

element be not hedged about with secrecy or taboo, that there be nothing esoteric about it. Thus, the spectacular part of a religious ceremony is much more readily borrowed by a neighbouring tribe than the esoteric elements known only to a few. Similarly, a myth or tale which is told for the mere fun of the telling travels faster than an origin or family legend that is owned by a specific society or clan. Again, a medicinal herb or other remedy whose use is widely known and openly practised in one tribe will be readily transmitted to a neighbouring tribe, while a method of treatment that is treasured as a secret by a particular family or religious society¹ tends to oppose itself to cultural transmission. In practice, of course, all cultural elements, no matter of how esoteric a nature, are capable of diffusion. It is a question here merely of relative rates of diffusion.

A still more important, if less easily grasped, condition of ready transmission is this, that the culture element in question be capable of detachment from its context and comprehensible as such. There is no doubt that different culture elements are thus detachable or, what amounts to the same thing, capable of conscious formulation by the native in quite different degrees. We have here a continuous gamut, ranging from the zero, or almost such, of a vocalic or consonantic change to indicate some subtle grammatical notion up to the maximum of what we may awkwardly term "conceptual detachability" of a type of implement of clear-cut form, material, and use. Obviously, culture elements are transmissible, roughly speaking, with an ease that is proportionate to their "conceptual detachability." Thus, we expect a ceremonial dance as such to be much more readily transmitted than any notions there may be as to its function; a myth plot more readily than, let us say, the cosmogonic ideas which serve as its frame; an element of decorative design than the precise mechanical technique in which it is executed or its style of artistic treatment in a particular tribe; a definite social custom, say the mother-in-law taboo, than the exact range of meaning covered by a relationship term.

¹ Thus, the various lines of descent among the Nootka tribes all possess medicines which are guarded with jealous secrecy. Compare with this the secret knowledge of a remedy for rattlesnake bites possessed by the Rattlesnake fraternity of the Hopi Indians.