan-Indianism'⁶.

sphere. 'Pan-Indianism' received on this basis for some authors a totally novel historical dimension too, dating way back, beyond the 20th century (Hertzberg 1971).

⁵ Besides Thomas' partial characterization of the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' as a complex social movement, one can detect a process like notion - often described as a movement - in several other concepts of 'pan-Indianism.' Hagan (1961), for example, relates to a 'Pan-Indian movement.' In doing so, he actually means a supposed increasing "willingness of the [Indian] individual to adapt to new practices [acculturation and assimilation]" (Hagan 1961:170). Powers (1966:6), speaking of a 'Pan Indian movement' likewise, has a totally different understanding. He means in contrast a "definitive trend toward unity where religious, economic, and political thought is concerned". Howard (1995:163; 1976) again, referring to Linton 1943, pushes the term 'revitalization movement' whereas Lurie (1971:418) favors the concept of an 'articulative movement' in referring to the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism.' It is not to be emphasized that all those movements mentioned obviously relate to different aspects of contemporary Native American reality. It is interesting to note in this connection that Powers (1990:107) emphasizes the impracticability of defining a phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' as a movement altogether, but he points out that types of it may certainly be.

⁶ In choosing Thomas' definition of 'pan-Indianism' and its characterization of this 'new' identity as 'ethnic identity' I side with a controversial labeling of this feeling of 'Indianness.' It is Powers in particular who opposes the term 'ethnic identity' on grounds of its lacking reflection of the numerous and diverse Indian cultures. Furthermore, he opposes its general implication of a developing 'ethnic group' - which is even expressed in Thomas' definition - for the fear, that it might turn the concept into a 'racist doctrine' (Powers 1990:108). Without attempting to oppose this position on principle, one should still be reminded to the fact that a 'biologically' (blood quantum) and therefore socio-culturally defined 'racial' category 'Native American' is in existence since long through the legal category 'tribe.' Besides, it is not to be denied that there is a notion of 'cluster of core values' in existence, as Lurie (1971:443) puts it, through which a large number of Native Americans associate themselves ideologically with one another. Without attempting to draw from the endless discussion on the characteristics of 'ethnic identity' (ethnicity)

This shifted understanding of the concept 'pan-Indianism' has had lasting consequences in regard as to the way the phenomenon 'powwow' was perceived. Thus, two additional important assumptions resulted as to the concept of 'powwow', which, on their part, found their way out of the academic context as well.

The first of these observations is that the phenomenon 'powwow' is a cultural expression of this 'new' identity as Native Americans and thus, a cultural expression of 'pan-Indianism' (e.g. Sanford 1971:222).

A second observation added later, is to be seen as a direct result of the debate on 'ethnicity.' With it the idea of a strategic employment of cultural symbolism gains momentum in order to strengthen a certain ethnic identity. Therefore, 'the powwow' does not remain an institution through which a cultural manifestation of 'pan-Indianism' is expressed. The 'powwow' attains with it more a status as a system of symbols (Blundell 1985), which is used among others as a strategic and conscious demarcation from the non-Indian society (e.g. Campisi 1975:44). Embedded and adapted into local cultural contexts (Lurie 1965:37), the 'powwow' becomes, even on a tribal level, an 'identity marker' (Lerch and Bullers 1996:390ff.).

Now, we have reached a point where it is necessary to turn towards the concept of 'powwow.' A quick glance into the subject is enough to realize that dealing with this term is much more complex and confusing than with regard to the term 'pan-Indianism.'

Originally, it was an expression of Algonquian-speaking groups. The term 'powwow' covered for them obviously a range of meanings, starting with priest or medicine man and ending with curing or curing ritual. Without much reflection, it was adopted by the settlers of New England in the 17th century. For them it covered predominantly a meaning from sorcerer to the practice of witchcraft (Laudin 1973:15ff.). This content was at least replaced by the 18th century by another meaning. The term 'powwow' came to be used first of all for any kind of assembly of people in which decision making was sought (Young 1981:192). One can assume, that this meaning to the term was inherit since its adoption, since the 'powwows' as ritual leaders did not only have a prominent role in curing ceremonies but also in any meeting where a decision was sought.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century the term powwow, applied to show dances in Oklahoma, found its way back into a broader modern Indian usage as an Anglo-term (Young 1981:192, 297). Within a short period of time it was included into the contemporary 'Indian-English' which serves as a Lingua Franca. Here it came to mean 'dance', respectively, any kind of dance meeting or celebration. Today, it is widely known that the term is of Indian origin.

With this new and broad range of implications attached, the specific usage of the term multiplied, because, as stated, it could be applied theoretically to any kind of event having to do something with dance or show. Besides, these two very broad modes of application it was also used more specifically to dances which were rated as mostly secular (e.g. Gourd Dances or Round Dances), so-called non-religious gatherings, religious events (e.g. Drum Dance) and last but not least to designate events, of which the main attraction is contest dancing.

and 'ethnic groups' at this point, I conclude that the ones noted above clearly support the notion of the existence of such categories. What else should the notion 'emergence of a unifying spirit' (Josephy 1968:29), "a feeling of American Indian nationality" (Sanford 1971:222) or "a certain sense of Indian unity" (Hiribayashi, Willard and Kemnitzer 1972:77) stand for, if not for an observed expression of an culturally legitimized and therefore ideologized 'ethnic identity.'

A very typical characterization of the term powwow from the contemporary Indian side of view is rendered by Wade Baker, a Hidatsa Grass Dancer and singer:

I guess to a lot of people powwow means celebration, bringing people together, enjoying the festivities that are there. Today the powwow system has changed. It's more competitive. ...Now, there is another situation there too, where the Crees on the northern plains treat the powwow almost as a spiritual atmosphere.

It is obvious that one can find in this statement a multitude of meanings merged, which were listed separately above. Still it resembles a very typical characterization of the term 'powwow' from the Indian side. This is demonstrated also by the definition of the term by Lita Mathews in the course of her dissertation thesis, who is, together with her spouse instrumental in the organization of the Gathering of Nations Powwow in Albuquerque, New Mexico, one of the largest events of its kind:

My working definition of the term 'powwow' is a social gathering of people who are celebrating various aspects of Indian culture, be they religious, social, or, in many cases, both. (Mathews 1999:5)

Any of these two examples demonstrate why the adoption of the term as a technical term for a concept of 'powwow' turns out to be so difficult and contradictory to the present day. Generally, one can state with regard to its contemporary usage, that the term 'powwow' is employed mostly in two fields. On one hand, it is used to designate dance events, which are characterized by clearly visual to be distinguished dance categories. It is not an exaggeration to state that Native Americans can enter by means of these categories almost anywhere into competition with one another. The dance styles of these dance events on which these categories are based are mostly connected with the grass dance tradition. These, more than any other form of dance, are associated with the term 'powwow.'

On the other hand the term is also used to designate Gourd Dance events. It is a dance related to an old warrior society, the content of which was reinterpreted and the society newly organized after World War II by the Kiowa, where it was used first as a veterans association. Since variations of this society were once part of the tradition of a number of tribes on the plains, the Gourd Dance witnessed especially in the Greater Oklahoma since the 60s an unknown popularity. At many a place it even displaced the so-called 'war dance', the dances rooted in the Grass Dance tradition (Foster 1991:149; Lassiter 1998:117ff.).

However, since the dissemination of the Gourd Dance has become much more regional in character as compared to the contest dance complex based on the grass dance tradition and furthermore is often used as a complementary element of it, I would like to limit the question pursued to the latter. Therefore, the term 'powwow' stands in this article for a phenomenon 'contest powwow.'

With this, I take the position of a number of central figures in the 'powwow-world' into account. Jack Anquoe for example, a Kiowa Head Singer (Greyhorse Singers), stated quite clearly that:

There is not a powwow unless they have contest dancing.

Even with this apparent clearly characterized field certain problems are conditioned. Even if one neglects the discussion on the contents of the catchword 'contest', there remains the

problem that the occurrence of contest dances is of course not limited to 'contest powwows.' As known, one can find contest dances integrated in different ways into other forms of events, so to say as side attractions. At this point one should be reminded of fairs and rodeos. It is a different matter altogether that these side attractions have turned many an event into a 'regular contest powwow' (e.g. Crow Fair). At this point one should be reminded that the term 'powwow' represents an alternative designation only, even though a very popular one.

Furthermore, one encounters the problem that referring to specific events the degree of the contest part changes often on a yearly basis up to its total abolition. This would turn a former contest powwow into what is commonly labeled a 'traditional' powwow. Therefore, if viewed as a local phenomenon, the 'contest powwow' might be generally regarded as a sporadic and in many cases short-lived phenomenon.

Thus, there is a relative clear, though ever changing prototype-image with regard to the contents for the term 'powwow', in the sense of 'contest powwow.' This image is time and again exemplary materialized through concrete events. In whatever way, the borderland of the actual phenomenon remains on principal elastic, up to the dissolution of the phenomenon altogether.

As noted, the goal of this article is to question established patterns of thought with regard to the phenomenon 'powwow.' Therefore, the discussion will be centered around the basic assumptions extracted above from the two definitions cited. They were to exemplify each a tradition of thought, one being focused on forms of culture change, the other, analyzing the role of 'ethnic identity.' Still, and I would like to stress this point in this context, it is only possible to take a closer look at the assumption on the phenomenon 'powwow' in this article. However, not possible is to deal with the theoretical discussion of the terms 'culture', 'acculturation', 'assimilation', 'ethnic identity' (ethnicity) or the historical context that might have led up to the development of a phenomenon labeled 'pan-Indianism.'

One of the established patterns of thought is, as mentioned, the assumption that the 'powwow' is supposed to be a manifestation of the heterogeneous cultural phenomenon 'pan-Indianism.' This is closely related to the notion, that 'pan-Indianism' as well as its cultural sub-phenomenon 'powwow' are direct results of acculturation and assimilation by the dominant non-Indian society. The phenomenon 'powwow' is dumped unjustifiably into a sort of cultural special category, through the general stress on its heterogeneity in connection with processes of acculturation and assimilation. This special category could be labeled provocatively: 'degenerated cultural forms through heterogeneity.'

Not to be misunderstood; I do not want to suggest with this that someone actually would advocate this position today in the form presented. Still, I believe that it renders some basic positions, on which certain weaker and related arguments are based and still in use. So, nobody would actually rate the phenomenon 'powwow' as being a direct result of acculturation and assimilation. But a very close interdependence is often still seen. The same is true for the felt heterogeneous character of the phenomenon 'powwow' which would most likely not be seen today as being a final cultural transitional stage prior to full assimilation. However, the notion of cultural heterogeneity as related to the phenomenon 'powwow' remains.⁷ It finds its expression in the differentiation of so-called 'tribal' and 'pan-Indian' cultural elements, as if there would be a canon of 'pan-Indian' traits in the 'powwow' tradition on which no tribal claims rest.

⁷ Kenneth Ashworth (1986:167) for example is an exception. He does not really regard the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' as being a primarily cultural phenomenon. Drawing his conclusion at the end of his dissertational thesis

Let us first get to the level of specific content of the phenomenon 'powwow.' Even though the original theoretical implications are not given anymore, the differentiation of so-called 'tribal' and 'pan-Indian' traits still has a certain assessing character. 'Pan-Indian' traits are due to their heterogeneous character and their dissemination not as 'traditional' as 'tribal' cultural elements. As it can be seen if one brings it to a point, it comes basically to a question concerning the general understanding of 'culture exchange' and, therefore, also of 'culture change' as well as of the term 'culture' generally.

Without attempting of losing myself while dealing with a theoretical discussion of the terms mentioned or without pursuing an analysis of characteristic so-called 'pan-Indian' elements, a quick look into history gives way to what is known anyway: cultural exchange, an outcome of which might be labeled cultural heterogeneity, is a normal state of affair and not an abnormal one in regard to human culture.

Let us take a look at the roots of the 'powwow' in this connection. Referring to the much cited unilineal development theory of the Grass Dance complex advocated by Wissler (1916). Accordingly, the archetype of the Grass Dance disseminated from the Pawnee via the Omaha etc. A second, not generally contradicting but broader based approach makes clear the attractivity and the exchange of early forms of Grass Dance long before the reservation period (Duncan 1997). In it a polilineal development is favored, in which different groups associated with the Deghiha - and not only the Omaha - were involved. In support of the latter position Wade Baker noticed:

I guess the historical perspective on the whole grass dance thing is that it started back in the 1800's where we were being transitioned into the reservations, at that same time, or a little bit prior before that.

and further:

I believe it does originate from...not only the Omaha, but other tribes related to the Omaha. They still have the concept of originality coming from there. And you have to give that a lot of respect. Its got to start someplace. And it started from there. And they know that and we know that. They know that we keep up the tradition up here. And a lot of the tribes, through assimilation and acculturation, have lost a lot of that. But they know that at one time they did have those Grass Dance societies.

Without attempting to get deeper into the historical sources of the phenomenon 'powwow', I would like to highlight the fact that early forms of some of its core elements have found their way into a multitude of tribal traditions before the reservation period. Wade Baker explains:

Grass Dance was being passed from...or being bought from tribe to tribe. There were different ways they [the grass dance societies]...[were]...transferred to different tribes...[Some societies] came with positions within the grass dance society and others just took the grass dance society without the positions...The reason why grass dance was being passed along, out to other tribes...[is that] there had to be a way to survive, a way to enjoy life. And this was one way of doing it."

which is based on the analysis of 541 'powwows' in Oklahoma he states, that ,,...the powwow can be viewed primarily as a group response to the Anglo-American economy...".

The said words make clear, how difficult it should be to determine defining characteristics on which one could possibly differentiate between so-called 'tribal' and 'pan-Indian' cultural elements in the 'powwow tradition.' However, the said states obviously that not too much thought should be given to the 'fact' that the Grass Dance found its way into different tribal traditions. Rather, questions inquiring the 'actors', the 'how' and 'what for' with regard to adoption or adaptation of cultural elements or traditions are obviously more promising. As is known, culture exchange does not take place in a vacuum, and therefore, there is of course a difference as to who was generally involved and whether it took place on a mainly voluntary basis, or through formal transfer or through force. Besides, a decisive factor for the realization of change is hereby the factor of speed in which these take place.

This brings us to the factor of assimilation policy and its possible effects on the exchange of cultural traits and in particular on the development of the phenomenon 'powwow.' As with regard to the Grass dance complex, one can actually note a definite increase in interest since the end of the 19th century. It is a period of time, which witnessed the beginning of taking effect of the reservation system for the native inhabitants of the plains and prairies and an application of an aggressive assimilation policy, which was in particular destructive and restrictive between 1890-1930.

Therefore, it can not be denied that the social and cultural crisis as well as a certain opposition provoked through suppression measurements on part of the government did play a certain role in the development of the phenomenon 'powwow.' Nevertheless, this idea should not be overly stressed. There is only an indirect and not an immediate connection between the two.

The stress on the indirect influences of the assimilation policy is crucial for leaving space to perceive and appreciate the activities of Native Americans at that time. They were of course in the first place independent from the assimilation tendencies on the side of the government, even though a superficial look - let us say the 4th of July or New Year's Celebrations - might lead us to believe the opposite.

The fact that at these occasions - or at Wild West Shows, to draw from a different example - traditional dances among others were performed at all, actually stands for a failure of this policy. This is true for its goal to smother the love for Indian traditions as well as its helplessness to suppress the curiosity of the non-Indian public.

The following is a narrative example of an assimilationist's failure to prevent a dance. It relates to an incident in Oklahoma in which a certain Amy E. Boobar of the Ponca Indian Mission of the Women's Missionary Society tried energetically to prevent a 'powwow' of the Ponca in 1929. The following sentences to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs exemplifies the aggressive attitude of the time and that it was, by the way, actually the 49er couple dance performed only after the actual, official program that made her feelings run high:

The last camp was practically unsupervised and uncontrolled. The war dances sponsored by the older men occupied only part of the time. The rest of the time, especially the nights after the war dances were closed were used by the young people in a way which stirred up the worst of their passions with most disastrous results...If they camp another time right now I doubt if there will be a family on the reservation which is not broken up. There has been drinking, fighting and unspeakable immorality. The young people danced indiscriminately, without lights, from midnight until near daylight. (Boobar in Young 1981:278f.)

Neither the Commissioner with the help of agent in charge of the Ponca, nor a wire from the Indian Office succeeded in preventing this 'powwow.' The organizers simple performed it

obviously on Indian private property (Young 1981:279). Ironically, the latter represents a result of one of the most dreadful attempts of the assimilation, the allotment policy.

Let us turn to the steadily increasing and, therefore, more than ever obvious exchange and mingling of music and dance traditions in this period which evidently led to the notion of an existing and culturally heterogeneous phenomenon 'powwow.' Doing this, I do not want to limit myself to the periods of aggressive attempts of assimilation. Especially the seemingly unspectacular modes of interaction among each other, often beyond the actual 'powwow' event, were the ones that obviously led to a high degree of exchange of music and dance traditions.

As an example of these forms of unspectacular mingling processes, I would like to cite some childhood reminiscences of Jack Anquoe, the Kiowa singer previously noted. In his recollections he mentions the reasons for his attendance of his first non Kiowa 'powwow':

And then in the middle 40s my father was also into the Native American Church. He made contact with some Otoe people. So my mother, my sister Anita and myself, we caught the bus from Anadarko to Red Rock, a place called Build Corner, and this Otoe man and his family was there to pick us up with his wagon, so we went about six miles in his wagon to his camp...It was the first time that I have ever been to another tribes powwow.

Two points in Jack Anquoe's recollections have to be emphasized. One is the existence and the development of new relationships between members of different tribes. As it can be seen, mutual interests and activities are often the basis of their existence. It is obvious that the 'powwow' as an event is just one of a number of options available. In this case it was a friendship based on his father's initiative in the Native American Church that led to Jack Anquoe's participation in a non Kiowa tribal dance event. The second, equally important point is the mentioned existence of new and faster modes of transportation, in this case a bus. It is a matter of fact, that the generally increasing radius for activities did its part with regard to new and more frequent forms of interaction.

These new possibilities had far-reaching consequences. On his early trips to 'powwows' in other parts of Oklahoma, Jack Anquoe got to know soon cultural traditions which were new for him. One of these would be his acquaintance with Ponca music, which lead to lasting consequences. Referring to it he noticed:

They [the Ponca] impressed me so much that I gave almost my whole singing after the Ponca songs.

This passion would eventually go so far that he, as a singer, would compose in his latter career a number of songs in Ponca. It is important to note, that Jack Anquoe does not represent an exception at all. On the contrary, it is an exception to find a singer whose repertoire is limited to songs of one group. And this is by no means a phenomenon limited to the early reservation period or to the present. Songs and dances - and I refer again to the roots of the Grass Dance tradition - were exchanged at any time.

A second, more indirect result of the active policy of assimilation was the increase of non tribal marriages. This in turn found its expression on a demographic level also. But again, this phenomenon is no novelty limited to the 20th century. It is the radius and the frequency that have changed. The resulting consequences, that is the exchange and acquaintance with unfamiliar ideas and traditions, remained unchanged, though they occurred in a shorter period of time.

At this point, I would like to mention the Ralph Zotigh, another Kiowa Head Singer (Zotigh Singers), who may be regarded as a central figure for bringing the 'powwow tradition' to the Southwest. In contrast to the example of Jack Anquoe, where the role of a 'recipient' was stressed, I would like to stress the role of a 'donor' with regard to Ralph Zotigh. He has met his wife to be at Haskell Indian School, Kansas, and followed her back to New Mexico:

I was born in the southwestern part of Oklahoma where the majority of the Kiowa tribe that I belong to reside today. I moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico forty five years ago. The reason I came here is because my wife is a pueblo. And she tied me up and drug me over here and I have been here ever since...But when I first came here I was totally lost. To me my whole world was the southwestern part of Oklahoma...When I moved here to my wife's country I was just, I don't know, hungry to identify with someone of my own kind.

We are called plains Indians, and all the people here are Pueblos, Apaches and Navajos. And, I guess, I just felt out of place. But way back in those days there were other what they call urban Indians, people that have married into tribes here and others have come for economic reasons...So gradually we would get together and kind of stick together. And they found out that I like to sing...

And this was about 1961. We were gathered together as plains urban Indians. We would bring our wives and would sit there and we would sing round dance songs. Gradually we begin to talk about bring in the powwow.

With this statement, I would like to turn to the second set of assumptions related to the 'powwow', to those associated with the focal point 'identity.' Without attempting to deal with the complex of social and political developments during and after World War II at this point, the results of which are well known. Of these, a considerable Indian urban population and a noticeable new self-consciousness as Native Americans are the most important. As noted, these processes were reflected also in the reformulation of the concept of pan-Indianism, in which the 'novel' focal point evolved, 'ethnic identity.' The 'powwow' was reinterpreted as being one of the most exponent cultural institution, through which this identity was expressed.

Interestingly enough, in the same period a boom like increase of interest in 'powwows' occurred as well as a noticeable wave of dissemination of this form of event. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise, that a connection was drawn between the two phenomena.

But, the cited recollections of Ralph Zotigh alone make clear that the relation between the new sense of unity and the increase of 'powwows' may be seen just as being part of a more complex context. Ralph Zotigh states quite clearly, that he was not searching for a way to express a novel Indian identity. Rather he was seeking the association with peoples, whose cultural backgrounds were more familiar than that of most of his Indian and non-Indians neighbors alike.

Similar were the experiences of Arlie Neskahai, a Navajo Lead Singer (White Eagle Singers), who was attending High School at Cortez, Colorado, at that time in which he got involved with 'powwow traditions.' In contrast to Ralph Zotigh he was seeking Indian contact without stated cultural preferences:

I was mostly involved in sports and academics. I was really good in school and I was really good in sports. I was in all the teams and everything. But actually it kind of frightened me because I was losing connection with Indian people and I started to notice that...All my friends I hang out with were white guys and that was hard on me because in my earlier grades it wasn't that way. There was more Indians on the team. And I started to miss my buddies...and they dropped out of sports .

Whereas Ralph Zotigh was relative consciously seeking contact with other plains Indians, Arlie got involved into Indian activities because of his general abilities. Through these, he would come out one day as a well known 'powwow' singer:

Right around that time these Ute kids came to see me. They walked up to me at school and they said: "Arlie, we want you to be the president of the Indian Club" and I was kind of shocked... And I mean to this day when I talk about it, it has a lot of meaning to me, because it was right at the point where I think I could have gone off and become something else and who knows what I would have been...I have found a way to reconnect to the other Indian kids again. I felt so good, it was such a relief and like a lifeline for me back to my identity, my people.

As a novice to cultural activities which the Indian Club offered, whose presidency he accepted, he was slowly introduced by other members of the club to the cultural niche in the 'powwow tradition', which would eventually become his passion and his way of life, the 'powwow' music:

So it was probably about the third meeting or so, I was there dancing around, just having a fun, man it was a blast...And then I was standing there and I was listening to them sing and then they pulled up a chair..."Come on, sit down, man" So I sat down, just sat down. They wouldn't dare to give me a drum stick. So that's the first time I sat down, just sat down and watched. So, they asked me if I wanted to learn. And I says "Ya". So little by little they started schooling me and they taught me my first songs...The first song they taught me was a 49 song.

Thus, it is not surprising that it was through 'powwow' music that Arlie Neskahai also found his way to active 'powwow' participation:

And then they found out that I had a car...They said: "This is pretty good situation here. Why? Because you got a car, we got the drum and we want to go to powwows..."So, we started strapping that drum on top of the car and taking off. So, I was their powwow ride.

It should be clear that both, Ralph Zotigh as well as Arlie Neskahai, knew about their being categorized as 'Indian' long before their participation in 'powwows' due to their respective group association. One can only speculate on the degree of self-identification with that category at that time. Besides not wanting and not being able to take a position on this question, one has to mention additionally with regard to the concept of ethnic identity, that it is of course a question of definition as to what is understood by this term. Is already the notion of being categorized in a certain way to be defined as such? Should a subjectively felt notion of belonging and an expression of that feeling be the main criteria? Or should an ideological component be the determining characterization, in the sense of 'pan-Indianism' as 'ethnic identity' being kind of an 'Indian nationalism'? Be that as it may, it should be clear, that misunderstandings as to the relationship between the phenomenon 'powwow' and the phenomenon 'pan-Indianism' - in the sense of 'ethnic identity' - are conditioned on the basis of the latter's obscurity.

As to the statements of the two, representative consultants cited, the 'powwow' did not represent for them at any rate a political or ideological field of integration. But, what they expressed were new living conditions, which made them end up somewhere far away from home which caused them to feel lonely and homesick. This in turn made them consciously search for the company of people who were similar or shared similar beliefs. The 'powwow' as a field of

action offered for those people longing for association a framework where this company sought could be found. This in turn, as it can be seen, supported the development of group identity, as well as strengthened their self-esteem.

In this light, the ever increasing number and popularity of 'powwows' after World War II did not appear to be so much an expression of a new 'ethnic identity', even though the group consciousness as Native American certainly gained a new quality at that time. The growing importance of the phenomenon 'powwow' is rather obviously an expression of new social conditions and the needs and opportunities connected with them.

To divert the attention from the topic of identity, I would like to draw on new examples showing that there were definitely more factors involved in the increasing popularity of 'powwows', other than a quest for belonging and identifying. Norman Roach for example, a Lakota Northern Fancy Dancer, grew up as a child in the period where the 'powwow tradition' became more popular and stronger:

The first powwows I have seen was probably in the late 50s, 1958, mostly in South Dakota and parts of North Dakota. And I used to see the dancers mainly because my grandfather was a dancer. You know, he was really into it...I remember watching it as a kid.

Even though Norman Roach got into contact with traditional dancing at a very young age, like many other Indian kids, it was not this fact as such that triggered his interest in dancing, which led him to be a passionate dancer in his later years. In his case, it was stimulated in far-off Wyoming where he found his first role models as a dancer during a show performance. They were to be his first main inspiration:

Well, as a little boy...there were not too many big powwows, so one time my mother [and] my dad we packed up and went to Sheridan, Wyoming, to watch the pageant, they called it not so much a powwow but they were doing performances on stage. There was this little boy about my age and I saw him...and he was kind of famous because he is a little boy but he really could dance...See I danced before that...and I kind of decided that ...I wanted to be like him. But then I saw another guy dancing, a man named Uros Blue Arm, both [he and the boy] were from Eagle Butte...and he would dance and people would say that he floated, I watched him dance and I was just totally, totally on and off him...I said I got to dance now.

The example of Norman Roach is in many instances quite typical. And as such, it was not only that he got interested in dancing and taking part in 'powwows.' His mother, obviously tired of just being a driver and a spectator, decided to be an active participant also:

So when I wanted to go more into powwows [in the early 60s]...she started taking me around and then - she had danced before then -...all of the sudden she said: "Oh what the heck, I'll come and dance too." And then she started getting serious about powwow. And then there was money involved, competition, so she entered the dance contest.

Let us come back to our central question stated in the heading: Is the phenomenon 'contest powwow' a cultural expression of 'pan Indianism'?

As can be shown, the terms and their meanings are an disadvantageous starting point. On one hand, we have the term 'powwow.' Because of the historical evolution of the term, and its

plethora of everyday connotations, the term is in and of itself nondescript. Thus, I have limited my interests to the more concrete notion of 'contest powwow' to be used as a prototype concept of 'powwow' in this article. This is a notion also shared prominently by Native Americans themselves today.

On the other hand, two extreme positions exemplified different theoretical traditions of thought in respect to the concept of 'pan-Indianism.' This concept went through a parallel theoretical reorientation as it was taking place in the general American anthropology at that time. With a changing interest from acculturation and assimilation processes towards topics related to and centered around the term 'ethnic identity', not only the general meaning of the concept 'pan-Indianism' changed. With it, anthropologists also began to view the phenomenon 'powwow' in a different light. It changed from being assessed as a heterogeneous Indian hotchpotch to be viewed as an intertribal cultural expression despite tribal and regional variety.

Both theoretical traditions left, even beyond the academic context basic assumptions concerning the general relations between the two phenomena. At both of their cores is the thought that the phenomenon 'powwow' represents a cultural expression of 'pan-Indianism.'

In dealing with the first set of assumptions, which is basically centering around the general understanding of cultural exchange, I tried to get away from the burdened discussion concerning the terms acculturation and assimilation. Instead, I have tried to push questions concerning the people involved, the purpose of adoption (actually adaptation), general opportunities, attractivity and thus cultural compatibility to the forefront, as factors for cultural exchange.

Starting point of the second group of assumptions centering around the term 'ethnic identity' was the implication that the phenomenon 'powwow' is an expression of a new identity as Native Americans. This notion is caught in the characterization of the 'powwow' as a 'vehicle of pan-Indianism.' In accordance with the examples cited, I have argued that the phenomenon 'powwow' is not so much an expression of a new 'ethnic identity', even though it is producing definitely a new quality of an existing identity as Native Americans. Rather, I have stressed the point that 'powwows' as a field of action and interaction as well as a stage offer the opportunity to meet new needs in a state of drastically changing social conditions. Furthermore, the examples cited have shown, that one cannot reduce the 'powwow' to the factors 'ethnic identity' and 'meeting new needs.' Factors immanent to the event itself, as the aspect of contest, show an obvious motivating and activating impact.

I intentionally close with these open end train of thoughts, without seeking a specific answer. The time has come, to assess the phenomenon 'contest powwow' beyond the discussion of 'pan-Indianism', 'acculturation', 'assimilation' or 'ethnic identity', as an 'independent', full sociocultural form of expression, which is subjected, according to location and context to its own dynamics. With it, I would like to leave it up to the reader as to whether it should be called and characterized according to the people involved Indian, pan-Indian, intertribal, tribal, international or whatever. In any case, being an open cultural form of communication the 'powwow' currently offers due to its flexibility and dissemination an extremely attractive alternative to the tendentious exclusive and separating character of older tribal traditions, which is even open to a limited extend to non-Indians.

To this effect, I would like to leave the final words up to Howard Bad Hand, a Lakota Lead Singer (Red Leaf/ Heartbeat Singers):

For the ones who do not ever leave the reservation, they can claim this tribal affiliation or identity, but it starts to separate instead of uniting. And the thing about dance competition and the whole evolution of dance competition really to me was like the field of action where people got together. Many different tribes, old traditional enemy lines became...blurred in the whole evolution of competitive powwow. The positive thing is that those traditional enemy lines are no longer existent...But if you are going to go back and try to separate and make that unique then what you are really doing is you are starting to create those separations again...So out of that then we try to find where everything started and who gets credit for it...and all those lines were blurred even from the beginning...And you know, the thing as a singer, I really try ...not to get into a position where you create sacred cows...some form is just something you do for a moment, but everybody thinks it is so sacred, they treat it as such, and sometimes it takes off from where they heard you singing. And this is true of any other singer. It takes off and then it seems to have a long history or tradition behind it...I think a lot of fades and lot of things that are now part of the powwow world started that way. And that's the role you have as a singer. You realize that you create tradition. Even as a singer you are creating tradition, you are creating experience, you are in the forming of it...As a singer you have a right to, you know, so called "touch the spirit world". And whatever you get from it you have to help people connect with their own reality, you are not giving them something, what you are doing is have the people really reconnect with what is their own reality. Any artist function is that...

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