

Choosing the Songs

The Densmore Repatriation Project

No. 1. Song of the White Buffalo Maiden (Catalogue No. 569)

Sung by CHARGING THUNDER

VOICE ♩ = 58
DRUM not recorded

The musical score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a 2/4 time signature, which changes to 3/4 for the second measure, and then back to 2/4 for the third measure. The second staff starts with a 3/4 time signature, which changes to 2/4 for the final measure. The third staff starts with a 2/4 time signature, which changes to 3/4 for the second measure, and then back to 2/4 for the third measure. The fourth staff starts with a 2/4 time signature, which changes to 3/4 for the second measure, and then back to 2/4 for the third measure. The fifth staff starts with a 2/4 time signature, which changes to 3/4 for the second measure, and then back to 2/4 for the third measure. The sixth staff starts with a 2/4 time signature, which changes to 3/4 for the second measure, and then back to 2/4 for the third measure. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Ni - ya tan-in-yaj ma-wa-ni ye ni - ya tan-in-yaj ma-wa-ni
ye e e o - ya - te le i - ma - wa - ni na ho ho
ho - tan - in - yaj ma - wa - ni ye ye ye ye a ye a
ye ni - ya tan - in - yaj ma - wa - ni - ye e e wa -
lu - ta le i - ma - wa - ni na ho ho
ho - tan - in - yaj ma - wa - ni ye ye ye ye a ye a ye

From *Teton Sioux Music* {Government Printing Office, 1918}

Frances Densmore was methodical in her categorization of the 240 songs included in *Teton Sioux Music*. Numerous categories include Ceremony and Sun Dance songs, Dream Songs, Healing Songs, Society Songs, Songs of War, Dance Songs and Honoring Songs. As Densmore writes in *American Indians and Their Music*, the words in these songs “are few in number and suggest rather than express the idea of the song.”

The collection of songs begins with the The White Buffalo Calf Pipe (Ptehíjčala Čhaṇnúṅpa), and as Lakota author and artist Kevin Locke emphatically points out, “*She* didn’t choose to start there, *they* did.” Densmore wrote:

“It is fitting that a narrative of the gift of the White Buffalo Calf pipe to the Sioux should introduce the present account of the ceremonies and customs of the tribe. Throughout this memoir, reference will be made to ceremonial acts performed in accordance with the instructions of the White Buffalo Maiden, a supernatural being through whose agency the ceremonial pipe was given to the Sioux.”

WORDS	
niya' taṇiṅ'yaṅ.....	with visible breath ¹
mawa'ni ye.....	I am walking
oya'te ² le.....	this nation (the Buffalo nation)
ima'wani.....	I walk toward
na.....	and
ho'taṇiṅyaṅ.....	my voice is heard
mawa'ni ye.....	I am walking
niya' taṇiṅ'yaṅ.....	with visible breath
mawa'ni ye.....	I am walking
walu'ta le.....	this scarlet relic
ima'wani ye.....	(for it) I am walking

Thirty-three songs associated with the Sun Dance are included in *Teton Sioux Music*. According to Lakota singer Courtney Yellowfat, “They go in order, they tell a story.”

We will never know if more of these Sun Dance songs were recorded and discarded why Densmore, or if the Lakota elders choose to share only some of these sacred

songs. We do know there are more, because contemporary Lakota singers know them. They have been passed down generation to generation and are still in use.

Suggested video link:

[The Story and Meaning of the White Buffalo Calf Maiden](#) (11:09)

For more about the Densmore Repatriation Project go to:

www.lakotasongs.com/

Bibliography

Teton Sioux Music
By Frances Densmore
Washington, Government Printing Office, 1918

*Frances Densmore and American Indian Music,
A Memorial Volume*
Compiled and Edited by Charles Hofman
Heye Foundation, 1968

Travels with Frances Densmore
Edited by Joan M. Jenson and Michelle Wick Patterson
University of Nebraska Press, 2015

World of the Teton Sioux Indians
Edited by Joseph A. Fitzgerald
World Wisdom, Inc., 2016