

THE NORTHERN TRADITIONAL DANCER

C. Scott Evans



PURCHASE THIS BOOK FROM  
W.W. TO DANCE THIS  
STYLE.

Revised Edition

1. LAKOTA CONTEMPORARY TRADITIONAL

A much "cleaner look" to the outfit

Use of Beadwork sets--Armbands, cuffs, kneebands, sidetabs(Large),vests

Use Lakota Beadwork patterns and colors--geometric or pictorial

Smaller back bustles--single or double rows. Normally Golden Eagle.

Use of breastplate/bandoliers. Otter bandolier or cape with mirrors.

Use of Knee bands--fringed and beaded to match set. Anklets.

Use of white or white with stripes socks worn on legs.

Shirts usually worn with outfit.

2. "SOUTHERN" CONTEMPORARY NORTHERN TRADITIONAL

Influence of the Oklahoma style and look.

A bottom -heavy, fringed look to outfit. Fringe leather or ribbon.

Use of leather leggings/breechclouts with fringe.

Use of shoulder feather epaulets/head feather visors common.

Large bustles used, often covering dancer from the back.

Use of long roaches.

Beadwork utilizes southern beadwork colors(rainbows) or designs(beaded feather).

3. NORTHERN/GREAT LAKES/CANADIAN NORTHERN TRADITIONAL

Use of large bustles, covering most of the back of the dancer. Use of eagle head centers in bustle. Mess Centers/multiple rows in bustle.

Use of unusual headpieces--hides, Dog Soldier Headdresses, etc.

Heavy Face painting designs.

Leather or wool leggings/clouts. Leggings often striped or colored.

Heavy use of overall colors in outfit--all yellow, red, black outfits more seen.

Use of more unorthodox outfit parts seen--Face metal plates, handornaments, clubs, etc.

4. WARRIOR STYLE CONTEMPORARY NORTHERN TRADITIONAL

Outfit tries to more closely use older materials/look.

Minimal body clothing used--bare chest/legs. Less use of shirts.

Leggings of leather used--simply decorated. "Everyday wear look".

Extensive use of weapons as hand ornaments--rifles, spears, tomahawks, bow & arrows/bow quiver, clubs, etc.

Use of shields, usually larger in size as per historical items.

Simpler headdresses--roaches or feathers in hair or animal skins/hats.

Usually no bustle worn at all.

Dancing more resembles battle movements, warrior actions in the field.

5. MODERN CROW OUTFITS

The traditional dancing outfits of Crow tribe in a modern setting.

Chainette fringe aprons, capes worn. Body tights sometime used.

Crow mess bustles used. Single trailer. Use of fluorescent feathers.

Crow beadwork beaded sets--arm bands, belt, belt bag, mirror bag, headbands, cuffs

Use of crow hair ornaments--hair bows, rooster feathers, etc.

Flat roach used for headdress.

6. CHICKEN DANCE NORTHERN TRADITIONAL OUTFIT

Newer style. Uses many of the older items. Simulates prairie chicken dancing.

Use of pheasant feathers in back mess bustle/arm bustles/as roach feathers.

Use of capes/aprons fringed with chainette fringe. Use of body tights.

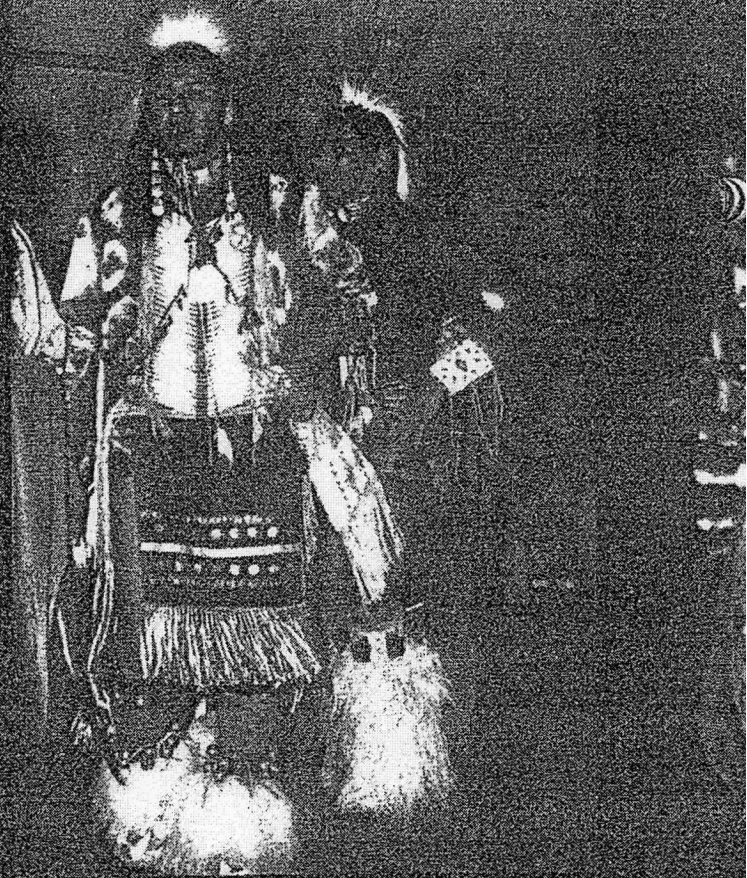
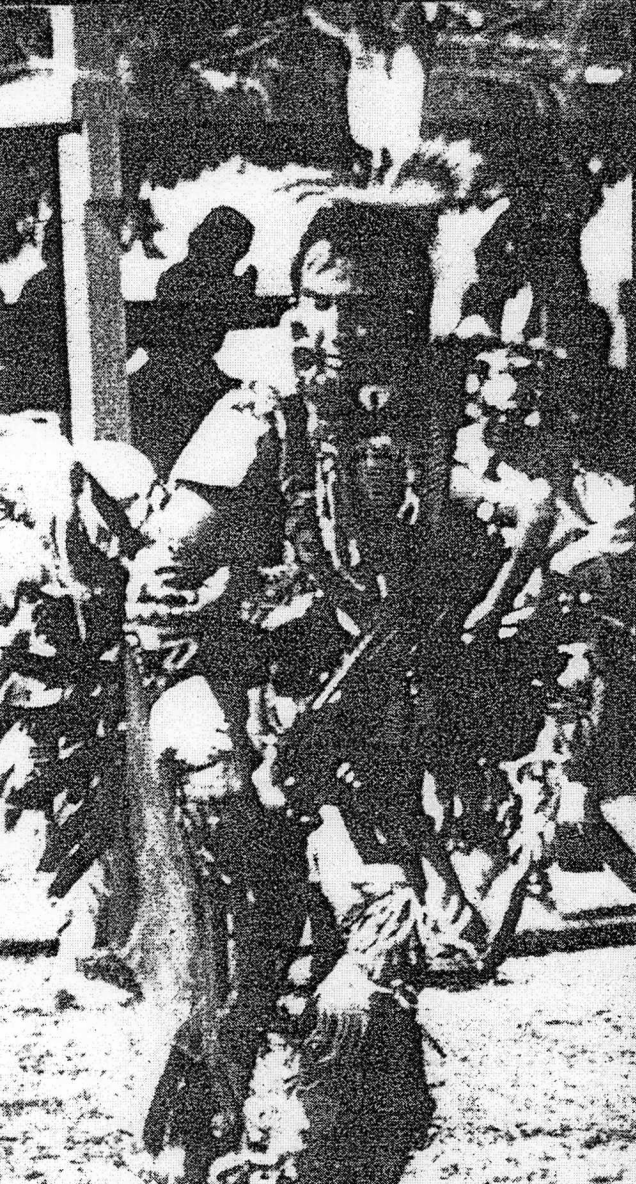
Bustles are usually smaller in size. Sometimes feather heavily cut in patterns.

Use of fluffs in decorative use more commonly seen here.

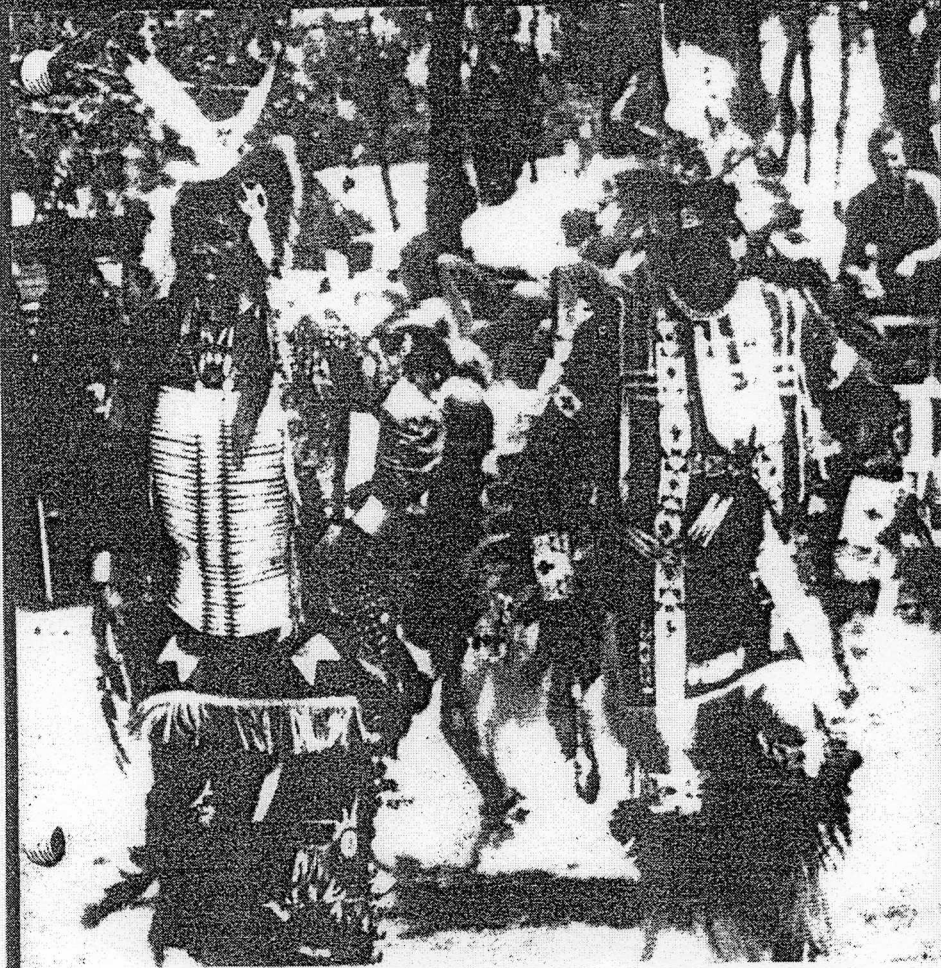
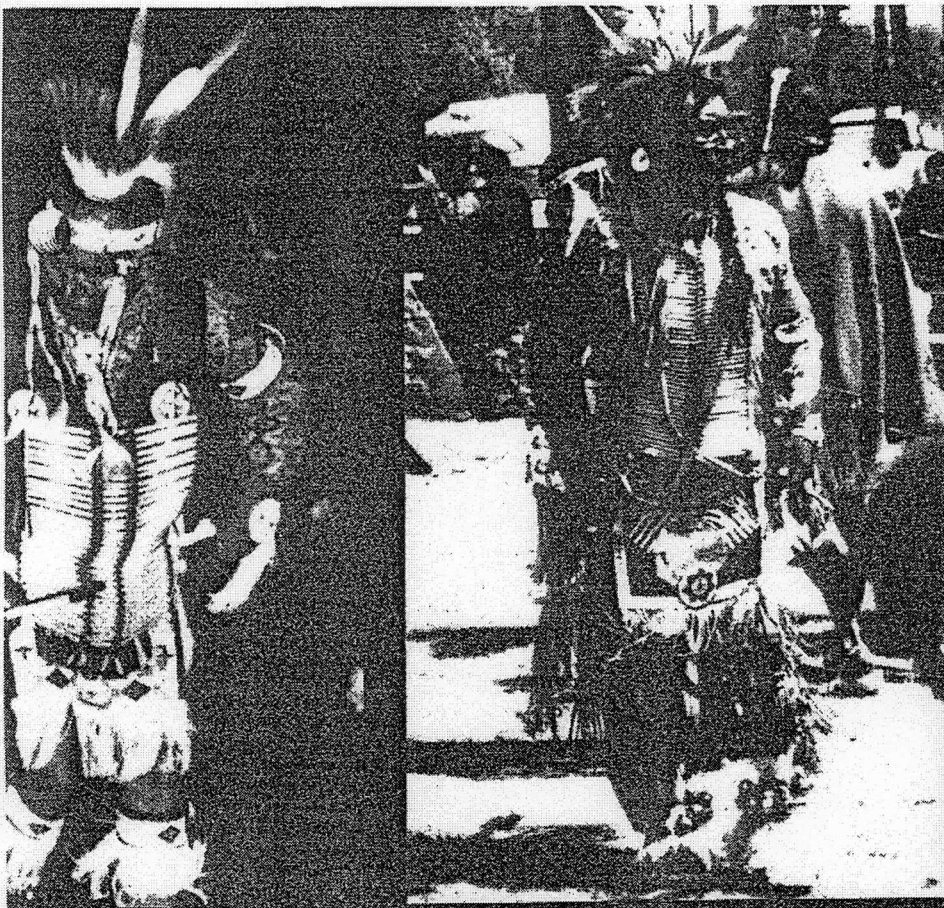


# photo feature

CONTEMPORARY  
"TRADITIONAL STYLE"  
LAKOTA DANCERS









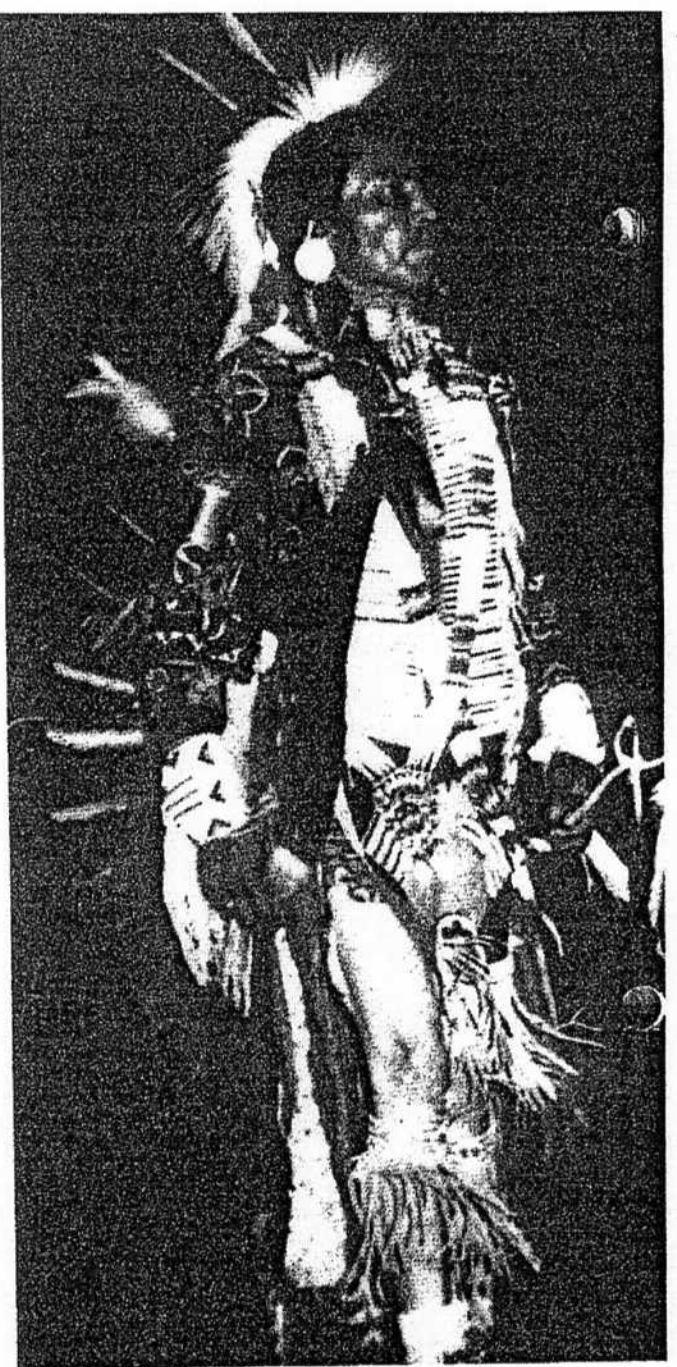
# The Contemporary "Traditional Style" Of The Lakota

By Ronnie Theisz

Drawings by Frank Standing High Vaccaro

In the late 1960's and early 1970's a distinct dance and dress style has emerged which has not been accorded the attention it merits. The "old-time Sioux" costume, the fringed "Grass Dance" suits of the northern Sioux bands and their neighbors, and the "modern Pan-Lakota" style of dress and dance, have all been described in print and are generally known.<sup>1</sup> An additional style, too often dismissed as an unfortunate approximation of the prototype "old-time Sioux" style, has made its appearance in recent years as a vigorous and widespread manner of dressing for the dance. The Sioux bands and their neighbors call it the "traditional" dance. The Lakota specifically refer to it as *'ehank' ehan wacipi.*" Although my observations about this style of dance and dress limit themselves to the Lakota division of the Sioux, especially as they appear on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations, they hold true for other divisions of the Sioux as well and to certain neighboring tribes if applied with caution.

The well-known "old-time Sioux" style extends with few modifications from the early reservation period through the 1950's. It is characterized most typically by the wearing of long underwear<sup>2</sup> or shirt and pants, roach, "crow bustle" and in contemporary samples by a general attempt at wearing costume pieces that were prevalent during the early reservation days, and which in their designs, colors, materials, and "well-worn" or even faded appearance emit the flavor of those old-time dancers seen in archaic photographs. The fifties and sixties can be considered a period of evolution during



John Attack Him

which the "old-time" dress generally split into what are now two distinctly different styles. The two branches began to assume their current separate identities in the late sixties. First to captivate the appreciation of the onlooker were the "fancy-dance" styles. The "Pan-Lakota" style, typified by long beaded harnesses, neck and back bustle sets and copious buckskin fringe and other dangling ornaments, displayed the flash, vigour and youthful exuberance of the northern type of fancy dance.

The other style branching off into what has become the "traditional" style, at first experienced a period of

transition or even a certain amount of neglect. (During the transitional years of the late fifties and early sixties the fringed "Grass Dance" suits from the north were adopted by a good number of the Lakota, perhaps to fill the void created when the "old-time" dancer began to fade from the powwow scene.) It may well be that the contest phenomenon at contemporary celebrations demanded the separation into dance and dress categories according to readily discernible criteria. Since the classification of the Pan-Lakota "fancy dance" category was quite clear, the concept of a complementary "traditional" category received a certain amount of revitalization. Now that the "traditional" style and the Pan-Lakota have established themselves, the appearance of the northern "Grass Dance" dress among the Brules and Oglalas of South Dakota is once again an almost certain sign that its wearer harkens from the north.

As the photographs accompanying these remarks indicate, the connection to the "old-time Sioux" costume is clearly felt by the wearer. Yet, and here we find a basis for the clear distinction from the present-day exponent of the "old-time Sioux" style, the "traditional" dancer draws upon the "old-time" dance dress, not in order to limit his own taste and creativity in designs, colors, and materials, but rather draws from it certain costume conventions he then either adheres to quite closely or interprets quite freely. The range of this subjective treatment of a respected tradition will hopefully become clear through the following descriptions.

The "traditional" costume (*wokoyake*) begins with the roach (*pesa*). The longer the porcupine hair and the fuller its overall appearance, the more it will move with the movements of the dance. This is important to the dancer. The roach spreader (*pesa ogle*) can be made of rawhide, leather or various types of metal and is either left without decoration, painted, or partially or fully beaded. Quite frequently a long scarf or ribbon(s) will be attached so as to hang down the dancer's back. The roach feathers (*pesa wiyaka*), almost always worn in pairs, are anchored in bone, metal, glass or rubber-tube sockets. Although the outside feathers from the tail of the golden eagle predominate, center feathers and feathers of the bald eagle are not uncommon. The feathers are fastened in the sockets to allow maximum freedom of movement. The rock spreader, of course, is never seen. Instead of tying on the roach with tie strings, a dancer will occasionally hold on the roach by placing a decorated stick through a lock of his hair.

When wigs are worn, they are adorned with otter wraps, strips of wool cloth scarves, or other means of decoration. Various types of ornaments adorn the hair, the quilled wheel being the most common. Beaded headbands with additional forehead rosettes and frequently with beaded drops are also quite common. Economically applied face paint is occasionally seen, but is not the rule.

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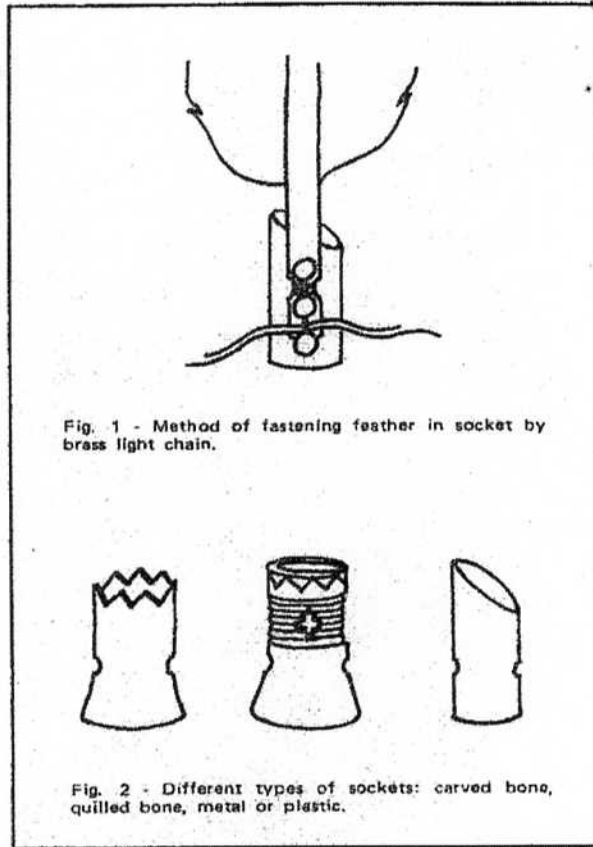
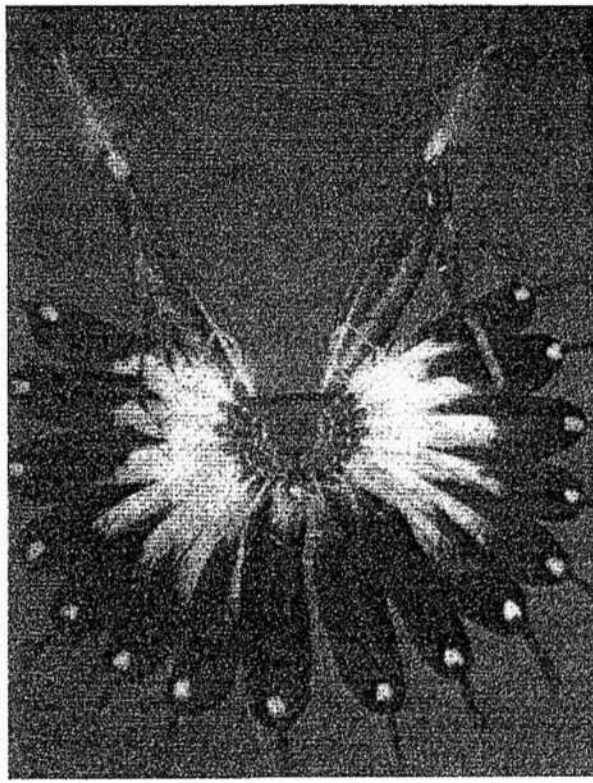


Fig. 1 - Method of fastening feather in socket by brass light chain.

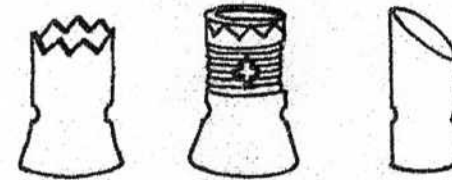
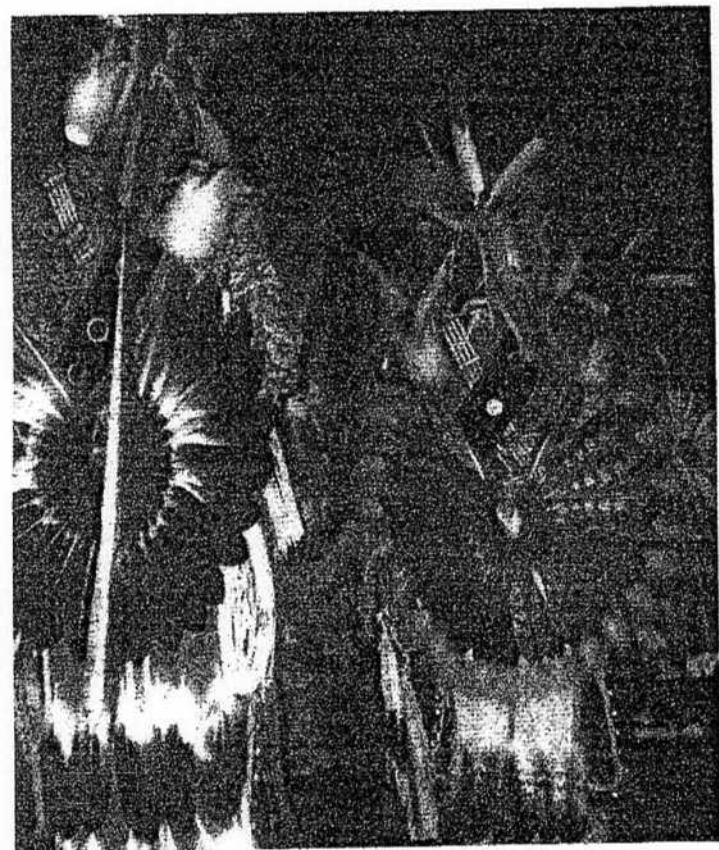


Fig. 2 - Different types of sockets: carved bone, quilled bone, metal or plastic.





John Attack Him and "Junior" Attack Him.

The eye-catching body decoration is the typical breastplate (*wawoslata wanapi*) made of bone or plastic hairpipes. Its length is usually one to several inches below the waist. It is topped almost universally by the choker (*wanapin*) of short bone or plastic hairpipes with or without further decoration in the front. Crossing the breastplate we find either on the one hand, a three to five inch strip of otter or similar fur with mirrors added on (*mioglas' in wanap'in*). The otter is not commonly worn by itself on the chest as it was by the "old-time" Sioux dancer. It is rather worn across the chest and back in bandoleer fashion. On the other hand, a bandoleer of 4½ inch hairpipes, two to four bones wide, is growing quite popular. The strings of bones with (usually) "Crow" beads separating the bones are either set by leather spacers or are worn bunched. In some cases, the dancer will sport two bone bandoleers crossing his chest in both directions.

Displayed below these adornments the dancer generally wears a shirt (*ogle ska*) of materials ranging from solid color cottons to vibrant electric synthetics with or without ribbon decorations and with or without collars. A buckskin or cloth vest is also occasionally worn.

Enough examples exist of the bone breastplate being replaced by the knee-length beaded harness. Not

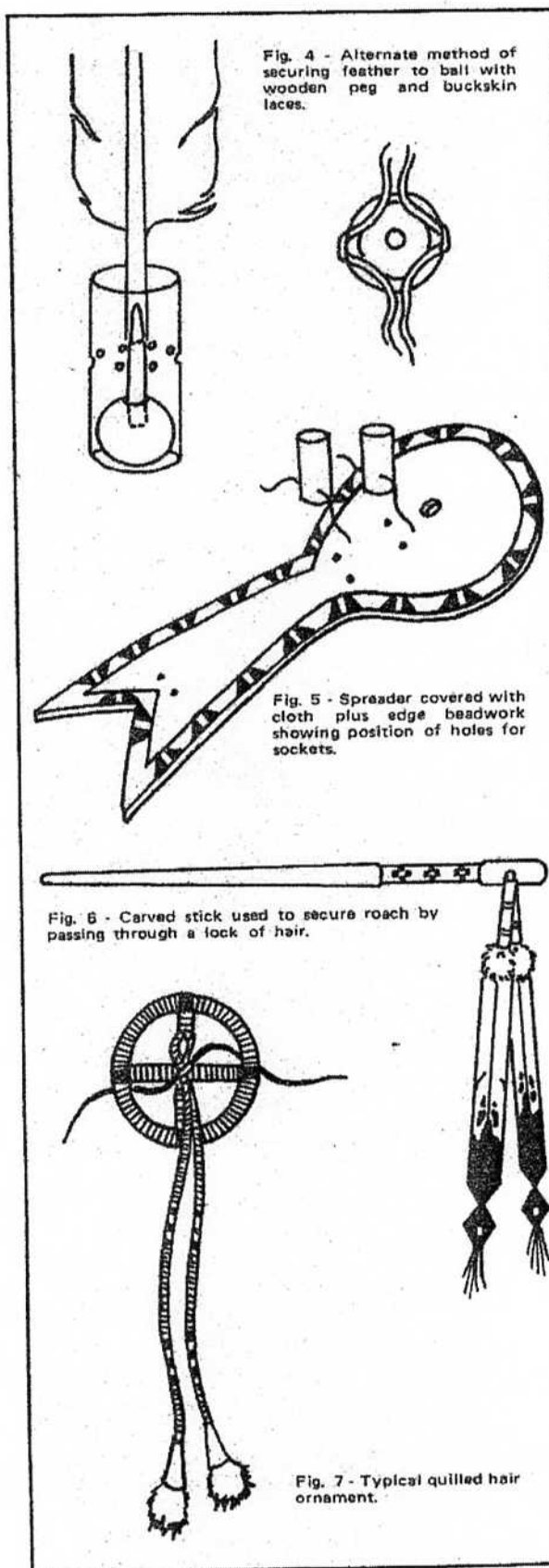


Fig. 4 - Alternate method of securing feather to ball with wooden peg and buckskin laces.

Fig. 5 - Spreader covered with cloth plus edge beadwork showing position of holes for sockets.

Fig. 6 - Carved stick used to secure roach by passing through a lock of hair.

Fig. 7 - Typical quilled hair ornament.

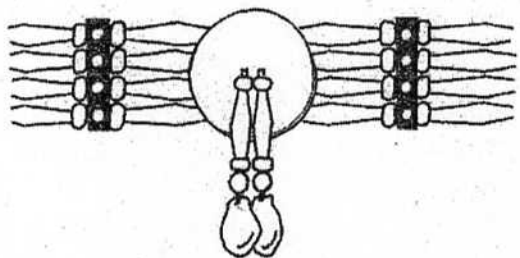


Fig. 8 - Cut out of choker.

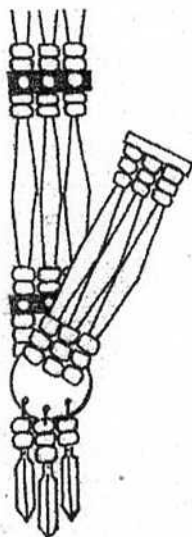


Fig. 9 - Cut out of one type of bone bandoleer.

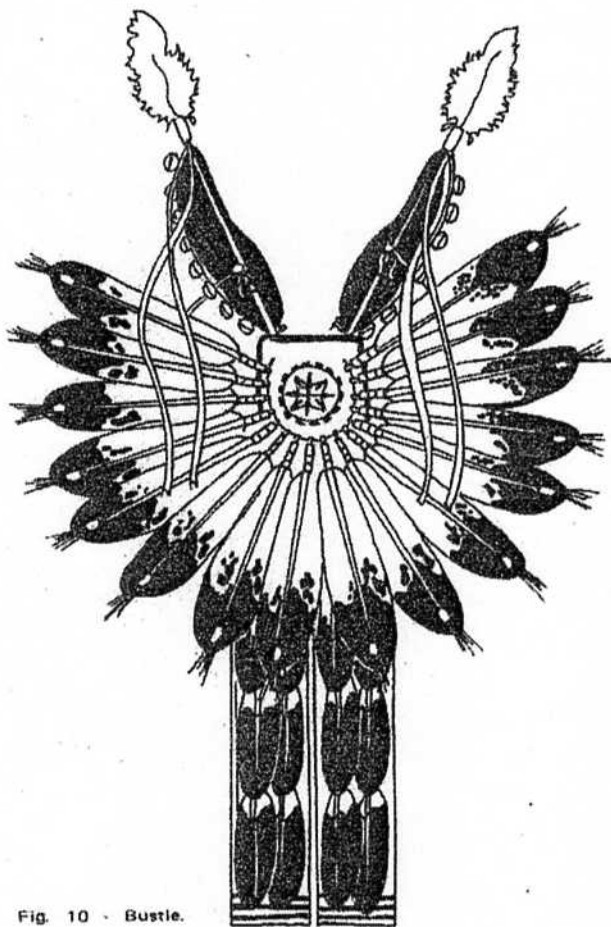


Fig. 10 - Bustle.

common, the wearing of the harness usually implies a less tradition bound attitude of the dancer toward his dress.

Arm bands (*isto iyakaske hant konza*) and cuffs (*napokaske*) can make up a matching set along with the knee bands (*cankpe iyakaske*), but combinations of metal arm bands with beaded cuffs or both arm bands and cuffs made of various types of metal are quite typical. The lazy-stitched or loomed arm bands, cuffs, knee bands with buckskin fringe, moccasins, and occasionally a necktie, constitute the beadwork of this costume. Here again the telling attitude toward the "traditional" costume is not one of strict adherence to the "old-time" designs and colors, but rather one of awareness of this tradition tempered by contemporary tastes and preferences.

Over the breechclout (*cegmake*) — the aprons type is also quite common — ranging from the rather traditional plain one with horizontal ribbons to that with designs of recent vintage, the majority of dancers like to  
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Left to right: Ellis Head, Dawson No Horse, Luther High Horse.





wear woven wool sashes (*icashkipiyake*), those of the "Hudson Bay" type being quite prized. All types of sashes are utilized, however, either to tie on the bustle or merely as a conventional piece of costuming. When the fringe of the sash does not cover the spaces on the hip where the aprons meet, a side-drop or side-tab is quite common, usually in some way matching the aprons. Various belts are worn as well.

Most dancers wear bells (*hihla*) only at the ankles above the angora goat "furs" (*huinapsa*). All sizes and types of bells are employed. In contrast to the "old-time" Sioux habit of wearing bells on various parts of the body — at the ankles, below the knees, along the outside of the leg from waist to ankles, around the waist — dancers will be disqualified at certain contests if they don't wear their bells at the ankles. This is by far not a universal concept, however.

Almost all dancers wear partially or fully beaded moccasins (*hanpa ksupi*). Tennis shoes are the exception.

The bustle (*unkcela kagapi*) worn by the traditional

Left to right: Dawson No Horse, Verdell Blue Arm going round.

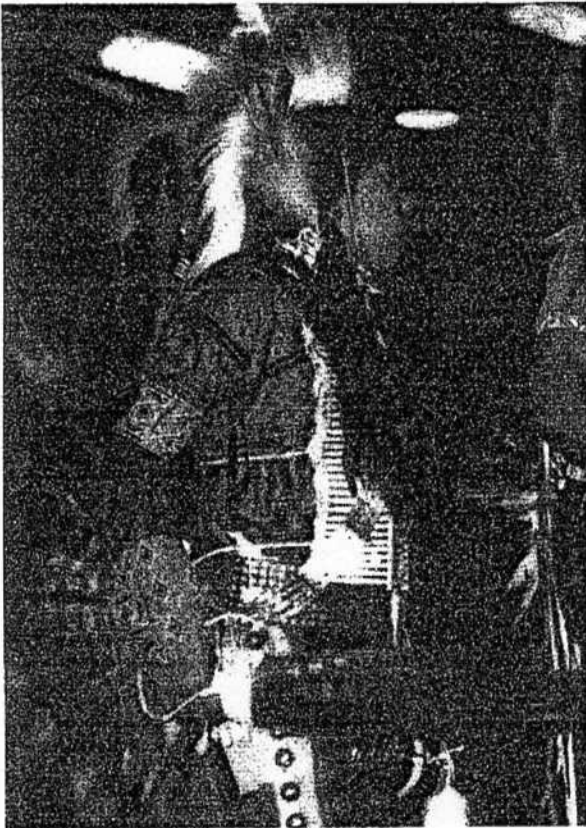


Left to right: Jonas Swift, Francis Menard.

dancer is normally of the U-shape type. Two decorated eagle wing spikes protrude from the top of the leather base. The feathers — mostly golden eagle wings or tails — are wrapped at the quill and laced onto the leather base. The tips of the feathers are decorated with fluffs and/or horschair. Additional rows of feathers inside of the primary one are uncommon. The center of the bustle is left plain or covered with a beaded medallion. The bustle trailers consist of golden eagle wing feathers laced onto felt, wool, corduroy, etc. bases hanging down to ankle height.

The dancers carry almost anything that pleases them. If certain objects predominate, they are the eagle wing fan (*wiyaka icalu*) and the whistle (*wiajo*).

In contrast to the dancing of the "old-time" dancers, vigorous body movements, changes and hesitations in the

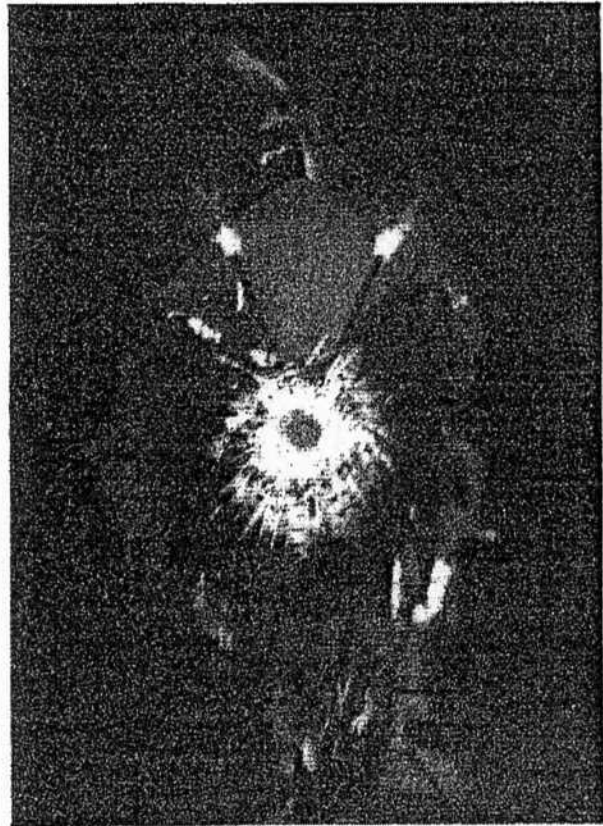


"Junior" Attack Him.

steps, and considerable head movements are not seen out on the dance floor. The practice of dancing "straight" or "deliberate" (*owo-tanla wacipi*) has become commonly accepted. An occasional bending down from the waist, a conventional looking up and out, and rhythmic glancing down to the ground on one's side and slightly to the back represent the range of spontaneous movements.

The above descriptions summarize the observations made by me at celebrations in the South Dakota area in recent years. They do consist in part of generalizations which are valid only if one realizes that the individual dancer feels quite free to apply his own creative ideas and preferences to a basic model of dancing and dressing for the dance.

If I would suggest two perspectives of my own on the "traditional" style it would be these: First, I would stress that contemporary manifestations of earlier or even "classic" models should not a priori be seen as examples of an unfortunate decline in creative abilities and tastes, but rather as samples of a changing culture that cannot be appraised simply by comparing it with forerunners and lamenting certain "losses." Secondly, it should be remembered that if the fancy dancers represent the climactic excitement of the dance, the "traditional" dancer must be considered its sustaining or essential element, its heart. The "traditional" dancer emphasizes



the rhythm of the drum and the song; he reminds us of one of the bases of the dance: expressing the joy of feeling in time with all around us.

Sinte Gleska College Center  
Rosebud, S.D.  
February 13, 1974

My thanks to James Emery, Ben Black Bear, Jr. and Victor Douville of the Sinte Gleska College Center's Lakota Studies Department for their help with the Lakota terms and their comments.

1. The "old-time Sioux" style has been examined among others by Norman Feder in his basic article "Old Time Sioux Costume" (*The American Indian Hobbyist* No. 3 and 4, Nov. Dec. 1957), The Grass Dance Costume by James Howard (*The American Indian Hobbyist*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1961), the Pan-Lakota or Northern Fancy Dance by me (*Powwow Trails*, Vol. IV, No. 8, January 1968) and the fine article by Chris Roberts on the "Sioux Style Northern Fancy Dance" (*American Indian Crafts and Culture*, Vol. VII, No. 4, 1973) which brings my earlier observations up to date.
2. James Emery recounts the first use of the long underwear among the Sioux: John Last Man of the Cheyenne River Agency Reservation who traveled for and with the "101" Shows of Oklahoma and Buffalo Bill Shows all of his life was on a tour of England just prior to World War I. Having to dance outdoors in cold weather he hit upon the idea of wearing his (undyed) long underwear underneath his costume. At first the object of much amusement, he then had his underwear dyed. On his return to the U.S. other Sioux dancers quickly adopted his innovation dyeing their underwear various colors.

John Last Man is also said to be one of the first dancers to dance very fancy even going down on one hand and around,





# MENS TRADITIONAL DANCE CLOTHES

Jim Swope

A revival of traditional dance clothes and dance style has been growing in the northern and central plains over the past several years. The traditional dance style has risen to a level of popularity which rivals current popularity of the pan-Indian "feathers" or "fancy dance" outfit popular in the 1960's & '70's. Even the younger dancers (Photo 5) are attracted to the traditional style.

The traditional outfit reflects a return to more natural colored materials - - feathers, leather, dark cloth - - and shying away from the brightly colored feathers and dyes. It also reflects a resurgence of old tribal designs and clothing styles in lieu of the showier modern designs. Today's traditional look combines designs and items of earlier times with some modern elements to produce a look that is distinctively different from what is generally called "old time", (1).

The revival of traditional dance clothes and dance style also embodies a return to traditional values. There is a strong feeling of Indianess and tribal identity in this style. The dancers take pride in their Indian heritage and doing things "the old way". There is a renewal of the old symbols and one's personal honors and accomplishments may reflect in his dance attire. A close friend once told me "there are three feathers tied to this hoop because while in Viet Nam I served in three campaigns or battles. Also in one I was a platoon leader so I can carry this bone whistle as that was a symbol of a war leader. This is why I can do these things."

The revival and development of traditional Lakota dance clothes was discussed by Theisz(2). He stated that although there is a general costume structure followed by traditional dancers the appearance is free form: that is, the individual has more freedom of variation than has been permitted by many other tribal or pan-Indian costumes. This free form has permitted the development of a pan-Indian costume which at the same time may show strong



PHOTOS

- 1) Traditional dancer on the cover, see page 3.
- 2) Back cover photo, see page 3 for details.
- 3) Thomas brothers (Lakota) from Sioux City at Omaha dance in classic dance poses.
- 4) Animated dancer at Bismarck 1981.
- 5) Young Traditional dancers at Bismarck.
- 6) Lakota Traditional dancer wearing several fully beaded items, all in traditional patterns and lazy stitch technique.







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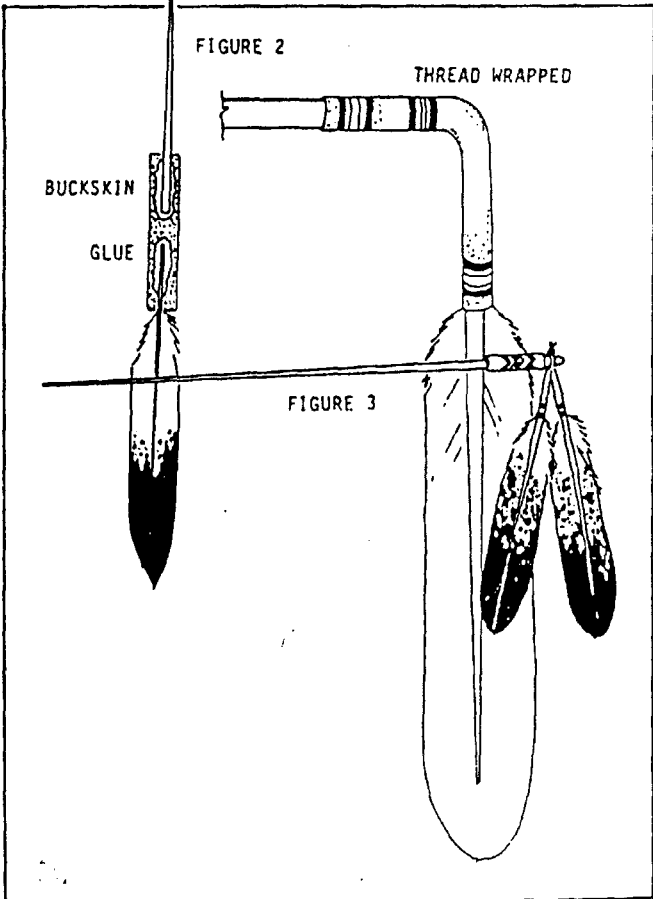
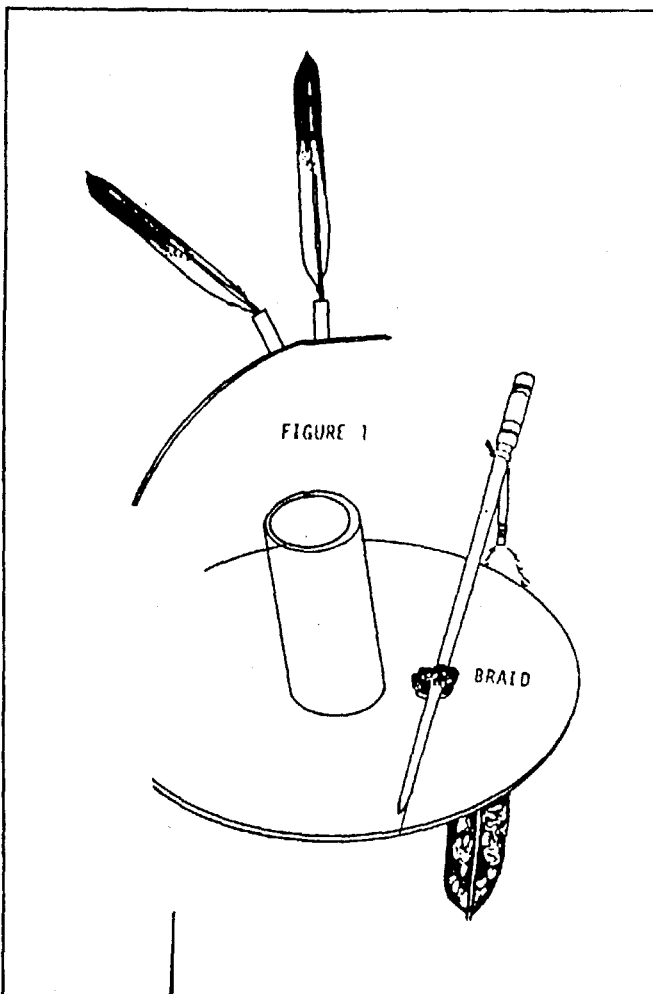


8A



9A

- 7) Anthony Arkeketah (Ojibwe-Ponca) wearing traditional clothes at Ponca Powwow 1980. Note Southern Plains leggings with sidetab and yarn-work sidetabs.
- 8) Traditional Omaha-style "crow belt" at Omaha Powwow. A crow is attached on left and wolf tail on right of the center cone of feathers.
- 8A) Howard Wolf (Omaha) at Skuunee Powwow 1981, wearing traditional Omaha bustle.
- 9) Unidentified dancer from New Mexico at Shoshone-Bannock Powwow 1980. Note floral Crow or Yakima-style beadwork, variety of bells, leather vest and mirror decorated fur suspenders.
- 9A) Pete Moore (Pawnee), winner of many Traditional contests. Note shoulder feathers, Southern Plains-style designs of medallions and loom-beaded belt. Photo taken at 1981 Pawnee Powwow.



tribal traits according to individual desire. The widespread popularity of dance clothes having the same general elements make the traditional look pan-Indian. Tribal identity is preserved in the decoration of these costume items by adopting unique tribal elements. Tribal identity is primarily preserved by beadwork designs; however, ribbon work, bustle styles, leggings, moccasins, and method of wearing some items reflect tribal traditions (photos 6-9). People are turning to museums, old photo albums, and tribal elders when designing their contemporary dance clothes.

Although there is much variety in design, and items worn, a complete traditional outfit is composed of the items described below.

#### HEADRESS

The porcupine hair roach is the traditional symbol of the Indian warrior, thus it is fitting that it is the headdress most commonly worn by the traditional dancer. The long porcupine guard hairs bob and sway in graceful imitation of the dancer's motions. The deer hair tied at the base of the roach is predominantly red or white, though yellow and other colors are sometimes used. The hair of the roach is spread using a bone, rawhide, leather, or metal spreader. Rawhide and leather spreaders are often decorated by painting or beadwork. In some groups metal spreaders are not considered as traditional as bone or leather spreaders. Roaches worn by northern people sometimes have wide spreaders which push the roach hair to the front, opening the roach. Some spreaders are so wide that the roach is actually flattened (Photo 5, 10). Roaches in the midwest are worn with smaller spreaders, thus the hair stands more vertical. Most dancers wear two feathers in the roach - - some wear only one. I once commented on this difference to a Winnebago dancer, and asked what was proper.

"It depends on how many war honors you have," he said. "When you go on your first war party you get a feather for your roach."

The roach feathers are attached to the spreader using sockets which permit the feathers to dance and twirl with movement of the dancer's head. The position of the feather sockets on the spreader are shown in Figure 1. One is just behind the front tie and holds the feather nearly vertical. The other is attached into the curve of the spreader so the feather has a significant rake to the back. The roach is tied into the hair or held on by ties. Roach sticks are popular for attaching a roach to ones hair. These are tapered sticks about 6 inches long and 1/4 inch in diameter. A medium size feather or feathers are attached to the large end of the stick using one of the methods shown in Figure 2 or 3. Either the end of the stick, feather, or both may be beaded. A lock of hair is braided to form a strand about 1/4 inch wide. This strand is





or tile beads, see Photo 10. Some dancers wear beaded collars and ties, or beaded chokers and pendants.

#### SHIRT-VEST

There is much variety in the decoration of the upper torso. Ribbon shirts are worn for evening and more formal dances. The shirts are made of cotton, or polyester, in solid colors or small geometric or floral prints. Calico is not as popular as it once was. The placement of the ribbons on the shirt follows tribal custom or the current style. The ribbon placement shown in photos 10 & 11 is very common, especially amongst the Lakota. Shirts with ribbonwork shoulders are prized by Winnebago dancers. Vests of cloth or leather may be worn with or without a shirt. These vests are partially or fully beaded or decorated with felt applique. Leather vests are often cut with long fringe along the bottom edge. On warm days many dancers go without a shirt, decorating the upper torso with bandoliers, breastplates, and armbands.

#### BREASTPLATE

An identifying element of the traditional look is the bone breastplate, photo 12. These are made of 3 to 4 inch bones horizontally suspended between strips of strap leather. The thongs which pass through each line of bones extends beyond the edges of the breastplate to form a 3 to 4 inch fringe the length of the breastplate. Breastplates cover the chest and extend 3 to 6 inches below the waist. They are pulled in at the waist by a tie. The breastplate may be left plain or decorated with conch shells, brass rings, ribbons or hair drops. On occasion the crow style breastplate of disk beads, or seed beads wrapped on thongs is seen. Some dancers wear a harness made of beaded strips or fur strips instead of a bone breastplate.

#### BANDOLIERS

Many dancers wear an otter bandolier (Photo 13). These are a 3 to 4 inch wide strip of otter fur decorated with round mirrors. The bandolier is worn over one shoulder, crossing the body and resting on the opposite hip. The old style otter breastplate, in which a head hole is slit along the back of an otter skin, is sometimes worn over the shoulders. These are not common.

Bandoliers made of 1 to 5 strands of bone pipes and beads are also common. These are worn as a single bandolier, in pairs crossing the body (Photo 14).

looped up through a hole in the base of the roach and the roach spreader. The point on the stick is inserted through the base of the roach hair and into the loop of the braided hairlock. The hairlock is pulled tight to hold both the roach and roach stick firmly, Figure 1. The roach stick is generally inserted from the right side so the feather hangs over the temple.

Some traditional dancers wear a beaded headband (Photo 11), either from personal preference or tribal influence. Headbands may have front medallions or side drops. A long hair style is popular with traditional dancers. The hair is braided and wrapped with cloth, ribbon, otter fur, or leather strips. Some dancers wear wigs so they can wear hair wraps. (Photo 10 & 11).

#### NECKWEAR

All dancers wear some type of choker. Most common are four or five strand chokers made of short bone pipes in combination with brass beads, crow beads,

Photo 10 & 11.



12



13

14

with an otter bandolier crossing the body, or over the same shoulder as an otter bandolier (Photo 13). All bandoliers are worn over the breastplate.

#### ARMBANDS AND CUFFS

Tribal customs have a strong influence on the style and type of armbands worn. The Lakota prefer beaded armbands with contemporary or traditional designs done in lazy stitch (Photo 6). Dancers from the Great Lakes area wear loom beaded armbands. The Midwest dancers seem to prefer German silver armbands. Several ribbons of different colors, 1 inch wide, 16-18 inches long, hang from metal armbands. Metal armbands of brass or German silver are also worn by the Lakota. Cuffs show the same trend. They are lazy stitched or loomed in a tribal pattern. Some leather cuffs are decorated with brass tacks instead of beaded. Cuffs may or may not have fringe.

#### DANCE APRONS

Dance aprons are more popular, although some breechcloths are worn. Dance aprons tend to be large; 1/2 the waist measure in width and from the waist to the knees in length. A large variety of materials and decoration are seen according to the dancers' taste or tribal custom. Cloth aprons are generally of blue wool with red satin ribbon binding on the side and bottom edges. Two to four 3/4 inch satin ribbons, each a different color (yellow, green, blue, red) are sewn horizontally, 3 inches from the bottom, separated by 1 inch. Many dancers wear leather aprons. These usually have fringe, 1/4 to 3/8 inch wide and 6-10 inches long, cut into the edges and bottom. (Photo 9 & 12) Leather aprons may also be decorated with beaded strips or beaded medallions. Cloth aprons are also decorated with applique bead designs, embroidery, or ribbon work.







or tile beads, see Photo 10. Some dancers wear beaded collars and ties, or beaded chokers and pendants.

**SHIRT-VEST**

There is much variety in the decoration of the upper torso. Ribbon shirts are worn for evening and more formal dances. The shirts are made of cotton, or polyester, in solid colors or small geometric or floral prints. Calico is not as popular as it once was. The placement of the ribbons on the shirt follows tribal custom or the current style. The ribbon placement shown in photos 10 & 11 is very common, especially amongst the Lakota. Shirts with ribbonwork shoulders are prized by Winnebago dancers. Vests of cloth or leather may be worn with or without a shirt. These vests are partially or fully beaded or decorated with felt applique. Leather vests are often cut with long fringe along the bottom edge. On warm days many dancers go without a shirt, decorating the upper torso with bandoliers, breastplates, and armbands.

**BREASTPLATE**

An identifying element of the traditional look is the bone breastplate, photo 12. These are made of 3 to 4 inch bones horizontally suspended between strips of strap leather. The thongs which pass through each line of bones extends beyond the edges of the breastplate to form a 3 to 4 inch fringe the length of the breastplate. Breastplates cover the chest and extend 3 to 6 inches below the waist. They are pulled in at the waist by a tie. The breastplate may be left plain or decorated with conch shells, brass rings, ribbons or hair drops. On occasion the crow style breastplate of disk beads, or seed beads wrapped on thongs is seen. Some dancers wear a harness made of beaded strips or fur strips instead of a bone breastplate.

**BANDOLIERS**

Many dancers wear an otter bandolier (Photo 13). These are a 3 to 4 inch wide strip of otter fur decorated with round mirrors. The bandolier is worn over one shoulder, crossing the body and resting on the opposite hip. The old style otter breastplate, in which a head hole is slit along the back of an otter skin, is sometimes worn over the shoulders. These are not common.

Bandoliers made of 1 to 5 strands of bone pipes and beads are also common. These are worn as a single handolier, in pairs crossing the body (Photo 14).

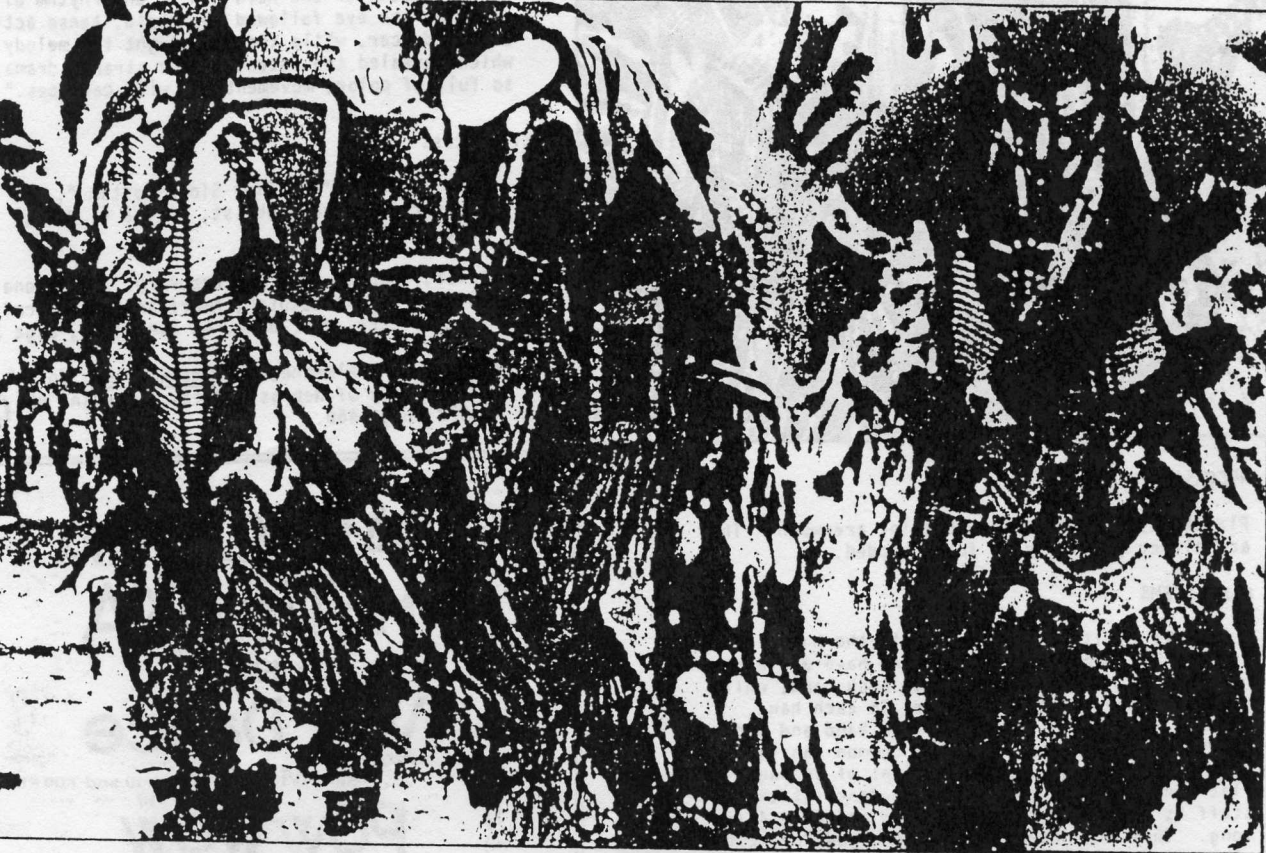
looped up through a hole in the base of the roach and the roach spreader. The point on the stick is inserted through the base of the roach hair and into the loop of the braided hairlock. The hairlock is pulled tight to hold both the roach and roach stick firmly, Figure 1. The roach stick is generally inserted from the right side so the feather hangs over the temple.

Some traditional dancers wear a beaded headband (Photo 11), either from personal preference or tribal influence. Headbands may have front medallions or side drops. A long hair style is popular with traditional dancers. The hair is braided and wrapped with cloth, ribbon, otter fur, or leather strips. Some dancers wear wigs so they can wear hair wraps. (Photo 10 & 11).

**NECKWEAR**

All dancers wear some type of choker. Most common are four or five strand chokers made of short bone pipes in combination with brass beads, crow beads,

B. M. Case 1944, p. 100



#### T AND SIDE TABS

ts may be beaded, leather decorated with metal  
chos or brass tacks and studs, or woven yarn sashes.  
n a yarn sash is worn, it is tied so the ends of the  
h hang over each hip as side tabs. Side tabs may  
o be loom beaded, finger weaving, ribbon work, or  
ther. Leather side tabs are decorated with bead-  
k or studs and have fringed edges. A knife  
ath or beaded tobacco bag may be tied to the belt.  
tos 6, 11, 15, 16 illustrate many of these traits.

#### TLE

ingle bustle made from natural feathers, i.e. not  
d fluffs or hackles, is an identifying mark of  
ditional clothes. The most common bustle is  
U-shaped or "swing wing" bustle made of a single  
of feathers, (Photos 4, 13, 14 & 15).

spike feathers or decorated shafts extend from  
top of the bustle to hold up the wings. These  
es are decorated with feather clusters at the  
, yarn, hawkbells, ribbons, or fur. A single  
ouble trailer, shingled with feathers, hangs  
the bustle. Other traditional styles of bustles  
worn. Some are circular bustles made of several  
entric rings of feathers. The traditional  
a bustle is this circular type, with two decorated  
es, and a wolf tail attached to the right side  
he bustle base and a crow skin on the left side,  
to 8).

#### EAR

her characteristic of traditional dance clothes  
he fringed leather garters worn just below the  
, (Photo 9). These consist of a beaded garter  
h has a 5 to 6 inch leather fringe hanging  
it. The fringes are cut 1/4 to 3/8 inches wide  
extend all the way around the leg. Dance bells  
worn just above the ankle, although some dancers  
bells below the knee, just above the garters.

case back: 100-300



Bells are steel jingle bells, small sheep bells,  
brass bells, or the larger steel jingle bells.  
Short angora "goats" are worn below the bells. They  
extend to the ground and cover the moccasin tops.

Some dancers wear leggings; however, the items  
described above are by far the more popular. The  
leggings are generally made of leather. They are  
usually of simple construction being simply a  
rectangle of leather folded about the leg with  
fringe cut into the outside edges of the leather.  
The leggings are closed with stitching along the  
leg, or by tying some fringes together.





acted out. The throb of the drum started pulses of the spectator and held him to the rhythm of the scene as the eye followed the rapid, tense action of the dancer, while the ear caught the melody which revealed the intent of the strange drama, so full of color, movement and wild cadences."

References:

1. Feder, Norman, "Old Time Sioux Costume", The American Indian Hobbyist, No 3 & 4, Nov., Dec. 1957.
2. Theisz, Ronnie, "The contemporary 'Traditional Style' of the Lakota", American Indian Crafts and Culture, Vol. 8 No. 6, June 1974, page 2-7.
3. Fletcher & LaFlesche, The Omaha Tribe, Vol. 2, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, 1972, page 466.



MOCCASINS

Plains style, hard-sole moccasins are worn. They are either partially or fully beaded.

HAND ITEMS

A variety of items are carried in the hands as can be seen in the photos. Most dancers have at least one hand item. Many have items for each hand, while several carry two or more items in each hand. Generally a fan is carried in one hand and a dance stick or club in the other. A common fan is a wing fan made from the upper joint of an eagle wing. Flat fans are also popular. The dance stick or staff is about 1 inch in diameter and 2 to 4 feet long. They are decorated with wrapped fur, cloth, ribbons, feathers, and beads. Gunstock war clubs, and other wooden clubs are sometimes carried. A medicine wheel, coil of rope, scarves, beaded bags and mirror boards are other items carried.

Some dancers regalia consists of all the items listed above, however, most do not have that many items. The headdress, breastplate, bustle, aprons, garters, bells, and moccasins are essential to the traditional look. One must study the photographs which accompany this article and other traditional dancers to see what combinations are being worn.

Traditional dance clothes alone do not make a traditional dancer. As with all other styles, the method of dancing is all important. The traditional dance style abandons the flashy steps adopted by fancy dancers. It preserves the dignified, conservative dance style of earlier times. The basic step is the flat foot stomp. The dancer advances a foot and places it flatly on the ground on the unaccented beat of the song. He then raises this same foot and stomps it in place on the accented beat. The feet are alternately moved in this manner as the dance progresses. The most characteristic part of the traditional dance style is the position and movement of the body. The description written by Fletcher and LaFlesche (3) in describing the dance style of the Omaha in 1906 applies to the style of dance seen today:

"Then, in a conventionalized pantomime he acted out one of his experiences in war... A good dancer was light of foot and agile. A variety of steps was taken; the foot was brought down on the ground with a thud, making a synchronous accompaniment to the resonant drum beat and the voices of the singers; the limbs lifted at sharp angles; the body was bent and raised with sudden and diversified movements, as in a charge, or as if dodging arrows or averting blows from weapons. In all this dramatic presentation of an actual scene there was not a motion of foot, leg, body, arm, or head that did not follow the song in strict time, yet keeping close to the story that was being

# CALIFORNIA HETHUSKA

1982

## War Dance

Sat. March 13 1:00 and 7:00 PM

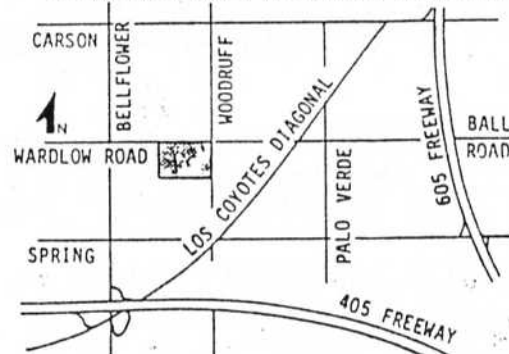
## Powwow

Sun. March 14 1-4 PM

Marshall Jr. High

Head Singer CHICK KEMBLE  
Guest Singers KIRBY KEMBLE, JIMMY KEMBLE AND EARL FENNER

For more information call (213)860-5334.  
5870 WARDLOW ROAD, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA



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APR. 17

ALL AT  
MARSHALL JR. HIGH  
WOODRUFF and WARDLOW in LONG BEACH

7:30, DOORS OPEN AT 7:00  
PHONE 213 426 2724 FOR INFORMATION