From the online library at www.worldwisdom.com

THE MANDAN

HISTORY AND CUSTOMS

NO one can say how long the Mandan had been living in their little stockaded villages at Heart river when, in 1738, le Sieur de la Vérendrye, on a mission of exploration for the Canadian Fur Company, found friendly welcome there. If credence is to be given Indian traditional history, their residence in that locality had already been measured by generations; for they had long been dwelling there when from their neighbors and allies, the Hidatsa, seceded the band that became the Apsaroke, an event that occurred about the middle of the seventeenth century.[1]

Mandan tradition and legend tell of a gradual migration up the Missouri "from the place where the river flows into the great water," and frequent are the allusions in their stories to the land of the south where the green of the trees never faded and the birds were always singing. One can hardly doubt, therefore, that the Mandan dwelt originally in the warm Gulf region in the vicinity of the mouth of the Mississippi. Indeed, this tradition has a sounder basis than would at first appear, as it is now known that several tribes belonging to the same linguistic family as the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Apsaroke, lived in the Gulf region during the historical period, and remnants of some of the tribes still reside there.

The earliest village site definitely located by their traditions is on the Missouri, a short distance below Cannonball river in North Dakota. It was there they lost one of the sacred Turtle-drums, as narrated in the origin myth, and the village is now referred to as *Pke-mini-tókidis,* Turtle Goes Home Into Water.

Pressing ever northward, they crossed the Cannonball, and still following the Missouri began to erect their earth lodges south of Heart river. About this time there appeared on the eastern shore of the larger stream a throng of strangers, who desired to be taken across. The newcomers, who were at once given the name *Mini-tadhi, Cross* Water, were made welcome, and they built their villages to the north of the Mandan.

[1] See Volume IV – The Apsorake.

There both tribes were living, the Mandan to the south, and the Hidatsa mainly to the north of Heart river, when La Vérendrye visited them. Though his is the earliest account of the Mandan, it is quite probable that he was not the first white visitor. For many years before his coming, solitary French voyageurs had been pushing their way westward from the Great Lakes, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that some of them had visited the river villages. A Mandan tradition relates that long ago a hunting party found wandering on the plains a man with white skin, fair hair, and blue eyes, who said he was from the north. They took him to their village, and clothed and fed and made much of him.

La Vérendrye found the Mandan occupying six villages, the smallest of which contained a hundred and thirty lodges, and one of the largest he estimated at about twice that size. The total number of habitations, therefore, could scarcely have been less than a thousand, and if each lodge sheltered, as was the rule less than a century later, twenty to forty people, there was a population almost incredibly great in view of the fact that Lewis and Clark sixty-six years later estimated the Mandan as numbering three hundred and fifty warriors or twelve hundred and fifty souls.

Much has been written as to the number of these almost prehistoric Heart River villages, and it has been generally accepted that there were nine. Tribal tradition, however, confirms the Frenchman by definitely locating five Mandan villages on the west bank of the Missouri and one on the east, all south of Heart river. The five were called collectively *Mítutaha*^{n}*k,* East Village, a reminiscence perhaps of a time when on the lower course of the river they lived to the east of the others; the one across the Missouri from the five was *Mahí-miti,* Burned Boughs Village, or Núptatamítis, and its inhabitants were known as Nuptádhi. North of Heart river were some scattered smaller settlements of families crowded out of the larger ones; these were doubtless responsible for the conflicting estimates of the number of the Heart River villages.

About 1770 Núptatamítis was attacked by overwhelming numbers of Yanktonai, many of whom had flintlocks. The villagers had only one firearm, and that one they were ignorant how to use.[2] Its owner,

[2] It is difficult to believe that the Mandan did not know how to use firearms in 1770, for La Vérendrye records that in 1738 they gave to the Assiniboin grain, tobacco, peltry, and painted plumes, in exchange for muskets, axes, and other implements.

pointing it bravely toward the enemy, says the tradition, commanded it to shoot, and threw it down in disgust when it failed to obey. Besieged within an imperfect stockade by a superior force armed with guns, the Nuptádhi were at the mercy of the Sioux. Warriors from Mítutaha^{n}k attempted to cross to their assistance, but Yanktonai were guarding the bank above and below the village, and they could not land. When darkness came, a part of the Nuptádhi escaped across the Missouri; the others, with the exception of a few prisoners, were killed. The survivors rescued their sacred Turtle-drums and went to live temporarily in Mítutaha^{n}k.

Soon after the destruction of Núptatamítis the entire tribe resumed once more their northward migration. After a journey of approximately seventy-five miles they stopped and built their homes on a rocky butte southwest of the site of Washburn, North Dakota. Here the two divisions were not far apart, and strife arose in which the Nuptádhi under their chief Little Raven, *Kéka-hámahe,* were aided by the Hidatsa, who were then living no great distance up the stream at Knife river; while the warriors of Mítutaha^{n}k, led by Good Child, *Sukshí,* sought and obtained help from the Arikara in the south. Hostilities continued for eight years.

Following the cessation of this internal strife, the Mandan made strenuous effort to rehabilitate the tribe. A high birth-rate was urged, and removal from the tribe by marriage prohibited; but dreams of once more seeing the Mandan a great people were doomed never to be fulfilled, and the heroic efforts of the leading men to make this desire of their heart a reality were unavailing. Their day as a tribal power had passed.

The Mandan now proceeded up the Missouri, their course lying to the west, and four miles below Knife river formed two villages, the Nuptádhi returning to the east side of the Missouri and building a new Núptatamítis. This was about 1783. Here they were visited by the party of Lewis and Clark, who wintered near Núptatamítis in 1804-1805. Traders from Canada and French interpreters had already established themselves in the villages. Toussaint Charbonneau (the husband of the celebrated Sacajawea [Tsakáka-wía], or Bird Woman, the Shoshoni captive), who became an interpreter for the expedition, had been living among the Hidatsa from 1796. In 1832 steamboat traffic between St. Louis and the upper Missouri was begun and the Mandan villages were thus made readily accessible to travellers and

traders.

In 1837 came the terrible scourge of smallpox. Out of a total population of sixteen hundred, fifty-three males above fourteen years of age escaped. Probably one hundred and fifty is a fair estimate of the number of survivors in the two Mandan towns. The deserted houses were plundered by the Arikara, who had just come up from the south and now decided to remain, and with them the remnant of the Mandan made their homes. A few accompanied the Hidatsa (who also had suffered the ravages of the plague) in 1845 to their new village at Fort Berthold on the north bank of the river, and in 1857, after a quarrel with the Arikara, — the result of the killing of a Mandan Soldier in the performance of his duties,

— the remainder joined their friends in the new village. Even this last poor relic of tribal life was demolished when in 1893 the agency headquarters were removed from Fort Berthold and the disintegration of the village, already well under way as a result of allotting the lands in severalty, was complete.

The Mandan with the Hidatsa and nine hundred and fifty lodges of Apsaroke under Red Feather At The Temple made a treaty of friendship with the United States at a council near Mítutaha^{n}k at Knife river on July 30, 1825, — a treaty that suffered no rupture by any of the participants, excepting an insignificant and sporadic affair with the Apsaroke in 1887. They signed the treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851, by which the limits of the territories dominated by various north western tribes were established.1[3] A reservation, including the site of the village at Fort Berthold, was created in 1870, but its dimensions were reduced in 1886. With the Hidatsa and the Arikara, the two hundred and fifty descendants of the thousands that once lived at Heart river in the midst of plenty now occupy a reservation of nearly fourteen hundred square miles, mostly on the north side of the Missouri river in western North Dakota. Of these only about a score can lay claim to being of pure blood.

When observed by Lewis and Clark, Catlin, and Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied, the Mandan, considering their numbers, were a

[3] The Fort Laramie treaty of September 17, 1851, was ratified by the Senate as signed, with an amendment changing the annuity in Article 7 from fifty to ten years, subject to acceptance by the tribes. Assent of all the tribes except the Apsaroke was procured, and in subsequent agreements this treaty has been recognized as in force.

vigorous people, of splendid physique, living in lodges that were not only spacious but provided with comforts unknown to the roving tribes, and growing crops ample for their immediate needs and affording a surplus for barter. Like all their neighbors, they depended chiefly on the buffalo for their meat supply.

No more impaired than their material culture were their religious and ceremonial beliefs and practices. Nothing had yet shaken their faith in their own gods. As the bird instinctively builds its nest to meet its own needs, the Mandan had formulated their religion to fit the requirements of their life, and were strong in precepts. Their well-developed political organization enabled them to execute effectually the tribal laws. To-day there is scarcely a shadow of their former greatness, with their six populous villages and thousands of warriors: scarcely a hardy full-blood is left, only a few feeble old men and women bemoaning the fact that they did not die before the hopelessness of the present came upon them. But from these ancients it has been possible to gather considerable historical, traditional, and mythical lore, and to restore in fair degree much of the life that has passed. A few years more and the knowledge still preserved in the memories of these old people will have departed with them.

Causes tending to the rapid decrease of the Mandan population between 1738 and 1804 are not difficult to determine. The earlier

date is not far from the beginning of active Sioux hostility toward them, which, judging by their own stories and by Sioux winter-counts, developed into an almost unceasing warfare; and we have the repeated assertion of Lewis and Clark that the Mandan had suffered seriously both from the Sioux and from that no less implacable enemy the smallpox, long prior to the winter's stay of those explorers among them.

In studying the Mandan a confusion of material is found, which adds greatly to the task. Since they have lived as near neighbors of the Hidatsa for centuries, there has been a constant interchange of thought, which has blended their mythology as effectually as intermarriage has mingled their blood. The myths and legends obtained from the two tribes have been carefully analyzed, in order, if possible, to determine to which one they primarily belonged. Any conclusion worthy of consideration must be reached from study of the material as a whole rather than from direct statements of members of either tribe, who invariably claim every myth as a part of their own birthright.

The story of Númak-máhana is taken as indicative of the early habitat of the nucleus of the Mandan tribe, and the myth of an emergence from a lower world by climbing up a grapevine, which is told by both Mandan and Hidatsa, is really a Hidatsa myth, and was derived by the Mandan from them. Such a separation of myth and legend demands the conclusion that the Mandan never lived to the northeast of their present location, but rather that their migratory movements were constantly northwestward. It is further believed that if in these movements the Mandan crossed the Mississippi, it was below the junction of that stream with the Missouri; consequently they have known but one great river.

Information gathered from both Hidatsa and Apsaroke indicates that the arrival of these two combined tribes at the Missouri was prior to the middle of the seventeenth century, and the Mandan at that time had no tradition of a home other than the one on the river: all of which tends to show a very early occupancy of the upper Missouri River region by this tribe.

Compared with neighboring Indians, the Mandan were not a warrior people, their fighting being for the greater part defensive, not predatory. It is true that in their ceremonies and stories great stress is laid on deeds of valor in war, and each of their chiefs could boast of a fair collection of scalps; yet it is certain that they were not the equal of their foe, the Sioux, and it was owing only to their well-built stockades that more than once they were saved from extermination. They admit that their near neighbors, the Hidatsa, were greater warriors. The Sioux, after reaching the Missouri, harassed them so constantly that it was even necessary for the women, when going out to gather berries and roots, to be guarded by the men; while it was a common occurrence for buffalo hunters to be attacked by small bands of Sioux invaders. An occasional season of truce occurred at harvest time, when their enemies came to barter for corn.

Corn was the chief staple of the Mandan, and was grown in considerable quantities. The fields consisted of small patches of rich alluvial land cleared of trees and shrubbery; the ground was worked with a wooden dibble, and with a hoe bladed with a buffalo-scapula. Each family's garden was divided into three to seven beds of six rows each, the rows a step apart and the hills in the row the same distance. What may be regarded as an unusually large plot was about eighty yards in length. As with many tribes, the work of preparing the soil

and tending the crop was a task of the women, the men meanwhile performing the sometimes dangerous duty of keeping sharp lookout for Sioux and other Indians of hostile intent. In addition to maize they raised, in smaller quantities, beans, squashes, and sunflower seeds, a mixture of which with corn and buffalo-fat made the "four-mixture" so often mentioned in ceremony and myth.

No tradition of the Mandan alludes to a time when they did not cultivate corn, and indeed this grain enters into a great many of their myths, as in that of the contest between *Káho*^{n}*he*, Waving Corn, and the Sun. The story runs:

Waving Corn was always in her corn-field, in which she built a strong scaffold, there to live and watch her corn. The Sun, falling in love with her, came down and sat by her side, wooing her with soft words, saying, "I love you better than I love any other woman." She refused him, and bade him begone; but the next day the Sun returned and sat beside her on the scaffold. Still she refused him, and sent him away, three times in all.

In anger the Sun said: "Very well, you will not have me. Then you shall never taste of this fine field of corn!"

"No, I will eat this corn; that is why I planted it," retorted Waving Corn.

Then the Sun repeated that she should never eat of it, and so the word was thrown back and forth three times. After that the Sun shone so hot that the corn withered and sank to the ground. When darkness came, Waving Corn went over the field looking and wondering how to master the Sun, and suddenly the corn rose again and was green as before. In the morning a heavy fog covered the earth, but at noon it walked away and the Sun again shone hot on the land until the cornstalks were dry, and rattled. Again as night came Káho^{n}he walked forth and revived the seared and prostrate corn. Four times in all this was done, when the Sun gave up the contest and the corn was left to reach maturity, and all was gathered and stored.

The typical dwelling of the Mandan is a large earthen lodge exactly like that of the Hidatsa.1[4] The erection of a lodge was a community undertaking, and feasting and laughter enlivened the task, which was one of considerable magnitude. The interior arrangements were more complete than was usual in Indian homes. Between the central fire-

[4] See Volume IV – The Hidatsa

pit and the entrance was erected a screen of poles, interwoven with rawhide, extending from the wall to a little beyond the middle. Just inside the door, on one side or both, the horses were stabled. The beds, which were placed between the outer posts and screened with curtains of hides, were made of poles supported at the ends by cross-sticks which rested on two forked posts, the whole piled thickly with robes. The door, consisting of a framework of poles covered with rawhide, was suspended from the lintel so as to swing inward only. To the rawhide covering were fastened several dry buffalo-hoofs, so that no one could enter unnoticed. The door was secured at night by a bar dropped into the crotches of two small posts set firmly in the ground. A single lodge sheltered from twenty to forty people. The son-in-law of the head of the household occupied the place of honor at the rear, while the master of the house claimed the space between the two main posts nearest the door. The houses were erected indiscriminately about an open circle, and the village itself was surrounded by a stockade of upright logs set firmly in the ground, and by a trench in which the defenders could take position in event of attack.[5]

The most noteworthy of the aboriginal arts of the Mandan was the manufacture of rude glass beads and pendants. The process is described by Lewis and Clark, wildly conjectured by Catlin, and ably discussed by Matthews. To Matthews' conclusions little can now be added. It may have been a primitive art with them, perhaps learned from some other tribe; but inasmuch as when the Mandan were first observed making beads a trader had been living among them and selling glass beads for eight years, it is not improbable that the first beads of native manufacture were of material derived from those obtained in barter. These ornaments consisted of a core of clay covered with a vitreous glaze, and were valued more highly than any other article of barter. It was customary for a father who was particularly fond and proud of his daughter to have an ornament of glass beads made, and then to employ a medicine-man to tie it in her hair, where it remained until her betrothal, when it was cut loose and thrown away. The Arikara

[5] La Vérendrye says that the village which he visited was surrounded by a ditch, more than fifteen feet deep and fifteen to eighteen feet wide. "Their fort," he says, 'can only be gained by steps or posts which can be removed when threatened by an enemy.' One of the subsequently built Knife River villages is said by Catlin to have had, inside the palisade, a trench three or four feet deep, in which the defenders sheltered themselves.

also were acquainted with this method of making beads, and may have manufactured them previous to their contact with the Mandan.

The Mandan also made heavy earthen pots, similar to those of the Hidatsa, Arikara, and other tribes of the region. The pure clay was mixed with a considerable proportion of coarse sand formed by pulverizing granite or sandstone. The mass having been thoroughly kneaded, a deep depression was made in it with the fist, then with a piece of smooth bark for a paddle, and holding a round stone on the inside, the potter modelled the lump to the desired shape and thickness. After drying in the sun, the vessel was fired. In this stage the pottery was rather light in color, and it was now smeared with scum from boiling corn, in order to fill the pores and produce a dull gloss. These pots were not painted, but while still in the plastic state were marked by the pressure of a piece of wood carved with the desired pattern, or of a cord, sometimes knotted, or of a piece of coarsely woven cloth. The vessels assumed a black tinge from use. Some were made with narrow openings, and others, elliptical in shape with two openings in the top, were known as "twinmouthed pots." All these utensils were round at the bottom. The vessel designed for holding water was set in a ring of willow-bark, to hold it upright, and near the rim was a thong to which was attached a pack-string.

Corn was pounded into meal with a pestle of ash in a mortar deeply embedded in the ground so that only about six inches protruded above the surface. The mortar was made of a section of an ash log about a foot in diameter and twenty inches in length. The hollow was burnt larger at the bottom than at the top, by checking the effect of the flame with moist clay and accelerating it with a reed blowpipe. The pestle was long and heavy, the handle rather small, and the head hardened by charring. With these implements corn could be pounded into a fairly fine meal.

The village head-chief was he who had acquired the greatest reputation as a warrior, and as a peacemaker among his people. Great stress was laid upon ability to effect peace. Bravery was indispensable, as were honors won in war, and medicine-power. A new chief was not formally elected in council, but became the successor logically, his position as the most prominent person next to the late chief being recognized generally. If it happened that there were two men of equal importance, they acted jointly as leaders, and when questions of moment were to be decided one would defer to the other. Men whose

reputation depended largely on their known sense of justice and their desire for intratribal peace would not be likely to permit discord to arise between them. Aspiring to chieftainship, a man endeavored to gain great spiritual strength, hoping at each period of fasting to see in his vision some new spirit being. Each *mahópini* thus revealed to an aspirant was that much added power, and in addition to the mystery-strength gained by personal supplication he might buy the medicine, or *hopíni* power, of others.

The council was composed of the elders of the village, many of whom were clan chiefs or sub-chiefs. From time to time, as the younger men performed deeds of valor or otherwise proved themselves worthy, they were admitted to the council. Here discussion was free, but after a question had been fully debated the final decision lay with the chief Public announcements were made from the housetops by the chief's herald, and the members of the Soldier order policed the village and saw that all instructions of the chief were fully obeyed. If a member of the tribe should fail to heed such orders, he was severely punished, the Soldiers having full power even to decree and execute the death penalty. There was no need of jails. When the Soldiers pushed open an offender's door, he knew he was face to face with the law of his tribe and its executors: whatever their demands, he must acquiesce without delay or demur. If the plan was to "soldier-kill" a male factor by destroying his hunting-lodge and maiming his horse, he knew that any resentment would probably be at the cost of his own life. Such organizations for the preservation of peace and authority within the tribe were as necessary as they were common; for when a fractious member of a tribe or village that must be constantly on the alert to preserve its very existence might at any time bring disaster by his misbehavior, the solidarity of the community depended on swift and decisive action.

The society organization of the Mandan is worthy of particular notice. The system comprised seven societies, or lodges, through which a man passed successively, beginning with the Fox order. The usual age of entrance into this grade was eighteen or twenty years, and no one younger than fifty years was permitted to enter the Bull society, the sixth organization of the system. To become a member of this system one had first to purchase the rights of a member of the lowest order before passing successively through the others. This could not be done individually, but only when it was arranged that the

whole society purchase the right of the next higher one. Each society had its own lodge as a meeting-place, — to which only members and past members were admitted, — and its own songs, which constituted their most valued possession. These songs were in fact what the new members acquired by purchase: in the Indian way of thinking they were not buying membership — the right to enter the lodge and to participate in its proceedings — so much as they were purchasing the songs, the right to sing which belonged to the society. Once having disposed of its songs, a society would not have dared to make further use of them.

To illustrate the custom of acquiring society membership: The Foolish Dogs purchased the rights and privileges of the Half-sheared, leaving them without membership in any society. After a time the latter assembled, but not as an organization, and decided that the time had arrived for them to buy the privileges of the Soldier order. They collected quantities of blankets, shirts, moccasins, pemmican, pipes, tobacco, and horses, and when sufficient property had been accumulated they took all to the lodge of the Soldier order and placed the ceremonial pipe inside the door. When the Soldiers assembled, if the quantity seemed to be sufficient, they smoked the pipe, thus signifying their acceptance. If, however, the property was deemed by them inadequate, they left the pipe untouched until the Half-sheared members added sufficient material. If the Foolish Dogs purchased the songs of the society next above them before their own rights were disposed of, they would possess two memberships, but would not exercise the rights of the lower order; and until the Foxes decided to pass into the Foolish Dog order the latter had no active members.

Each society had its own dances, in which the members alone might participate; but the performance was not conducted in secret. Each had also its own costumes, which sometimes, as in the case of the Bulls, included masks; and in each there were two leaders, who bore the staffs and were committed to deeds of bravery, as in the military organizations of other plains tribes.[6]

During courtship the Mandan young man brought presents to the girl of his choice, and if she accepted them, he felt sufficiently encouraged to effect a meeting with her, when they would sit and talk, he endeavoring to pursuade her to come with him at once. If she

[6] See Volume IV – The Apsaroke

were a proud maiden, such a proposal would be refused, as it was the ambition of every Mandan girl to have many presents exchanged for her. If she simply refused, yet gave the suitor cause to think she cared for him, he brought presents to her family, and his relations too gave whatever articles of value they could afford.

If the family of the girl were in favor of the union and the girl herself acquiesced, she went to the young man's house, bearing food and gifts. The man's family and his other close relations came to the feast laden with presents for the bride, which she later took home and distributed among her clanspeople. From the time the young woman first went to her suitor's house they were regarded as married. If she went secretly, without the knowledge of her family, no gifts having been exchanged, she lived in the husband's lodge; in the other case the man dwelt with her family. If the marriage were formally arranged in accordance with the general custom, the bride's younger sisters were usually included in the contract. In the case of an elopement the husband had no claim on the younger sisters; but if he were a worthy man, bringing food frequently to his father-in-law, the younger sisters were commonly given to him as soon as they reached the marriageable age, the logic being that it was better to make sure of one good son-in-law than to incur the risk of gaining a worthless one.

Divorce consisted simply in parting, and usually was caused by one of the pair becoming infatuated with another; but sometimes it was the result of a less serious matter, such as constant disagreement. Punishment of marital unfaithfulness on the part of a woman was left to the husband, who might either send the wife away or keep her; to take the latter course, however, was proof that his "heart was weak" and caused him to become the subject of contemptuous criticism in the tribe and a laughing-stock in his clan. If a man eloped with another's wife, the deserted husband might call the old men together and ask one to go and bring back the recreant. On her arrival, he combed and perfumed her hair, put on her best dress and leggings, led out a favorite horse and decked it with fine trappings, then taking down his best bow and arrows, he handed them to her, saying, "Now you have found a better husband than I, take and give these to him." Thenceforth no enmity existed between the two men; they were friends for life, and the magnanimity of the husband was regarded as an act of which any man might have been proud.

Fasting was observed for the purpose of bringing one's self into

communication with the spirits, that the suppliant might obtain hopíni, mysterious, power, and thus be enabled to see into the future and to forecast the fate of intended war expeditions. The faster prepared himself by purification in the sweat-lodge and by perfuming his body with sacred sweet-grass; then, clad only in moccasins and loin-cloth, and bearing medicine bundle, buffalo-skull, and pipe, he walked forth alone to some high peak. The start was made very early, since he must reach his goal and be in position when the sun first looked over the edge of the earth. As the sky became illumined by the approaching orb, the suppliant stood on the buffalo-skull and looked to the east, and just as the sun came into view he prayed, "O Sun, give me strength in this deed!" He remained on the summit the entire day, looking in the same direction and crying aloud, that the spirits might come to him. At night he made a light brush shelter or dug a shallow cave in which to sleep. The rising sun found him again standing on the skull praying for divine revelation, and all through the day he cried out to the *mahópini,* or spirit powers, "How shall I be most successful?" The prescribed length of the fast was four days and four nights, but this was often extended to as many as seven days and seven nights in order to make the suppliant so free from earthly things that he became hopíni. Even this long period of fasting and praying was exceeded by Cherries In The Mouth, who fasted nine days and nine nights; and Big Shirt, a contemporary of the Hidatsa chief Roadmaker, observed the seven-day fast eight times. At the end of these long periods of abstinence from food and water the men were so emaciated and weak that they could not return to the village unaided. Fasting was urged upon Mandan boys at maturity, but not required of them as among many tribes. Those making this sacrifice ranged from the youth of fourteen, who felt the first promptings of approaching manhood and the desire to go on the war-path, to the gray old patriarch, bent and maimed, who slowly wended his way to the high places that he might once more humble himself in supplication. It was thought, however, that men of youthful vigor, not yet hardened in life's ways, experienced the most potent visions.

Medicine practices of the Mandan were similar to those of the Hidatsa,[7] and the information here recorded may be considered as applying to both tribes. As among so many Indians, medicine-power

[7] See Volume IV - The Hidatsa

was obtained either in visions produced by fasting or through purchase. The more medicine a man could obtain the greater his spiritual power was supposed to be. Each particular medicine was accompanied with certain songs pertaining to it, and in purchasing medicine the songs became the property of the new owner jointly with their original possessor.

Broken Axe, a celebrated Mandan medicine-man, acquired his medicine by killing a bear in a hand-to-hand encounter; as he had vanquished the bear in this way, he had imbibed the power of the animal and consequently became a Bear medicine-man. It is told of the great Mandan chief Four Bears that he went out to fast by the burial scaffold of an Apsaroke, and after many days the spirit of the dead warrior appeared, gave his medicine-power to the faster, and told him how to use it. Following this, and before the chief had told of his new power, there came a great drought, and Four Bears went to his housetop, beat his drum, and called out in Apsaroke words, "Father, come this way! Help my people!" Soon a black cloud came toward the village, and the gardens were drenched with rain.

The treatment of disease among the Mandan was usually a four-day performance in which blowing of the breath and singing formed an important part. Such plants as they employed were gathered secretly in the spring, and were prepared and used according to the instructions of the tutelary spirit of the medicine-man giving the treatment. Medicine paraphernalia, including the medicine-bag containing herbs tied up in little bunches, was kept on a small scaffold in the honor place at the rear of the medicine-man's lodge, making this part of the house sacred. The skin of the medicine animal was spread over the scaffold in a lifelike position, and under it were the medicine-bag, eagle-feathers, and rattle. Anyone seeking aid of a medicine-man would first fill a pipe, take it reverently to his lodge, and lay it on the ground in front of the scaffold. The healer's acceptance of the case was indicated by his smoking the pipe.

Three methods of disposing of the dead were in vogue among the Mandan: on a scaffold, in the ground, or within a cairn. The body of a man of prominence was placed on a platform, unless before death he had requested that his remains be disposed otherwise; while ordinary men and women, unless their dying wish had been that their bodies be deposited on a scaffold, and children, except in cases of special favorites, were buried in shallow graves. Sometimes a man would ask

that his remains repose in a cairn; in this event his body was wrapped in skins from head to foot and placed in a sitting posture with stones piled completely about him save for a small opening about his face, so that his spirit might look down from the hill over the earth where he had lived. A corpse buried in the ground was likewise placed in a sitting posture, leaning slightly back; it was covered first with poles, then with grass, and finally with earth, and in all cases the body faced the west.

A man was prepared for his final resting-place by a clanswoman of his father, who combed his hair, washed and painted his face, and dressed him in his best garments. All this was done, if possible, shortly before the end came, the belief being that the soul entered the next world clothed as was the body at the time of death. Before his death or immediately thereafter, the woman, with the assistance of her sister or husband, erected the scaffold (if the remains were to be placed on one), which was a little higher than a man's head. After death had come she wrapped the body completely in skins and tied them, and a few hours later it was carried out to the scaffold, where she addressed its spirit:

"You have gone to the Spirit-land. While you were here you did not have all the good-fortune that should have been yours, so what you did not have, leave to us. Do not look back."

Each day for four days the relatives went out and sat under the scaffold, weeping. Sometimes they killed a horse and laid the weapons of the deceased beside the body, but this was not a general custom. They did not furnish food and drink for the departing spirit.

Death was attended with violent mourning, which extended to personal torture, such as gashing the body or cutting off the first joint of the little finger on the hand not used in shooting the bow.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CEREMONIES

In considering the religious concepts of the Mandan, the word *hopíni* and its derivative *mahópini'* should be first understood. The former is analogous to the Lakota *waká*^{n,} "mysterious," and the latter is the substantive derived from the adjective, equivalent to the Lakota *tákuwaká*^{n} "something mysterious."[8] All creatures, spirits, objects,

[8] See Volume III – The Teton Sioux

and phenomena possessing, or supposedly possessing, hopíni or inexplicable, power, are called *mahópini,* and thus are personified and deified. All animals and birds, and even inanimate objects, are *hopíni,* and can transfer their spirit-power to men. In supplications the individual spirits may be addressed as *mahópini,* but usually the suppliant seems to consider that he is calling upon all the forces of the infinite.

Númak-máhana, One (solitary) Man, is the principal myth-character, and according to Mandan legend the creator of mankind. *Kínumakshi,* He Becomes Chief, is scarcely less important, and next in order is *Hóĭ*^{n}*tahe.* These three were probably men of the Mandan tribe, who from great personal deeds have with the passing of time become deified: a view borne out by the fact that one of the clans is still designated as that to which Númak-máhana belonged. Other characters of mythology are Old Woman Who Never Dies, the spirit of plant life, corresponding to a like character in Hidatsa lore; the *Sun, Máha*^{n}*p-mináki;* the Moon, *Ishtú*^{n}*mináki;* and Thunder, *Htáte.*

The soul is *ínuhike,* and is identified with the human shadow. The word itself does not mean "shadow," but *ínuhike* has grown to be identified with the shadow of man. The human being has four shadows, all souls, one black, two lighter, and one almost indistinguishable, so transparent is it. This faint shadow leaves the body at death, the others remaining, "for the body still casts a shadow, but not the light one."

The soul-shadow is now *manúhik.* The spirit hovers about its earthly home for four days, then journeys by underground ways to a spirit-world and a spirit-life similar to that described by the Hidatsa.

THE SACRED TURTLES

As the Calf Pipe is the object of greatest veneration to the Lakota, so with the Mandan are the three sacred Turtle-drums. Their antiquity is such that only the origin myth of the people can afford a glimpse of their acquisition. Scattered Corn Woman, *Wópi*^{n}*te,* is now the keeper of one of these sacred objects. Her father, Moves Slowly, occupied this office for many years, and to aid his memory in retaining the names of the thirty-four who preceded him as custodians of this particular one he improvised a song in which their names were interwoven. *Wópi*^{n}*te*, unfortunately, did not learn the song perfectly and could recall only twenty-three of the names, which follow:

1 Hóïⁿtahe

2 Ohtáⁿ-ókidhe, Cedar Plume

3 Aⁿkít-mahúdhe, Shoulder Bone

4 Medhók-áikiha-maké, Bull Lying On Top

5 Pá-íⁿna'ne, Head Rattle

6 _____

7 Widhátaⁿ-pa, Enemy Head

8 Ohkiⁿ-hedhe, Foolish Doer

9 Madhúkidhíké, Air Quivering With Heat

10 _____

11 Ókahíⁿhka, Cooking Pot

12 Kó-shi-nade, Good Gourd Rattle

13 _____

14 _____

15 _____

16 Hóhteke (another name for Númak-máhana)

17 Músta-mahe, Garden Tree

18 _____

19 Pá-mahúdhe, Head Bones

20 Widhátan-kitádhe, Looks For Enemy

21 _____

22 Shehék, Coyote

23 Kéka-kshuke, Slim Raven

24 _____

25 Máhin-kédhe, Bloody Knife

26 _____

27 Ohtándhe, Cedars

28 _____

29 Madhúkidhi-hédhe, Laid In A Row

30 _____

31 Húdhe-só'ke, Strong Leg-bones

32 Medhók-nasúska, Left-hand Bull

33 Hákohe, Scabby

34 Páhu-hote, Gray Nose (a kind of bird).

Hákohe, the thirty-third keeper, the brother of Moves Slowly, died during the smallpox plague of 1837, and, no adult male member of the family surviving, Gray Nose kept the drum until Moves Slowly grew to manhood. The latter was seventeen years of age at the time of the epidemic, and married at twenty; but Wópiⁿte does not know when he took possession of the Turtle. While there is lack of certainty on the part of Scattered Corn Woman respecting the names of eleven of the custodians, and even of some of those recorded above, she is very positive as to their number — thirty-six, including herself. Furthermore, a pictographic memorandum kept by her father gives a symbol for each of the keepers and confirms her statement as to the number. To allow a reasonable average period for each guardian to have kept this Turtle-drum gives it a seemingly impossible antiquity. However, the material is worthy of record even if necessarily viewed with some

skepticism, and it is more than unfortunate that the subject could not have been investigated thoroughly during the lifetime of Moves Slowly.

According to tradition, the Turtle that became angry and made his escape went into the river when the tribe was living below the Cannon-ball. That was their home long before the Mídhokats, the ancestors of the Hidatsa, came to the Missouri. This in itself makes the Turtle-drums centuries old, and Scattered Corn Woman considered the time when this one "escaped" as not very remote compared with the time the objects had been in their possession, though she could not name the keeper of that period. However, she was certain that her father knew. When asked how it was that Catlin had four turtles in his picture of the *Okípe* lodge, she said, "Perhaps some one told him about the fourth and he made them that way in his picture." Moves Slowly was thirteen years of age at the time Catlin's picture was made, and it is inconceivable that he could have been ignorant of the number of the Turtle-drums at that time. It is equally inconceivable that one of four objects so sacred as these could have disappeared subsequently to so recent a date as 1833 without leaving a thread of tradition that would lead back to historical certainty. Catlin's drawing also portrays the Turtles on their backs, which is contrary to Mandan teachings. Númak-máhana said, "When you become weak in numbers and wish to die together, turn the Turtles on their backs and sing a song, which I will give to you."[9] All this indicates that Catlin drew either from misinformation or from careless observation.

Packs Wolf is the keeper of the other two Turtles, which descended to him through two distinct families. He is also the guardian of practically all the remaining paraphernalia pertaining to the *Okípe* ceremony. The room in which these sacred objects are kept is a part of the log house in which he lives, and the priest insisted that, until the day the writer and his two assistants entered the room, no white man had seen its inner walls. For some days we had had the promise of this privilege, but it was not until we were inside the room and the door locked to prevent intrusion, that we could realize our good fortune. The room was dingy, being lighted by only two small windows. At one side, on a raised platform or table, were the sacred objects buried beneath countless offerings of cloths of many hues. After a short prayer and

[9] This song is still known to the older members of the tribe.

the burning of incense, the priest began to remove the offerings one by one, and soon the two Turtles were exposed to view. They rested side by side on the table, and each was provided with a necklace of ancient, thickly clustered eagle-feathers. After addressing a brief prayer to the Turtles, the priest very slowly and reverently placed them on the floor, then took down a medicine bundle containing the articles traditionally worn and used by Númak-máhana.

When the bundle was opened, the following articles were revealed: a girdle of buffalo-skin from which hung numerous strands of twisted buffalo-hair; a large wooden pipe inlaid with stone; a cimeter-shaped club of ash ornamented on one side with carved figures of the Moon and the Thunderbird, on the other with the Sun and the Morning Star; a stuffed raven; a head-dress of porcupine-hair at the top with jack-rabbit skin hanging down; a collar and anklets of jack-rabbit skin; a bunch of four buffalo-tails wrapped at the upper ends with white buffalo-hair; a buffalo-tail with white fur at the top, used on the end of a staff worn in the hair of Númak-máhana; a set of buffalo-teeth; a strip of skin with raven tail-feathers and white crane-feathers inserted as in the trailer of a war-bonnet; an upright head-dress of matted buffalo-hair, with a small stuffed owl attached. First a photograph was made of the Turtles with their eagle-feather necklaces, and then the unexpected permission was granted to photograph them without the feathers, thus affording an opportunity actually to lay hands on them. The Turtles were found to be made of heavy buffalo-skin, and considering the material used are excellently well formed. Their length is about twenty inches, and the weight probably twenty pounds each. The priests claim for these Turtle-drums great weight because each contains a spirit-buffalo, a belief which they carefully keep alive in the minds of the people by pretending to exert great strength in handling them. Packs Wolf watched closely when a white man's hands were on them, and repeatedly gave the warning, "Do not turn them over; if you do, all the people will die!"

On the table were the eight costumes worn by the Buffalo Dancers participating in O*kipe*. Each consists of a kilt formed of narrow dangling strips of buffalo-skin, and a large piece of buffalo-robe designed to cover the head and back. When this was worn the shaggy hair almost covered the face. Fastened directly in the middle of the back of this cape is a single horn, but there is no horn at the head. Here Catlin made another mistake in depicting the Buffalo Dancers with a pair

of horns on the head of each. The contention might be made that the costumes are not the ones used in O*kipe* when Catlin presumably saw it; but their appearance indicates an age of more than seventy-five years, and the priest insists they are the ones that have always been used. Certainly no one would believe that even during the forty-eight years intervening between Catlin's day and the last observance of O*kipe* (in 1881) the form of the costume could have changed so materially and in such an apparently essential detail. Furthermore, all the old men scoff at the idea that horns were worn on the head-dress. Unfortunately the old skins are badly moth-eaten and are crumbling with age. Only one of them is sufficiently well preserved to be made the subject of photography, and even from that the hair in great part has gone.

The day was spent in the midst of these ancient relics which had played a part in so many a frenziedO*kipe*, and with regret that the time had passed so quickly we reverently lifted the Turtles to their place on the table and saw them again covered from sight.

THE SACRED ENCLOSURE

Scarcely less revered than the Turtles was a structure occupying the centre of the open space in the middle of the village. A myth ascribes its origin to Númak-máhana.[10]

In the ancient times when Númak-máhana, the creator, was still dwelling among the Mandan, the people had a wonderful boat, which moved of itself. It was called *Ídehe,* He Goes. The people would embarkin it, and say, "Ídehe, go!" and the boat would glide away across a certain body of water to the home of another people, where the Mandan obtained a kind of large shell called "the shell that has a noise." These strangers would feast them until many of the visitors died. Númak-máhana, disapproving of this, accompanied them on one of their voyages, disguising himself, and running the long hollow stem of a water-lily through his body. Thus he was able to swallow all the food that was brought, and still call for more when the supply had

[10] This incident is related also by the Hidatsa as a portion of their genesis myth. If the Mandan borrowed it from them, it must have been very long ago, for Lance, born in 1833, declares that when a very small boy he heard his grandfather, Young Grasshopper, then a man of about seventy years, relate the myth as of Mandan origin.

been exhausted, for it passed through without lodging in his stomach. His hosts recognized him as a*mahópini,* and for the time abandoned the effort to kill their visitors. With seeming friendliness they promised to come to the Mandan the next year. Having returned home in safety, Númak-máhana at once planted a cedar post in the ground and painted it red. This, he said, would represent him to the people after his departure. Cedar was chosen because it is chief of all woods, outlasting all others. Around the post in a circle he erected wooden slabs, held together by two hoops of cottonwood saplings, one inside and one outside. "This," said he, "is*minimí'tahhe*[11] and it shall be a breastwork for your protection. When the people from across the water come against you, they may kill some, but never all so long as this stands." In the following year their enemies came against them as expected, and caused a great flood, but the hoops around *minimí-tahhe* prevented the water from rising above them.

The sacred enclosure was used principally as the pivotal point in the dances of O*kípe,* but at any time during the year offerings could be made to it. Any offering so exposed in this shrine could be removed by any member of Númak-máhana's clan, the Mahíkina, who would say, "Númak-máhana, I take what they give you." But if it remained

[11] The meaning of the word *minimí'tahhe* cannot be determined. It is said by one Mandan to be compounded of an obsolete word signifying "surround," and tah, "to bellow," the allusion being to the dancing around it by the bellowing Buffalo Dancers in *Okípe.* This derivation cannot be verified. Catlin called the structure the "big canoe," and evolved a theory that it was typical of the "ark " in which they escaped from the fury of a deluge ; but in this he was undoubtedly wrong. Catlin the more easily fell into error because he had no competent interpreter. James Kipp, acting in that capacity, was a trader, and knew Mandan only as a trader. Asked, without a leading question or a hint of the ulterior object of the inquiry, how much of the Mandan language Kipp was master of, Lance replied: "He knew Mandan well — in his store. But he could not interpret a sacred story or carry on a conversation in Mandan." Lance knew Kipp many years after Catlin's visit, hence his knowledge of the language could certainly have been no better at the time he served as Catlin's interpreter and host. "Big boat" in Mandan is *mináki-hte,* a word sufficiently close to *minimí'tahhe to* confuse a novice in the language, or, if the difference were noted, to lead him to regard it as a more modern form of the latter word. No man or woman of the tribe recognizes any connection, either by etymology or by association, between *minimí'tahhe* and a boat; and only Lance, and he only after repeated questionings, connected it with a deluge. The simple fact seems to be that it originated as an enclosure protecting a sacred cedar post, which at first had no mythic significance more than was attached to the sacred cedar posts planted by various other Siouan tribes.

there over night, it belonged to Númak-máhana , and could never be appropriated.

At the present time, there being no village, *minimí'tahhe* stands near one of the small Mandan communities about five miles west of the agency, south of the river. It consists of a rude palisade, about five feet in height and three feet in diameter, surrounding a red-stained cedar post and decked with a few fluttering offerings of calico.

THE OKÍPE CEREMONY

The four-days religious rite of the Mandan might be, but was not necessarily, at least not in later times, celebrated annually at the season "when the squashes were almost large enough to be eaten." The time is also described as "the longest and hottest day of the year," and it seems probable that originally the ceremony was observed near the summer solstice, when in their more southerly habitat their squashes were maturing, but as they moved ever northward the season of ripening became later, so that O*kípe*[12] did not occur before the beginning of August. The purpose of the ceremony was in general the welfare of the tribe. In particular, they asked for abundant crops, healthy children, numerous buffalo in the vicinity of the villages, and freedom from disease. The prayers, spoken or unexpressed save in thought, were addressed to the various *mahópini,* especially the sun, while individual fasters invoked also their own medicine, their guardian spirits, for success in their love-making or war-making; or if none of the spirits had as yet undertaken their guidance and protection, they sought earnestly for visions in which some mysterious being would appear to them. The desire to demonstrate publicly one's power of endurance, if present at all, was entirely overshadowed by this higher aspiration for communication with the spirit beings.

The performance was instituted each time by some man who, having in four successive dreams heard a voice singing the songs of O*kípe*, knew that the spirits desired, nay commanded, him to make this sacrifice. Failure to obey would have been to court swift retribution, even death, at their hands. Going then at once to one of the custodians

[12] The word okípe is obscure, but it is said to mean 'look like,' or 'effigy,' referring to the masked dancers. The full ceremony was last observed in 1881, but a performance lacking the features of torture was held in 1889.

of the Turtles the suppliant made known what had come to him, and at the other's bidding engaged the village herald to announce that night to the people that in the following summer he would be *Okípe-kíseka,* Okípe Maker.

This usually occurred in the winter, and throughout the remainder of that season and the following spring the Okípe Maker collected as much property as possible, to be given away during the ceremony. Each lodge was visited by him and a few friends, and in response to the laying of a pipe and a buffalo-beard on the floor within the four centre-posts, each head of a family brought out some gift of value. In butchering after a hunt, a prospective Okípe Maker was not permitted to touch the entrails of the buffalo, for that would have brought a disastrous epidemic. Further to guard the health of the people he every morning entered the sweat-lodge, and at intervals he fasted, going alone into the hills for days at a time.

At the proper season, young men, summoned by the herald, cleaned the medicine-lodge thoroughly inside and out, and gave the roof a fresh covering of earth. This, the *tí-ta,* or "different lodge," was a large structure of the ordinary type in every point except that in the front it was flattened as though a small segment of the circle had been cut off. The entrance, facing the southwest, is always described by the old men as being toward the south.

Four men, known to have had prophetic dreams, painted around each centre-post, at the height of about eight feet, a band some four inches wide, the two posts on the west side being marked with charcoal, the other two with red earth paint. This is said to have symbolized the conception that the structure was supported by the influence of these four men with the spirits. Thus prepared, the *tí-ta* was called *tí-hopíni,* house of mystery. From now until the close of the ceremony no woman was permitted to approach it.

At sunset the Maker entered. At the same time through all the devious ways of the village went the headmen of the tribal divisions, calling aloud, urging their young men to enter *tí-hopíni* and there fast to induce visions of the spirits. Presently, with no previous declaration of their intentions, the devotees began to pass silently under the covered entry-way, either singly or in small groups, each with his medicine bundle, or, if he had none, with that of some older relative, and bearing a bleached buffalo-skull for his pillow, an armful of sage for his bed. Once inside they stationed themselves in a circle near the wall,

beginning at the west of the door, members of the Tamísik phratry on that side of the lodge, and those of the Sí-pu^{n}shka on the east, an order observed as well by all others that entered the house of mystery. Each hung his shield overhead and his medicine to a rafter or to a pole planted in front of him, and then proceeded to smear himself from head to foot with white clay. Opposite the door and behind the centre-posts in the place of honor sat the Maker. Over his head hung a basket filled with balls of corn pemmican; on them lay a pipe. In front of him, but to his right, near one of the posts, was a scaffold of slender sticks on which reposed the articles supposed to have been worn by Númak-máhana . The Maker's medicine swung suspended from a pole.

As darkness settled, one who had formerly been *Okípe-kíseka* carried in and deposited in front of the first faster west of the entrance an uncured buffalo-hide rolled into a cylinder and tied near each end with a twisted rope of grass. This drum symbolized and took the place of the three Turtles on the first night and day of the ceremony. Three of the men who had inherited or purchased the right to sing the Okípe songs sat down before it. Their entire bodies were painted red; a single tuft of sage was fastened in their hair; and about wrists, elbows, knees, and ankles were worn amulets to ward off the sickness that else would have been incurred by breathing the dust raised by the dancers. Each had a handful of sage with which to wipe the perspiration from his face. Two young men chosen from the spectators, who by now had gathered in the lodge, stood beside the singers, each with a rawhide rattle in his hand, and the Maker laid in front of the roll of rawhide a filled pipe and a ball of pemmican.

At the conclusion of four songs, or sometimes five, the two youths divided the pemmican while the singers smoked the pipe. Their leader then called out, *Hóï^{n}tahe, íhi^{n}ke kédehosh! Kamíseka, íhi^{n}ke kédehosh*! — "Hóï^{n}tahe, the pipe is going! Maker, the pipe is going!" He who personated Hóï^{n}tahe, sitting on the Maker's right, bade him "Go and get the pipe!" The latter immediately came forward, drew both hands slowly down the length of the pipe, symbolically receiving power from the leader of the singers, who held it in his hands. Returning to his station he refilled it and placed it on a scaffold where lay the buffalo-skin costumes to be used by the dancers. The three singers filled and smoked their own pipe, a pipe of black stone, for they could not use the red stone since it was believed to be blood, — and their leader cried,*Númak-máhana, pke máwahadhata*! — "Númak-máhana, move

the Turtle!" At that the one representing the mythic creator — there were more than one possessing that right, either from inheritance or through purchase, but only one officiated in each observance of O*kipe* — moved the raw-hide farther to the left, and the singers followed.

In the meantime the devotees stood, sat, or lounged in their places, some silent and thoughtful, others uttering heartrending sobs and cries of anguish as they stretched forth open hands to the medicine bundles and besought the mysterious powers above to take pity on them.

Again two youths were summoned from the crowd to use the rattles; the Maker laid pipe and food before the drum, and the singing started anew. Thus the drum was moved forward, stopping at different points in front of the votaries, until it reached the spot at the eastern side of the door. The singing continued until about midnight, or until the fasters had ceased to cry aloud to the spirits; and frequently this was not long before dawn.

At sunrise three men chosen by Númak-máhana from those qualified to perform the function carried out the rawhide roll and deposited it near *minimí'tahhe,* on the side toward the lodge. Each with his drumstick sat beside it, and two youths, also selected by Númak-máhana, took their places with the rattles. Then appeared the Maker wearing an apron of antelope-skin, which fell from waist to ankles, and a head-covering of old buffalo-hair, which hung down over his eyes save when he raised it with his hand to see his way before him. Laying the customary pipe and pemmican in front of the singers, he passed around*minimí'tahhe* on the west, and at the south side stood upon a buffalo-skull, which he himself had placed there, clutching the slabs of the sacred enclosure and pressing his face against it, while he wept loudly and sorrowfully in supplication to the spirits. At the same instant the singing and the beating of the drum began, and two fasters appeared wrapped close, body and head, in their shaggy buffalo-robes. One to the east, the other to the west, they moved, dancing in a large circle to the rear of*minimí'tahhe;* meeting, they advanced together rhythmically back of the crying Maker, then separating they stood facing the sacred enclosure, but still dancing, one at the northeast, the other at the northwest corner. Another pair followed in the same manner and took their places beside the first two; and thus the fasters continued until all stood there in two rows about *minimí'tahhe,* extending from the Maker to the singers. Then, "All are out!" shouted Númak-máhana , and as the wild chanting of another song filled the

air the fasters danced backward and about without regular order. As the song approached its end they moved gradually toward the covered entry-way of the medicine-lodge, forming there in two rows facing each other and extending outward parallel with the walls of the passage-way. Their robes, supported on arms partly outstretched, created two black unbroken walls between which passed the singers, the Maker, and the personators of myth-characters. Then the fasters themselves withdrew into the lodge.

At noon, and again just before sunset, the dance was repeated. When the participants had finally retired, the women in response to the bidding of Númak-máhana, whose duty it was to keep the fire blazing at night, gathered great fagots of willows and deposited them outside the door, whence young men removed them and piled them on each side of the entrance, observing the rule that each phratry had its own side of the lodge.

Númak-máhana for the first time arrayed himself in the costume that all this time had been reposing on its scaffold. His body was painted red, and a wolf-skin half covered his shoulders; on his hair was perched a stuffed raven, and upright at the back of his head appeared a short rod from which depended a row of raven and white crane feathers inserted into a narrow strip of skin, and from whose tip curved a short buffalo-tail. A wide band of brown buffalo-hair covering his forehead, collar and anklets of jack-rabbit skin, and a kilt of twisted strands of buffalo-hair completed his dress. In the crook of his left arm rested a large pipe of wood inlaid with stone, and his right hand gripped a sword-shaped club of ash, on one side of which appeared the carved images of the Moon and the Thunderbird, on the other of the Sun and the Morning Star. Thus accoutred, a striking figure, he visited the lodges of the three custodians of the Turtles and carried these sacred effigies one by one into the ceremonial lodge, making a pretence of exerting great strength in moving the Turtles and their imprisoned spirit-buffalo. Taking their place beside the Turtle-drums, the three singers who had performed on the preceding night painted them with red and added offerings of eagle-feathers to the thick clusters that already were massed around their necks. The ceremony progressed as on the first night, the singers and the wielders of the rattles moving by degrees around the lodge, following the Turtles as they were carried forward by Númak-máhana and two youthful assistants, who each time in single file bore them completely around the lodge, past the spot where sat the singers, to

their new position. As on the first night the fasters cried out pitifully their petitions to the mysteries.

Early in the morning of the second day, while young men were bringing from the lowlands huge armfuls of green willow branches to be used in dressing the Buffalo Dancers, Númak-mihana came forth apparelled in the full costume of his prototype, and as he went about distributing small bits of a mixture of corn, beans, squash, and sunflower seeds, presents given as offerings to the real Númak-máhana were showered upon him from every side. Reëntering the lodge, he was addressed by the leader of the singers:

"Friend, you have been roaming about the country. What have you seen?"

"Many buffalo are coming," he made answer; "game is abundant, and so are the crops. I have seen many scalps waving above the village, and the people dancing joyfully."

In the meantime eight men, who had now entered the lodge with the intention of participating in the eight Buffalo Dances to be performed on this day, were being painted by men of their own selection. As they stood with arms half outstretched at the sides, holding their bodies rigid and motionless by means of a staff in each hand, they were painted with a black stripe an inch and a half wide down the middle of the chest, which was then completely enclosed in black by a line drawn across it just below the clavicle, a second across the abdomen, and another down each side of the chest. The space thus circumscribed was painted red, but across the lower half ran three bars of white clay. The remainder of the upper part of the body was black, as were also the neck, upper arms, wrists, hands, thighs, ankles, and feet. Forearms and calves were marked with longitudinal lines of alternate red and white. From a platform in the back of the lodge were taken the costumes of the Buffalo Dancers, each of whom now donned anklets of thick buffalo-hair, and a belt from which hung a knee-length kilt consisting of ribbons of buffalo skin. A short buffalo-robe was thrown over the dancer's back and head, the long black hair failing over his face and leaving only mouth and chin exposed. At the back was a single buffalo-horn pointing upward, and under the thongs that fastened it to the mask were thrust numerous green willow branches from above and below, until a great bushy sheaf of them projected above the dancer's head and another swept the ground. Each thumb passed through a hole at the edge of the skin, and the hands were held out on a level with

the shoulders, while the elbows remained bent, producing the effect of bat's wings.

Númak-máhana and his two aids placed the Turtles at the north side of *minimí'tahhe,* facing the ceremonial lodge; the Maker laid pipe and pemmican before them, took his position on the buffalo-skull, and began to wail; drums beat and singers chanted shrilly, when suddenly appeared two of the masked dancers. With upper bodies bent to a horizontal position they moved with a forcible, yet not rapid, skipping step around opposite sides of the sacred enclosure to the south side, where they crossed and danced forward to the Maker. With scarcely an interval came a second pair dancing up between the first two, who spread apart to accommodate the newcomers, and when the two remaining couples had joined them the entire line danced without leaving its position. While the singing continued they moved forward, still keeping the dance-step, and formed an arch about the Turtles, its base resting upon *minimí'tahhe* and its crown toward the lodge. Another song was begun, and they broke ranks, dancing at will about the open space, spreading their arms and exhibiting the painting on their breasts. Finally they formed in two lines outward from the lodge door, and the various actors in the drama retired. Eight times during the day the Buffalo Dance was performed without variation.

The third night of the ceremony was marked by the selection of men to personate in the dances of the following day various animals such as bear, skunk, eagle, hawk, snake, and antelope, and two stars, two women, and the myth-character *Óhki"hedhe,* Foolish Doer. Númak-mihana, walking about with his great pipe in front of the spectators, would call out:

"I want a man to be Bear!"

Someone to whom the bear was medicine would respond:

"Bring it here!"

He received the pipe, and while he clasped it in his hands Númakmáhana spoke aloud, promising him many good things from the spirits.

"What you give, I gain," said the other, handing back the pipe.

Any other man who possessed the bear-medicine and wished to participate in the morrow's dance expressed his desire in the same way. Youths without medicine engaged to play the part of antelope. In the end Númak-máhana lighted the pipe and passed it among those who had accepted parts, holding it for each to puff. Then the spectators

filed out, and the usual order of singing was observed.

The next morning fresh willows were gathered for the eight new Buffalo Dancers, and those who were to represent animals assembled in the ceremonial lodge, characteristically dressed and painted. A pair of Buffalo Dancers at each end of the lodge danced to the rhythm of a song and the beating of the Turtle-drums; the two couples approached each other, passed, turned, and passed again, all the while making gestures with body and head imitative of the buffalo. At the fourth and final repetition of the song they simulated a fight between buffalo bulls. Then in their order came all the other animal dancers, each kind stepping to the music of its own song and fighting in characteristic manner during the last repetition of it.

At about this time the people caught sight of a solitary figure approaching the village in a zigzag line. Instantly all was confusion and excitement. As he came nearer it could be seen that his body was black. About his hideous mouth was a square of white, and a wooden ring wrapped with corn-husks was held in place over each eye by a cord passing back of the head. A disc of red on his chest represented the sun, and a red crescent between his shoulders the new moon. The side of each knee and elbow was marked with a small round spot of red surrounded by a narrow line of white, so that his limbs seemed to be pierced with holes. Suspended from a thong about his neck was another corn-husk ring. His head-dress was a close-fitting cap of buffalo-skin, its hair clipped short and painted red, surmounting which like a crest was a black eagle-tail. He carried a long staff whose lower end terminated in an elastic ball of buffalo-hair wrapped in white deerskin, from one side of which streamed long hair as though the ball were an enemy's head. Ever as he ran he pushed his staff before him, the ball skipping and bounding over the ground. Amid the shouting of men and women, the shrill cries of frightened children, and the excited barking of dogs, Óhki^{n}hedhe entered the village and moved about the crowded streets, vaulting with his staff over anyone too slow in making way for him. The women fled from his approach in well-feigned terror. Now and again offerings were thrown on the ground before him, when invariably he started back in the greatest surprise, then made the sign, "Good!" Two men, who also owned the right to enact the part of Óhki^{n}hedhe followed him and collected these presents, which later were divided among the three. The clown directed his apparently aimless course into the ceremonial lodge, just in time to perform his

dance after the other maskers had finished theirs.

When the Turtles had been carried out, and the Maker had taken his place at the farther side of *minimí'tahhe,* the fasters, painted yellow and wearing aprons of sage, marched forth in single file, and side by side, with the space of almost two feet between each two, they lay face downward on the ground back of the Maker, their heads toward the west. In pairs the Buffalo danced out, passed around *minimí'tahhe,* and leaped over the fasters, stepping between each two. They were followed by the otheranimal dancers, and lastly by Óhki^{n}hedhe; then all disposed themselves in order around the sacred cedar, facing it, a pair of Buffalo Dancers at each semi-cardinal point and the others between them. The circle moved back, then dispersed, and in the irregular dance that followed each mimicked the actions of the creature he represented. Women were constantly offering food to the growling, body-swaying Bears, but it was as constantly snatched up by the Eagles, who in turn were pursued and deprived of their booty by a horde of Antelope. The clown, as the dance progressed, encountered the two maskers personating women. He at once followed the one of grave and sedate manner, saying by signs that he loved her, and offering her his corn-husk neck-ornament. But she was blind to his entreaties, and he turned his attention to the other, who, more frivolous and foolish, was all smiles and encouragement, and accepted his attentions. The incident was intended to furnish a lesson in morals for maid and matron. Altogether there was a deal of laughter and merrymaking.

The animal dancers and Óhki^{n}hedhe participated in the first four of the twelve Buffalo Dances occurring on this third day. Entering the lodge at the conclusion of the fourth dance the clown held his staff crosswise, and of course when it came in contact with the door-posts it snapped — a sign that his part in the ceremony was finished. His two assistants rolled up acalf-skin and fastened on it the corn-husk rings and cap of Óhki^{n}hedhe, making an effigy which the donor of the skin elevated on a tall pole. The clown himself, closely wrapped in a buffalo-skin, retired to a secluded spot on the river-bank to remove his paint, while the other maskers went in a body to the customary bathing pool. The two who played the part of stars, however, continued to dance, and during the events of the succeeding night they stood motionless behind the Maker's seat until dawn.

Only in the first dance did the fasters assume their prostrate position behind *minimí'tahhe;* at other times they remained in the lodge or sat

on the roof watching the dancers. Those who wished to do so were permitted to withdraw from further participation at the end of the third day, whether because they had experienced a vision or because they had become disheartened in their quest. As a rule, those who intended to submit their bodies to torture waited until the fourth day; but if any chose to do so before retiring on the third day, he had that privilege. One of his clansmen, called from the assembly, with thumb and forefinger raised the flesh on the breasts or shoulders and pushed through it a knife with a nicked edge, cutting through the outer edge of the muscles. Through each of the two slits was pressed a stout skewer, over which was fastened a loop in the end of a rawhide rope, and the line running over a roof-timber of the entry-way was drawn taut until the devotee hung free of the ground. At the conclusion of the dance the eight Buffalo Dancers jostled roughly against the swinging body as they withdrew into the lodge. After a brief interval, long enough only to produce unconsciousness, the faster was lowered to the ground.

The proceedings of the fourth night were a repetition of those of the second.

On the final day the Buffalo Dancers numbered but four, all men of unusually powerful physique. Except for the addition of a black streak across the face below the mouth, and a line of black down the nose and each cheek, they were painted and garbed exactly as the eight had been on the preceding day. A strong leafy hoop about five inches in diameter, made of intertwined willows, was hung over the horn at the back of their buffalo-skin capes. Frequently while being painted they would fall as if stricken by some mysterious power. In the meantime, the younger men of the village had painted themselves after their individual custom, and they now entered the lodge, each with his hoop of willow and a willow rod to which several sunflower stalks had been tied. After a preliminary dance by the four Buffalo Dancers, they and the other participants, excepting the fasters, passed outside for the Buffalo Dance, which was performed sixteen times in the course of the day.[13]

In the interval before the last appearance of the dancers, those fasters who wished to undergo further ordeal in their effort to communicate with the spirits were pierced through their breasts or back of their shoulders and suspended from the roof, while from other slits in the

[13] In later years this number was usually lessened.

arms at shoulder and elbow, and in the legs at hip and knee, were hung shield, robe, medicine bundle, and buffalo-skulls. Weakened as they were by long fasting, oblivion came quickly, and they were let down to the ground. Outside, the four Buffalo Dancers were playing their parts at the semi-cardinal points. Unhampered now by the capes of buffalo-skin, they and the young men by grasping the willow hoops formed in a circle around *minimí'tahhe,* and as they swung madly around the sacred cedar post the fasters were led out, freed of the skewers that had pierced their breasts, but not of the objects that hung from their other wounds. Two clansmen or friends were selected for each devotee, who, laying hold of their willow hoops, ran between them about the sacred enclosure, faster and faster. Weak and faint he soon lost his feet, but hanging to the hoops with the grip of death he was dragged headlong at a rapid pace round and round the circle, until his encumbrances were left behind, torn from the flesh, and he lay unconscious ready to receive the revelations of the spirits. All this was to the accompaniment of the wildest singing, during which Hóï^{n}tahe, holding a bundle of a hundred sticks, dropped them slowly to the ground, one by one, and with the falling of the last the singing and the dragging of the votaries ceased. The four dancers gathered around the Turtles, and as the voices of the singers rose once more, everyone threw his hoop into the air with a shout. The Buffalo Dancers took their places at the entrance of the lodge, and in the usual order the performers passed in between them.

The fasters, emaciated and bloody, resumed their position around the wall, and to those on the side of the Tamísik phratry one of the singers gave a bit of pemmican, which they rubbed on their bodies; while the Sípu^{n}shka were commanded to wash their persons with masticated leaves. The Buffalo Dancers repaired to an unfrequented spot on the river-bank to bathe; the singers carried the sacred Turtles into a sweat-lodge, and the fasters sought their homes, to be washed and fed.

MYTHOLOGY

GENESIS MYTH

A man appeared running on the earth. It yielded beneath his feet, and he went quickly, never walking, in order to avoid breaking through

the crust. That was Númak-máhana, One Man. About his shoulders hung the skin of a gray wolf, and his moccasins and anklets were of jack-rabbit skin. On his back, inside the robe and extending above his head, was a staff decorated with raven-wings and an eagle-feather, and in the crook of his left arm he carried a pipe.

As he looked at the earth, he thought: "This is not good. The earth is not solid to walk on. I see nothing anywhere except myself. Whence came I?" Looking behind him he saw his tracks, and thought, "Perhaps if I go back I may see something and learn whence I came." So he went back and at last came to a clump of weeds, and crawling up one of the stalks was a very large grasshopper, one which had not wings large enough to enable him to fly. He stood looking at the weeds and the grasshopper, and thought, "I wonder which one of you is my mother?" But he did not speak.

He turned away and hurried on, and after a while met another *man, Ki-numakshi,* He Becomes Chief.

"Ho, Younger Brother!" was his greeting.

"This is the first time I have been called Younger Brother," responded Ki-numakshi. "It seems to me that I should be called Elder Brother."

Then followed a dispute as to which should have the honor of being Elder Brother.

"Let us stand here," said Ki-numakshi; "the one who lasts the longer shall be Elder Brother."

"No, my Little Brother," spoke Númak-mihana, "that would not be fair, since I am so much stronger than you."

"I know you are strong, but we will decide it that way," answered the other.

So Númak-máhana took his staff in his hand, made three motions toward the earth, and then thrust it deep in the ground, saying, "This will stand for me."

Ki-numakshi shook himself and became a sleek, finely formed coyote, which, after turning around four times as if making a bed, lay down beside the pole.

Númak-máhana went away, looking thoughtfully at the earth and considering its unfinished condition. In the course of time he forgot all about Ki-numakshi, but one day, longing for a companion, he remembered, and his heart was sad that he had not made a friend of him. "Now," he said, he is dead. But it was not my fault, for he said he was Elder Brother. I shall go back to the place and see what is there."

He found only a pile of whitened bones to remind him of the coyote, and his staff had rotted half away. Again he went wandering away over the world, and after a long time returned once more. This time there was no trace of the coyote, but over the spot where the bones had lain a dark patch of grass was growing thickly. His staff had rotted away until only a stub was left.

He said to himself, sorrowfully, "Well, now you see! You would be Elder Brother, and now you are dead!" He pulled up the rotting staff, and it at once became as it was in the beginning. At the same instant there appeared standing before him a sleek coyote, which immediately became a man.

"Now you see that I am the elder," he cried, exulting over Númak-máhana, who was compelled to yield him the honor of being Elder Brother.

They separated, and after a long time met again in the east where the yielding sand of the earth was bordered by water.

"Elder Brother," said Númak máhana, "let us make this earth good with rivers, lakes, springs, hills, and trees."

"I have just found that thought. Let us do this," was the answer. So Númak-máhana stretched forth his staff and there was the river flowing into the great water. Then he said:

"Elder Brother, you go north of the river and I shall work on the south, and let us make a good land." So it was divided between them.

When their labors were finished, Númak-máhana went to see what Ki-numakshi had done, and was displeased with the flat unbroken surface of the land to the north.

"It is just the way I wanted it," declared its maker; "it is smooth and easy to walk on." He then returned with Númak-máhana to the south and was greatly pleased with the varied appearance of the country, its streams and lakes, green hills, and rolling prairies.

Again they separated. As he went, Númak-máhana looked at himself and wondered about his origin and why he was carrying the pipe and staff. Soon he came upon a Buffalo Bull lying on the ground.

"Why do you lie there, brother?" he asked.

"I do not know," was the answer; "I eat this grass, but I do not know who made me. What is that you are carrying?"

"I do not know," said Númak-máhana; "there is a hole, but nothing to put into it."

Said Buffalo, "I will make you something to put into it."

So he pawed the earth and made a little soft wallow. Then he told Númak-máhana to go away and to return when he heard the earth rumbling. Númak-máhana departed, and after a time heard the earth rumbling and felt it shake beneath his feet. "What is that for?" he asked of himself. He pondered long, and when he remembered what Buffalo had told him, he returned. There in the wallow he saw a fine growth of beautiful plants in bloom; butterflies were fluttering about and alighting on the blossoms. That was tobacco.

Buffalo Bull said, "Pick a handful of these leaves and blossoms." Then he rolled over, leaving a blanket of his hair on the ground. "Dry your leaves on that," he said.

When the tobacco was dry, Númak-máhana filled his pipe, and asked, "What am I to do with this?"

Buffalo sent him to a certain man whose body was painted red, who told him to return to Buffalo Bull and get a dry buffalo-chip. So he brought the chip and received fire on it. This man was the Fire that burns in the ground of itself.

After Númak-máhana and Buffalo had smoked together, the latter took from himself a paunch, which the wanderer carried away filled with tobacco.

As he ran, he was constantly looking to see if there were others like himself. Not finding any, he decided to make some, and when he came to where the river met the great water, he took the lower rib from each side of his body, and of the right he formed a man, and of the left a woman. Númak-máhana left them for a while, and on his return found a man-child and a woman-child. Raising them in the air and singing, he made them grow at once to maturity, and bade them mate. Thrice more was this repeated, until at length there were five pairs of human beings. These lived together in one village, and were the first Mandan.

Númak-mfihana went away, promising to return. After many years he came back and found the valley crowded with lodges, so that the air was filled with the smoke of the fires as if the earth were covered with a fog. He was surprised to see what he had accomplished. A second time he went away, travelling over the earth, and again remembering his people he returned and saw that there had been another great increase. The lodges could not be counted. He thought it best to separate them into groups, each with its chiefs, and he bade each live in a village of his own. Then he went away once more, never walking but always

running.

After many years he returned again and decided to be born as a Mandan. First he looked about through the villages, and beginning at the east found the people frivolous and foolish, so he would not be one of them. In the next village the women were continually looking out for men. In the fifth, the largest, he found only good people; they were the Mahíkina. He chose a beautiful young woman to be his mother, and transforming himself into a dead Buffalo with its side torn open, came floating down the river. The girl was in the garden with her mother, and going to get a drink, she saw the carcass of the Buffalo coming down the river, and rushing into the water she pulled it ashore. The kidney-fat was exposed, and she ate of it. Then she went to call her mother to help bring the animal out of the water, but when they arrived at the place where the carcass had been tied to the willows, it was gone.

In a short while it was noticed that the girl was to become a mother, and the people all spoke of it, as she had no husband. In due time the child was born, and they wrapped it in deerskin; but it cried continually, until they exchanged the deerskin for buffalo-skin with the hairy side inward. As the child grew into a fine strong boy and played about with the other children, the people almost forgot that he had no father.

One day the chief sat on the housetop scanning the village. The boys were sliding down a hill and into a hollow; but after they had disappeared from his sight he would always see a Buffalo Calf following them. The chief made sure of his sight and called other men to see this thing. Another day he was on the roof and some boys came along and jumped into a hole from which the earth had been taken in repairing the house. Again he noticed a Buffalo Calf among them, and called some men to see. It was Númak-máhana revealing his spirit to the chief. Certain that this boy was a mysterious being, the chief invited him to come to his house and partake of food. After the corn soup was eaten, he ordered the four-kinds mixture[14] to be brought. The boy ate the whole of it, and the people thought, "This is a buffalo turned into a boy;" for the buffalo were very fond of corn. Many times after that the chief asked the boy to visit him, and at length the wonderful youth

[14] Corn, beans, dried squash, and sunflower seeds, all pounded and mixed with buffalo-fat.

began to foretell to him the coming of herds of buffalo. Little by little the people learned of his mysterious power, and when he became a young man it was known that he was Númakmáhana .

There was another being of mysterious power in the same village—a Black Eagle in the form of a man. His body was the darkness. The people called him Hóï^{n}tahe, and he had a following even larger than that of Númak-máhana. One day the people secured a white buffalo-skin, and after much talk it was given to Hóï^{n}tahe. Jealous and angry, Númakmihana prayed to Thunderbird to cause a heavy rain that would wash into the lodge and spoil the skin; and to Sun and Whirlwind to complete the work of destruction by shrivelling and blowing it away. His medicine was strong, and after a pouring rain and a burning sun, the Wind whirled away bull-boats, skins, and corn-scaffolds, and in the midst of great excitement the white robe was seen flying away. The hide came to the ground in the south near another tribe, which had just decided to make a visit to the Mandan. So again the skin was brought to the village of the Mahíkina and given to a follower of Númak-máhana , and thus it came in the end to him.

Hóï^{n}tahe was very angry, and in the winter, after the stores of berries, corn, beans, and squash were nearly exhausted, he took all the living animals into a butte in order to starve Númak-máhana and the people. Thereafter when the people went out hunting they killed nothing. Númak-máhana himself went into the hills and found bones, some of which had marrow in them, and he gave them to his starving people.

One day from the top of a high hill he saw a Raven flapping slowly toward the butte. "That must be the last bird going in," he thought. On other days he saw a White Crane, an Eagle, then a Wolf, a Jack-rabbit, and last, seven Buffalo, all going to the same place. He determined to find out how to get in, and went to the butte, but could see no opening. While looking for the entrance he heard a voice —"Númak-máhana, you seem to have lost your power. That Raven you saw was the raven-wing from your staff. The Crane and the Eagle, too, were your feathers. The Jack-rabbit was the skin from your ankles, and the Wolf your wolf-skin blanket. Pretty soon your pipe will be rolling into the butte, and then your body will follow if you do not do something! Why do you not do something?"

He looked and saw that Field-mouse was speaking. Then he glanced down, and sure enough he had nothing left but his pipe. Field-mouse

then told him he must make peace in some way with Hóï^{n}tahe, and in order to do so he must get into the butte. The only way was to change himself into a large Jack-rabbit, for the Jack-rabbits came out every day to eat cactus, and at dusk went back. So he did as Field-mouse told him, and went to the butte, but all the animals were inside. He asked to be admitted, but Hóï^{n}tahe cried:

"No! Go away; you are Númak-máhana, and I know it!

"No, no," said Númak-máhana, "I am Jack-rabbit. Ask someone in there."

So the question was asked, and Field-mouse said, "We are not yet all here. The Jack-rabbit that tied the eagle-feather to the staff of Númak-mihana is not in. That must be the one out there."

Then having assumed the shape of a Jack-rabbit, he was admitted. The butte was full of animals, and in the midst of them sat Hóï^{n}tahe, wrapped in a thick-haired buffalo-robe. His eyes flashed fire. Númakmáhana became a Spider and crawled to the top of the cave, and from there he watched Hóï^{n}tahe and his animal people making medicine. In the morning when the Jack-rabbits went out he returned to the village.

That night he called all the people into one house, and in the middle placed a young man who looked like Hóï^{n}tahe. In each eye of the man he put a Firefly. A great fire was lighted, and they made medicine as those in the butte had done. When the animals heard the loud singing and saw the light of the fire, Marten went down to see what it meant, and returning told Hóï^{n}tahe that the people were using his medicine; but his report was not believed, and the next night Red Fox was sent down. He brought the same news, and on the third night Wildcat looked carefully, came back, and said:

"I saw you, or perhaps it was your son, making medicine. It is not good to remain penned up in this place, for you cannot starve these people when they have your medicine."

Then Hóï^{n}tahe decided to see this thing for himself, and Númakmáhana, knowing that he was coming, told a woman what to do. When Hóï^{n}tahe entered the lodge and saw a man who looked like him and used his medicine, he cried, "Who are you?"

The woman stepped in front of him, and said, "That is our son! When you lived here I was your wife, and that is your son."

Hóï^{n}tahe would not believe her, and told them to replenish the fire, so that he might see if the man was in truth his son. He looked

carefully at him on every side, and said, "Yes, he is like me; but now I must see his eyes. Look at me, boy!"

At that moment some of the people, at the bidding of Númakmáhana, pushed the sticks from the fire, and in the semi-darkness the Fireflies flashed like the eyes of Hóï^{n}tahe himself.

"Númak-máhana," said he, "I see that you are a medicine man. You have done this thing, and now I cannot kill you with hunger, for my son is among your people."

So he returned to the butte and released the animals, and once more the people had food. Hóï^{n}tahe went back to the village of the Mahíkina, and the two men of mystery became friends.

Númak-máhana pondered what he should do to help the people become strong, and he asked Hóï^{n}tahe to aid him in initiating a great dance, which would be called *Okípe*. Eight buffalo masks were made, and for the drum they tried Badger. But one blow of the stick drove his legs into the ground, strong as he was. Then they tried to persuade Beaver to be the drum, but he refused.

"I am soft," he said, "for I live in the mud, and if Badger was not good, I surely would not do."

Next they tried River Turtle and other strong animals, but all these when beaten were driven into the ground. So for a while they gave up the search for a drum and built the dance-lodge. In front of it they placed a round palisade of split slabs, in the middle of which they planted the sacred post of cedar and painted it red. They called that *minimí'tahhe*.

Then Númak-máhana went forth in his search for the drum and came to the great water. Being *mahópini* he walked far out upon it, and in the distance saw what appeared to be a clump of weeds; but going closer he found them to be large oaks growing from the cracks in the shells of four enormous Turtles. These were like islands, and their shells a rocky surface of many colors. He filled his pipe and went toward them, holding it before him.

One of them said, "Why are you holding that pipe in front of you?"

"My friends," he answered, "I am looking for a drum. My people have fine corn and good food, and I wish you to go back with me."

Said they: "We are just like land in this place. We are very heavy. If you can take us, we will go."

Extending his staff, Númak-máhana made the waters walk back,

and stooped to lift the Turtles, but they were far too heavy.

"Look well at our bodies," they told him; "then go back to your people and make of buffalo-skin shells just like ours, and we will go into them."

So Númak-máhana returned, and of the thick neck-skin of two buffalo bulls made four drums, which looked just like the shells of the Turtles. They were hardened over the fire, and the legs and the drumsticks were made of the oak that Númak-máhana had brought from the great water. Then he bade all the people be quiet while the Turtles entered. So they were very still, and as the Turtles were *mahópini* they went in, though nobody saw them. Númak-máhana sewed up the skins, and the Turtles have remained there ever since.

Now that drums were provided, the people were ready for the dance. Númak-máhana directed that for four days the men should neither eat nor drink, and women should not enter the lodge in which they dwelt.

After the ceremony Númak-máhana said that he was going away, for he had lived long with them, eating the same food, drinking the same water, laughing when they laughed, sorrowing when they were troubled. He told them that when they were in want of food, they should take out the Turtle of that season and pray to it, when buffalo would be sent to them; for the buffalo-spirit also was in them. When they were in danger, they should call his name, and help would come; and if ever the Mandan became weak in numbers and wished to die together, they should turn the Turtles on their backs, sing a song, which he gave them, and strike the drums once. He then went away to the south.

The people had been moving up the river and arrived at last near the Cannonball. Here one day they brought out the Turtles to decorate them, as was the custom. Three they adorned with black eagle-feathers, and the fourth with a spotted one. Angry with jealousy the Turtle rushed down to the river, and though many laid hold of him, they were not strong enough to prevent him from disappearing in its depths. In their trouble they called for Númak-máhana , and he came. When he was told of their difficulty he held his staff over the water, which divided and revealed the Turtle lying at the bottom.

"Why did you run away from these people?" he asked.

"They gave the others eagle-feathers, but to me only a snow-birdfeather," was the Turtle's reply.

Númak-máhana explained in vain that the feather they had given him was that of a spotted eagle, which was the best.

"I am here in this water now, and I like it. I will not go back," said the Turtle.

After that the people kept calling on Númak-máhana for help in lesser troubles, and after coming many times, he said, "This time when I go away I shall not return. But when a gentle breeze blows from the south, that will be my spirit."

Afterward, at a time when the people were being overwhelmed by their enemies, many medicine-men tried to call Númak-máhana back, but without success. The only medicine-man who had not tried said he would bring Númak-máhana if the people would first give him presents. So they made a great heap of robes, and on the top spread the skin of a white buffalo calf. The medicine-man sat down on the pile and wrapped the white skin about him, chanting, "I am going, I shall return! I am gone, I have returned!" Then throwing off the skin, he sat there reeking with sweat, as if he had been running a long way. He cried, "He is coming!" The people looked to the south and saw Númak-máhana approaching them, running, as he always did, and the sunlight glinted on his staff.

As he waved the staff toward the enemy, those within reach of its magic power fell dead, and the besieging horde fled from his wrath.

That was the last time Númak-máhana was seen, but he is still present in the south breeze, and he it is that drives away the cold north wind.

THE SON OF FOOLISH DOER

The daughter of a certain honored man was as well known for her modesty and virtue as for her beauty. On a day when all the rest of the family were in the gardens, she sat alone in the lodge basking in the broad shaft of warm sunlight that streamed through the smoke-hole. Suddenly a shadow fell upon her body, and looking quickly upward she beheld far away in the sky next to the sun a black-visaged man, who made signs that he loved her. The girl gave no response, and after another declaration of his love the apparition vanished. This was Óhki^{n}hedhe.[15]

[15] *Óhki^{n}hedhe,* Foolish Doer *(óhka, foolish; i^{n}hedhe,* to act, to do). The anomaly of

In the course of time it was evident that the girl was to become a mother, but to her grieved parents she avowed herself innocent of any wrong. The child was born, but the women present were unable to discover it until, looking about, they saw a diminutive baby, black as a crow, dancing up and down in the middle of the lodge. Then it was known that the young woman was innocent and had been chosen by some spirit to be the mother of his child.

The boy grew rapidly, and constantly moved about with quick, alert actions. Usually he left the lodge by way of the smoke-hole. One day he asked his grandfather to make him some little arrows, and when they were finished he desired a close-fitting cap of clipped buffalo-hair with a black eagle-tail for a crest. Thus equipped he would sally forth into the hills and slay many evil creatures.

At length the spirits united in an effort to destroy this menace totheir peace, and producing a dense fog so that Óhki^{n}hedhe might not see the conflict and come to his son's aid, they approached the village. The youthful *mahópini* assembled the people in one lodge where they would be secure from random missiles, and went forth. Soon Óhki^{n}hedhe's son returned filled with arrows, which he plucked from his body before going back to battle. Three times the champion of the people sought shelter to remove arrows from his wounds, and the last time he informed them that he could not return again, for he was to be killed. And so it proved to be, for he was never seen again.

When the fog rolled away, Óhki^{n}hedhe, looking down from the sky, perceived his son lying dead. With rage in his heart he sought the murderers, and meeting Númak-máhana accused him of the deed. The other, however, denied all knowledge of it, and then, being asked to bury the body, he carried it to a hilltop and with his staff split open a great black bowlder. There in the cleft he laid the body of the son of Óhki^{n}hedhe, and closed the rock, which still is marked with a line of red blood.

THE WINNING OF THE BUFFALO

such a name for a deity suggests that the myth-character was devised to account for the presence of the clown in *Okípe*, q. v, rather than the reverse. The clown is very frequently seen in Indian ceremonies, and usually, if not always, the greatest respect is manifested toward this character.

Looking Down was different from other boys. He never joined in their pastimes, but sat alone on an isolated knoll. His father, Black Eagle, who had assumed human shape, one day soared away never to return; and as the youth, growing day by day more like him, approached manhood, his mother began to cherish for him an affection that had in it something more than a mother's love. The young man noticed this and was displeased.

One day as he sat on his lonely hill he seemed to hear sweet singing wafted faintly from the distance. On the morrow the same sounds came to his ears a little more distinctly. The third day he could distinguish his own name in the song, and on the fourth he plainly heard the voices softly singing:

> "Looking Down, I love you in my heart. I come.
> But your mother looks at you.
> This is the thing that strikes my heart.
> I come from afar, my feet are sore."

Two young women appeared, approaching him on either hand. One placed before him a bowl of pemmican and a pair of moccasins, the other a quantity of corn-mixture and another pair of moccasins. They stood with modest downcast eyes awaiting his acceptance of their gifts. Not to displease either, he placed a bit of each kind of food on his tongue at the same time, and drew on his feet one moccasin of each pair. Then silently he arose and led the women to his lodge.

His mother was sitting as usual in front of the lodge playing with a ball, her face painted gayly. She wore a dress covered with bright quills, for she used all her efforts to appear young and beautiful since she had begun to feel that profane love for her son. The instant she saw him approaching with two strange young women, she withdrew quickly into the lodge, washed off her paint, put on an old greasy dress, and dusted ashes over her hair.

Looking Down entered. "Go and bring in your daughters-in-law, he said.

The mother led them in, and they placed before her presents such as they had given her son. Looking Down was watching her anxiously, fearing she would not have wit to avoid giving offence, but the mother did exactly as he had done, and the two were pleased.

In due time one of the wives of Looking Down apprised him that she was about to become a mother.

"My mother will be with you," said Looking Down.

"No," she responded, "I wish to be alone."

Looking Down made no answer, but he thought it strange that his wife should desire to be alone at such a time, and when she went out and passed around a hill, he followed. A mysterious thing occurred. From his concealment he saw his young wife become suddenly a Buffalo Cow, which immediately gave birth to a Calf. This she transformed into a human baby, and herself into a woman, and with her child wrapped in a calf-skin she returned to the lodge. The young man said nothing, but many thoughts were in his heart.

On the next day he learned that his other wife was to give him a child. She, too, refused assistance, and made her way into the cornfield. Her husband, following secretly, beheld her turn into a tall waving stalk of corn supporting a single large ear, from which soon sprouted a smaller one. This was transformed into a baby, and the stalk into a woman, who wrapped it in the skin of an elk calf and retraced her steps. But Looking Down still maintained his silence.

The boys grew as did other boys. Buffalo Woman made a *skop*[16] to amuse her son. The other boy cried, wishing to play with it, but Calf Boy would not give it up for a moment, nor would his mother interpose. Corn Woman sat there in silence, and after a while she said, "Come here, my son, you shall have something to play with." From a bag she produced a beautiful striped squash, perfectly round. Then it was Calf Boy's turn to cry, and Corn Boy retaliated by keeping jealous hold of the squash. His mother, however, chided him, saying, "Let your brother play with it a while;" but still he would not.

There ensued a bitter dispute in which Buffalo Woman was the aggressor, and each taunted the other with making the people gray, referring to the dust that coated the fatigued worker in the cornfield and the returning buffalo hunter. Corn Woman had somewhat the better of it, for she could boast that corn benefited the people constantly, while buffalo came to the village only occasionally, and in an angry mood Buffalo Woman took her child upon her back and left the village.

When Looking Down discovered one of his wives was gone, he sat down and pondered: if he followed her, the other would be displeased.

[16] The perforated stone disc used in the wheel-and-pole game.

Divining his thoughts, Corn Woman said, "You may go after her, and it will be well, for my heart is good. I will help you at all times."

So for the first time using his inherited mysterious power, he rose high in the air, a wide-winged Black Eagle, and saw far away a Buffalo Cow with a little Calf trotting at her flank. They were travelling through a vast extent of prickly-pear cactus, and he was filled with anxiety for his son, lest the feet of the Calf should be pierced with the thorns. But they passed through in safety, went a little farther, and camped. The Eagle descended, and as a man Looking Down came to the spot, where he found his wife and his son in a new skin lodge. Buffalo-ribs were roasting beside the red coals. The boy ran to him at once and grasped his hands, chattering delightedly:

"Here is my father! Come, father, and eat! Mother, mother, here is my father! How did you come through that bad place? I had a terrible time!"

The father gave an evasive answer, and entered. The woman did not so much as glance up. He sat down, and she began to eat, without a word or a look. Calf Boy at last could bear it no longer, and furtively snatching the last of the meat, handed it to his father. The night passed without a word, Buffalo Woman continuing utterly to ignore her husband. In the morning Looking Down awoke to find wife, child, and lodge gone, and himself lying in a buffalo-wallow.

That day they journeyed through a dense growth of bushes spiked with long sharp thorns. At night the man again found the gleaming white-walled lodge of his wife and child, and the events of the previous night were repeated. As before, morning found him lying alone in a wallow.

The third day's progress was obstructed by the well-nigh perpendicular walls of a deep coulée, and on the fourth day they encountered a river, wide and swift, which the Calf crossed with difficulty. That night the woman cut off a piece of meat, which the boy was told to give to his father. After Looking Down had eaten, Calf Boy lay beside him, and began to talk in whispers, forewarning him of the attempts that would be made on his life when they reached the village of the Buffalo on the succeeding night.

The next morning Buffalo Woman and Calf Boy did not leave him, and all three journeyed on together over the hill, beyond which lay an enormous village, stretching as far as the eye could see. This was the village of the Buffalo people. The three travellers turned their

steps toward the lodge of Buffalo Woman's mother. His spirit-power enabled Looking Down to become as light as a feather, and when the heavy door was suddenly dropped just as he entered, he was blown aside unharmed.

Along the wall on one side were arranged ten covered beds, for Buffalo Woman was one of ten sisters. Her mother called out:

"Calf's father will hang his bow and arrows on his wife's bed!"

Calf Boy was skipping and gambolling about the lodge, apparently in ecstasy at being among his people, but as he passed a certain bed he struck it with a switch of his tail. On that bed Looking Down hung his weapons, and a second time he had the better of the Buffalo.

"Calf's father will stand beside his wife!" cried the mother-in-law quickly. The ten sisters had gathered around the fire, and to the eye there appeared no point of difference between any two. But again Calf Boy designated with a touch of his tail which one should be his father's choice, and again Looking Down was saved.

"All the Calves stand in a row!" was the next command, and the intruder was required to point out his son, whom he readily recognized by a slight movement of the tail.

Thrice foiled in her efforts to find a weakness in Looking Down's medicine, the old Buffalo made one more trial.

"I think son-in-law should have a sweat-bath after his long journey," she said. The sweat-lodge was quickly made ready, and stones were heated to redness. Seven Bulls were charged with the duty of preventing the man's escape from the lodge. The two antagonists entered, and the Buffalo dipped a huge hornful of water from a paunch. But no sooner was the lodge filled with steam than Looking Down became a Spider and crawled down one of the hoops of the framework into the ground, putting his arm out to wield the buffalo-beard brush.[17] At intervals he would call out:

"Yellow Calf, tell your grandmother to pour on more water. This is a strange sweat-lodge. It is not warm!"

At last his mother-in-law, herself nearly dead, gave up the contest and rushed out. In a little while Looking Down leisurely came out, dry as a bone, and returned to the dwelling-lodge complaining that he had had no sweat.

[17] A buffalo-beard was used to switch the body, and thus induce more profuse perspiration.

Next a dance was arranged, the intention being to crush and trample Looking Down, but as the seething mass of snorting fiery-eyed Bulls rushed in from every side upon the spot where they had just seen Looking Down before a cloud of dust obscured him, his other wife, Corn Woman, suddenly stood beside him. She placed a large basket over him, and when he had grasped its ribs she raised him into the air until the danger was past.

One final attempt was made to overcome the medicine of Looking Down. His mother-in-law proposed a wager with him, and he assented. "We will stake our people against each other," she said, "and we will race around the world. As you pass each post, mark a black stripe on it and I will paint a red one."

That night Looking Down went secretly to the Snipes, whom he found walking on the edge of a mudhole. "Go and make very soft and muddy the land between the first two posts that mark the corners of the world, he commanded them. When the race was about to begin, Looking Down became a magpie, one stroke of whose wings never failed to carry him forward to the brow of the next hill in front, while his adversary took up a magic staff, whose power was such that by merely touching it to the ground she transported herself a vast distance. The race was close until she planted her staff in the mud. It sank deep, and in trying to extricate it she herself became almost hopelessly mired, so that she had scarcely marked the first post when her opponent finished the course. She came in puffing and chagrined.

"I have won your people," said Looking Down.

"You have won my people, so far as eyes can see," she admitted.

Seeking the bird with the keenest vision, he chose Raven, and went with him to the summit of a hill.

"Brother," he commanded, "go up!" and the hill rose higher and higher, until Raven could descry the four posts, and consequently all the earth. Thus were the Buffalo won for the people.

"The Mandan"
From
The North American Indian: Volume 5
by Edwards S. Curtis
All Rights Reserved. For Personal Usage Only
www.worldwisdom.com