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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Description of a contemporary Sundance.

Being held up by rains, I did not arrive at the dance place until 2:00 in the afternoon. By then the centre pole had already been cut and young men were hauling poles for the lodge proper. There were quite a number of riders and every once in a while they would come dashing up, drawing logs behind them with ropes. There were seven women riding behind men and Julia

Tutosis who rode alone.

Solomon, my interpreter, first took me to the chief, James Blackman. I had a long palaver with him. He called in his councillor, George Atimoyoo. They decided that I was to be allowed to go wherever I liked and see whatever I wanted to see. Solomon then went to see the old men conducting the ceremony for their consent. This was a lot of formality for they knew I was coming and they had long ago decided to let me observe everything, but the necessary gestures had to be made.

The old men were gathered in a large tipi immediately to the north of where the lodge site was. Of course at this time the lodge was not yet erected and there was only a few poles lying about. The tipi was an "End to end Tipi" (as Skinner puts it). It had some 16 poles and was covered with two canvas tipi covers. It did not have a door proper, but we entered from the south by lifting the canvas.

Inside the tipi was crowded with old men. They kept passing the pipes around. At one time they also ate berries around. I presented two plugs of tobacco to each of the givers of this dance -- William Sap and Bones (pines). Harry Brown who was second in command to Muskwa, the headman, was preparing the bone whistles for the use of the dancers. There was nothing much doing there and before long I went out.

By this time nearly all the poles had been brought up. The centre pole was raised on a tripod. This pole was about 20' in height and 1' in diameter. It was forked at the top. The side pillars were being set up. They were 7' high also forked at the top. The centre pole was raised so that its butt was just a foot or so from where the hole for it was to be dug. 13 pillars were set up. One was added later when the pole was up in the place it had covered. The beams were laid on in this fashion ------ and tied with string. The rafters are laid in position. There are 4 principal rafters -- 2 for Sap and 2 for Bones.

The following is the account of the action as observed and is a series of chronological notes. (See original for diagram)

Brown lashes boughs to fork in centre pole thus making Thunderer's nest. This is lashed with saganapi.

Muskwa comes out with several 5 yard prints. The first is blue. He holds it up to the east (where the sun comes up) talks and pins it on to the nest.

Then he holds white cloth up to south, talks, pins it on. Red one to west and north -- pins it on.

Rafters are hewn out at end, four laid in place after c.p. is up in cardinal directions. East one goes up first. Muskwa is still tying prints. Now Bones holds up print. Red and blue ribbons tied to middle of centre pole.

As rafters are set up in place, one by one, after c.p. is up, Muskwa points print and ties it onto them. B. and Sap follow him around carrying cloths.

Hole is dug for centre pole, 3 feet deep. Muskwa puts sweet-grass and 3 cloths in the hole.

Some cloths are taken to the headmen to be pointed and then taken back to be flown from staffs on individual tents -- like flags. After the dance is over they will be tied in the bush.

Many men sit around and watch. The "Shouter" Josie Cuthand yells for men to bring ropes. They are brought and tied to pole 3 feel below nest. The two outside poles of the big tipi are tied near the end and used to brace the pole as it goes up. Also to brace the rafters as they go up. At a signal the men pull at the poles. The pole is lifted against a roller on the far side of the hole. When the pole is up the roller is pushed back and the pole slips into the hole.

Then, the rafters are set in place as described above. After the first four are up, Muskwa goes out and Sap ties on prints to the other rafters. (See original for diagram)

On one side there is a group of men joking. Two brothers-in-law are kidding each other as to who was braver in the old days. One calls the other an old woman. There are no women at all around during the building of the lodge. The 4 rafters were put on in this order: east, south, west, north.

Sap calls the men in to eat berries in the tipi. (See original for diagram)

The Chief Blackman invited many men to supper (That's the way of a chief -- S).

Muskwa told where the lodge pole should go. "Every time a man makes a S.d. the lodge is bigger."

One of the riders bringing poles is training to be a preacher.

Shouter called for men to bring boughs. Stakes are driven into the ground and the boughs laid between.

The dancers may have substitutes at night. These are called mickotconiganahk "Traders." But they themselves must dance at sun-up.

Brown digs the excavation which is to be in front of the skull. A stick 16" long is used (supposed to be the distance between the horns of the skull) as measurement. They sight carefully to get the centre of the excavation directly north of the pole. The sod is cut out to a depth of 4 inches. Later five peeled pegs are set in, one at each corner and one in the centre.

The covers are stripped from the large tipi, exposing the

skull, prints, sweetgrass, and willow hooks. These last are wapahune and represent utensils used to catch men. There are always two on each side of the skull. (See original for diagram)

The two leaders pick up some of the paraphernalia. Sap leads with the skull. Bones follows him with sweetgrass. Others (myself included) follow them in single file carrying tobacco, eagle feathers, berries, etc. The two leaders wail and stop to hold their burdens over smudges of sweetgrass at the points marked. Then they deposit the skull in back of the excavation, the prints and other things alongside.

A fire is built six feet north of the pole and a sweetgrass smudge beside it. (See original for diagrams)

On the east and west sides of lodge two sticks 5 feet high are planted. These are peeled and have two feathers at the top. This is an innovation of Sap's.

Now the principals enter the lodge and dance is about to begin. Muskwa tells the oskapeus how much tobacco to cut.

Shouter yells, "Flying Eagle, you are invited to come and smoke." Flying Eagle was present but the shouting had to be done anyway. He yells for other men also.

The altar is screened off. Only the four principals, Sap, myself and interpreter witness this. One man sits at each corner of the altar. Muskwa directs each man where to sit. A

complete silence prevails during this ritual and it is obviously of a very sacred character. Muskwa and Brown each take a pipe. It is lit by the oskapeus and then he withdraws to bring back another lighted coal. This he deposits at the centre peg with some sweetgrass. Another sweetgrass smudge is placed directly in front of the skull. The skull has a red ribbon across the snout and prints folded upon the horns.

Muskwa passes a bundle of sweetgrass braids tied with saganapi over the smudge at the centre peg.

Now Muskwa and Brown smoke their pipes simultaneously. First they puff about them eight times. Then they point the pipes. Then the passing begins. Muskwa carefully holds his pipe upright along the edge of the altar so that its mouthpiece slowly goes along the edge about an inch below the surface. At the same time Brown passes his pipe with the bowl following the edge to Flying Eagle. This is repeated until each pipe has gone around four times. When each man receives the pipe he holds the bowl a little above his peg and puffs several times before he in turn passes it to the next man to his left. (See original for diagrams)

When this is done Muskwa sings songs and rolls his fingers over each other (?). All cry. The oskapeus fills the pipes again.

The man Flying Eagle was under tension and could not get the passing of the pipes straight. He was several times brusquely corrected by M. who silently took the pipe from him and indicated the proper way of doing it.

When the pipes had gone around a sufficient number of times, Muskwa held them up and talked; turned them in a clockwise circle; and with a sudden movement tore the bowls off and dropped them to the ground. That marked the end of that particular ritual.

During this I noticed Sap combing his braids with his fingers. He collected the loose hair and put it in his pocket.

Before this ritual, Sap sang his Sundance song (I forget just at what point). The words were these:

> "Manito you are going to stand here now.
> Bring us what is good."
> Thunder this is your lodge. This is your home now.
> Bring what is good here.
> Make it safe and good for everybody."
> "Sun I am begging you for life for everybody. What
> I promised I am doing now. Help us."

Bones held up a wihtigo mask that was later worn by one of the dancers.

Solomon explained the ritual as the unwrapping of the tobacco that was wrapped up when they promised to make the dance last winter.

Muskwa points the pipe and it is passed around to the men seated in the lodge.

The hide which is to serve as a resonator is spread out. Bones and Sap stand up and whistle four times and the oskapeus tosses the hide at the fourth blast into the circle of 12 singers who are waiting to receive it.

Sap announces that the children should be kept away from the two sticks that are planted outside.

The Shouter calls for the women to come and help the men sing.

Wm. Sap comes to lead the singing. He is going to sing his own songs. The leader always has two drummers on each side of him and shakes the rattle. Each beater has 2 sticks. Before the leader sings his songs he talks. He also talks after he has finished. There is no certain number of songs to be sung. Each leader keeps up until he is tired. There must always be at least five men singing. The leader who sings his own or his father's or grandfather's songs, and four men who beat the drums and help him sing. Then there are from nine to ten men who sit around and beat time on the hide with sticks. Before the song leader sings the dance songs, he sings several other types of songs to which the dancers do not dance.

At last Sap sings the dance songs. The dancers who have been sitting behind the fence of boughs tooting occasional blasts to show that they are impatient to start, get up and bob up and down to the rhythm of the song. For every beat of the drum, the dancer blows on his whistle.

From now on the pipes go around at frequent intervals. After they are smoked out the oskapeus cleans and refills them, passes each one over smoke -- bowl and stem and then replaces them on the rack. They are soon given to some old man who points them and starts them around from mouth to mouth in endless succession until the dance is over. (See original for diagrams)

After Sap, Bones led the singing, and after him other men who have Sundance songs are leaders. A certain Stony with powerful

lungs sang often. Others who led were Fine Day, Flying Eagle, and Muskwa.

When Bones took the rattle he said, "Our father -- boss of us all -- of course I have to name you first. I beg good life for the people that are coming here to fast. Last fall when my children were having hard luck I promised you this tipi. Now I am glad and happy that is being completed for me. I think I am satisfied and manito is satisfied. Now return good health for the people. I cannot say any more for I shall take up too much time."

Then he sang a "dream song" which was ended by 'kiyis'. Then a "buffalo song," also finished off by yells. Then came the dance song proper.

During this time and at intervals during the following days of the dance, a number of boys rode the circuit of the camp abreast. They sang songs which used to be sung at battle occasions. Sometimes they would hold their hands to their mouths so as to throw the sound toward the Sundance lodge. There were anywhere from two to fourteen horses at any one time on the parade. The boys ranged from eighteen to six in age. Some horses bore two boys. These songs were entirely independent of those sung in the lodge.

At frequent intervals also men (no women) would carry prints up to the principals, Bones and Sap. The prints would first be passed over a smoke of sweetgrass in front of the altar and then given to either one or both of the hosts. These held the prints up and talked for the giver. Then the prints were returned for the donor to hang or were hung by the hosts on the lodge. I donated two prints which were tied to the lodge without being attached to small sticks. The donor may tell the host what he wishes the offering to bring and the host includes it in his prayer. These cloths were sometimes simply tied about the poles of the lodge. Bones tied one such white cloth around the centre pole. Most cloth offerings however were tied onto a small stick in a certain manner which I have not as yet

recorded.

Whenever the song leaders were changed, the drums were heated over the fire to improve their sound.

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