

Choosing the Songs

No. 1. Song of the White Buffalo Maiden (Catalogue No. 569)
Sung by CHARGING THUNDER

VOICE $\text{♩} = 58$
DRUM not recorded

Ni - ya taṅ-iṅ-yaṅ ma-wa-ni ye ni - ya taṅ-iṅ-yaṅ ma-wa-ni
ye e e o - ya - te le i - ma - wa - ni na ho ho
ho - taṅ - iṅ-yaṅ ma - wa-ni ye ye ye ye a ye a
ye ni - ya taṅ - iṅ-yaṅ ma - wa-ni - ye e e wa -
lu - ta le i - ma - wa - ni na ho ho
ho - taṅ - iṅ-yaṅ ma-wa-ni ye ye ye ye a ye a ye

¹ The catalogue numbers used throughout this memoir correspond respectively with the numbers designating the phonograph record of the songs, which are preserved in the Bureau of American Ethnology.

Densmore was very methodical in her categorization of the 240 songs included in *Teton Sioux Music*. There are numerous categories including 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 (Ptehíṅčala Čhaṅnúṅpa), 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' tanj'yan.....	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'tanj'yan.....	my voice is heard
mawa'ni ye.....	I am walking
niya' tanj'yan.....	with visible breath
mawa'ni ye.....	I am walking
walu'ta le.....	this scarlet relic
ima'wani ye.....	(for it) I am walking

There are 33 songs associated with the Sun Dance and according to Lakota singer Courtney Yellowfat, “The go in order, they tell a story.”

We will never know if more of these Sun Dance songs were recorded and discarded, 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 are still in use.

Numerous examples of these different songs and explanations can be found at:

www.lakotasongs.com

Suggested video link: <https://vimeo.com/731077978>

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