

Sonic Sovereignty: Performing Hopi Authority in Öngtupqa

TREVOR G. REED

Abstract

In this article, I explore the ways territorial authority or sovereignty emerges from within a particular mode of Indigenous creativity—the creation and performance of Hopi taatawi (traditional songs)—despite the appropriation of Hopi traditional lands by the American settler-state. Hopi territories within Öngtupqa (Grand Canyon) are just a sample of the many places where Indigenous authority, as expressed through sound-based performances, continues to resonate despite the imposition of settler-colonial structures that have either silenced Indigenous performances of authority or severed these places from Indigenous territories. Drawing on the work of Hopi composers and intellectuals, I explore how Hopi musical composition and performance are deeply intertwined with Hopi political philosophy and governance, resulting in a form of sovereignty that is inherently sonic rather than strictly literary or textual in nature. Recognizing that this interconnection between territorial authority and sound production is common across many Indigenous communities, I propose listening to contemporary Indigenous creativity not just as an aesthetic form but as a source of sonic sovereignty.

Introduction

In August 2016, the Grand Canyon Music Festival held the premiere performances of Puhutawi¹ on the edge of the South Rim of Öngtupqa, known by many as Grand Canyon National Park. The concert had been organized to commemorate the centennial of the United States National Park Service, supported with Park Service funds, as well as funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and New Music USA. The Park Service had sponsored Puhutawi to “celebrate the magnificence of America’s national cultural treasures through art . . . by connecting art projects with the natural, historic and cultural settings of the National Park System and [to] inspire a new generation to discover these special places and experience our great heritage.”² By bringing Indigenous artists into conversation with the majestic landscape, the Park Service had hoped to motivate more Native Americans to visit Grand Canyon National Park—a demographic it had apparently struggled to attract. What it failed to recognize, however, was the fact that Öngtupqa remains a sovereign territory of Hopi and several other Indigenous peoples, despite being severed from them under settler law.³

¹ A rough English gloss for this word might be “new traditional song.”

² National Park Service, “More than \$1 Million Goes to Fund Arts Projects in National Parks,” National Park Service Office of Communications, May 10, 2016, updated June 22, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/05-10-2016a.htm>.

³ In this article, I use the term “settler” and “settler colonialism” to reference concepts that are critically important to understanding the colonization and dispossession of Indigenous lands. As Patrick Wolfe theorized it, settler colonialism is both a process and social structure whereby those not indigenous to a territory (settlers) work to dispossess those who are (Indigenous peoples) through their

Seated or standing on the floor of Grand Canyon National Park's Desert View Watchtower, seventy or so spectators—including several members of the Hopi tribe who had traveled across portions of what is now the Navajo Nation to attend the performance—applauded as Clark Tenakhongva, a Hopi composer and singer (and now Tribal Vice Chairman), welcomed everyone “to our land” and began to sing a series of taatawi (Hopi traditional songs), including this song:⁴

Okiwa Okiwa, sinomu	I pity you, I pity you, people.
Yep i' Öngtupqa pas himu	Here this [Grand Canyon] is a very important (sacred) place.
Pay nu' yayniwa niikyango	Now, I am just beginning, but
Hiisavat nu' umumi yep	I have something brief to tell you while I am here.
lavaytinit yep'e.	
Okiwa, oheyi ohiye, Sinomu	I pity you, <i>oh-eyi ohi-ye</i> [a man's expression of regret], people.
Pay yep Öngtupqa pas himu	This [Grand Canyon] is a very important place.
Yep i' qatsi yayniwa	This is where this life began.
Yep i' qatsi ahoy tiitso'tiwa	This is where life returns when we have finished our part.
Paas ⁵ yep himu, noqw yep uma	You should be careful of what is here; yet, you are disrespecting it.
sinom it qa kyaptsi'yyungwa.	
Okiwa, Okiwa sinomu	I pity you, I pity you, people.
Oheyi Ohiye, Sinomu	<i>Ohe-yi Ohi-ye</i> , people.
Pay uma yep i' Öngtupqa	You who are present at Öngtupqa
Qa, qa sòsoyam pas	No, you will not disrespect it, every one of you people.
kyaptsi'yyungwni sinomu.	

Based solely on its words, one understands that this song is a kind of rebuke, presumably of settler activities in and around Öngtupqa. But, as I will explain, the fact that it is performed in Hopilavayi (Hopi language) and comes in the form of a tawi (traditional song) is both significant and powerful. It is an injunction to refrain from acting in a certain way within a particular place, backed by the authority of a network of powerful, long-term relations existing there. It confidently asserts jurisdiction, or a sovereign's “general power to exercise authority over all persons and things within its territory.”⁶ And yet, coming in the form of a song, some might mistake its true nature.

In this article, I briefly explore the ways territorial authority emerges from within a particular form of Indigenous sonic creativity. This emergent authority is just one example of the many ways Indigenous peoples continue to govern through sound

liquidation and elimination. Settler colonialism dissolves and destroys Indigenous societies through perpetual invasion of every aspect of Indigenous lives while presuming and assuming the right to govern indigenous territories and peoples. See Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 387–409.

⁴ I want to thank Daryn Melvin for his assistance in reviewing my translation of this song and providing additional insights. This transcription is of the full song composed by Clark Tenakhongva and performed in a subsequent performance on August 27, 2016, at the Shrine of the Ages, also located on the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. This text and the text of the performance at the Watchtower are very similar but not identical. I have included this text here as it corresponds with the version that Tenakhongva intended to be made available for public broadcast.

⁵ This word could also be “pas'i,” which would mean “this place is sacred.”

⁶ See Bryan A. Garner, *Black's Law Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Toronto, ON: Thompson West, 2019), s.v. “Jurisdiction.”; see generally Justin B. Richland, “Jurisdiction: Grounding Law in Language,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (2013): 209–26.

within territories settler-colonial regimes claim as their own. In the pages that follow I attempt to explain how Tenakhongva, a 60-year old Hopi man and United States Army veteran, could expect all present—United States officials, tourists, Navajo Nation residents, Hopi people, and all those who would hear his performance on radio and social media—to conform their actions to his voice. Indeed, understanding Tenakhongva's articulation of sovereignty in this moment requires us to rethink what Indigenous song is, how it functions, and how we might listen and respond to it.

On Sovereignty

Listening to Tenakhongva's performance at Öngtupqa as a kind of sonic sovereignty, or resonance of political authority within territory, requires merging theories of sound and law—intellectual domains which European and European-descended settler thought has traditionally conceptualized as separate and perhaps irreconcilable.⁷ My argument here is that Hopi sovereignty, like many forms of Indigenous sovereignty, is a kind of authority that directly contradicts concepts of authority performed by the settler-state both in its form and generative possibilities. At the outset, I want to explain that my purpose in drawing connections between sound and sovereignty is not just for academic curiosity.⁸ Instead, I want to encourage both music and sound studies scholars and the broader public to hear Indigenous songs as potentially much more than aesthetic objects or modes of representation. Rather, music and sound are often tools or processes whose uses have consequences across a variety of political and social networks, human and non-human. I also want to persuade legal and Indigenous studies scholars to hear Indigenous culture as not just a source of social difference or a kind of communal property from which “others” should be excluded, but as the actual material of governance and a source of Indigenous authority—a position historically occupied strictly by texts within European-descended legal thought. Because discourses on sovereignty have been so closely tied to legal processes and the connection between sound production and sovereignty may not seem immediately clear, I begin by briefly discussing how the two might interrelate conceptually.

A full intellectual history of the term “sovereignty” is not possible here. Standard definitions of sovereignty proclaim it as “supreme dominion, authority, or rule.”⁹ As Vine Deloria Jr. expressed it, sovereignty is, in essence, “making another political entity respect your rights deriving from a contractual relationship you have with them.”¹⁰ But while seemingly straightforward, sovereignty is a deeply troubled concept,¹¹ especially

⁷ For a critique of the way Western Modernity has packaged knowledge into discrete domains while “purifying” them of their social relations, see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁸ Vine Deloria Jr., “Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Looking at the Windmills in Our Minds,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 27. In Deloria's experience, theorizing “sovereignty” does little good for Indigenous peoples unless it is tied to concrete efforts to secure Indigenous rights.

⁹ See Garner, “Sovereignty.”

¹⁰ Deloria, “Intellectual Self-Determination,” 26.

¹¹ Richard Falk, “Sovereignty,” in *The Oxford Companion to Comparative Politics*, 2 vols., ed. Joel Krieger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2:398. (“The very centrality of sovereignty [in diverse

as applied to Indigenous peoples. As I will discuss below, differences between Indigenous and Enlightenment philosophies of sovereignty have historically worked as justifications for the conquest, colonization, and dispossession of indigenous lands and peoples.

Sovereignty originally referred to the divine authority of European kings, which justified their exercise of an “inherent right” to make war and to govern domestic affairs in the name of a deity.¹² But as bodies of citizens, rather than monarchs, assumed the role of “sovereign” over European and American territories, some key philosophical tensions arose which Enlightenment philosophy set out to resolve. Whereas before a single monarch or other supreme ruler could theoretically exercise all power within a given territory he or she controlled to the exclusion of others, the advent of popular sovereignty set up a direct conflict between individual interests and the interests of the nation as a whole over how sovereign power should be distributed and exercised. The potential consequences of absolute individual sovereignty could be dire: when all hold equal right to govern or wage war against their neighbor, all live in fear, unless they join together in reciprocity-based alliances to accumulate power—alliances which some Enlightenment philosophers would deprive “the people” of autonomy and freedom.¹³ Democracy could be a framework for determining the voice of “the people,” but a consolidated power to organize “the people” and to carry out its will, even against dissenters, was needed.¹⁴ Thus, Enlightenment philosophers understood that “the people” would also have to cede many of their individual interests to the general will of the collective for popular sovereigns to be authoritative within a territory.¹⁵

Europeans and American settlers carried out transactions of sovereignty from individuals to their newly formed nation-states through constitutions, compacts, and political institutions: these provided the nation-state with, among other things, a stable referent for sources of “exclusive jurisdiction, territorial integrity, and guaranteed nonintervention in domestic affairs.”¹⁶ By establishing a collectively managed sovereign government that could delineate boundaries between individual citizens and between itself and other nations, while also transferring to each nation-state some portion of its citizens’ individual rights, popular sovereigns could

strands of political thought] ensures its contested character. In each setting, meanings are attributed to sovereignty that accord with the interpreter’s project. There is little neutral ground when it comes to sovereignty.”)

¹² Joanne Barker, ed., *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 2.

¹³ See Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 26. (“Hobbesian anthropology is constructed on this fixed principle: ‘Men by natural passion are divers ways offensive one to another.’ They are united by the common desire to injure one another since they aim at the same objective constituted by power. . . . One can ensure life, which is the first necessity, only by accumulating power, which is the first passion.”)

¹⁴ See Robert Jackson, *Sovereignty: Evolution of an Idea* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 87–89.

¹⁵ Thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Jean Jacques Rousseau are often credited with these innovations. Jackson, *Sovereignty*, 87–97.

¹⁶ Wallace Coffey and Rebecca Tsoie, “Rethinking the Tribal Sovereignty Doctrine: Cultural Sovereignty and the Collective Future of Indian Nations,” *Stanford Law and Policy Review* 12 (2001): 197.

effectively “immunize” the public against the perpetual threat of internal violence while allowing citizens a certain degree of individual autonomy.¹⁷ Thus, popular sovereignty seemed, at least to Enlightenment philosophers, to obviate the kinds of relations of reciprocity they perceived to be at the heart of Indigenous societies.¹⁸

While the United States and other settler sovereigns have recognized Indigenous sovereignties as predating the arrival of Europeans in Indigenous territories, their courts have justified placing limitations on the authority of Indigenous sovereigns by imaging them as being at an earlier stage of development and lacking the hallmarks of full nationhood.¹⁹ Even the most brazen attacks on the inherent sovereignty of Indigenous peoples in the United States by the U.S. Supreme Court have been prefaced by declarations that Native American Tribes retain some “inherent” sovereignty.²⁰ But while Tribes maintain significant flexibility to govern as they wish,²¹ and can choose their sovereign structure with only minimal oversight by the United States,²² Indigenous sovereignty is not understood as absolute within its territory in the same way that the United States’ sovereignty is absolute.²³

¹⁷ Esposito, *Communitas*, 29–30.

¹⁸ Esposito, *Communitas*, 12–13.

¹⁹ For example, the US Supreme Court has consistently reiterated that Native American tribes possess power to govern their territories and their own citizens, but other attributes have been implicitly divested by their relationships to colonizing governments. See, for example, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, which denominates Tribal sovereigns as “domestic dependent nations” that are “in a state of pupilage”—“resembl[ing] that of a ward to his guardian”—until such time that Tribal governments cede their territory to the jurisdiction of the United States; 30 U.S. 1 (1831), 10. Other opinions have been less explicit about viewing Tribal sovereigns as primitive. Some have framed sovereign inferiority as racial difference. See *Ex Parte Crow Dog*, which infers that tribal sovereigns are not governed by the “responsibilities of civil conduct” but are “separated by race, by tradition” from Western “authority and power.” 109 U.S. 556 (1883). Others frame sovereign inferiority as producing laws based on Indigenous custom that are so peculiar that they cannot be enforced against settler citizens. See *Plains Commerce Bank v. Long Family Land and Cattle Co.*, in which the majority viewed a tribal non-discrimination law based on Lakota custom as “novel” and unenforceable against a non-member corporation; 554 U.S. 316 (2008) 338. Also see Justice Ginsburg’s concurrence and dissent in part for *Plains Commerce Bank v. Long Family Land and Cattle Co.*, in which she describes the same provision as run-of-the-mill, “resembl[ing] federal and state antidiscrimination measures,” 554 U.S. 316 (2008), 351.

²⁰ “To be sure, Indian tribes retain inherent sovereign power to exercise some forms of civil jurisdiction over non-Indians on their reservations, even on non-Indian fee lands.” However, “in the main . . . ‘the inherent sovereign power of an Indian tribe . . . do not extend to the activities of non-members of the Tribe.’” *Strate v. A-1 Contractors*, 520 U.S. 438 (1997), 446, citing *Montana v. U.S.*, 450 U.S. 544 (1981), 565–66.

²¹ The ability to govern has been limited in certain ways by the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 (ICRA), 25 U.S.C. § 1301-04, which applies many of the limitations present in the US Bill of Rights to tribal governance. Although most of these limitations are not enforceable outside of Tribal legal systems (with the exception of habeas corpus review for criminal convictions in tribal courts), the statute mandates that tribes uphold certain individual rights.

²² That is, Tribes need not establish a popular democracy or ratify a constitution to organize a government for their welfare. See 25 U.S.C. 5123(h)(1); see also 25 U.S.C. 5123(a).

²³ See *Johnson v. M’Intosh*, which limits the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples by extinguishing their right to alienate land to anyone except the European nation who “discovered” their territories. 21 U.S. 543 (1832); See also *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, which holds that Indigenous peoples no longer have sovereignty over foreign relations, but are “domestic dependent nations.” 30 U.S. 1 (1831); see also *United States v. Kagama*, which holds that the United States Congress possesses plenary authority of Indigenous peoples’ affairs. 118 U.S. 375 (1886).

Recognizing the salience of “sovereignty” as an index for a peoples’ independent authority to govern, many Indigenous groups have adapted or fully appropriated European-descended modes of governance and terminology as their own, sometimes out of necessity to preserve life and to defend basic human rights within the legal and political structures imposed on them through settler colonization. And yet, there is no doubt that applying European-descended formulations of sovereignty wholesale “constrains [Indigenous] people’s exercise of sovereignty and limits their self-determination to those forms deemed permissible by federal courts and government agencies.”²⁴ Thus, sovereignty as it has developed within American Indian law undoubtedly fails to fully encompass what Indigenous sovereignty really is.²⁵

If not rooted in European political philosophy and forms of governance, what is Indigenous sovereignty? And, more broadly, can the concept of “sovereignty” really describe Indigenous modes of governance or relations of authority within territory? Joanne Barker argues that Indigenous peoples use “sovereignty” discursively and strategically as they identify with those principles and processes that resonate with their own notions of cultural identity and community affiliation.²⁶ Thus, for Barker, the concept of “sovereignty” is for Indigenous peoples “more of a continued cultural integrity than of political power.” Similarly, Wallace Coffee and Rebecca Tsosie have articulated Indigenous sovereignty as a “cultural” rather than a strictly “political” sovereignty—one which draws on the “norms and values” Indigenous peoples use to structure their collective futures and maintain relations to one another and to prior generations that can only be accessed by “prob[ing] the philosophical core” of each Indigenous community’s epistemologies and modes of relation.²⁷ For many contemporary scholars of Indigenous political philosophy, the concept of sovereignty may also extend beyond the human social, political or cultural spheres into the modes of relations Indigenous peoples maintain with ancestral lands or other spaces where Indigenous identity is formed.²⁸

Increasingly, scholars of Indigeneity have noted that, in many Indigenous communities, sovereignty exists within ongoing, generative relations, rather than being proscribed by a single, monolithic text or authority. Thus, the relations within which Indigenous sovereignty is expressed may appear as something other than law or political authority from a settler point of view. As numerous scholars have shown, Indigenous sovereignties exist in forms that have been classified within settler epistemologies as fine art, dance, music, film, or narration.²⁹ Dylan Robinson has

²⁴ Michelle H. Raheja, “Sovereignty,” in *Native Studies Keywords*, ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 8.

²⁵ Coffey and Tsosie, “Rethinking the Tribal Sovereignty Doctrine,” 196.

²⁶ Barker, *Sovereignty Matters*, 20.

²⁷ Coffey and Tsosie propose that cultural sovereignty may revolve around “what rights, duties and responsibilities are entailed in our relationships.” “Rethinking the Tribal Sovereignty Doctrine,” 196.

²⁸ Thus, Kevin Bruyneel defines sovereignty as “the ability of a group of people to make their own decisions and control their own lives,” but he adds that this right is always “in relation to the space where they reside and/or that they envision as their own.” Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.–Indigenous Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 23.

²⁹ See Jolene Rickard, “Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (April 2011): 465–86; Mique’l Dangeli, “Dancing Sovereignty: Protocol and

recently argued that, for Indigenous peoples, “sovereignty is not a thing, but an action; it is a form of doing”³⁰: therefore, while exercised sovereignty may take the form of a text or aesthetic object produced by Indigenous creatives, they are not themselves sovereignty. Perceiving these texts and objects as sovereignty necessitates a “sovereign sensibility” on the part of the one perceiving the work and a willingness to set aside received intellectual boundaries and colonialist infrastructures of expression that might flatten, delimit, or tokenize them. Indigenous expressions that activate and generate relations between individuals and between people and other actors in the world—no matter their form—may be sovereign acts.³¹ Scholarship that renders these acts of sovereignty as merely “artistic expression” undoubtedly furthers the objectives of settler colonialism.

This article attempts to educate the reader about the way song is working as a mode of sovereignty at Öngtupqa. While the methodology of this article is ethnographic, its purpose is not to extract cultural material from an Indigenous community to generate an authoritative text on Hopi music and performance. Such a project may support the development and diversity of the settler musical or legal academy, but risks further diminishing Hopi sovereignty. Rather, this article is meant to encourage readers of this Special Issue to broaden their “sovereign sensibilities” and to begin to recognize and respond appropriately to Indigenous sonic sovereignties.

Itaataatawi (Our Hopi Songs)³²

Hopi songs are not just works of solitary, human, artistic genius. Hopi yeeyawat (composers) generate taatawi (traditional songs) through their collaborations

Politics in Northwest Coast First Nations Dance” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2015); Raheja, “Sovereignty,” 11; see also Michelle H. Raheja, “Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography and *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*,” in *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 190–220; Elizabeth B. Coleman and Rosemary J. Coombe, with Fiona MacAlraill, “A Broken Record: Subjecting ‘Music’ to Cultural Rights,” in *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation*, ed. James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 173–210. I thank Dylan Robinson for hosting numerous gatherings of Indigenous and Indigenous allied scholars over the last several years to discuss these important topics.

³⁰ Dylan Robinson, “Public Writing, Sovereign Reading: Indigenous Language Art in Public Space,” *Art Journal* 76, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 85–99. Revised April 24, 2019.

³¹ See Jack D. Forbes, “Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Implications for Native Studies and for Native Intellectuals,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 11–23; see also Robert Allen Warrior, “Intellectual Sovereignty and the Struggle for an American Indian Future,” in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 87–125.

³² In this article, I speak of Hopi cultural forms in the first person and describe some of my own experiences with Hopi song, following a now deeply established tradition in Native American studies. In doing so, I want to make clear my position in relation to the subject matter of my research: as a member of the Hopi Tribe participating in research *with, by, and for* Hopi people, see Sonya Atalay, *Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2012), I view my position as a researcher similar to what has been expressed by Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, Jessica Bissett Perea, Tēvita ‘Ō. Ka’ili, and many other Indigenous anthropologists; see Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, “Unsettling Ethnography: Tales of an ‘Ōiwi in the Anthropological Slot,” *Anthropological Forum* 15, no. 3 (November 2005): 247–

with corn plants and other living things within a territory over the course of months and years.³³ As Hopi village leader Lee Wayne Lomayestewa explains, these songs are “not just for us Hopis. It’s for all the little insects that crawl the earth, the animals, the plants, the birds, the butterflies, all the people that live on the earth . . . even the stars, the galaxies.”³⁴ In fact, it is because they produce effects within entire territories that taatawi have become a vital component of historical and contemporary governance at Hopi, just as they are in many Indigenous territories.³⁵ Song-based authority has been practiced since our emergence, far longer than the kinds of political or legal discourses upholding current European settler forms of sovereignty. Because Hopi sovereignty is a performed acoustic reality grounded in territory—a reality independent of present-day Euro-American legal forms³⁶—accepting taatawi as sovereignty challenges the very foundations of settler governance and control over Indigenous lands.³⁷

Painting Öngtupqa in Words

How does Hopi song generate sovereignty, or authority within territory? For one, taatawi can be direct representations of law—in some cases, their lyrics are literally legal texts. Hopi songs may contain “thinking about how life should be lived” and “the principles by which Hopi people have organized themselves.”³⁸ By stating

56; Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai’i* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Jessica Bissett Perea, “The Politics of Inuit Musical Modernities in Alaska” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2011); Tēvita ‘Ō. Ka’ili, *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017). I approach doing ethnography of ‘my people’ self-consciously and self-critically but also with acknowledgment that my connections within indigenous territories, in this case Hopituskwa (Hopi lands), are what animate my work. I am connected to others in the Hopi community through my father’s clan, Iswungwa (coyote clan), and to the pahaana (settler) world through my mother. As one privileged with academic knowledge, I take upon myself the obligation to strengthen and defend the Hopi community, while fully acknowledging that I am not an authority or representative of the Hopi People.

³³ Trevor Reed, “Reclaiming Ownership of the Indigenous Voice: The Hopi Music Repatriation Project,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Repatriation*, ed. Frank Gunderson, Robert C. Lancefield, and Bret Woods (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 627–53.

³⁴ See Lee Wayne Lomayestewa, “Podcast: Returning Hopi Songs—A Hopi Perspective,” *Hopi Music Project*, February 5, 2011, MP3 audio, 15:00. <https://hopimusic.wordpress.com/2011/02/05/podcasting-returning-hopi-songs-a-hopi-perspective/>.

³⁵ For example, Lassiter, Ellis, and Kotay discuss how language of Kiowa Christian hymns and narratives from community members about how those hymns articulate a continuity of authority from prior generations have considerable power and influence over norms and group identity in the Kiowa community. Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay, *The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

³⁶ See Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja, eds., “Sovereignty” in *Native Studies Keywords*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press (2015), p 10–12 (briefly discussing the diversity of ways sovereignty is expressed by Indigenous peoples which appear to be beyond the conceptual limitations of settler political philosophies).

³⁷ Raheja briefly discusses the diversity of ways sovereignty is expressed by Indigenous peoples which appear to be beyond the conceptual limitations of settler political philosophies. “Sovereignty,” 10–12.

³⁸ Emory Sekaquaptewa and Dorothy Washburn, “They Go Along Singing: Reconstructing the Hopi Past from Ritual Metaphors in Song and Image,” *American Antiquity* 69, no. 3 (July 2004): 458.

community norms and social structures, or describing people and their behaviors in terms of metaphors or patterns in the environment or the cosmos, Hopi songs can provide a basis from which listeners can make choices about their behavior and gauge the actions of others, just as they would read a statute or observe a community norm and abide by it. In this way, songs become the expression of standards, norms, rights, and the will of a community. In this section, however, I want to move beyond a strictly textualist interpretation of song as law, and explore how sound and territory interrelate to generate a “sovereign sensibility.”

Hopi songs are structured to bring people into productive relation with territory. The Hopi yeeyewat I know theorize their songs as having two basic components, the lavayi (speech of a song) and the tawvö (its melodic contour). For many Hopi people, a good song is one that uses its lavayi to “paint a picture” that emplaces a listener in particular times and places.

In the song described at the beginning of this article, Tenakhongva starts by singing the historical Hopi placename for the Grand Canyon, Öngtupqa, which literally means “salt canyon,” a name given for its replenishing salt deposits along the Colorado River near its confluence with the Little Colorado River. Salt and other important minerals were harvested through great sacrifice by our ancestors, making Öngtupqa a vital part of our survival. Tenakhongva continues by singing Öngtupqa as “pas himu” or sacred (literally “very something” or “something of high importance and status”³⁹). For Hopi people who live in the high deserts (and many of the world’s Indigenous peoples⁴⁰), the substance of life is water, moisture, or breath—it is for us ani’himu (a “great something” or sacred substance).⁴¹ Öngtupqa’s rivers are sacred spaces in part because they circulate this water and moisture. But they are also sacred because they lead to places vital to our individual and collective destinies: “yep i’qatsi yayniwa” (here this life began), Tenakhongva says, and “yep i’qatsi ahoy tiitsotiwa” (here life returns when it is finished). In other words, Tenakhongva is painting us into a picture of the Canyon—a place where we emerged into this world, and also where we ahoy (return, go back to earlier time/place) when we have tiitsotiwa (“finished our part”).⁴² The root word, tiitsoti, has among its meanings, to finish dancing, to finish planting, and the culmination of something’s purpose of being.⁴³ Many Hopis believe that when we die, our substance returns to Öngtupqa’s water-filled canyons. But Tenakhongva reminds us

³⁹ I thank Stewart Koyiyumptewa for this insightful gloss.

⁴⁰ Although Indigenous peoples’ relationships to and responsibilities toward water may vary based on culture and climate, the water protectors who worked to defend both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities from the potential environmental harms of the Dakota Access Pipeline from 2016 to 2017 brought significant attention to the notion that “Water is Life” in many Indigenous worldviews. See #WaterisLife, #NoDAPL. Kate Cave and Shianne McKay describe the work of Indigenous women in Canada to steward water resources. “Water Song: Indigenous Women and Water,” *Solutions* 7, no. 6 (November 2016): 64–73.

⁴¹ John D. Loftin, *Religion and Hopi Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

⁴² Certain scholars have described in abundant detail specific details of how Öngtupqa is a place of emergence and return. The Hopi Cultural Preservation Office has asked that I not cite this literature.

⁴³ See Kenneth C. Hill, Ekkehart Malokti, and Mary E. Black, *Hopi Dictionary/Hopiikwa Lavàytutuveni: A Hopi-English Dictionary of the Third Mesa dialect* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

that there is an element of reciprocity involved. When we have finished our part by completing a good life—including a life of naa'ökiwa (humility) and kyaptsi (respect)—then we can return to Öngtupqa.⁴⁴

Tenakhongva's ability to authoritatively paint the listener into Hopi territory through song derives from a tangible relationship he has to the canyon itself and the actors that reside there. In the years leading up to his 2016 performance at Öngtupqa, Tenakhongva and I had the opportunity to travel down the Colorado River on a pilgrimage with several Hopi men of a wide range of ages and cultural experience. We traveled for nine days by boat with two guides from Lee's Ferry, located on the present-day Navajo Nation, to Diamond Creek, on the Hualapai Reservation. It was admittedly a different kind of a journey than what our ancestors took roughly a century ago. They walked the seventy-plus miles from the Hopi village of Orayvi through the desert to Öngtupqa without any sources of water in between. Our journey was instead on a motorized river raft, paid for by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, who relies on Indigenous knowledge to gauge the impact of the upriver Glen Canyon Dam on the health of the Grand Canyon below. Although overland pilgrimages to Öngtupqa ended in the 1920s, Hopi people have taken this new opportunity to re-embody our territories and re-establish relations with actors within these territories, and with one another.⁴⁵

We spent each day of the pilgrimage in often intense work, witnessing the land and its characteristics, learning and remembering histories, respectfully harvesting certain minerals and plants, making offerings, and singing songs. On the second day of our journey, for example, we arrived at a region in the early stages of Öngtupqa known as Vasey's Paradise, a lush oasis at a bend in the Colorado River where a spring that we call Yam'taqa spews fresh water from fifty feet above the Canyon floor. Just before reaching the spring, we climbed the canyon wall to a dwelling where some of our ancestors had lived several centuries ago. Near the dwelling was a large rock filled with familiar symbols—badger paws, children's feet, beetle marks—and other inscriptions. Leaving our guides behind, we ascended above the rock to the dwelling. One of the men made an offering at a designated place that none of the many tourists rafting down the Canyon would have noticed. We each offered our prayers and hooma (ceremonial cornmeal) before continuing up the trail to the dwelling, and then on to the next site, and the next. Day after day, we visited as many of these shrines, dwellings, mineral deposits, and other sites as we could, doing specific ritual labors with and for those things that reside within the landscape.

⁴⁴ As Sekaquaptewa and Washburn explain, similar reciprocal language can be found in Hopi katsina songs. When the katsinam (spirit beings) visit Hopi villages, they often include the phrase "uma tüwati" (for your part), followed by a description of what is required for them to fulfill their part or obligation and then a promise by the katsinam to bring rain, nourish crops, and help sustain a good life. Sekaquaptewa and Washburn, "They Go Along Singing," 468.

⁴⁵ There is an extensive literature on pilgrimage in anthropology that unfortunately cannot be reviewed here. However, substantial works on Hopi pilgrimages, past and present, can be found in Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma, T. J. Fergusson, and Chip Colwell, eds., *Footprints of Hopi History: Hopihiniwtiput Kukveni'at* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018).

Öngtupqa is filled with these—what are called *kuuku* or “footprints.” As Hopi cultural historian Leigh Kuwanwisiwma relates, when Hopi people emerged from within Öngtupqa, one of the first promises we made was to migrate throughout the world in different directions to fulfill our spiritual obligations and then return to *tuuwasavi* (center of the earth, present-day Hopi lands) along with the knowledge we had obtained.⁴⁶ With the instruction to migrate was the instruction “*kuk-tota*,” which Kuwanwisiwma translates as “along there, make footprints.” These footprints provide evidence that the *ngyam* (clans) that make up the Hopi Tribe today took the steps necessary to join the rest in our present-day homeland.

Personally experiencing these footprints in such a profound way during our pilgrimage worked to further establish our relations to Öngtupqa. It wasn't just because these *kuuku* are historical markers that embed us in Öngtupqa's grand timeline or because we claim these footprints as a resource for our collective identity. These are both undoubtedly true, but they are not the source of our sovereign connection to Öngtupqa. Rather, our presences and performances in relation to these footprints do something in the world. Just as our clans inhabited spaces like Öngtupqa in the process of fulfilling their promises with the Creator, so we pass through and reembody them in process of fulfilling the same promises. Our bodies, which are produced in part from their bodies, sense the places they lived, in many of the ways they sensed them. We remember that they continue(d) on just as we continue on. Our *hooma* (ceremonial cornmeal), grown from the ground which they hoped their future generations would reach, is now left by us and our descendants as an offering and a fulfillment of their hopes in the sites where they lived. The kernels from which our *hooma* is made came, in part, from the seeds they carried and planted along their migrations, generation after generation. Through performed exchanges with these places across multiple temporalities—in pilgrimage and through song—we personally and collectively establish relations with these lands and the actors that reside there. Our bodies perceive them together with our ancestors and future generations as we experience a territory that contains proof that they, we, and hopefully our descendants, will likewise accomplish our journeys.

Because few members of the Hopi Tribe can feasibly take this kind of journey, those that do become points of memory for the community.⁴⁷ The feel and

⁴⁶ Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, “Ang Kuktota: Hopi Ancestral Sites and Cultural Landscapes,” *Expeditions* 46 (2004): 26.

⁴⁷ The condensation of places into sonic forms that facilitate collective memory is similar to what Dudley Patterson describes in Keith Basso's work, “Wisdom Sits in Places.” Patterson explains that for some in the Apache community, experience of places and the histories of events that occurred in those places allows individuals to learn from the experiences of prior generations and to connect those to the land. Thus, the landscape articulates not only the norms of the community but also individual community members' connections to the land. The more experience one has with the land, and the histories in the land, the wiser one (and, as that individual shares his or her knowledge, the community) will be. See Keith H. Basso, “Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), 53–90. At the same time, the schizophonia, or time- and place-shifting of the experience of sound from its “natural” location to a different “cultural” space, that is happening here may be something like what R. Murray Schafer expressed in *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994). I would argue, though, that the kind of connection brought about through pilgrimage and interconnection

knowledge of these footprints, along with performances of relations between actors that exist in those places and ourselves, become condensed in our *taatawi*. Singing the *lavayi* of these songs allows us to generate these places and temporalities anew in ways that can be embodied and felt by those who perform and hear them.

Tawvö: Melodic Ordering of Relations within Territory

As I mentioned earlier, Hopi songs or *taatawi* consist of two basic parts, the *lavayi* (speech) and the *tawvö* (melodic contour, timbre, form, and tempo) of the songs. The *lavayi* of Tenakhongva's song concisely paints a picture of Hopi existence at Öngtupqa, connecting us to the many *kuuku* (footprints), the *kuuyi* (water), and our *hisat'sinom* (ancestors). But contained in this seemingly simple and straightforward song are also powerful articulations of Öngtupqa as a place where Hopi people exercise authority—albeit an authority different in kind from the totalizing authority assumed by the settler-state. Thus, although the *lavayi* of Tenakhongva's song emplaces the listener within Hopi territory, it is the *tawvö* of Tenakhongva's song and the context in which it is sung that articulates our relations to territory and authority within it, making it a powerful enactment of contemporary Hopi sovereignty.

The *tawvö* of Tenakhongva's song tells us that it is an *ökwhantawi* (song of admonition).⁴⁸ These kinds of songs come in many different styles, depending on the understanding and cognitive ability of the intended audience. There is, for example, a genre of lullabies called “owl songs” that depict scenes of misbehaving children, followed by a swift admonition for the listening child to stop “or else.”⁴⁹ When sung to adults, these songs may be a bit more subtle, and yet for the target of the song, it operates as a kind of injunction.

Like an owl song, Tenakhongva's song flows along in a lulling triple meter, depicting a scene in which we are present: he illustrates a time-lapse picture of Öngtupqa, emplacing us within its rich landscape while narrating to us the story of our emergence and return. And suddenly, like the owl song, this admonishing song employs a unique rhetorical form in which the “fourth wall” of the scene created by the singer is abruptly ruptured by a clear, rapidly punctuated prescription of

with the footprints of one's ancestors—effectively unifying oneself with them and learning their sensibilities—and then conveyance to a community who likewise is connected to those ancestors is different in kind from sonic mediations typically being performed by most soundscape artists, who generally have no ancestral connection to the places they hear. That said, Raven Chacon's work to capture the noise of sacred and sometimes fetishized Indigenous places by imprinting those sounds in record grooves on postcards of those landscapes demonstrates just how important personal agency and aesthetic sensibility is in conveying the sounds of place to others. See Erin Joyce, “From Navajo to Arctic Landscapes, Exploring the Aesthetics of Sound,” *Hyperallergic*, May 5, 2016, <https://hyperallergic.com/273964/from-navajo-to-arctic-landscapes-exploring-the-aesthetics-of-sound/>.

⁴⁸ See Hill, *Hopi Dictionary*, 360.

⁴⁹ For more on Hopi Owl Songs, see Mesa Media, *Taatawi: Puwvitstawi pu Tiitaptawi Hopi Lullaby and Game Songs*, Mesa Media, 2010, compact disc; Mary E. Black, “Maidens and Mothers: An Analysis of Hopi Corn Metaphors,” *Ethnology* 23, no. 4 (October 1984): 279–88; Robert Rhodes, “Selected Hopi Secular Music: Transcription and Analysis” (EdD diss., Arizona State University, 1973).

consequences intended for someone in the audience. The consequence in an owl song is typically that the owl will snatch or even eat the misbehaving child. In this song, after illustrating the scene of Öngtupqa's water-filled canyons as both our origin and potential destination, the admonishing lines in Tenakhongva's song state "you should be careful of what is here; yet, you are disrespecting it" and then, with voice breaking, "No, you will not disrespect it, every one of you people." What is left unsaid—the unspoken consequence—leaves us unsettled.

While the pulse and form of an okwhantawi tell the listener that what is being sung is an admonition, the melody used by the yeewa tells the listener about the nature of the authority being asserted, and the nature of the one receiving the admonishment. In Tenakhongva's song, the authoritative voice immediately catches us off guard. Instead of an owl, the narrator in this song is a crying or regretful elder—a human authority—illustrated by the mourning-dove-like descending vocables, "oheyi, ohiye." The target of the song, however, is more subtly infected. The lavayi of the song suggests that Tenakhongva is admonishing umumi (you [over there]) to stop disrespecting Öngtupqa. As we listen closely to the melodic contour of the word umumi, we begin to understand who exactly Tenakhongva is enjoining.

"You" Will Not Disrespect It.

Öngtupqa, like many Indigenous territories in North and South America, is a colonized territory. As Michelle Raheja has pointed out, one consequence of this colonization is that Indigenous modes of doing sovereignty, like the ökwantawi Tenakhongva performed or other forms of what we might call Indigenous "artistic expression," have continued to be ignored, silenced, sidelined, or relegated to intellectual domains other than that of law or governance, where they are more apt to resonate.⁵⁰ Take, for example, the way sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Franciscan priests (who earned the nickname "tota'tsi" from Hopi, which could be glossed as "dictators" or someone who wants to "have his own way all the time") restricted the performance of our ceremonial dances during the Spanish occupation of Hopi territories from roughly 1540 to 1680. These dances were vital to Hopi relations to one another and the surrounding territory, but the colonizing ear relegated them to the domain of "religion" and therefore placed them in opposition to Catholic beliefs and power structures. Following their invasion of Hopi lands, Catholic priests constructed missions over the top of Hopi ceremonial spaces and began extracting labor from our people, limiting the time and space they had to sing our lands and perform our relations.⁵¹ They required us to provide cotton for Catholic ceremonial practice rather than for ceremonial vestments, destroyed marital relationships by requiring our people to perform sexual services for them, and tortured our people for performing our ceremonies.⁵² Our people

⁵⁰ Raheja, "Sovereignty."

⁵¹ Thomas E. Sheridan et al., *Moquis and Kastilam: Hopis, Spaniards, and the Trauma of History, Volume 1, 1540–1679* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 119, 122, 191.

⁵² Although the official policy of the governor of New Mexico prohibited Franciscans from using violence in their work with Indigenous peoples (they were rather to "reduce" "obstinate spirit[s]" "with

risked their lives by secretly slipping out of our villages to remote places to sing, just to keep these songs in our collective memory, thereby maintaining our sovereignty.

American settlement and conquest, on the other hand, has taken a different approach to undermining our sonic sovereignty, but with similar effects. Instead of forced labor for the Spanish empire and coerced silencing of Hopi ceremonial performances, the American government dispossessed our people from our connections to territory through interventions like removing our children to distant boarding schools and legally cutting us off from our ancestral lands.⁵³ Understanding the method through which this later intervention was carried out is crucial to understanding to whom Tenakhongva's ökwphantawi was ultimately directed.

United States President Chester Arthur established the Hopi Reservation in 1882, designating a rectangular plot of land approximately seventy miles by fifty miles "for the use of the Moqui [sic], and other such Indians as the Secretary of the Interior may see fit to settle thereon."⁵⁴ Of course, the designation was flawed from the outset because its boundaries were arbitrary, severing Öngtupqa, the Bears Ears region, Chaco Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, and many other vital Hopi spaces from the rest of Hopi lands. But it also left the door open for "other such Indians" and the Federal Government to claim Hopi lands as their own. Roughly a decade following the order, the lands around Öngtupqa inhabited and traversed by Hopi people for millennia became designated the Grand Canyon Forest Reserve, then the Grand Canyon National Monument in 1908. Ultimately, Congress created Grand Canyon National Park in 1919.⁵⁵ The federal government then began to settle the Diné people of the Navajo Nation on the land between Öngtupqa and the Hopi Reservation it had created, ultimately granting the Navajo Nation sovereign status over the land. After Diné had survived brutal militarized displacement by the United States leading up to the Long Walk,⁵⁶ followed by the signing of a treaty with the Federal Government in 1868 and temporary confinement to a reservation,⁵⁷ the United States used Diné people as pawns of conquest, placing them at or near Hopi sacred sites around the Southwest, perhaps as a means of instigating warfare between our peoples.⁵⁸ In the midst of the economic and social instability it

gentleness and mildness than with violence and harshness"), accounts of torture and abuse, including whipping, rape, burning with turpentine, and execution were apparently common practice during the rule of Padre Fray Antonio de Ybargaray in the mid-seventeenth century. Sheridan et al., *Moquis and Kastilam*, 120–21, 142–45, 169–77.

⁵³ Many tribes faced more severe treatment, including forced removal from their homelands and genocide. See Andrew W. Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton, eds. *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁵⁴ Moqui (or Hopi) Reserve, Executive Order (December 16, 1882). Indian Office, *Executive Orders Relating to Indian Reserves from May 14, 1855 to July 1, 1902* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 9.

⁵⁵ Grand Canyon Association, "Who Owns the Grand Canyon? Nature, Culture and History at the Grand Canyon," Arizona State University, <http://grcahistory.org/history/who-owns-the-grand-canyon/>.

⁵⁶ I think my reviewers for pointing out that Mescalero Apache were also subject to the brutality of the Long Walk.

⁵⁷ Treaty with the Navajo, 1868, 15 Stat. 667 (Ratified July 25, 1908).

⁵⁸ I thankfully attribute this insight to Wilton Kooyahoema (1937–2017).

had created at the beginning of the twentieth century in the region, the Federal Government likewise convinced the Navajo Nation to accept toxic contracts, whereby uranium would be extracted and refined on former Hopi lands, leading to widespread epidemics of leukemia and other diseases that took numerous lives in the region. In the 1960s and 1970s, the United States government again dangled an economic carrot in front of both our peoples in the form of the Navajo Generating Station and Kayenta coal mine, whereby our air would be polluted, our land stripped of minerals, and our water contaminated with arsenic, all to power the growing settler oases of Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Los Angeles. Finding an economic partner in the Navajo Nation, the United States government expanded Diné settlements from three million acres to fourteen million acres in the region, taking over large swaths of former Hopi lands, while the Hopi Reservation was reduced to only a quarter of its 1882 dimensions.⁵⁹ When tensions between the two tribes began to flare, the federal government placed a moratorium (called the Robert Bennett “freeze”) on the development of the land between the Hopi Reservation and the Grand Canyon, as a means of forcing Hopi and Navajo to begin negotiations to settle land disputes in the region. But after nearly four decades of minimal success, the freeze was finally lifted in 2009 after United States President Barack Obama signed a bill officially ending it.⁶⁰

From the settlement of Diné on Hopi lands until today, much of which happened at the insistence or invitation of the United States government, American settlers have sought to exploit the animus between Navajo and Hopi for their financial or political gain. For example, in February 2012, shortly before Tenakhongva and I would make our pilgrimage into Öngtupqa, a settler resort developer would convince the Navajo Nation to begin work on a new 420-acre tourist destination called the Grand Canyon Escalade over the top of Hopi sacred sites in and around Öngtupqa and located in the former development freeze area. Under the joint proposal, the Escalade development would be built near the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers within the Grand Canyon, and would include the construction of a “Gondola Tram, the 0.5 mile River Walk and the Confluence Restaurant” as well as “a destination resort hotel & spa, other hotels, RV park, commercial/retail space/opportunities and an airport.”⁶¹ Importantly, it would be built near a Navajo settlement that had been hit hard by the development freeze. The lure of the Escalade, as is typical of settler economic development on Tribal lands, was the prospect of low-paying service jobs—construction jobs, food service jobs, hotel service jobs—further capital development that would eventually result in

⁵⁹ William Michael Havens, “Intercultural Dynamics of the Hopi-Navajo Land Dispute: Concepts of Colonialism and Manifest Destiny in the Southwest” (master’s thesis, University of Arizona, 1995), 9.

⁶⁰ Act of May 8, 2009, P.L. 111-18, 123 Stat. 1611 (repealing § 10(f) of 25 U.S.C. 640d-9(f)); See Bill Donovan, “Obama signs Bennett Freeze Repeal,” *Navajo Times* (May 14, 2009). The two tribes ultimately created a settlement agreement satisfying the Government, but disputes between the two tribes continue.

⁶¹ Memorandum of Understanding by and between the Navajo Nation and Confluence Partners LLC 1-2, signed February 25, 2012, Grand Canyon Trust, “Escalade: The Saga,” <https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/stopping-grand-canyon-escalade>.

Indigenous lives and lands being exploited by the settler capital economy. In addition to Hopi and an increasing number of Navajo protests, many environmental and naturalist groups also expressed fervent opposition to the development that would have forever transformed one of the most remarkable landscapes on earth.

So when Tenakhongva sang the word *umumi* (you over there) during the performance at the Grand Canyon, which was being recorded for Public Radio broadcast throughout the Southwest, he sang it with a particular inflection, which to me revealed his intended audience. He sang the word using alternating pitches that were only microtonally away from one another, emphasizing and prolonging the unusual *tawvö*. The figure below provides a rough transcription:⁶²

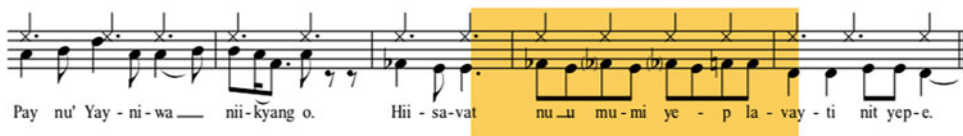


Figure 1. Excerpt from opening song in *Puhutawi: New Traditional Song*.

This is a sound I associate with the *Tasap* or Navajo *katsina*.⁶³ To my ears, the song, an admonition for respect of the land and the beings who live there, was being directed both to the American Settlers who Tenakhongva acknowledged in his pre-concert remarks “could not understand him,” and also—and perhaps more importantly—to the Diné people through their spiritual relations, who he hoped *would* hear, remember and act.⁶⁴ Importantly, he did this in and through a mode of authority generated out of our relations to the land.

Listening for Indigenous Sovereignities

Listening to Tenakhongva’s *tawi* within its environmental, political, and economic contexts, you can hear how Indigenous creativity and performance are not merely discursive spaces where Indigenous peoples struggle to maintain and defend our sovereignty. They are, I argue, constitutive of that sovereignty. If this is the case, then your close listening for and deep thinking about Indigenous modes of sovereignty in sound is vitally important for a decolonizing sound-based scholarship.

Scholars of indigeneity have long recognized deep connections between song and place within Indigenous societies. Indigenous song can be a source of truth about places, a source of memory, and a means for understanding one’s self in space.⁶⁵

⁶² Note also that Tenakhongva changed the word order and rhythmic figuration slightly between the performances. The meaning of the *lavayi* remains essentially the same.

⁶³ A *katsina* is a spirit being within Hopi cosmology. Beings of a similar form are also depicted within Diné cosmology.

⁶⁴ Further discussion about *katsinam* and their role in our world would be inappropriate for me to discuss here.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); Steven Feld, “Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996).

Indigenous creative work in sound attaches people, histories, and genealogies to places and to communities, not only by indexing particular memories individuals and groups have had in places but also by generating a particular feeling or feelings that become iconic of places.⁶⁶ As these feelings are re-experienced, a person shares the same space as those of past or future generations. Importantly, the genre an Indigenous creative chooses and that genre's genealogies of musical style sometimes have very little to do with the strength of the resulting sonic connection between Indigenous groups and a given territory.⁶⁷ An Indigenous hip-hop artist may generate just as much of an attachment between an Indigenous community and a place as a pow-wow singer, jazz artist, or classical composer.

What has not been explored as fully is how performances of Indigenous sound generate authority outside of settler political forms. For example, how might songs or other kinds of sonic creativity be heard as bona fide expressions of sovereignty, particularly when settler performances of sovereignty—typically in the form of legal or political discourse—seek to compete with or colonize it? Making the connection between song and sovereignty may sound a bit tenuous, as discourses of sovereignty in the Euro-American legal tradition so often take the form of foundational texts (e.g., constitutions, treaties, statutes), resolutions of paradigmatic disputes (e.g., published legal opinions, discourses on jurisdiction), or historical social transformations (e.g., constitutional amendments, shifts in dominant political ideology). And yet, even for the settler-state, sonic performances are crucial to the legitimate operation of the nation: candidate debates, oral testimony and argumentation, confrontation by witnesses, phone calls to legislators, and even protests are among key features of modern settler governance that spill over into the sonic world, doing work that could not otherwise be done strictly by text. The settler sovereign permits and even encourages these, at least to the extent that they resonate with its prerogatives, procedures, or laws; are made within the permissible scope of the sovereign's power through a delegation of the sovereign's authority; or are recognized or permitted by the sovereign as within an individual actor's "fundamental" or "natural" rights.⁶⁸ Ordinary citizens in the United States, for example, are regularly empowered as jurors to utter words backed by the coercive power of the state that

⁶⁶ Byron Dueck, *Musical Intimacies and Indigenous Imaginaries: Aboriginal Music and Dance in Public Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); David W. Samuels, *Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity on the San Carlos Apache Reservation* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

⁶⁷ See, for example, Victoria Lindsay Levine and Dylan Robinson, eds., *Music and Modernity among First Peoples of North America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2019).

⁶⁸ The United States, for example, protects certain kinds of expressive authority under the First Amendment of its Constitution, which states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances." For Indigenous song to be recognized as authoritative by the settler-state, it appears that it must either contribute to the settler-state's authority or be relegated to the domains of "religion," "speech" or "press," which will necessarily limit its function to whatever is permitted by the settler-state, or it must be relegated to a position of otherness within a multiculturalist framework, which inevitably marks Indigenous expressions of authority as inferior to that of the settler-state. See generally Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

mobilize its resources and power over people and territory, transforming lives, liberties, and property rights, and at times extinguishing these as well.⁶⁹

And so it is that even in the human-centered, totalizing sovereignty model of the American settler-state, vast networks of human and non-human actors within a territory become activated upon the performance of specific sounds. When humans are de-centered and where sovereignty is not totalized around any one entity, as may be the case for many Indigenous sovereigns, it seems that the role of sonic authority may be all the more important.⁷⁰

As Clark Tenakhongva's tawi illustrates, performances of Indigenous song may operate on multiple levels to create resonances among actors within a territory, which lend them and those who sing them authority. This authority is not necessarily constructed from human agency and a presumed dominance over other, "lesser" life forms and inert matter within a territory but is generated through engagement with all agentive actors within a particular space, human and non-human. In this way, whether sound carries authoritative weight moves beyond

⁶⁹ Consider a jury foreman who reads a verdict in a criminal trial. That utterance will determine the future of the accused only to the extent that those words are authorized by the sovereign—the foreman speaking for the jurors, the jurors speaking for the court, the court speaking for the political subdivision, and the political subdivision acting on behalf of the sovereign. To accomplish the desired work of meting out justice, the foreman's words must be spoken at a particular time and place in which the foreman has authority, and it must be done in an actionable form, so that it will resonate with others in authority who have knowledge of the forms of different kinds of verdicts, and who are employed to ensure the collective work of justice is carried out. Once the verdict has been performed, all manner of materials—human and non-human—will be mobilized for the sake of ensuring the verdict is realized. Shackles will be taken off of the body or the body will become imprisoned. The accused's potential for work, health, and/or happiness will be affected, as will his or her social networks inside and outside of the prison. Each verdict incrementally increases or decreases the demand for prison space, for taxpayer funds, for labor and raw materials, and the extraction of resources. The defense attorney will begin celebrating or will begin preparing an appeal, impacting the reputation of the attorney's office, the fees that can be charged to clients, and potentially even public opinion surrounding the effectiveness of government. The point is, once performed under the totalizing authority of the sovereign, the sound of the verdict will begin to resonate with entire networks who will be mobilized to accomplish its directives and whose lives will be altered in some way by the words performed.

⁷⁰ Examining the cultural politics surrounding discourses of jurisdiction on *Hopitutskwa* (Hopi lands), Justin Richland argues that, "rather than replaying Euro-American logics of sovereign totalities, Hopi cultural politics orient to the lived practices of social power as emergent and contingent, and suggest tradition as the jurisdiction of Hopi sovereignty." Justin Richland, "Hopi Tradition As Jurisdiction: On the Potentializing Limits of Hopi Tribal Sovereignty," *Law and Social Inquiry* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 205. As Richland goes on to explain, both in design and in practice, Hopi sovereignty is never absolute: "no singular authority is understood as holding the whole of social power." Richland, "Hopi Tradition as Jurisdiction," 206; see also Justin Richland, "What are You Going to Do with the Village's Knowledge?: Talking Tradition, Talking Law in Hopi Tribal Court," *Law and Society Review* 39, no. 2 (June 2005): 235–71. Richland had witnessed the way Hopi tribal members would talk about legal authority on the witness stand in Hopi tribal courts, and he became curious about why people would often become silent or balk when asked to give an authoritative statement on what Hopi law is on a particular subject. As he dug deeper, he found more and more refusals: refusals in the drafting of the Hopi constitution in 1937, refusals to vote on its ratification, and refusals by elders in various cases to speak as an authority for a clan, village, or the tribe. Richland, "Hopi Tradition as Jurisdiction," 208–9. The performance of refusal by individual Hopi tribal members—denying settler desires to see performances of a totalizing authority shaped in its image—demonstrated for Richland how Hopi sovereignty is not grounded in one particular individual or elected body but is the result of numerous centers of authority (clans, ritual societies, villages, etc.) bringing their own unique sets of relations together for the good of all.

the dimensions of strictly human perception and political will to questions of performativity, resonance and political power across living things.⁷¹ Hopi actions through sound can be seen as authoritative because they tend to produce changes in human and non-human listeners and within environments throughout a given territory.⁷² Rather than coercing actors to bend to the will of a human sovereign, taatawi encourage all actors with whom Hopi people have maintained relations over centuries to work together for the benefit of the world, leading to the production of rain, fertility, health, and happiness.⁷³ Thus, at least in the Hopi context, ongoing sonic relations—not the fear of force—are the material of our sovereignty.

Conclusion

If our Indigenous songs are meant to resonate within our territories, giving voice to Indigenous authorities within those spaces, then the creation and performance of Indigenous song should be understood as an act of sovereignty. Performances of Hopi taatawi at Öngtupqa, for example, are not merely Hopi artistic contributions to what has become a ‘multicultural’ Grand Canyon. Rather, the sovereignty articulated through taatawi exists in direct opposition to colonialist visions of the Southwest as *its* territory. In this regard, Hopi people have experienced the same tensions that Glen Coulthard has found at Denedah, in which colonizing governments have refused to abide by the grounded normativities—modes of governance that emerge from the land—already existing in our territory and instead are attempting to impose political and economic frameworks upon Indigenous peoples

⁷¹ As J. L. Austin noted, there are some utterances that can be termed “performative” because “(a) they do not ‘describe’ or ‘report’ or constatae anything at all, are not ‘true or false’; and (b) the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action”—in other words, “the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action.” J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 5–6. As Austin points out, for performative utterances to work, there must be an existing convention that gives effect to certain words performed in a context. In addition, there often must be intention behind the words. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 8–9, 11, 15. As Erving Goffman points out, the crafting of the context (“front”) can be just as important to the effectiveness of the utterance as its linguistic content: the setting (spatial layout/organization of the context), appearance (indices of social status), and manner (cues in the voice or physical movement that foreshadow the utterance), when understood by those who experience the utterance, will be key to what effects if any are achieved by the performance. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), 13–17.

⁷² “[Hopi] [c]eremonies are instrumental as well as symbolic.” Sheridan et al., *Moquis and Kastilam*, 27. See also Peter M. Whiteley, *Rethinking Hopi Ethnography*, Smithsonian Series in Ethnographic Inquiry (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

⁷³ As Hopi archeologist Lyle Balenquah has explained, “When a modern Hopi person is involved in ceremonial rites and responsibilities, he or she does not simply go through the motions but actively engages the spiritual power that was first developed and handed down by the ancestors. In this way a Hopi remains connected to the time of the ancestors—many of whom, Hopis believe, still inhabit [Hopi ancestral sites]. Indeed, it was in places like these that some Hopi ceremonies, such as the Snake Dance, originated. The ceremonies reflect connections that transcend time and set participants among their ancestors in the present day. . . . The ancestors play important parts in contemporary Hopi ceremonies that ‘bring rain, fertility, and other blessings for the Hopi people and their neighbors throughout the world.’” Lyle Balenquah, “They are Still Here: Wupatki Pueblo and the Meaning of Place” in *Hisat’sinom: Ancient Peoples in a Land without Water*, ed. Christian E. Downum. (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012), 14.

that exploit us, the land, and our modes of creative production. As he explains, “Place is a way of knowing, of experiencing and relating to the world and with others; and sometimes these relational practices and forms of knowledge guide forms of resistance against other rationalizations of the world that threaten to erase or destroy our senses of place.”⁷⁴ Taken together with other recent moments in which Indigenous performances have asserted or defended Indigenous sovereignties (e.g., Idle No More, #NoDAPL), it becomes clear that our Indigenous forms of creativity can directly counteract imagined settler places like the Grand Canyon and the objectives of the settler-states who have sought to dispossess, erase, and/or assimilate our people into their own cartographies of colonization and taxonomies of creativity. It is in these spaces of sonic sovereignty that we have perhaps some of our greatest opportunities for generative decolonization and indigenization.

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⁷⁴ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 61.

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