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ANTHROPOLOGICAL SERIES

VOL. VII, No. 2

THE PONCA SUN DANCE

BY

GEORGE A. DORSEY

Curator, Department of Anthropology

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THE PONCA SUN DANCE

By
George A. Dorsey

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The account of the Ponca Sun Dance here presented may, at best, be considered imperfect and unsatisfactory. This is due chiefly to the fact that I have been able to witness the ceremony but once, and that opportunity has not been afforded to investigate the ceremony by questioning the priests. It must also be noted that, owing to the rapid deterioration of the Ponca in recent times, the ceremony has lost much of its former hold on the tribe. Owing to the proximity of the camp-circle to the railroad and to white communities of considerable size, the ceremony is witnessed each year by a large number of white visitors. This has contributed much to weaken the genuineness of the feeling for the ceremony. Not the least difficulty which I encountered in the brief time that I have been able to devote to the Ponca, was my inability to secure the services of a satisfactory interpreter. This does not mean that there are no educated young men in the tribe, or that the priests are unwilling to give such information as they possess about the ceremony. The real difficulty lay in securing an interpreter who would be willing to confine his attention to the subject in hand. Imperfect as this account is, however, I offer it as a contribution to the study of the Sun Dance in general.

It is with much pleasure that I acknowledge my indebtedness to White-Eagle, the chief of the Ponca, to the minor chiefs, and to the priests and dancers of the ceremony for their uniform willingness to assist me, both in securing information on the ceremony and in photographing the more important events.

GEORGE A. DORSEY.

November 1, 1905.

PART I.—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

NAME OF THE CEREMONY.

The name the Poncas give to the Sun Dance ceremony is Sun-Seeing-dance; that is, the sun is a witness to the dance. Another name at times applied to the ceremony is Sacred or Mystery dance.

TIME AND DURATION.

The time of the ceremony is determined by the Thunder-men (Sun Dance priests), who assemble at the call of the tribal chief in the spring for this purpose. The month being determined, they choose the time of the month when the moon is at least half full. All the Ponca ceremonies of which I have any record have been held in June or July, the majority in the latter month.

PARTICIPANTS.

The priests of the ceremony are called Thunder-men, and are medicine-men who have fasted at least four times during previous ceremonies and who have learned the rites and paints. The priests determine who shall dance in each ceremony, each priest selecting one or more men who shall report to the priests in general at a certain time during the ceremony, when the dancer selects his instructor and remains in his care until the end of the ceremony and compensates him liberally for his instructions. Each individual chosen may be expected to be thus called, on three additional performances, whereupon he becomes a Sun Dance priest. To be thus chosen is not without considerable honor, for each dancer is supposed to bear the sufferings of the tribe. The priesthood of the Ponca Sun Dance is, therefore, a close corporation with self-perpetuating power. Each priest selects a servant and two pipe-bearers, one to take care of his pipe, the other to look after the gifts or presents. The ceremony is in charge of the oldest and most learned of the priests and more especially under the direction of the war-priest of the tribe. There are neither pledgers for the ceremony itself nor those who vow they will dance and fast.

During the ceremony the directors were as follows:

White-Eagle, Chief. (See Pl. I, Fig. 1.)

Hairy-Bear, Leader.

Big-Elk, Assistant Leader. (See Pl. I, Fig. 2.)

The following list contains the names of the priests, or grand-fathers, as those who attend to the painting are called, and those who were to fast and dance:

PRIESTS.	DANCERS.
1. No-Ear.	Through-Hole. Black-Buffalo-Bull.
2. Little-Walker.	Frank-Eagle. Fire-Shaker. Yellow-Ricket. Carl Four-Bear.
3. Two-Crows.	Philip Other. Charles McDonald. Martin Blue-Back. Jack Rough-Face. Edward Little-Warrior.
4. Sits-on-Hill.	Little-Hale. Willie Poor-Horse. Albert Black-Coal. (Oto.)
5. Little-Dancer.	James Other. Jessie Gives-Water. Jack No-Care.
6. Polecat.	Black-Horse. (Osage.) Clarence Black-Hair-Horse. Joe Knows-the-Country.
7. Black-Elk.	Fred Smith. Fred Crooked-Hand. (Oto.)
8. White-Deer.	Makes-Cloud. Little-Snake. Oscar Makes-Cry. John Bull. Buffalo-Chief. Mrs. Little-Snake.
9. Little-Hard-Man.	Atkins White-Tail. Leonard Big-Goose. Leon Little-Turtle. John Hudson (Oto). (Oto.)

From the list it is seen that four Oto and one Osage participated in the ceremony, and one woman.

PART II.—THE CEREMONY.

The time and place of the ceremony having previously been announced to the tribe, they aim to move camp and have formed the camp-circle by evening of the day before that set for the beginning of the ceremony. From this time until the close of the ceremony, all who are to participate in the ceremony abstain from women, otherwise serious accidents would result.

FIRST DAY.

THE FOUR SECRET TIPIS OF PREPARATION.

The camp-circle being completed, the priests selected four tipis, located one on the southeast, one on the southwest, one on the northwest, and one on the northeast of the circle. They assembled within these tipis according to the following grouping:

- No. 1. White-Deer.
Black-Elk.
Polecat.
- No. 2. Little Dancer.
Sits-on-Hill.
Hairy-Bear.
- No. 3. Two-Crows.
No-Ear.
Little-Walker.
- No. 4. White-Eagle.
Big-Elk.
Little-Hard-Man.

No rites were performed, but they visited back and forth from one tipi to another, provided certain raw materials to be used later in the ceremony, decided on the individuals who were to perform certain rites later on, and discussed the names of the men who were to be invited to participate as dancers during the ceremony.

MOURNING FEAST.

At about noon there occurred on the south side of the circle a mourning feast, at which time many presents, including horses, ponies, trunks, shawls, etc., were given away. This was followed by the feast. (See Pl. II, Fig. 1.)

The most important event of the day was the appointing by each priest of pipe-bearers and a servant who should run errands and assist him generally. The servants (see Pl. III, Fig. 1) collectively act as police and guard the camp. The pipe-bearers (see Pl. III, Fig. 2) always accompany the priest; one bears his pipe and paints and fasts just as the priest does who appoints him; the other pipe-bearer looks after the presents the priest receives for instructing the dancers.

SECOND DAY.

With daybreak the servants began clearing and making ready the space within the camp-circle, and the principal participants and mounted Dog Soldiers began to appear.

PREPARATION FOR THE SHAM BATTLE.

At about seven o'clock the chief, White-Eagle, made the following announcement: "The enemies are coming to attack our camp. We must be on the alert. All you young men get ready, for we must drive them away and let them know that we are prepared to repulse any depredation at all times. Mount your ponies, shoulder your guns, prepare to follow your leader (Hairy-Bear) and repulse them. They must be driven away for the safety of our camp and of our women and children." Immediately following this announcement, young men and old, gayly attired, began to appear and parade around the inside of the camp-circle. Big-Elk from time to time urged them to hurry and called for more men to volunteer. Near the center of the circle Big-Elk took his position with a standard, and by him sat several musicians about a large drum. (See Pl. IV, Fig. 1.) Near the drummers were gathered the men who had been selected to fast and dance in the ceremony. White-Eagle stood to their left and directed the performance, which was in the nature of preparation to meet the enemy. Thus arranged, they sang war-songs and related war stories for about an hour. (See Pl. V.)

SPYING THE CENTRE-POLE.

In the mean time the mounted warriors, the so-called Dog Soldiers, led by Little-Soldier, set off to the north and went to the timber to go through the formality of spying the tall willow tree (chosen because the willow is hard to kill), which had been selected the night before by the chiefs. (See Pl. IV, Fig. 2.) Then they returned toward the camp-circle, having painted themselves and being provided with grape-vine shields and willow poles for lances.

The majority of the horses were painted, and provided with willow collars and bell pendants. They entered the camp-circle on the north side, and singing, shouting and yelling, and brandishing their guns, they rapidly rode around the camp-circle, passing via the east and south. Then they charged upon the equally bedecked and painted crowd in the centre of the circle, and for over half an hour there ensued a very spirited and hilarious sham battle. (See Pl. VI.) During the sham battle White-Eagle and the sub-chiefs selected certain men to "capture the enemy," that is, to go with the one who located the tree to the timber, cut the tree and bring it to the centre of the camp-circle. It was then about midday and all went to their tipis for the noon feast and to give away presents, to show their joy at the successful outcome of the sham battle.

MOVING THE TIPIS OF PREPARATION.

Mention has been made of the tipis selected by the priests on the previous day, which served as meeting-places. In the early morning each of these was taken up bodily by women, relatives of the priests, and carried within the camp-circle about one hundred feet towards the centre. (See Pl. II, Fig. 2.) These tipis then became sacred and secret, and could not be entered by any one except the priests who belonged to them, or later by the dancers who elected to have as grandfather a priest, who, in conjunction with one or more priests, owned the tipis.

INVITING THE DANCERS.

Immediately after assembling in the secret tipis the servants were given the names of those who were to be invited to fast. They at once made the round of the camp crying out the names. The men on hearing their names called went to any one of the four secret tipis they chose, and each selected as grandfather the one he preferred to be his instructor. Each grandfather, however, aimed to get at least four men to paint and direct. Having chosen a grandfather, they henceforth remained in his tipi, except when they were in the Sun Dance lodge proper. In this secret tipi they were painted and costumed for the public performances, and from the time they entered the tipi until the ceremony came to an end they fasted.

BUILDING THE LODGE.

At about two o'clock a large body of men and women went to the timber and brought in many short limbs. With these, under the direction of White-Eagle, the Sun Dance lodge was erected.

This differed entirely from the elaborate and substantial lodge erected by the Cheyenne and Arapaho. The limbs were sharpened at one end and thrust into the ground in the form of a circle about seventy-five feet in diameter, with a wide open space or doorway towards the east. In this condition the lodge remained until the following morning.

CAPTURING THE CENTRE-POLE.

In the mean time the men appointed by White-Eagle in the forenoon, led by the one who had located the centre-pole, had gone to that part of the timber where the willow tree was standing. Arrived at the tree they halted, and the leader, Little-Soldier, related a war story, telling how he had killed an enemy. Then he rode around the tree, thus capturing it. The man selected to chop the tree walked around it four times, touching the tree once each time. Then each man present marched around it, counting coup on the enemy. After that it was felled without further ceremony, and carried by men to the edge of the camp-circle, where it was placed so as to extend north and south or crosswise to the sun, and there it was left until the following morning. It should have been taken into the circle in the afternoon, but the men were too late in returning with it. As late as seven o'clock White-Eagle and Hairy-Bear rode around the camp pleading that the pole be brought in, although they knew that their plea would be in vain. Furthermore, the lodge should have been dedicated on this night, but, as that was impossible, the men invited to fast danced and sang informally, both within and without the inclosure.

THE FOUR TIPI ALTARS.

These altars, or dry sand paintings, were erected in the afternoon, but the accompanying rites were not observed. Whether each altar was the work of one priest, or of all in the tipi, was not ascertained, nor is it known to what extent, if any, the dancers were allowed to participate in any rites which may have accompanied the construction of the altars.

ALTAR NO. 1. A circular area within the tipi had been cleared and the ground made smooth. The diameter of this cleared space was about five feet. The space surrounding the cleared area was covered with sage, the butts being directed toward the outer edge of the tipi. The symbol itself consisted of four concentric circles, the one on the inside being red, the second yellow, the third green. These circles were made by excavating the earth to a slight depth

and covering the excavated surface with dried paint. The three inner circles were distant from each other about six inches. The outer circle was not excavated, but was produced by covering a broad, irregular area outside the third circle with red paint, which extended as far as the sage. (See Pl. VII, Fig. 1.)

ALTAR No. 2. As in the first tipi, the central part of the space within the tipi had been thoroughly cleared and the remaining portion covered with sage. In the centre of this cleared area was a cross, with arms of equal length, produced by two lines of sand made at right angles. At the end of each line was a peculiarly shaped symbol representing in a somewhat realistic manner the buffalo hoof. The explanation given of this altar was that the sage represented the people, the arms of the cross the paths of the buffalo and of the four winds, the buffalo hoofs, of course, being symbolic of the buffalo. (See Pl. VII, Fig. 2.)

ALTAR No. 3. The cleared space and the sage occupied the same relative areas they did in the first and second tipis. In the cleared area was a comparatively level sand field, about two feet in diameter. Surrounding this was a shallow trench two inches in width, with its sides covered with red paint. Over the sand field the narrow trench and the area of cleared ground still remaining were scattered eagle downy feathers. According to my informant, "there should have been four colors in this altar, but the leaders had changed it to suit themselves, in order to make the medicine stronger." The red trench was the symbol of the sun, while the whole altar represented the nest of the Thunder-Bird. (See Pl. VIII, Fig. 1, and Pl. IX, Fig. 1.)

ALTAR No. 4. The altar in this tipi bore a general resemblance to that in No. 1, the centre of the cleared area being occupied by four concentric circles, the inner by four concentric circles, with equal space between them. The inner circle, two feet and a half in diameter, was blue, the second circle was red, the next blue, and the outer circle red. No explanation was obtained concerning the meaning of this altar, beyond the statement that it was the sun's symbol of one of the four medicine worlds. (See Pl. VIII, Fig. 2, and Pl. IX, Fig. 2.)

THIRD DAY.

At sunrise White-Eagle made the circuit of the camp-circle on horseback, calling for the dancers to repair to their respective tipis of preparation.

THE RACE TO THE CENTRE-POLE.

Within half an hour the dancers, in charge of their grandfathers, left the four tipis and assembled on the south side of the camp. There they formed in one long line facing north. The dancers were entirely naked except for a loin-cloth and blanket. Their blankets were given to the servants of their grandfathers, and as they received them they shouted four times. At the signal all raced to the opposite side of the circle where the winner of the race, Crazy-Buffalo, stepped upon the foot of the centre-pole, thus having the honor of first counting coup on a dead enemy. The other racers repeated this performance. One struck it with a stick, and all sang a victory song in honor of the winner of the race. Then by means of short poles, which had already been provided for the purpose, they lifted the tree and carried it to the Sun Dance lodge, halting four times on the way. The dancers and their grandfathers returned to the secret tipis to begin preparation for the ceremony proper. The Dog Soldiers went to the timber for additional boughs to complete the arbor forming the lodge. When these were in place women fastened four canvas tipis to the sides of the arbor and attached the free ends to the lodge poles, thus forming a better protection for the dancers from the burning rays of the sun.

PAINTING THE CENTRE-POLE.

The chiefs, leaders, and priests gathered around the centre-pole. Standing-Elk related some war stories, each story stating that on the return of each party they were successful and wore the black paint of victory. Then White-Eagle related seven war tales, each one with an equally happy ending. Next Red-Leaf related a tale in which the victors returned home wounded and covered with blood. At the end of this tale a band of red a foot and a half wide was painted near the centre of the pole by Little-Walker, who also painted the skull in his secret tipi. (See Pl. X.) Then Yellow-Bear related the story of a victorious party who, upon returning home, found that they had no black paint and so had to burn grass for use in blacking their faces. Little-Walker then burned some dry grass, and with the black ash thus formed he painted a black band just above the red one. A large bundle of willows was placed in the fork of the pole, tied by a long lariat rope which hung free, and a black handkerchief was tied to one of the forks as a mourning symbol. Without further rites the pole was raised into position. (See Pl. XI.)

PREPARATION FOR THE ALTAR.

After the pole was erected the women cleared with hoes a circular space about ten feet in diameter west of and between the centre-pole and the outer edge of the lodge. The dirt they piled just at the foot of the centre-pole on the west side. About the outer or western quarter of the rim of the cleared space they placed a layer of weed sage.

In the mean time before the tipi of each man selected to dance during the ceremony a long trimmed pole had been erected by his mother or a female relative, from the top of which streamed a long piece of calico or cloth. These were offerings or sacrifices, and indicated that the tipis over which they waved were contributing to the ceremony. Should a man erect one of the banners he would be classed as a woman.

THE DANCERS ENTER THE LODGE.

When the lodge was ready, a crier went forth to inform the priests, who, during the time of the performance of the above-mentioned rites, had been in the secret tipis preparing and painting the dancers. The priests and their subjects came forth from the tipis and started towards the lodge. On the way they halted four times, sitting down on the ground for a few minutes each time. (See Pls. XII and XIII.) Arriving at the entrance of the lodge, they passed on around the outside, encircling it by the way of the south and west, halting four times; again, arriving at the entrance of the lodge, they turned and entered by groups, each led by a priest or grandfather, in the following order: 1. No-Ear. 2. Little-Walker. 3. Two-Crows. 4. Sits-on-Hill. 5. Little-Hard-Man. The dancers of each group were all painted and costumed alike, each bearing the paint and costume of his grandfather. The grandfather not only paints himself, but dances and fasts as do the regular subjects. As the names of the dancers proper have already been given in connection with their so-called grandfathers in the list of *Participants*, it is not necessary to repeat them. In describing the *Paints*, the numbers of groups will refer to the numbers as arranged above.

COMPLETION OF THE ALTAR.

As the line of dancers entered the lodge, No-Ear and Little-Walker turned toward the cleared space and the latter placed the painted buffalo skull, which he had carried from his lodge, upon the sage, so that, at the outer edge of the cleared space, the skull faced towards the centre-pole. Then No-Ear deposited on the

ground a pipe, which he so placed that its stem leaned against the base of one of the horns. This completed the altar. The skull bore the following paint, which presumably had been done by a priest while in the lone tipi. (See Fig. 1.) On the forehead of the skull was a square, the anterior and posterior lines of the square being continued down the sides of the skull. In front of these were two additional lines continuing entirely across the skull. On each side of the lines of the square were two other lines, which were continued backwards to the base of the skull, the anterior ends of these two lines being connected by two parallel lines. All of the lines were narrow red lines. (See Pl. XIV.)

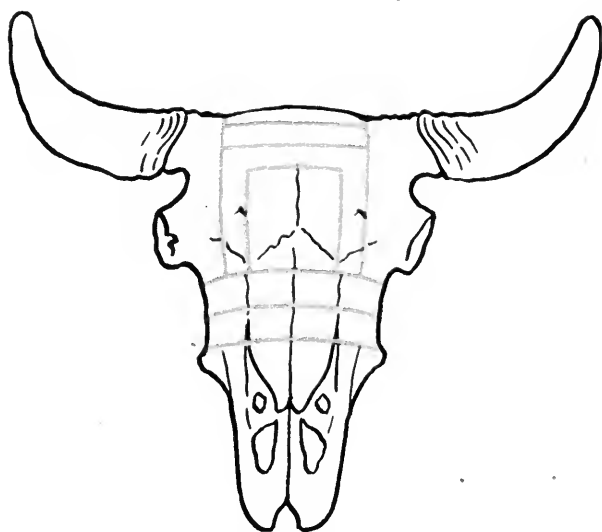


FIG. 1. Diagram of paint of buffalo skull.

BEGINNING OF THE DANCE.

Immediately after the arrival of the dancers several musicians entered the lodge and took their places about a large drum inside the lodge and just south of the entrance. They at once began to shout in a high voice and beat irregularly on the drum. The dancers, grandfathers, and pipe-bearers, who had seated themselves in a long, semi-circular line about the west half side of the lodge, arose. The grandfathers began shaking their bells or whatever they held in their hands. The dancers began to cry and heave their chests in a peculiar form of prayer. All raised their right hand toward

the centre-pole. Then they placed the whistles in their mouths, and, facing the centre-pole, they began to whistle and dance in time to the singing and drumming, which had now become regular. Thus they danced during four successive songs, which occupied half an hour. Then the drummers arose and passed outside the lodge towards the east. The dancers followed and, halting by the side of the long poles with the calico banners, they formed in one long line east and west and faced the sun and danced. (See Pl. XV.) All returned to the lodge, where they continued to dance at intervals for the remainder of the day, dancing outside to the sun on two additional occasions. On one of these two occasions they waved towards the sun for long periods the wreaths or shields or whatever else they held in their hands.

At two o'clock the relatives of the dancers provided a feast for all the musicians and guests. During the day there was much rejoicing and giving away of ponies, etc. (See Pl. XVI.)

THE EVENING AND NIGHT PERFORMANCE.

After a long period of rest in the afternoon, the dancers, just before sunset, filed out of the lodge and passed around by way of the south to the west side tipi, where they formed in one long line facing the setting sun in the west. Behind them were grouped the musicians about the drum. In front of the line of dancers stood Hairy-Bear. In this position they danced for over half an hour. From time to time the grandfathers stepped from the line in front of their subjects, exhorted them, waved their leaves and sun-glasses, etc. (See Pl. XVII.) The dancing was extremely spirited throughout this period, and the greatest religious enthusiasm was shown by the crowd of spectators, who formed in long lines extending from the east to the west on each side of the end of the line. After the sun had completely disappeared, the grandfathers and dancers engaged in a long and earnest prayer. Then they sat down and faced the east for a short period. Thereupon they returned to the tipi and rested until about eleven o'clock that night. Then they all arose, passed out of the tipis and stood facing east and danced to the moon for nearly an hour. They returned to the tipi and rested until after midnight, when they again left the tipi and danced, facing the west, to the moon. The two remaining hours of the night were passed in sleep.

FOURTH DAY.

Shortly before sunrise the dancers began to adjust their kilts and made ready for the sunrise performance. They passed out

of the tipi, accompanied by the grandfathers and musicians, as on the preceding day. They formed in one long line, facing the east and danced until the sun appeared. Again they prayed long and earnestly, as on the preceding night. They re-entered the tipi, and after a short period of inactivity, they received their second paint. By seven o'clock they were again ready for the dance, and, rising, they stood and prayed for nearly a quarter of an hour. Then they danced, facing the centre-pole, while the grandfathers earnestly exhorted and encouraged them.

Several times during the day they left the tipi as on the preceding day, and danced with their eyes fully turned towards the blazing sun. Many times during this dance the grandfathers worked themselves and subjects into a frenzy of excitement, waving before the dancers their wreaths and shields, or by means of small hand-mirrors reflecting the sun directly in their subjects' eyes; at other times running about the dancers, gesticulating frantically, or directing their attention to something in the sun which they themselves could see, and wished that the dancers might see. (See Pls. XVIII and XIX.)

Throughout the day's performance there was much feasting about the camp, and many ponies and other presents were given away during the dancing episodes. Many presents, especially ponies, were also given to a band of about thirty Pawnees, who were visiting the Poncas on this occasion. During the day there were also held many mourning feasts and dances, at different points in the camp-circle, and in the afternoon the women held a scalp dance. (See Pl. XX.)

FIFTH DAY.

THE SUNRISE DANCE.

At five in the morning the dancers were still asleep, lying in a circle about the edge of the lodge, their heads turned towards the centre-pole. Shortly after, they began to awaken, and before sunrise they had brushed their hair carefully and adjusted their costume. Led by the musicians, who beat in irregular time upon the drum, they passed outside the lodge and faced towards the east, and, raising both hands towards the sun, prayed for fifteen minutes. Then, to the exhortations of the grandfathers, or the jingling of bells, the waving of bandoleers, etc., they danced during four songs. After the dance they returned to the lodge to receive the third paint. By eight o'clock all were ready. They passed out of the lodge in groups and not in single file as before. Each group, led by its leader, went

either to the right or to the left and encircled the lodge, and in regular positions danced for a quarter of an hour. Thus the forenoon was spent.

THE FINAL DANCE.

Shortly after noon all the dancers in line passed outside the lodge, went towards the south to the west of the lodge and faced the sun overhead. Here they danced for nearly an hour, the dance being of an extremely spirited nature. All then re-entered the lodge, the dancers removed the cotton bands from their wrists and ankles and the willow wreaths from their bodies, and deposited them, along with the bunches of sage they had held in their hands, on the mound at the foot of the centre-pole. (See Pl. XXI, Fig. 1.) Those who had used black handkerchiefs and those who had carried the little images attached them to the base of the centre-pole. During this performance the Dog Soldiers formed in a semi-circle facing the lodge outside, and the priests formed in a circle just behind them.

SECRET RITES IN THE TIPIS OF PREPARATION.

After the dancers had removed all of their paraphernalia, except their kilts and loin-cloths, they reassembled in groups, and each, led by its grandfather, went to one or the other of the secret tipis of preparation. The group from tipi No. 4, that of White-Eagle, was followed by the author. Arrived at the tipi, the leaders entered first, and were followed by the dancers. They all sat down in a circle around the sides of the tipi. The pipe-bearers entered, while a group of Dog Soldiers sat outside.

Female relatives of the dancers brought food to the tipi, and it was passed inside.

THE SACRIFICE.

White-Eagle sat opposite the entrance of the tipi and having the sand-picture between him and the opening, took a cup of water in his left hand and with the thumb of his right made a small hole at the edge of the sand-picture. Into this he poured some water, covered the hole, took a bunch of sage, dipped it in the cup and drew it across the mouth of the dancer who sat next to him. Then with his hand he pressed the rest of the water from the sage upon the dancer's head. He again dipped it into the water, and went through the same performance with the dancer next in line, and so on until he had gone entirely around the circle. He then passed the same piece of sage over the sun symbol, drawing it back and forth irregularly. Then he passed it back and forth on the symbo

and destroyed it. Next a cup of water was handed to each one of the dancers, after which each drank his fill from the pail. Then White-Eagle took from a bowl some corn and offered it to the sun symbol on the south side. Food, consisting chiefly of dog-meat, was then distributed among the dancers. As each dancer received his portion, he broke off a bit, raised it aloft, muttered a prayer, and dropped it on the centre of the sun-symbol. After the feast, White-Eagle uttered a prayer.

TORTURE.

At this point the author left this tipi, and went to White-Deer's tipi, called hitherto No. 1. So far as could be learned, the same rites had been performed here as in tipi No. 4. On entering, the dancers were preparing themselves for the sacrifice. Seated in the centre was the priest, and one after the other the dancers took a place by him, each as he did so turning his right shoulder to the priest. The latter thereupon took up an awl which he thrust in the skin over the shoulder-bone, and, lifting up the skin, he cut off with a knife a circular piece about half an inch in diameter, which he placed in the outstretched hand of the dancer. Thereupon, the latter stood up, raised the piece of skin upward, offering it to the sun, then placed it on a small piece of cloth with tobacco seeds, which had been provided for that purpose. During this rite of sacrifice much good feeling and jollity and even hilarity prevailed in the tipi. After the priest had completed taking the sacrifice from the last dancer, each handed to the priest his little packet containing the tobacco and the piece of skin; these he took to the lodge and deposited them on the ground at the foot of the centre-pole. (See Pl. XXI, Fig. 2.) It was then about two o'clock in the afternoon and the ceremony was at an end.

PAINTS AND COSTUMES.

All dancers at all times wore their hair loose, and were naked, except for a loose, white skirt, over which hung in front the loose end of a red or blue loin-cloth. None of them at any time wore moccasins. Besides the paint which the dancers of each group wore in common, the members of each group wore or carried distinctive objects of special nature. When the contrary is not stated, it will be understood that all the dancers, including the grandfather or the one who painted them, and his servant and pipe-bearers, were painted and costumed alike. Each dancer carried in one hand a bunch of sage, and all wore wrist and ankle bands of cotton, which

are symbolic of clouds. Thus they make themselves plain to the Thunder-Bird. Each dancer also wore on his breast the usual eagle-wing bone Sun Dance whistle, which was suspended from a cord around his neck. The lower end of the whistle, that is, the part he inserted in the mouth, was covered with short sage stems. This is said to prevent the dancers from becoming thirsty.

FIRST PAINT.

This is the paint worn on the third day of the first entry of the lodge. As before noted, all preparations of costumes, painting, etc., were done in the secret tipis.

1st Group. All wore an eagle breath feather attached by a short string to the scalp lock, and a necklace of long, red horsehair, so arranged as to extend well down on the breast and shoulders. (See Pl. XXII, Fig. 1.) The entire body was painted yellow. Blue dots extended down the arms and surrounded the face. (See Pl. XXIII, Fig. 1.) The upper half of the face of the grandfather was painted black.

2d Group. All wore an eagle breath feather attached to the scalp lock, and a wide collar of eagle feathers about the neck. (See Pl. XXII, Fig. 2.) The entire body was painted yellow, except the face, which was red. All the dancers, except the grandfather, wore a row of large, red, circular dots on the left arm, and a red zigzag line on the right arm. (See Pl. XXIII, Fig. 2.)

3d Group. All wore the eagle breath feather in the scalp lock. The grandfather wore around his neck a wreath of sage, so fashioned that the sage projected outward on four sides, thus giving it a rectangular appearance. (See Pl. XXIV, Fig. 1.) The bodies of all were painted yellow. The faces were painted a bright red, surrounded by a row of white dots. On the right arms were zigzag lines, and on the left rows of large circular dots, both in bright red. (See Pl. XXV, Fig. 1.)

4th Group. All wore an eagle breath feather in the scalp lock and a collar of eagle tail feathers around the neck. Three of the dancers carried in their right hands a compactly made ring of willow; the fourth carried in his right hand a similar ring of sage, to which were attached eight eagle breath feathers. (See Pl. XXIV, Fig. 2.) The entire bodies of all were painted yellow; so were the faces of all except one, who had only a blue line across his face. The others bore a row of blue dots around their faces.

5th Group. All wore eagle breath feathers attached to their scalp locks. The grandfather wore a necklace or collar of black eagle feathers and all the dancers wore a collar of crow feathers.

(See Pl. XXVI, Fig. 1.) The entire body of all in the group was painted yellow, except the face, which was red, surrounded by very large white spots. A row of large white spots extended up and down each arm and a circular row was found on the breast. (See Pl. XXV, Fig. 2.)

6th Group. The grandfather and three dancers wore a bandoleer of crow feathers, the last dancer wearing a bandoleer of hawk feathers. All the dancers carried in their right hands a large sage ring, to which was attached eight eagle breath feathers. The grandfather in his right hand carried a black handkerchief to which was attached a bell. (See Pl. XXVI, Fig. 2.) The bodies of all were painted yellow. The faces were surrounded by small white dots. On the breast, back, and arms were marks made by applying the fingers when the paint was wet. (See Pl. XXVII, Fig. 1.)

7th Group. All wore the eagle breath feather attached to the scalp lock and a black-tipped eagle tail feather in the hair. All wore an otter-skin band on the right wrist, to which was attached a small red painted human image of rawhide, and a bunch of crow feathers. (See Pl. XXVIII, Fig. 1.) The bodies of all were painted red. The face was also red, except within a white line which surrounded the face. Over the red of the body were white lines, from ten to three inches long, made by the fingers. (See Pl. XXVII, Fig. 2.)

8th Group. All wore a red painted human image of rawhide, seven inches long, suspended from a cord at the wrist. The grandfather, in his right hand, carried a sage ring, and in his left a black handkerchief, to which was attached a bell. One of the dancers carried an eagle feather attached by a string; another a small hand looking-glass. One wore a crow feather bandoleer, and the remaining dancers wore a hawk feather bandoleer. (See Pl. XXVIII, Fig. 2.) The bodies of all were painted red. Around the faces and up and down the arms were three rows of white dots, the ends of which met in front of their necks. The tops of their heads were besmeared with thick red paint. (See Pl. XXIX, Fig. 1.)

9th Group. All carried medicine war shields and wore in their scalp locks an eagle breath feather attached to a long string. One wore a plain rawhide bandoleer; another wore a red stained horse-hair necklace; another wore a broad bead necklace and a red string bandoleer. (See Plate XXX.) The grandfather and two dancers were painted red. On the left side of the face was a crescent-shaped line in blue. (See Pl. XXIX, Fig. 2.) The other three dancers were painted yellow, with a blue line passing across their nose from one cheek to the other. (See Pl. XXXI, Fig. 1.)

SECOND PAINT.

This paint, as already noted, was worn on the third day. The dancers were painted in the lodge on this occasion, and not in the secret tipi. In costume and objects worn on the body or carried in the hand, no change was introduced from the preceding day. It remains to describe the paint of those groups which introduced a new paint.

4th Group. All the dancers and the grandfather were painted alike. The body and face were painted yellow, and around the breast and around the face were black circles.

5th Group. All the dancers and the grandfather were painted alike, except one, who was unpainted. The body was painted yellow and the face red. Surrounding the face was a row of white dots. Up and down each arm was a zigzag line in white and a white circle was placed on the breast. (See Pl. XXXI, Fig. 2.)

7th Group. The grandfather was painted differently from the dancers. His entire body and face were painted yellow, and on the right arm was painted a zigzag line of red. The dancers were painted yellow, but on their right arm bore a line of red dots, and on their left arm a zigzag line of red.

9th Group. The grandfather's body and face were painted orange. On one side of his face was a semi-circle of blue. The bodies and faces of two of the dancers were painted yellow. Across the yellow-painted face was a straight blue line. The remaining dancers of this group had a red painted body, with a blue semi-circle on the face. The scalp line was painted yellow.

THIRD PAINT.

The third was the last paint worn during the ceremony, and was applied in the lodge on the morning of the fifth, or last day. As during the second paint, there was no change in the paraphernalia of the dancers, but there was a complete change in the paints.

1st Group. The body of the grandfather was painted yellow throughout, except the upper half of the face, which was painted black. The bodies of the dancers were painted yellow. Around the face and arms were encircling blue lines.

2d Group. The bodies of all the dancers, including the grandfather, were painted yellow. The face of the grandfather was painted red, filled in with large white dots. (See Pl. XXXII, Fig. 1.) Around the faces of the dancers was a broad white line, and down the left arm was a zigzag line in red and down the right arm a row of large red dots.

3d Group. The grandfather's body was painted red. Up and down each arm was a series of large white dots, arranged in parallel rows. (See Pl. XXXII, Fig. 2.) The bodies of the dancers were painted yellow, with the face red, encircled by a white band. Down the right arm was a single line of large red dots, and down the left arm was a red zigzag line.

4th Group. The bodies of the grandfather and dancers were painted yellow. That of the grandfather was given a rough, grained effect by the application of the finger to the wet paint. Around the face was a black circle, and on each breast was a large crescent-shaped symbol. (See Pl. XXXIII, Fig. 1.) Around the face of each dancer was a single row of large red dots.

5th Group. The bodies of the grandfather and the dancers were painted yellow. The grandfather and two of the dancers wore on the left side of their faces a blue crescent-shaped symbol. The remaining dancers wore a straight line across the face, passing over the bridge of the nose.

6th Group. The bodies of the grandfather and dancers were painted yellow. The face was painted red, surrounded by a row of white dots. Across the breast and shoulders the grandfather wore ten parallel rows of white dots. (See Pl. XXXIII, Fig. 2.) The arms and bodies of the dancers were streaked with white.

7th Group. The bodies of all the dancers and the grandfather were painted red. The face was surrounded by two rows of small green dots. (See Pl. XXXIV, Fig. 1.) The dancers wore green dots on their bodies, and a white line around the face. (See Pl. XXXIV, Fig. 2.)

8th Group. All were painted red. Around the face and down the arms of the grandfather was a white zigzag line. (See Pl. XXXV, Fig. 1.) Each dancer wore two rows of white dots around his face, and four rows across his breast. (See Pl. XXXV, Fig. 2.)

9th Group. One of the dancers was unpainted. The remainder were painted yellow, with a red face, surrounded by a row of white dots. There were three additional dots on each cheek and one on the nose.

CONCLUSION.

While it is not possible at the present time, owing to lack of more extended observation and fuller information from the priests, to make an adequate characterization of the Ponca Sun Dance, certain points stand out prominently and seem worthy a moment's consideration. Foremost among these is the apparent simplicity

of the Ponca Sun Dance as compared with that of the Cheyenne or Arapaho. It is, of course, quite possible that certain rites are conducted in the tipis of preparation which the author has not witnessed, and which, consequently, are not even mentioned in these pages; but, judging from what was witnessed in the secret tipis and from the method of conducting the rites incident to the construction of the Sun Dance lodge proper, it seems more than probable that the secret rites were of the simplest nature. At any rate, they were, presumably, confined to the construction of the various forms of sun symbols and to the painting of the dancers. The public rites seem to be confined to those attending upon the spying, capturing, felling, painting and raising of the centre-pole, and the race to the pole before it is brought into the centre of the camp-circle. The altar of the ceremony proper is of the simplest kind, and requires, apparently, no rites for its construction, except such as may, perhaps, have been performed by the priest when he painted the skull in the secret tipi. Beyond this, there seems to have been no further rites of any importance connected with the ceremony, until the priests and dancers returned at the end of the dance on the last day to the secret tipis of preparation. The rites on this occasion were confined to the sacrifice of water and food, and the cutting from each dancer of a piece of skin from his shoulder by the priest. The last rite of the ceremony is connected with this incident; the grandfathers deposit the pieces of skin which they have removed, together with the tobacco, at the foot of the centre-pole in the Sun Dance lodge.

While no satisfactory account of the origin of the dance was obtained, a few points were brought out in conversation with White-Eagle. According to the belief of this very earnest chief and priest, the Ponca have always performed the Sun Dance. The lodge itself is typical of the circle of tipis overhead. The centre-pole seems to be symbolic of a man, an enemy, conceived of as naked, that the Great Medicine may see him. It is also conceived of as firewood, being of willow, which is said to be hard to kill and of a clean nature. In the fork of the pole is the nest of the Thunder-Bird, sometimes spoken of by the Ponca as an eagle, sometimes as a brant or loon. This bird produces rain, thunder, and lightning. The altar seems to be symbolic of a fireplace; it is also spoken of as the sun, which in turn is spoken of as the chief. According to Ponca mythology, in the beginning of creation was the sun or fireplace, and at that time it contained the four colors which are found in the four tipis of preparation. Next came the buffalo bull bearing

a pipe, offering himself to the people. The bull came from the interior of the earth and brought the people the paints of the lodge. Thus the exceedingly simple altar may be said to consist of the fireplace, or sun, the buffalo, and finally of the sage, which is symbolic of the people.

In comparing the Ponca Sun Dance with that of the Cheyenne or Arapaho, the points of difference stand out more prominently than those of resemblance. Most important of these points of resemblance are the painted dancers, who dance with an eagle bone whistle in their mouths towards the centre-pole, or towards the sun. The chief differences between the Ponca Sun Dance and that of the other group are as follows: The Ponca Sun Dance is an annual ceremony, and not dependent upon the vow or pledge of an individual member of the tribe; the dancers neither vow to dance nor dance because they belong to some particular warrior organization, but because they are asked to do so by the priests; instead of one secret tipi of preparation, there are four; instead of many rites in these tipis, there are but few, and these seem to be confined to the erection of sun symbols; the lodge itself is nothing but a wind-break as compared with that of the Cheyenne or Arapaho, which is a very substantial structure; the torture which the subjects in the Ponca ceremony undergo are not practiced, so far as known, by either the Cheyenne or the Arapaho; the Ponca ceremony finishes at midday, the Cheyenne and Arapaho at sunset.

It should be noted, finally, that in the Ponca Sun Dance of to-day we have a ceremony which has become, perhaps, much simplified in the practice and nature of its rites, and which devotes a larger proportion of its energies to the spectacular. It is quite possible that in the attitude of the priests when dancing towards the sun, they may be attempting to hypnotize the dancers; or it is possible that their actions may be explained by their having been influenced by their practice of the Ghost Dance.



FIG. 1



FIG. 2

FIG. 1. White Eagle, Sun dance chief

FIG. 2. Big Elk, assistant leader.

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FIG. 1

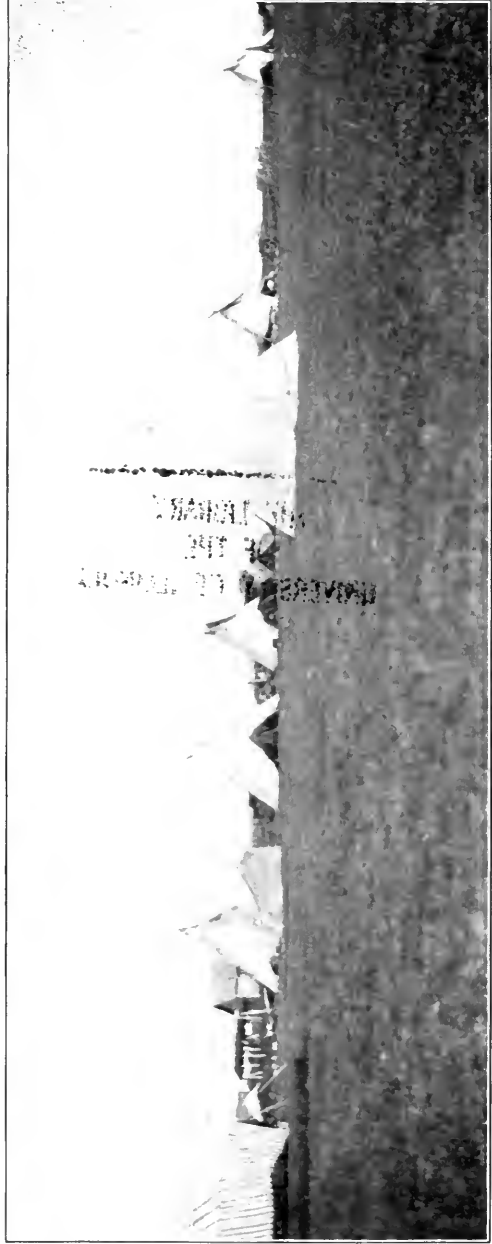


FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Mourning feast.

FIG. 2. One of the secret tipis of preparation.

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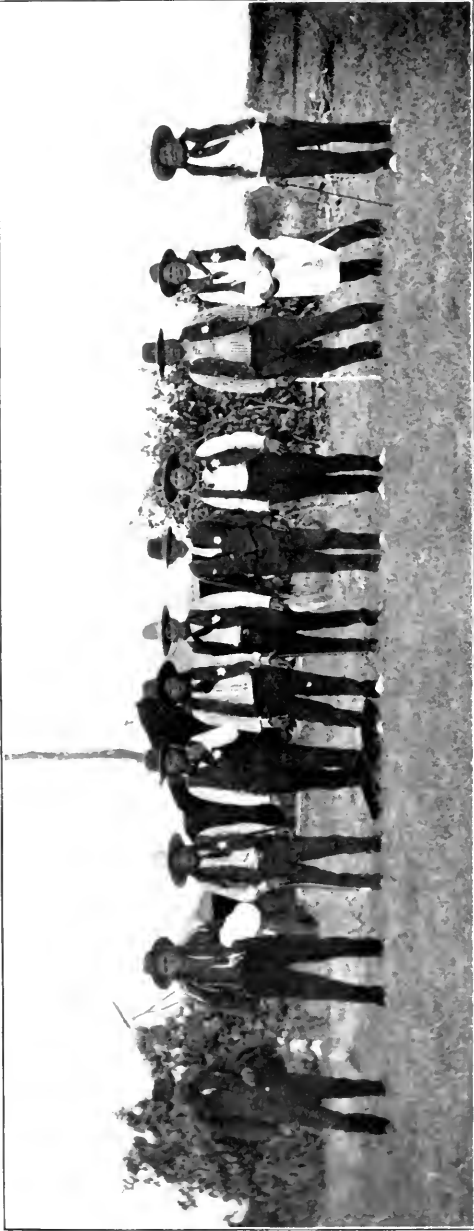


FIG. 1

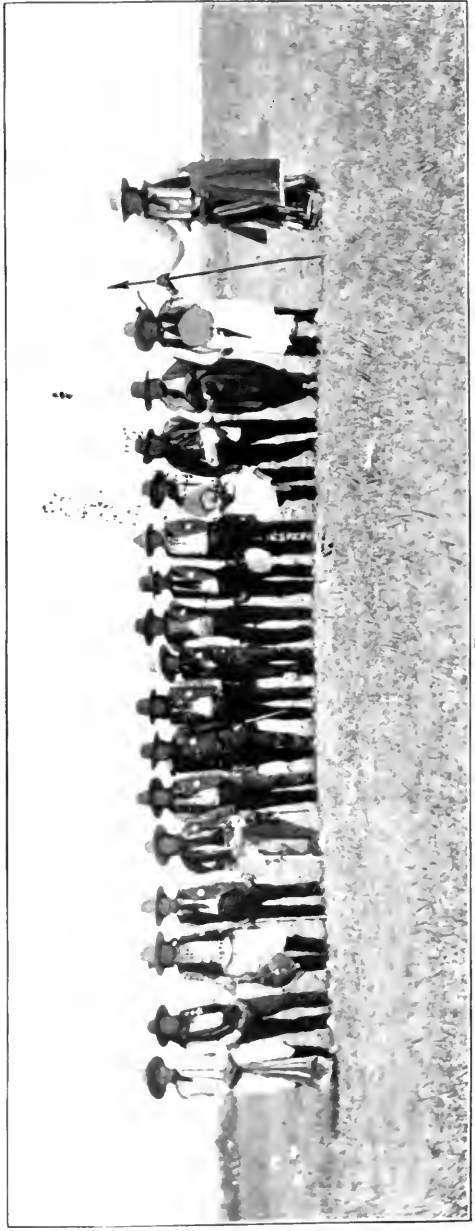


FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Sun dance servants.
FIG. 2. Sun dance pipe-bearers.

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FIG. 1



FIG. 2

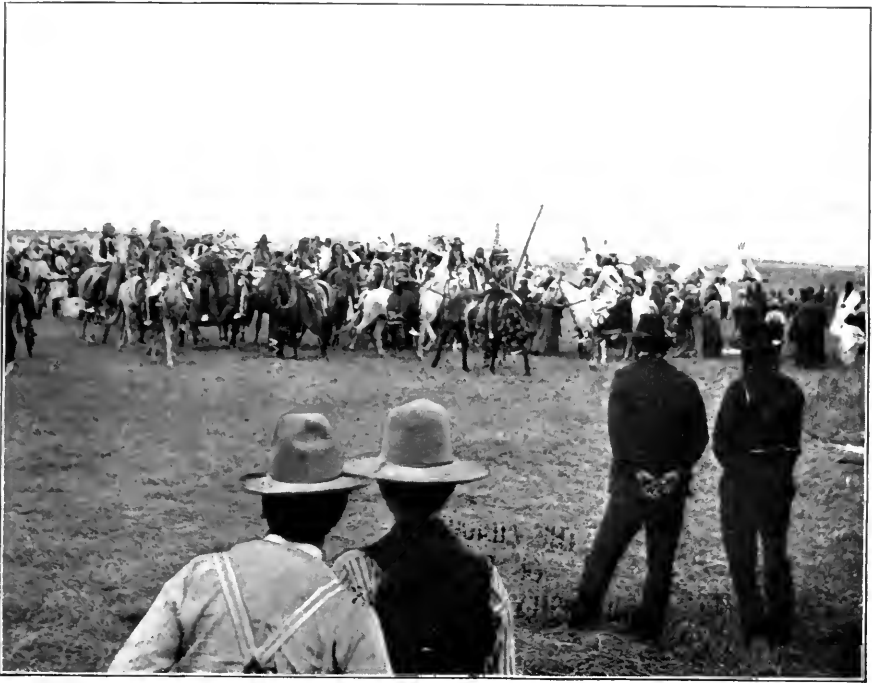
FIG. 1. Sun dance priests assembling.
FIG. 2. Mounted Dog-soldiers leaving the camp-circle.

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Sun dance priests awaiting return of Dog-soldiers.

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Sham battle after capture of the centre-pole.

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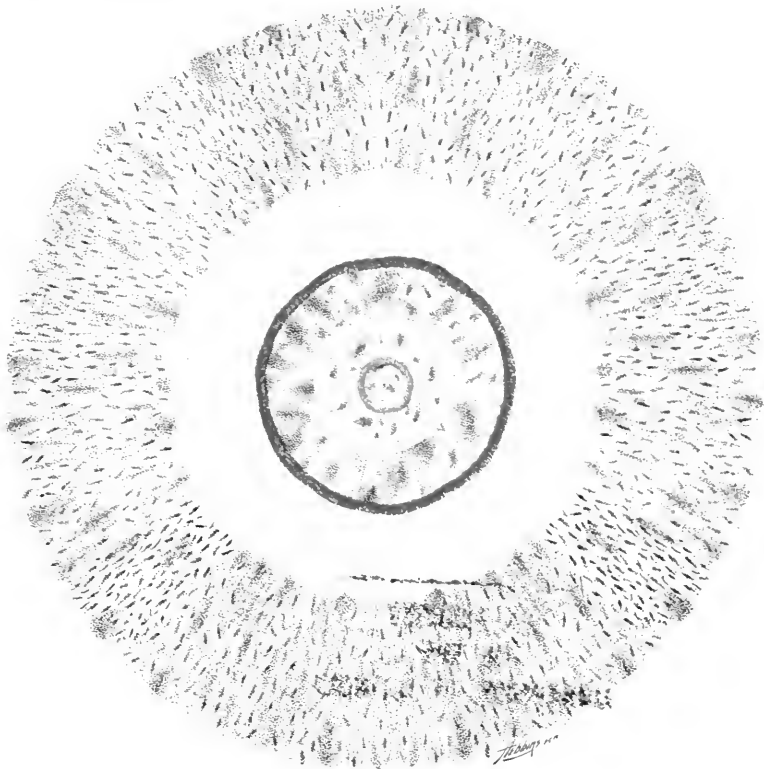


FIG. 1

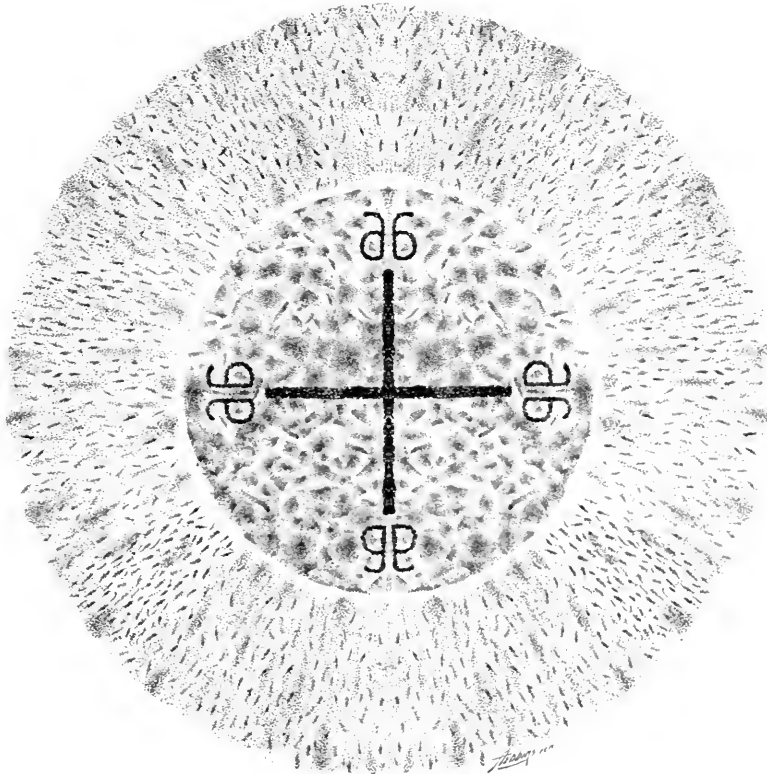


FIG. 2

Diagrams of first and second altars.

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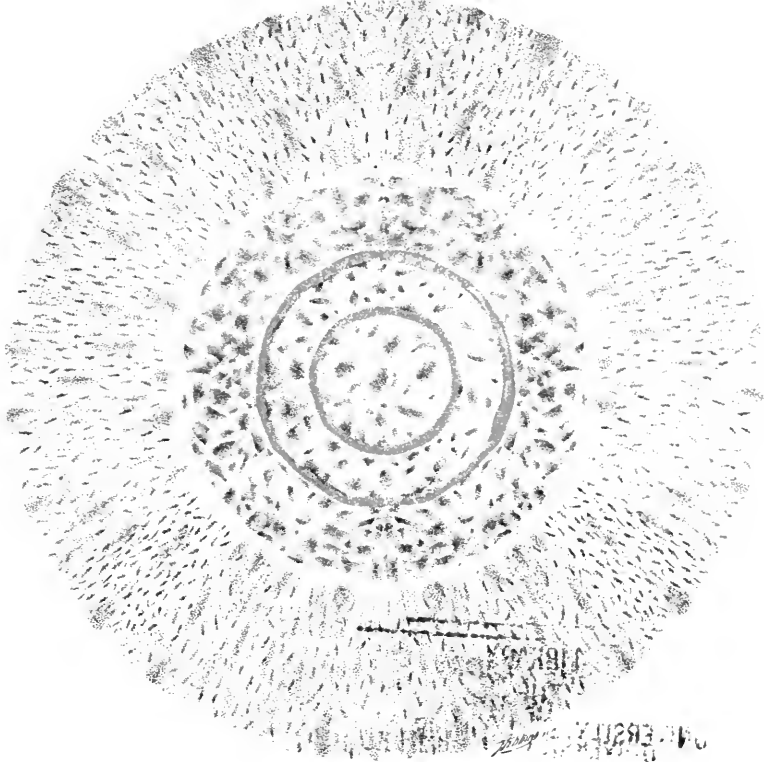


FIG. 1.

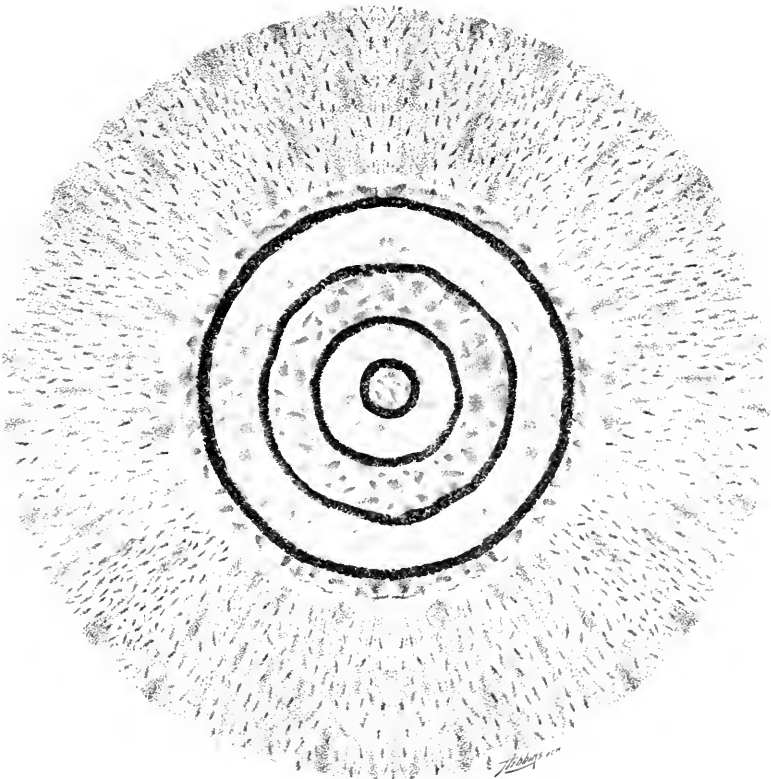


FIG. 2

Diagrams of third and fourth altars.

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FIG. 1



FIG. 2

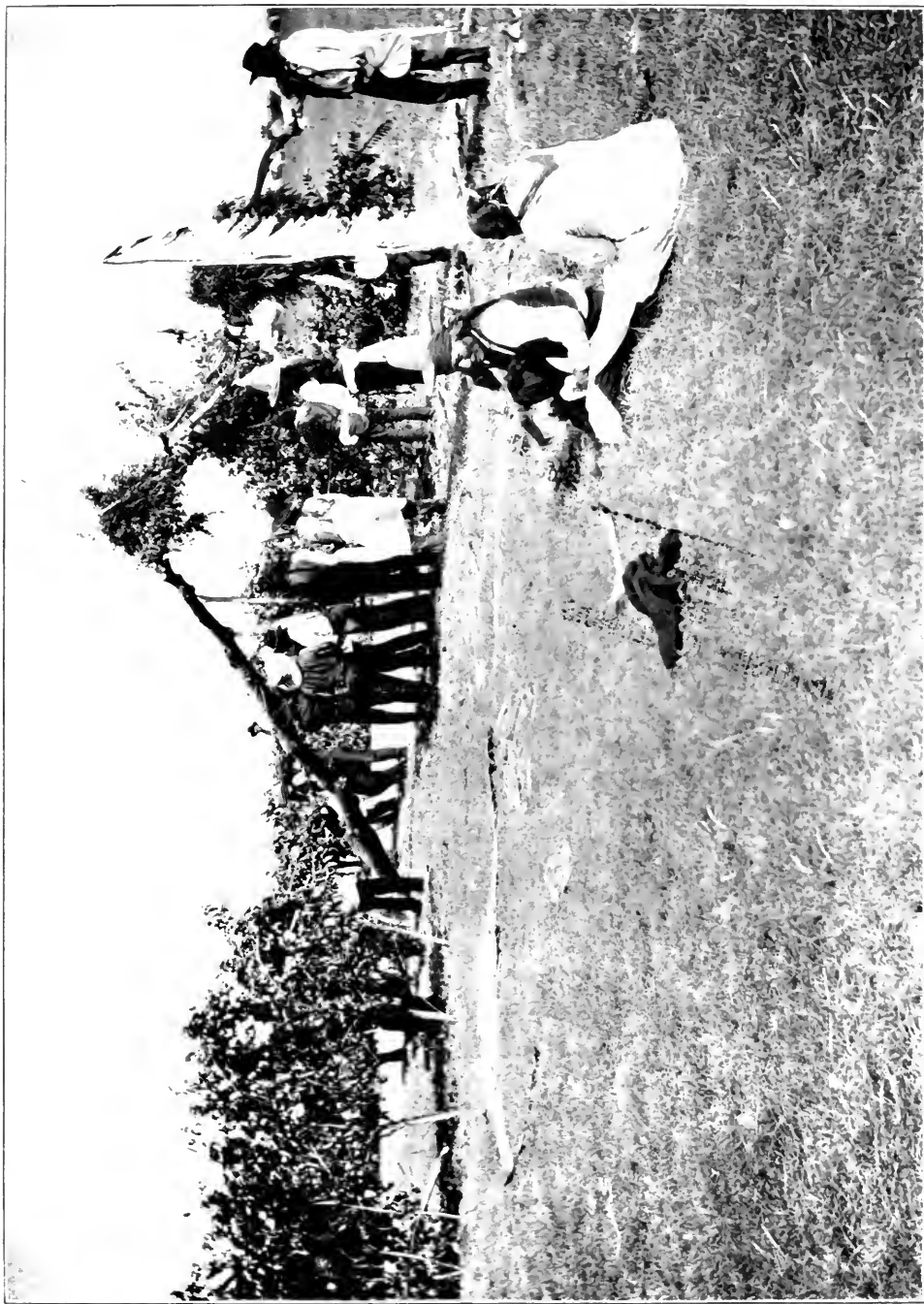
Views of third and fourth altars

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Preparing the centre-pole.

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Raising the centre-pole.

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Entrance of priests and dancers to Sun dance lodge.



Entrance of priests and dancers to Sun dance lodge.

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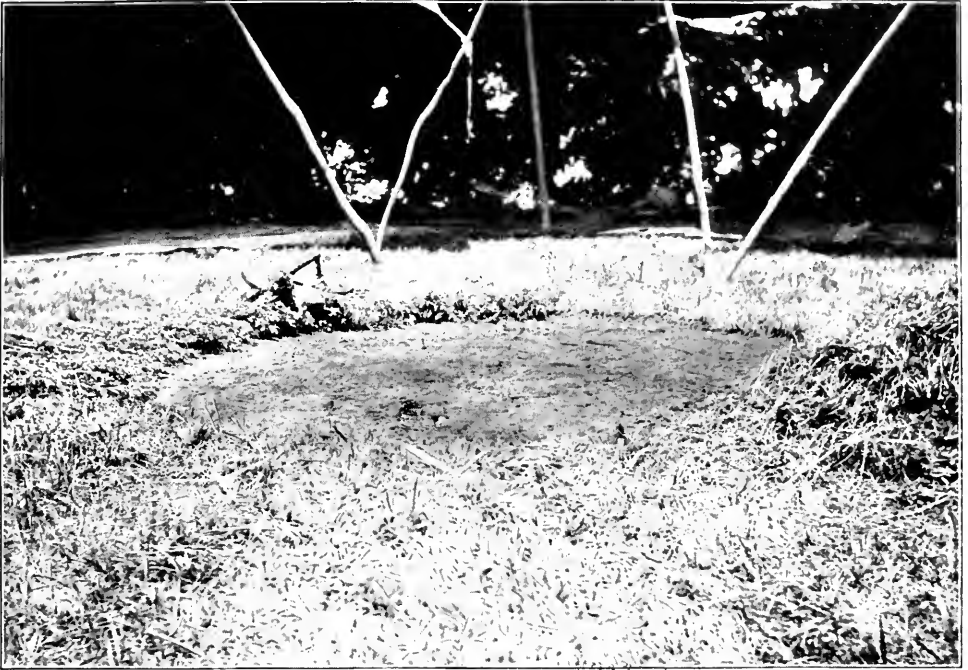


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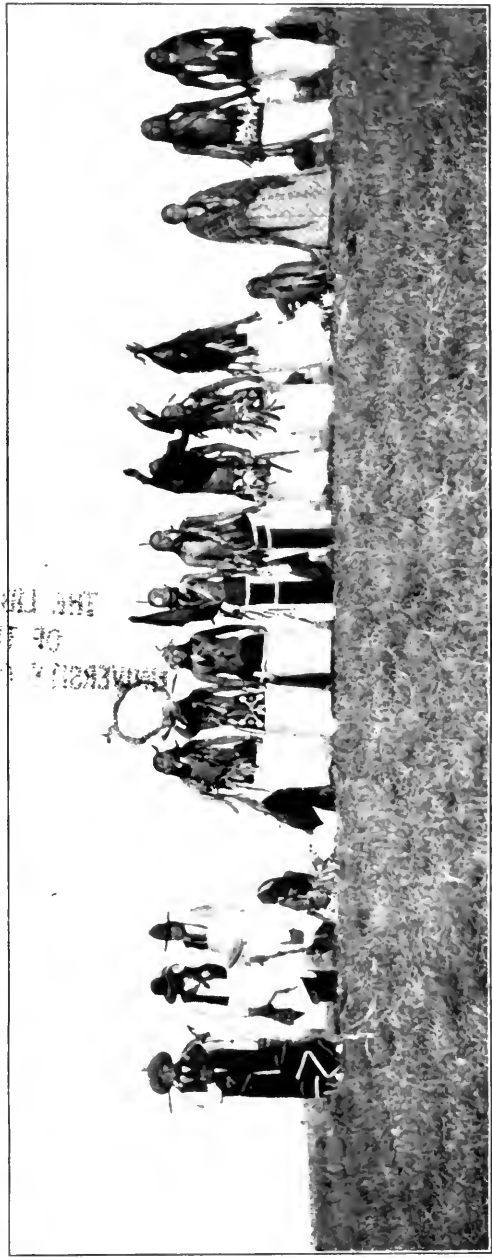
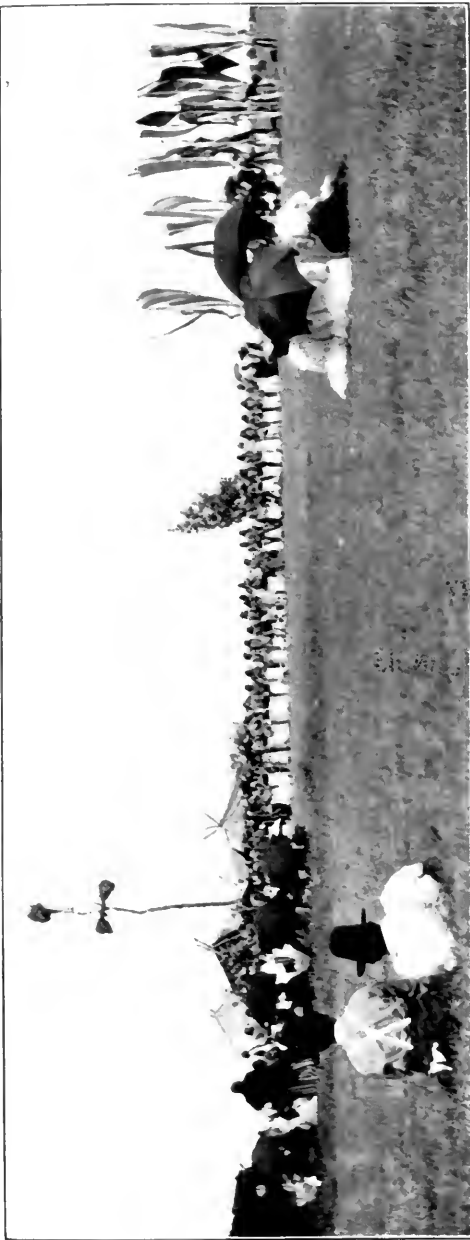
Entrance of priests and dancers to Sun dance lodge.

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The Sun dance lodge altar.

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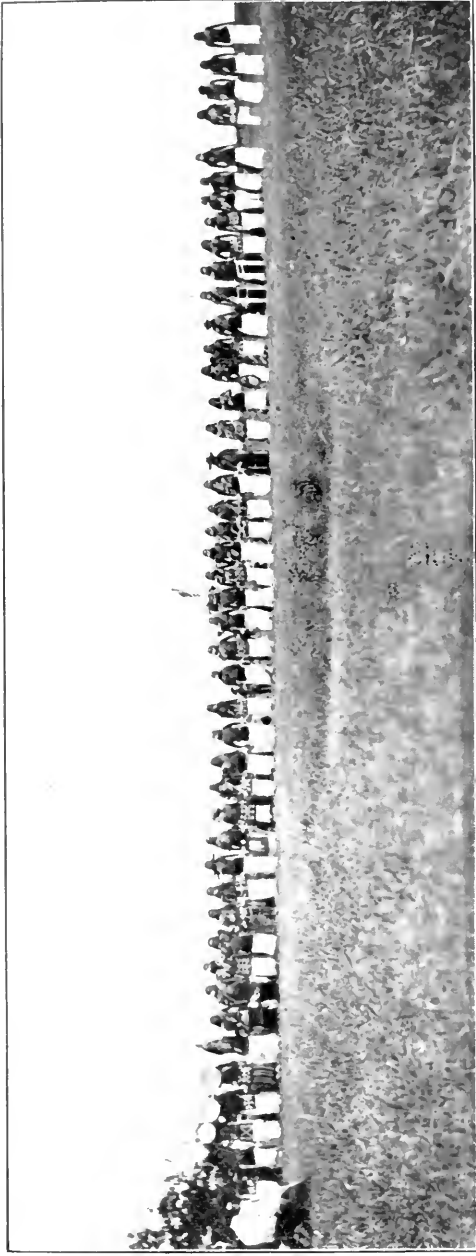
Beginning of dance, outside the lodge.

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Incidents of the noon dance, third day.

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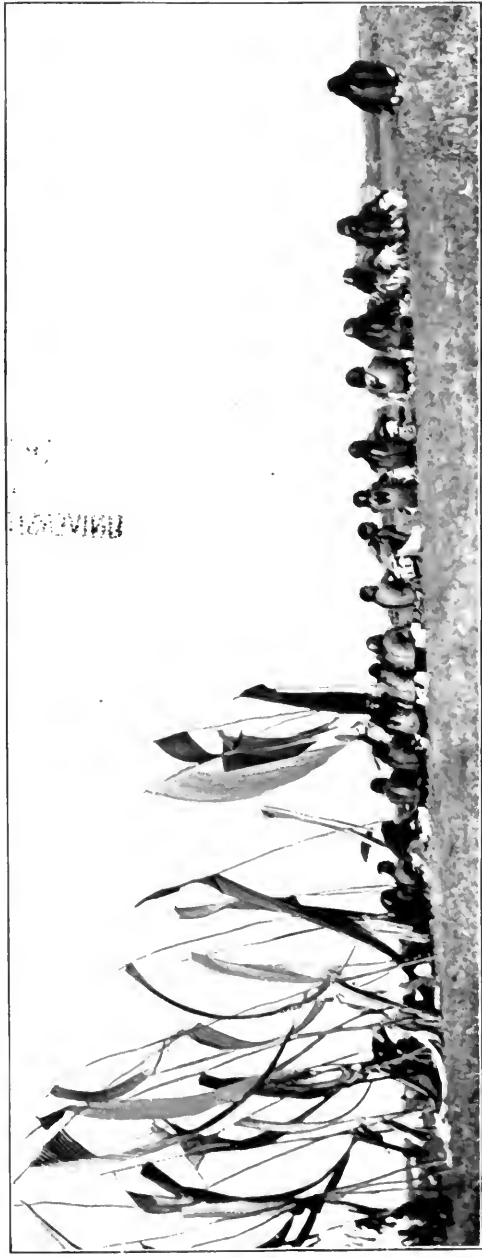
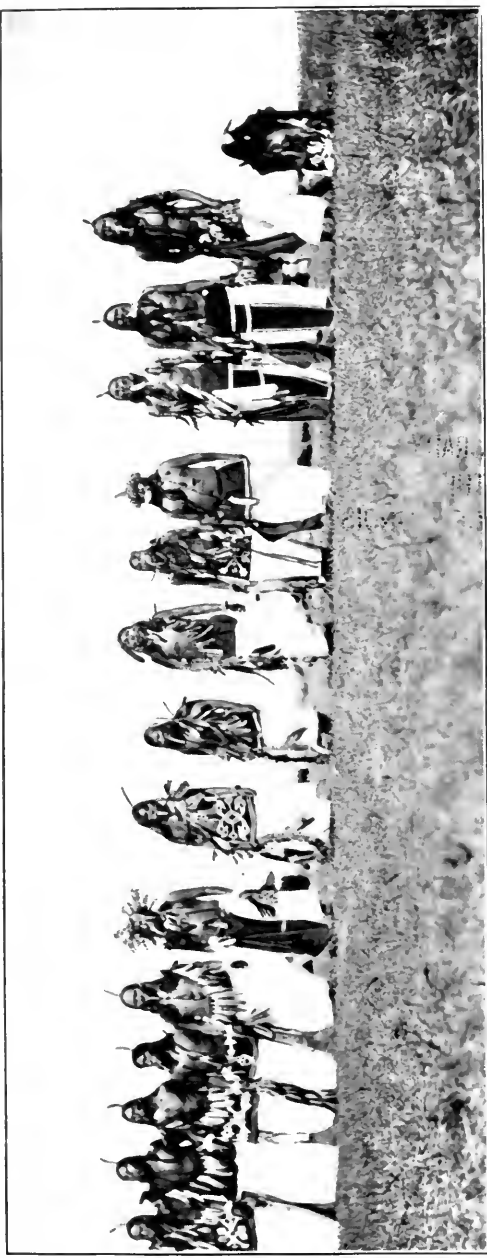
The dance to the setting sun, third day.

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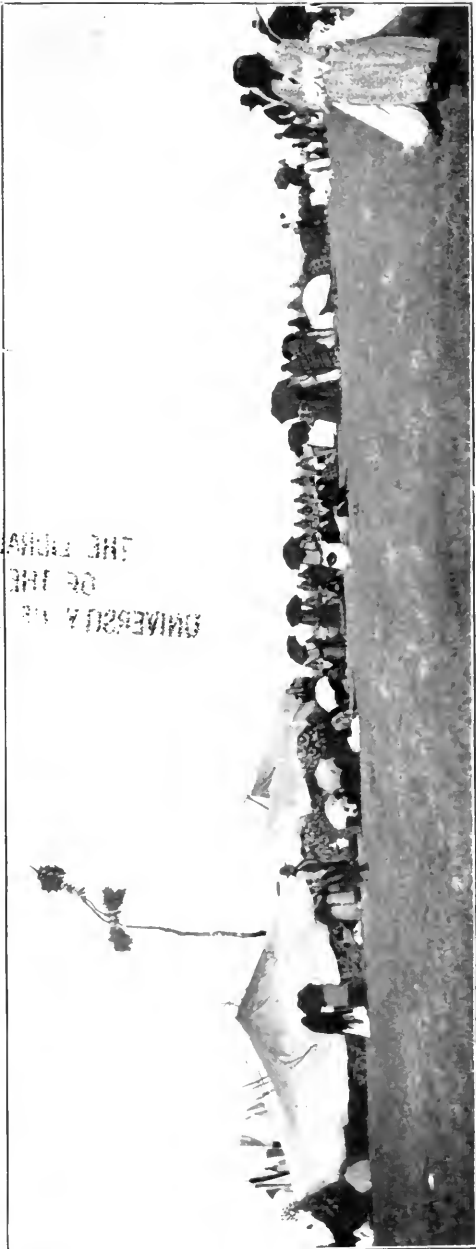
Incidents of morning dance, fourth day.

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Incidents of morning dance, fourth day.

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Costume of ninth group of dancers.

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FIG. 1

FIG. 1. Depositing wreaths at foot of centre-pole, last day.



FIG. 2

FIG. 2. Depositing sacrifices of flesh at foot of centre-pole, last day.

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FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

FIG. 1. Costume of first group of dancers.
FIG. 2. Costume of second group of dancers.

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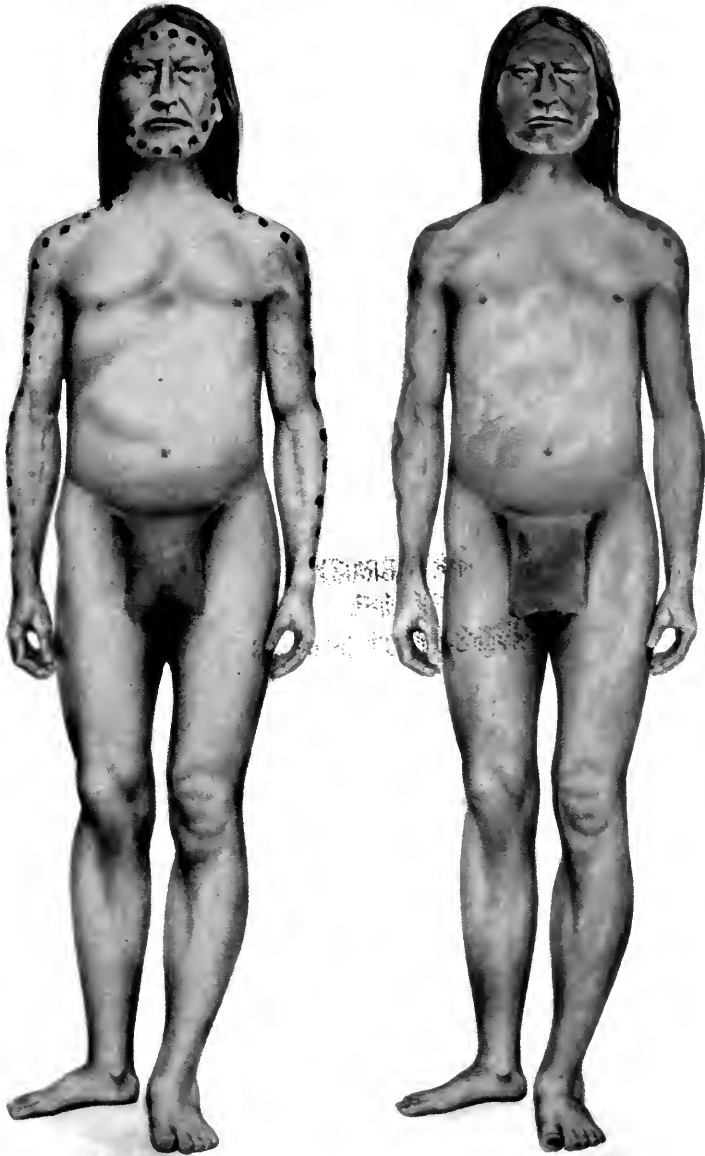


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Paint of first group of dancers.
FIG. 2. First paint of second group of dancers.

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FIG. 1



FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Costume of third group of dancers.
FIG. 2. Costume of fourth group of dancers.

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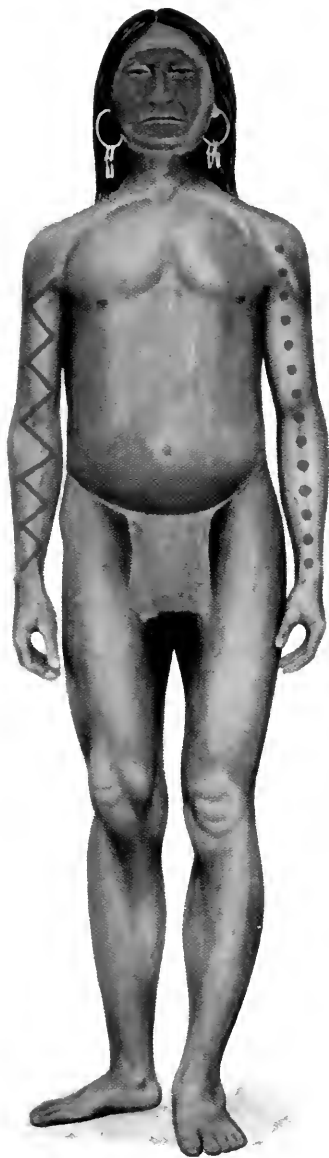


FIG. 1

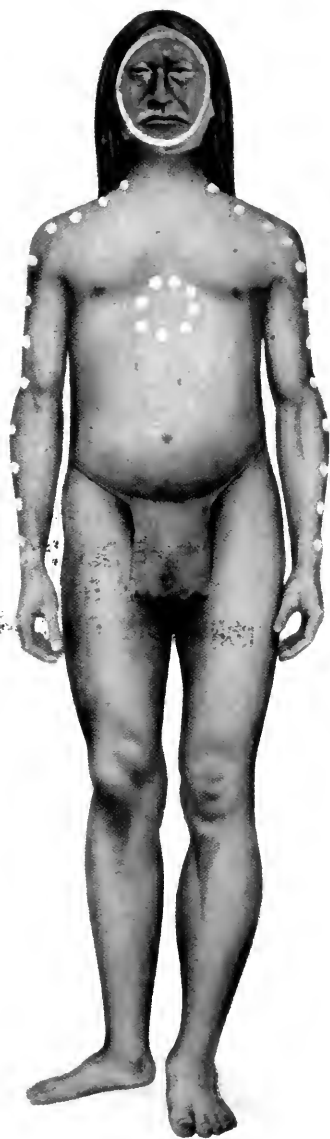


FIG. 2

FIG. 1. First paint of third group of dancers.
FIG. 2. First paint of fifth group of dancers.

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FIG. 1



FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Costume of fifth group of dancers.
FIG. 2. Costume of sixth group of dancers.

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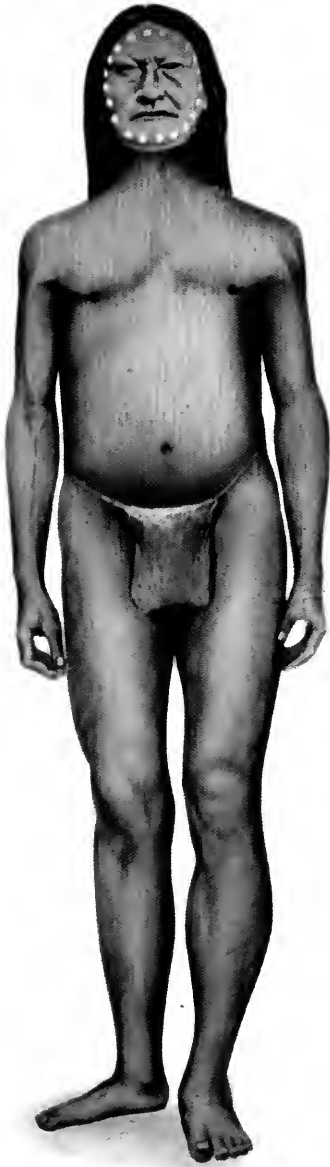


FIG. 1

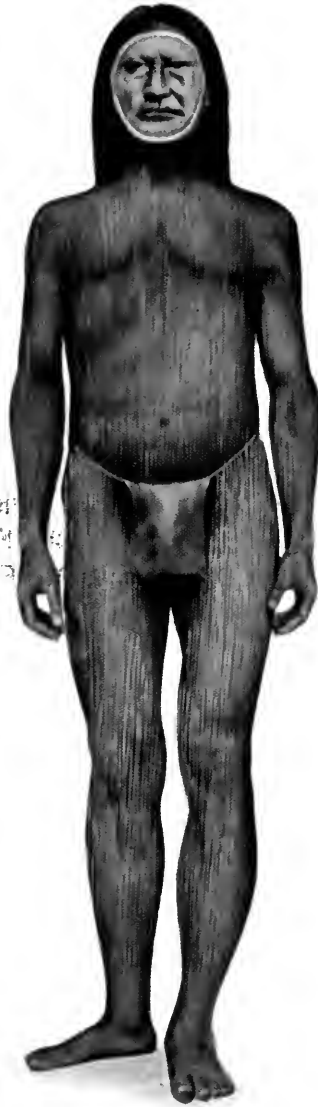


FIG. 2

FIG. 1. First paint of sixth group of dancers.
FIG. 2. First paint of seventh group of dancers.

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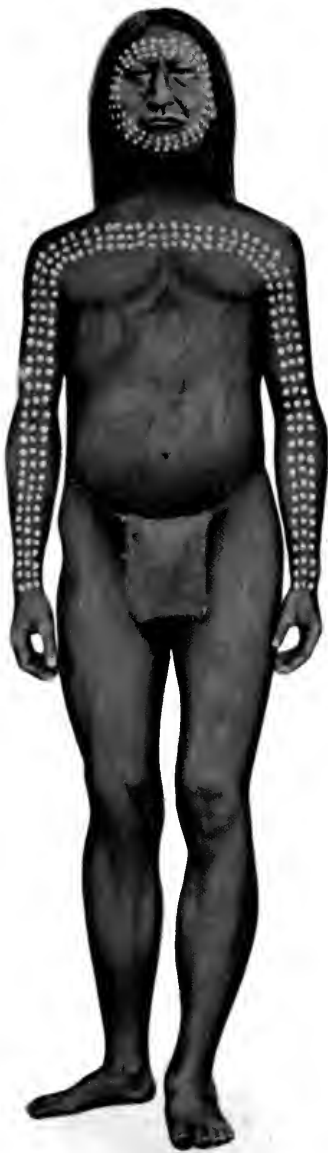


FIG. 1



FIG. 2

FIG. 1. First paint of eighth group of dancers.
FIG. 2. First paint of part of ninth group of dancers.

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General view of camp and Sun dance lodge, fourth day.

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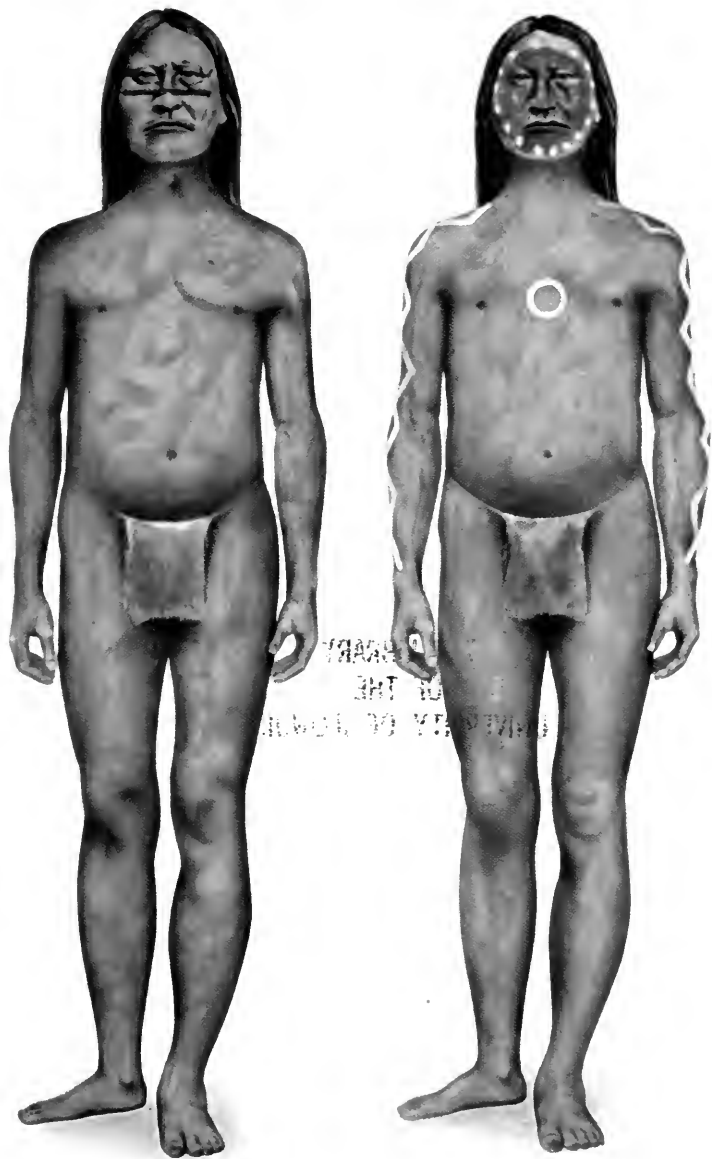


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

FIG. 1. First paint of part of ninth group of dancers.
FIG. 2. Second paint of fifth group of dancers.

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FIG. 1



FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Third paint of second group of dancers.

FIG. 2. Third paint of grandfather of third group of dancers.

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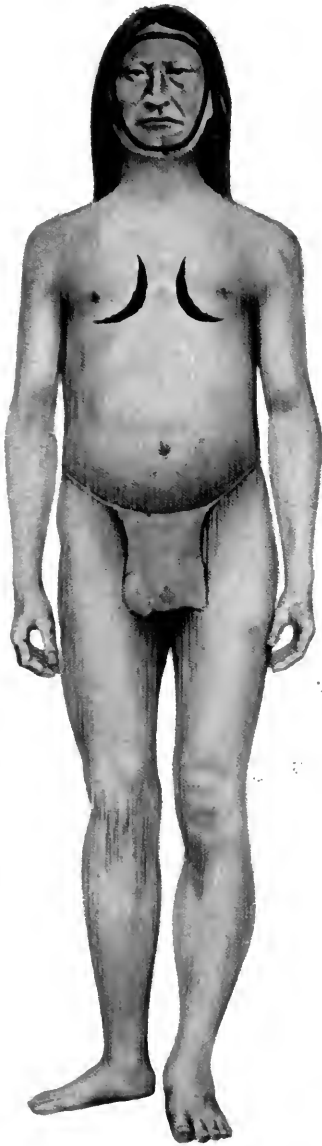


FIG. 1

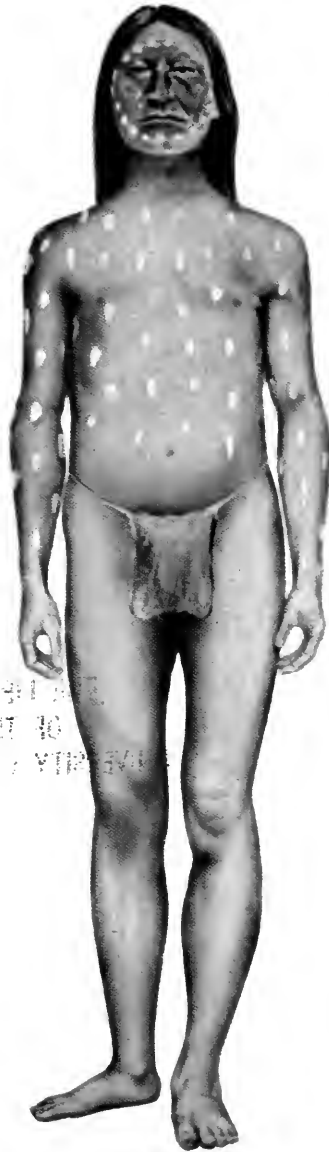


FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Third paint of grandfather of fourth group of dancers.
FIG. 2. Third paint of sixth group of dancers.

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FIG. 1



FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Third paint of grandfather of seventh group of dancers.
FIG. 2. Third paint of seventh group of dancers.

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FIG. 1



FIG. 2

FIG. 1. Third paint of grandfather of eighth group of dancers.
FIG. 2. Third paint of eighth group of dancers.

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