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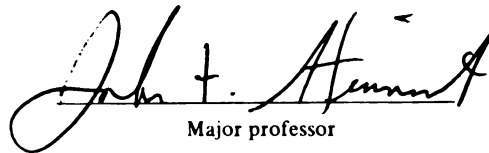
Eager Anthropologist, Reluctant Sun Dancer: A Partial Account of Participant Observation Field Experience, with Symbolic, and Ritual Analysis of Inipi and Piercing, at the Woptura Medicine Society Sun Dance of 1993

presented by

James D. Stalker

has been accepted towards fulfillment of the requirements for

Master's degree in Anthropology


Major professor

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**EAGER ANTHROPOLOGIST, RELUCTANT SUN DANCER:
A Partial Account of Participant Observation Field
Experience, with Symbolic and Ritual Analysis of *Inipi* and
Piercing, at Woptura Medicine Society Sun Dance of 1993.**

By

James D. Stalker

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Anthropology

1994

ABSTRACT

EAGER ANTHROPOLOGIST, RELUCTANT SUN DANCER:

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This thesis is concerned with several aspects of the continuing tradition of Oglala Sun Dance. An overview of previous works on this area is presented. Following, is an elaboration of the development of research methods which lead to an emphasis on participation. This emphasis made for an experiential study, drew attention to particular symbolic effects of ritual, and encouraged a perspective of analysis that encompasses the body, cognition, and social structures. *Inipi*, or sweat lodge, and the piercing activity of Sun Dance are presented in experiential ethnographic sketches and then analyzed. It is argued that Sun Dance creates especially moving non-discursive physical and affective experiences which lend legitimacy to the ultimate sacred postulate at the core of Oglala belief and social sense.

This work is dedicated to the Earth and her people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must thank most of all my wife, Kristen Lambert, for her support, encouragement, tolerance, and companionship during the long journey to the completion of this work. I also want to express my appreciation for her family and my own as they made my study and writing possible through their help. I wish to recognize the faculty members who made this possible. From the Department of Anthropology at Michigan State University, Dr. Hinnant, Dr. Pugh, Dr. McKinley, Dr. Sauer, Dr. Dwyer, and many others all contributed greatly to my development and the completion of this thesis. At the University of Michigan's Department of Anthropology, Dr. Rappaport and Dr. Bierwert provided crucial inspiration, encouragement, and assistance. I owe so much to the people "in the field" both Native American and from around the world, with whom I worked, lived, played, and prayed: Charles Chipps and his family, Pedro Red Hawk and his family, Red Feather, Stan, Kim and Ruby Star, Greg, Justice, Katinka, Seth, Nate, Yoga Paul, Wookie Paul, Virginia, Eileen, Pathfinder John, Wendy, and so many others -- thank you all. Finally, wopila to Dan Keto, naturalist, friend, un-paid research assistant, drummer, singer, and mountain climber.

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Introduction

This is my Master's Thesis prepared for the Department of Anthropology of Michigan State University. Accordingly, it is of appropriate length and scope to demonstrate the necessary mastery but not an attempt at an academic *tour de force*. The research performed in preparation for this work was exceptionally rich. I struggled to maintain a limited focus for presentation in this writing for new opportunities for exposition continually suggest themselves even to this day.

The Chipps Family

The data comes from my participation in and observation of the Woptura Medicine Society's Third Annual Ellis Chipps Memorial Sun Dance held in July of 1993 on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The Chipps family, Chipps is *Woptura* in Lakota, is descended from Horn Chipps, a medicine man close enough to Crazy Horse to call him "brother." (McGaa, 1992; Neihardt, 1961) The Chipps family has provided several generations of *Yuwipi* men. Ellis Chipps, when he was living, was the father of Charles Chipp's, the Sun Dance Chief and Intercessor. Charles' living brother, Godfrey, carries on the *Yuwipi*

tradition and is known throughout the world as one of the most powerful living *Yuwipi* men. (Powers, 1982) Ben, Godfrey's teenage son, is next in line, but as of this summer was not sure about his future in relation to *Yuwipi*.

I should make it clear at this point that I am neither attempting to construct credibility for myself through this information nor trying to make the Chipps family anything they are not. The Chipps family status among medicine societies is really of no consequence to the authenticity of the Sun Dance they host, although their history is an important part of the meaning of that dance. I provide this information as just that, not to try and impress the reader with my acquaintance with famous medicine men of the Oglala. I see no reason why anthropology on reservations must confine itself to the "famous." It was really quite by accident that I became acquainted with the Chipps - I did not seek them out as a career move. It was only recently that it began to sink into my mind just who the Chipps are and were. Still, I value their integrity as a family on their prayers, ceremonies, actions, and reputations among those around them, not their pedigree. Their history only adds to the power of a family living out their traditions.

All Nations Sun Dancing

The Woptura Medicine Society Sun Dances are unusual in one notable respect - they are open to participation from people of "all nations." This means that there is no "racial"

discrimination for participants. "White" people can attend and do from around the world. At the 1993 Sun Dance there were participants¹ from Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and Australia. The Chipps, like many other medicine men, travel around the world to provide their services and teachings. The participation of "white" people in the Sun Dance is problematic. While a member of the American Indian Movement did participate, others criticized the Dance from outside as the "selling of Medicine."

I was sensitive to this charge and thought at length about the legitimacy of this Dance. Participants do make contribution to Charles as well as *Unci*, Grandma Chipps. However, there is no expressed, fixed, price and participants are free to contribute what they can and how they want. Compensating the Sun Dance Intercessor is a tradition as old as the Dance itself. (See Dorsey, 1890) Since it is difficult to provide traditional gifts of buffalo products, (skins, robes, meat, and the like), cash is an easy substitute. For my part, I paid the Chipps' rather large electric bill. Others paid the phone bill. Some paid cash. All members of the Sun Dance community this summer contributed ten dollars each to a fund that went to buy Charles a much needed new, used car, an early model Lincoln Continental big enough for his whole, large family.

¹ "participant" refers to the people who came to, watched, and/or helped make the Dance happen. "Sun Dancers" are people who actually participated inside the Arbor by Dancing.

Another outside criticism was that the "white" people, assumed to be hippies and flakes, were profaning a sacred tradition. All I can say about this is that the Sun Dance was performed in earnest and was more traditional than any of the Dances recorded in the literature of the previous two decades. I met "white" people who were devote practitioners of a contemporary Lakota based spiritual complex. Many "white" people follow traditional Lakota ways with more integrity than some of the "red" people on the Reservation. This is not an accusation or a judgement, but simply an observation. In the twilight of the twentieth century, Oglala religion has moved off the reservation and has found life in former, or still practicing, Christians, Jews, agnostics, Buddhists, Krisnas, and self made spiritualists.

This brings us to a final criticism of open Dances, one I partly share. There is a strong danger that "white" folks may push the Native Americans out of their own tradition. Red Feather, Charles' main helper, voiced this concern at another Dance I attended in the Midwest. It is a legitimate concern. While I think it would be impossible for this to happen at Crow Dog's Dance on Rose Bud, or at many of the smaller Dances on reservations, it is the case that there are more "white" people at the Chipps Dances than "red" people. This is due, in the case of the Chipps, to a number of factors. For one, it has "always" been a Chipps' tradition to extend the Lakota rituals and spirituality to "all nations." As this offends

many Native Americans they shun the Chipps as other people accept the invitation. Off the reservation it is crucial that Native Americans be involved in Sun Dance, other than in merely token positions; however, this is easier said than done in today's political climate. Co-operation between "white" and Native Americans is not impossible, but often awkward. By no means is "white" participation in the Sun Dance an easy issue to address or resolve. It is an issue all of us involved with Sun Dance and Native American communities will have to face with understanding, patience, and humility. I wish I had more space to address the issue. For my purposes here it must be enough to open the debate and leave it where I have. The open nature of the Dance does have other implications for this work as I will detail later, especially when it comes to anthropological theory.

How I Became Involved

I feel I should explain why this Sun Dance became the subject of research. I do not come to this project as a committed "Native Americanist" but rather as someone interested in religion, ritual, and symbolism who found an excellent opportunity for analysis. In the spring of 1992, I broke my right collar bone as a result of a nasty crash in the quest for "big air" on my mountain bike. I broke it in two places just two weeks before my wife, Kristen, and I were supposed to join my parents in Turkey where my father was

working for Fulbright. A week of sedatives, ibuprofen, and CNN put me in sufficient shape for a nightmarish plane flight to Ankara. I still think that the pain of knowing I had ruined Kristen's trip was worse than the pain of broken bones. I was a poor travelling partner. I had originally planned on staying on in Turkey in an effort to look for research opportunities in that country. I was all too happy, however, to return home. Dysentery, Turkish toilets, pollution, and language barriers, combined with my still un-knitted bone to drive me home after a brief but wonderful two weeks. Upon returning we discovered that Kristen's classes had all been cancelled and she had already missed a week of a short term. I could not work yet, being unable to use my right arm for much at all. The whole summer fell to pieces. At the local food co-op, just down the street from our house in Lansing, Kristen met an acquaintance from her work at the next door bakery and vegetarian restaurant, Kim. Kristen and I had been talking about crossing the country by car to interview some graduate schools and go down into Mexico now that I could share the driving. Kim and Kristen talked about summer plans and in conversation Kim mentioned that she was looking for a ride to South Dakota and then Oregon. She was going to Sun Dances. She even extended an invitation for us to join her as supporters at the Dances. I had only a scant knowledge of the Sun Dance, mostly through Marriott's excellent *Ten Grandmothers: Epic of the Kiowas*, (1945). However, as an avid

student of religion, ritual, and symbolism, I was eager to have the chance to be a part of what I knew to be a fundamental ceremony on a reservation. After meeting with Kim a few times, we decided that we would all be happy with the arrangement, despite having to cram four people, (Kim's daughter, Ruby Star does the Dance as well), in a Pontiac Grand Am for a five thousand mile trip. That first year provided me with an introduction to many wonderful people including Charles, *Unci*, and a man named Stan from Vermont who became a key in my understanding and participation in the dance. I was introduced to a whole community of people from my area and around the world. This past year, I was almost reluctant to subject my friends, and a few near enemies, to study.

The Research and Structure of This Thesis

This thesis begins with a survey of some of the anthropological literature available on the Sun Dance. This little project itself suggests a number of fascinating routes for analysis and later comparison. It is with reluctance that I postpone these projects for a latter work. The purpose of the survey is several fold. First, this thesis assumes a basic knowledge of Lakota Sun Dance tradition on the part of reader. The survey provides options for background reading ranging from brief but informative articles to lengthy ethnographies. Through the survey the reader should be able to

make informed choices for further reading. The second purpose is to demonstrate my background in the area of the Sun Dance. The review also shows the reader what reading, specific to Oglala Sun Dance, I have done in preparation for this thesis. Finally, the review shows some of the methodological and analytical theories operating previous to my own as well as providing some interesting background information. There is a general trend in the literature from reliance on interviews about the Sun Dance, to observation of actual Dances, to my own full participation in the Sun Dance. There is also a great deal of variation in description of the Sun Dance within the overall structural similarity. I bring out a few points that are of interest to the purposes of this thesis and its theoretical focus on the body.

The intent of my research was basic: learn what the people who are at the dance think I need to know and whatever else I can find out. My methodology is described in the second chapter. As will be seen, my methods were a complex mixture of previous training, University requirements, and conditions of the environment for research. The result was my full participation in the Sun Dance, a very deep and rich experience yielding personal and professional results far beyond what I expected from the project.

I wish to note with some regret that this work has as its focus a decidedly male perspective of the Sun Dance. Women are involved in Sun Dance and do even Dance for up to four

days. A few women even pierce although usually not as deep or through the chest, rather on the arms. The direction my research took placed me largely in a position to understand the male experience because of my own gender and involvement as well as the segregation of sexes that is a Lakota tradition. By no means is my omission of women in this work a political act or an oversight. It is rather a result of many forces outside of my control as will be seen as I explain the development of my methods.

In the third chapter I present the theory with which I analyze two specific domains of my Sun Dance data. While I would love to present an ethnography of the Sun Dance as a whole, it would easily extend beyond four hundred pages. In using this data for a task appropriate to the expected length of a master's thesis, I must narrow the scope of analysis. It is with this intent that I concern myself with the very fruitful area of the human body and its crucial involvement in the symbolic action of ritual. The Sun Dance itself suggested this line of investigation to me as well as the lectures and writings of Dr. Rappaport at the University of Michigan where I attended classes the spring before my research in 1993. Dr. Rappaport's thinking on the numinous and nondiscursive aspects of religion will be combined with his ideas on the body as symbolic locus for meaning. Upon returning from the field I read Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice* for a class at Michigan State University. In this work I found again an emphasis on

the human body that combined well with Rappaport's work to make an excellent tool of analysis. I also use Sperber's thinking on symbolism to help explain some of the variation in individual enculturation that is unique to All Nations Sun Dancing. Together, in Chapter Three, these authors form the foundation of my framework for an ethnographic analysis of two parts of the 1993 Woptura Sun Dance.

These two areas of the Sun Dance very much involve the body. The first area of the Dance that I analyze is the *inipi*, the sweat lodge. This will be the subject of Chapter Four. It is in *inipi* that fundamental concepts are taught and relearned both verbally and through the physical experience of suffering, endurance, and numinousness. The lodges are the place where skills needed to perform well in the dance are communicated to the dancers.

From the *inipi* it is logical to move on to the *Wiwanyang Wacipi*, the Sun Dance, in Chapter Five. I will not present the whole dance, for as I mentioned this would be a long task beyond the bounds of this thesis. What I will present are elements of the Dance particularly germane to the framework of analysis focusing on the body set up in Chapter Three. While many authors shy away from the "torture" aspects of the Dance, I will concern myself at length with the experience of piercing. I will also briefly consider other aspects of the dance involving the body such as fasting, thirst, circular movement, gazing at the sun and tree, exposure to the

elements, and blowing the eagle bone whistle. These components of the dance, or "variables" as Jorgensen (1972) calls them, all focus on the body as medium for symbolic communication. The result is a profoundly successful and motivating inscription of information upon the individual that binds him, or her, to the common beliefs of the community while maintaining a powerful existential meaning that validates those social systems.

Thoughts on Style

I made a effort in writing this work to preserve as much of the aesthetic qualities of the Sun Dance as possible. This thesis contains highly experiential ethnographic information as a result of the nature of the reseach. At the same time, it subjects this information to a very alien scrutiny in the form of anthropolgical theory. For me, this creates a tension that may or may not be obvious to the reader. On one hand, I deeply respect the faith and belief in Lakota ways that the people around me held during my field work. On the other hand I subject that faith to scientific scrutiny which denies itself belief in Native systems. This very problem was embodied in myself during my participation. It is a problem only overcome here by expressing the tension between the two systems.

This work is substantially autobiographical and fits in

the genere of "field work stories" to some extent. Again, I had only a limited amount of choice in this matter. To be honest in disclosing the sources and nature of my data requires a healthy autobiographical content. Further, I feel it necessary to show the development of my position in the field, since it was only partly of my own making, but made this thesis. I did not set out to write this thesis in this way - it probably would have been much more boring! Despite the way things turned out, I have done the best I could and have tried to embrace both the exposition of ethnographic information and the theory with enthusiasm and inspiration. Above all, being a writer before an anthropologist, I wish this text to be interesting and engaging reading despite its heavy academic content. Please laugh, cry, recoil, wonder, ponder, and above all enjoy.

Chapter One:
Review of Literature on Lakota Sun Dance

In writing this thesis I assume, on the part of the reader, a certain knowledge of the Oglala Sun Dance tradition. To keep this work an appropriate length and to meet the goal of presenting an ethnographic analysis, it is necessary to only briefly review some of the available literature on the Lakota Sun Dance. What information that comes from this review will help to provide context for the Dance studied for this work. I also present this overview for the purposes of demonstrating what sort of information is available on Sun Dance and what I, as a researcher, used in preparation for this thesis. There is not space here to present summaries of the works reviewed. I will instead give a few lines of introduction and, if necessary, detail contributions that are specifically germane to the construction of this thesis. This overview is also not intended to be exhaustive. I am certain that there are texts that are difficult to get hold of or are not so widely known that escaped my attention. A few I have simply left out for they are brief and draw on sources cited

here. I am pleased to offer a good balance of Native American and academic American works. Major efforts have been made, where the Oglala Sun Dance is concerned, to give Oglalas a chance to express their traditions in their own voice. The sources that I review are: Mails, Lewis, Jorgensen, Amiotte, McGaa, Dorsey, Walker, Spier, and Black Elk.

I begin with Mails' *Sun Dancing at Rosebud and Pine Ridge*, because it is a rather recent and very informative work. Mails provides a great deal of information about dances intercessed by Eagle Feather on Rose Bud reservation in 1974 and 1975. He gives detailed accounts of preparations, rituals, and each day of both dances. An amazing number of photographs and original paintings by the author provide a rare visual complement to the ethnographic data. Mails also allows participants to provide their own accounts of the dances in written contributions to the text. This is a commendable addition to ethnography that I wish I had the resources to provide in my own. Mails observed the dances himself and even went so far as to participate through supporting them. He does mention that he stayed at a motel in Mission during the Dances and thus, I expect that he missed some of the daily experience of the Dance. His position, despite his enthusiasm for the ceremony, seems to remain one of professional observer not immersed in the urgency of practice. Further, Mails, due to his own strongly Christian background, seems all too willing to leave *Wakan Tanka* and

other spiritual terms and operations locked solidly into their Christian glosses of Almighty God and the like. While I too experienced the syncretized modernity of contemporary Sun Dance on a highly missionized reservation, there were aspects of the spiritual content that did go beyond simple Christian equivalencies. This could have been the case at the Dance Mails observed, and he was just to willing to leave the matter unexamined - perhaps not. Another aspect of the ethnography that is interesting to me is the short duration of the Dance day and the lack of fasting. By Mails account, the Dances involved four half days and a large lunch was provided. In contrast, the Dance I participated in was nearly dawn to dusk with no food or water for four days. A powwow followed the half day of dancing in Mails - another contrast with my own experience. This information is very valuable, however. Mails supports his own work with quotes from Dorsey, which is reviewed below, and Densmore. I found enough of Densmore in Mails and was not inspired to read more. Generally, Mails' ethnography is of high quality and meets most of the expectations and needs of a contemporary student. It is certainly possible to gain a solid understanding of the Sun Dance, especially its revival period, from *Sundancing at Rosebud and Pine Ridge*.

Lewis, in *The Medicine Men*, describes the same era of Sun Dances as Mails. His account focuses more on the social dancing that follows the rather anemic and perfunctory

"sacred" part of the Dance. His contribution is interesting especially the detail about a Sun Dance that was forced to Crow Dog's on Rose Bud by police pressure and arrest warrants because it lacked Tribal authorization. Lewis helps put the 1960-1970's era of Dances into perspective in a way that is missed by Mails's concentration on their sanctity. Lewis also provides a good bibliography for the Sun Dance which includes authors I do not cover here: Fletcher, (1883); Schwatka, (1890); Nurge, (1970); Zimerly, (1969); and Lewis, (1972).

Another rather recent work on the Sun Dance is Jorgensen's *The Sun Dance Religion*, (1972). Jorgensen has a very interesting and modern approach to the Sun Dance. I should first make clear, however, that he is primarily concerned with Ute and Shoshone Dances which are notably different from Oglala tradition. He focuses on the political/economic aspects of the Sun Dance for these groups. He presents excellent data on the conditions of reservation life in terms of industrial mass society. This is something outside the scope of my research and analysis. He then uses this data to interpret the meaning of the Sun Dance, along with other more traditional interpretive tools. His description of the dance, and the problematics of white involvement, are excellent. His use of statistical analysis of "variables" of various stages of the Dance seems bizarre and does not provide much meaning for me. Still, Jorgensen's work is worthy reading even for the student of Oglala

tradition. Political and economic aspects of the Sun Dance would certainly be a part of any future large scale analysis of the Sun Dance on my part but is too cumbersome to attempt in this short work.

Amiotte gives valuable information in his short article, a contribution to *Sioux Indian Religion*, (1987), a volume edited by DeMallie. Amiotte also provides the wonderful illustrations for the book. Amiotte's paper is a presentation, in Native American voice, of contemporary Sun Dance. He describes the preparation involved in current dances, the dance itself, and some of the cosmological notions at work. He also notes differences between tradition and current practice. In the opening paragraphs he provides an important historical understanding of the changes in forms of Sun Dance during revival:

Beginning as early as 1924, and developing especially during the 1960's and seventies, we had the revival of the ceremony proper, gradually moving out of its transitional phase where it was part powwow and part Sun Dance and part annual fair. We have seen a renaissance take place recently in which the Sun Dance was returned to its formal, intensely sacred character, with many of the same restrictions and dimensions that it had in its historical setting. (Amiotte, 1987.)

The Sun Dances that Amiotte refers to here recall the Sun Dances described by Mails where easy half days were combined with powwows. Amiotte also seems to refer to a type of Sun Dance like the Chipps' dances. They do not have powwows and are extremely traditional in restrictions and sanctity, as

Amiotte alludes to, while being open to all nations. Amiotte does not address open dances and in fact there is no record of open dances to my knowledge. Thus, following Amiotte we can type the Dances found in Mails as transitional, with the Dance I present being something beyond the ceremony proper in its renaissance phase. I found Amiotte's thoughts on cosmology interesting but they did not correspond to anything in my experience. His article is a good, short, introductory text although it is not comprehensive enough to stand on its own as the detail of the description of Sun Dance is insufficient.

Ed McGaa, Eagle Man, an Oglala Sioux, provides a brilliant description of Sun Dance from his own personal experience following his return from combat flying in the Vietnam War in Chapter Ten of his *Mother Earth Spirituality*. He describes with poignancy the struggle he, Fools Crow, Lame Deer, Eagle Feather, and others went through to resist the Missionaries' attempts to suppress the revival of the dance. Eagle Feather and Lame Deer are key men in Mails ethnography which is probably from a few years later date than the Dance in which Eagle Man defied a missionary. McGaa's description of the Dance includes affective and spiritual content largely absent in many other ethnographies. Also notable is that the Dances in which he participated included powwow. He does not mention fasting or thirst, but piercing was a part of his Dancing after the first year. *Mother Earth Spirituality* is a well written book for a popular audience that should be

mandatory reading on the contemporary Oglala Sun Dance.

This brings us to the classic works on historical Sun Dance from around the time of forced reservation settlement. Dorsey's writing for the U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology is a classic reference for the student of the Sun Dance. His understanding of the Sun Dance is detailed, although it seems to be based upon interviews rather than observation - the methodology is not clear. There are, however, some clues to Dorsey's orientation to the Sun Dance:

In the summer of 1873, when the author was a missionary to the Ponka in what was Todd County, Dakota, that tribe had a sun dance on the prairie near the mission house. The scarifications and subsequent tortures and dancing lasted but three hours instead of a longer period, owing to the remonstrances of Bishop Hare, the agent, and the Missionary... For obvious reasons the author did not view the sun dance but he was told about it by some of the spectators. (Dorsey, 1890.)

To me it is not immediately obvious why he would not go unless it is because it offended his Christian sensibilities. This is quite a contrast to Mails, who is a Missionary quite supportive of the Sun Dance. (It is amusing that it was Bishop Hare, from the East, who broke up the dance considering Hare's role as a trickster in much Woodland Native American mythology. (Radin, 1956) Mails and Dorsey also disagree about the meaning of *Wakanta* or *Wakan Tanka*. Dorsey finds that it is not even close to God as there are too many "beings" within it, while Mails accepts the equivalence. This change over time would be an interesting area of analysis were I to have

space to address it. A very interesting detail that comes from Dorsey is his mention of piercing to a tree or dragging buffalo skulls independent of the Sun Dance. Apparently, at this time, these components of the Dance were also practiced alone for purposes of obtaining a vision or guidance. Finally, Dorsey's ethnography, drawn from other sources as well as his own research, shows a much more war oriented Sun Dance than is found in contemporary accounts and my own research. Warrior societies are active in Dorsey's report, as is the killing of the "enemy tree," eventually the Tree of Life, and the mock capture of Sun Dance pledgers before they are pierced. These elements are all absent in contemporary Sun Dance as recorded here and elsewhere. (McGaa, 1989; Amiotte, 1987; Mails, 1978) The warrior theme seems to have faded to allow other themes to be emphasized as I will discuss later. Dorsey's work is very detailed, although somewhat dry, and is a very useful look back at the tradition of the Sun Dance, prior to its return in full form in the past two or three decades.

Walker, provides a similar historical view in his Anthropological Paper prepared for the American Museum of Natural History, in the early 1920's based on research conducted earlier. There is a great deal of similarity between the content of Walker's ethnography and Dorsey's. However, one gets the idea, given that Walker admits to having become a shaman, that his attitude toward the Sun Dance would

have been more open minded than Dorsey's. Further, Walker's methods and work were highly regarded by Wissler, a protege of Boas, and thus we can assume that Walker did not share Dorsey's cultural evolutionist tendencies and was much more of a cultural relativist. Walker does not say that he observed a Dance, and it is assumed that Agents and Missionaries, sharing the sentiment of revulsion toward the ritual that leaks through the objective tone of Dorsey's prose, had driven the Dance underground if not into temporary abandonment. Walker's account of the Sun Dance is through interview. It is likely that the Sun Dances remembered by Walker's informants, are of the same era of Sun Dances described as practiced in Dorsey. The emphasis on warrior drama is similar from felling the Tree of Life to the drama surrounding the piercing of participants. Walker does find that *Wakan Tanka* has taken on the meaning of "the Christian's God - Jehovah." Again a potentially intriguing area for comparison. In Walker's account, the Dance proper seems to last only one day while there are still four days of preparation. Perhaps this is a distortion caused by interviewing as opposed to observation. Walker does provide an enormous amount of information. He is a model salvage ethnographer. For this reason I highly recommend Walker as a historical source for Sun Dance. Also, Walker follows his own report with written pieces from several Lakota on a variety of subjects. In *Lakota Society*, a writing specifically on the Sun Dance is provided by High Bear. It is

short but interesting. Walker's work could stand on its own although it would be well combined with one or more of the contemporary sources above.

Following Walker's report, in the same volume, is a comparative work by Spier on the entire Plains wide tradition of Sun Dance. I review it here because it is a good source for understanding all the variants that can still be subsumed under the category of Sun Dance. Notably unique to the Lakota is the heavy emphasis on piercing. According to Spier, an Oglala Sun Dance is the only Sun Dance where piercing is nearly mandatory. I have heard of dancers not piercing but have never seen it. It is to this day, at least in Dances where Charles or Red Feather is involved, a rarity. Spier also contains excellent summarization of the long tradition in his attempt to reduce the Sun Dance to a series of components that are then used for statistical analysis. The work in some ways is similar to Jorgensen and his "variables" that are used to understand variation. Spier's effort is one of attempting to identify the original sources and direction of diffusion of the Sun Dance tradition. The information content on components of ritual is rewarding although the work offers little on Lakota tradition in terms of process.

Another classic text for students of the Sun Dance is found in Chapter Five of *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*. Black Elk, through Joseph Epes Brown, gives an incredibly detailed remembrance of

the "original" Sun Dance. While the text is probably not an account of an "actual" Dance, it does appear to be a mythical model, an oral history prototype for traditional Sun Dance as practiced before, and during, Black Elk's time. As an origin story it is incredibly rich and rewarding to read. Black Elk narrates a large number of prayers in the story that give an invaluable sense of the motivation and meaning of the Sun Dance for the people. A good companion text for any Black Elk reading is Julian Rice's *Black Elk's Story*, a critical look at Niedhart's construction of Black Elk's teachings as well as the life of Black Elk as a Christian and a Sioux Medicine Man. Black Elk's teachings, perhaps the most popular of all "Lakota writings," are still required reading for understanding the Sun Dance, especially when balanced with a little post modern reflection as provided by Rice.

These texts were all chosen because of their focus on Sun Dance, mostly Oglala or Lakota. In preparing for this thesis I also read a large number of works concerned with the Lakota culture in general and its history. However, reviewing just the texts specific to Sun Dance has consumed nearly ten percent of this thesis. Detailing more general background reading would be twice as time consuming. What should be taken from this chapter is the availability and content of some of the work on the Sun Dance for the reader who needs more background data than is given in this thesis. Also, the notable aspects of each book should give the reader familiar

with the Sun dance an idea of some of the general characteristics of the one I present here. Finally, the reader should have an idea of what kind of home work was done in preparation for this writing. Certainly, I have managed to overlook some source here and there, most likely an obscure one not available at the Michigan State University Library or not appearing in the bibliographies of the sources cited. The impact of these readings will show itself here and there throughout the remainder of this work.

Chapter Two:

Structuring Structures and Influential Individuals - The formation of field methods

My methods were formed in what can be divided into a three step process that took place over the course of a year from the summer of 1992 through the summer of 1993. The first step was initial exposure to the field conditions in 1992. It was here that I evaluated the possibilities for fieldwork procedures and anthropological position. The second step was the formalization, legalization, and bureaucratization of the methods as a result of submission of research proposals and methodology to Michigan State University's University Council on Research Involving Human Subjects, known from this point on as UCRIHS. This process, my first exposure to the realities of "official research," had the effect of altering my initial intent for methods as well as redefining my internal notions of the anthropological position in the field. The third step in the formulation of methodology occurred in the field as a result of UCRIHS requirements, my own attempts at research, and the authority of Charles Chipps, the Sun Dance Chief.

I think that it is best to describe my methodology within its own terms and this requires presenting it as the process that it was. I present the forming of my methods in a more or less chronological order with some occasional "play" with time to promote clarity and economy of narrative. The chronology begins with my preliminary field experience in 1992. I then discuss the academic basis for my methods, inspired by anthropological practice theory and sensitivity to the field conditions. After this, I return to the narrative and explain how both UCRIHS and Charles Chipps structured my methods. In the end, it was these three factors, my academic background, the institutional requirements of UCRIHS, and Charles Chipps, that lead to what I find to be a logical extension of practice theory resulting in novel data recovery from participant observation. With the development of methods narrated and the final methods explicated, I continue in chronology to review this method in terms of Bourdieu's *The Logic of Practice*, an influential work I read upon returning from the field. This evaluation of methodology allows me to place the methods that I used in a firm theoretical context and address their intensely participatory aspect with some critical attention.

The Summer of 1992

I begin, before any formal field work, in the Great Plains, at the first Sun Dance I attended simply as a

supporter of two Sun Dancers, Kim R. and Stan C.. Since I was only a first year graduate student, I could not really call myself an "anthropologist" in any credentialed sense of the word. Further, given the unfavorable reputation of anthropologist on the Reservation and the general dislike among the members of the Sun Dance community of the idea of being "studied," I quickly realized that the best position was just to be like everyone else. As I mentioned in the introduction, this Dance was an All Nations event and thus, a "white boy"¹ with no previous experience in Sun Dance was not unusual. It was assumed that I came there to learn, which was true, and so I was taught. A role for me to fit into was already present - "first year at a Dance." "Anthropologist"² was not a role available to me without considerable effort of negotiation with elders and the potential for getting myself asked to leave or at least so fully removed from day to day events and social interaction as to make investigation fruitless. So I humbled myself to be what I really was and for the most part did what I was expected to do. My position eliminated the possibility of public note taking, but also

¹ While my skin color fits the popular American "racial" category of "white," my genetic, ethnic, and social background is severely distorted by this oversimplification.

² I place these "roles" in quotes to emphasize that this is an artificial formalization of an individual identity easily recognized by the group but full of the varieties of expression and exercise unique to the individual who can be identified by that "role." "Roles" are not rule bound but do contain some heuristic value.

removed with it the stigma associated with that practice and the break in natural social flow caused by obvious observation. I also discovered, among other things, that one could learn more about *inipi* ceremony, the sweat lodge, from the inside than the outside. Much more is gained in the initial stages of research from being involved and taking notes later in one's tent, than taking notes during the event and being too removed to really experience the ritual.

I left Pine Ridge, and a second Dance in Oregon, with among other things, a general practical knowledge of Sun Dance as Charles Chipps was involved in it in 1992, a great deal of exposure to the varieties of sweat lodge ceremony, and a firm grasp of the possibilities for anthropological position for the next year's thesis research. "Anthropologist" would have to be subordinated to "Sun Dance supporter" and the obligations and experiences appropriate to a second year participant in the events that year brings. There was promise of enormous potential for interesting data suggesting ideas for analysis even at this early stage.

Return to the Academic World

When I returned to academic study the following fall, 1992, it became apparent that, academically as well as practically, a minimum of anthropological intrusion into practice accompanied by a willing and co-operative

participation in events was an excellent opportunity. It fit in perfectly with a practice model for ethnography and would yield a depth of information suitable for considerable original analysis in the field of the Sun Dance.

I began, in preparation of field work and as part of my required course work, formal study of "praxis" or "practice" ethnography. I had been exposed to a number of practice ethnographies before without ever really having the theory behind them made explicit for me. One of the features of anthropology that most attracted me as an undergraduate student was the participant-observation method and ethnographies that focused on this experience and the data that came from that focus. Within this frame I have always been impressed with the results of those anthropologists who, in the narrative of their field work, appear to enthusiastically but respectfully embrace the culture that was the object of their study.

Some of exemplary works that I have found most intriguing in anthropology partially involve hallucinogens as in Taussig's *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, or Myerhoff's *Peyote Hunt*. Somehow, mind altering substances seem to lend legitimacy to the fullest possible anthropological immersion in the subject culture. There are no drugs in my work but there is complete participation in ritual on the part of the researcher modeled after these and other ethnographies. What also impressed me about these

works, and others, is the formation of friendships and the willingness on the part of the investigators to be restrained in letting their informants teach as much as they themselves actively seek to learn. In neither of these cases does the anthropologist in turn claim to represent, as an individual, the culture that they study. There is no conversion despite heavy involvement in mind altering and personally meaningful experiences.

Few authors, that I am familiar with, specifically disclose their methodology for fieldwork. The emphasis seems always to fall on analytical theory and that is used to explain methods in many cases. Just as often the author describes how the field experience suggests the theory of analysis they are about to present and the methods that they use to achieve this are pieced together in the narrative. However, methods can be inferred from the presentation of data within the text of some works such as in the two mentioned above, Seremetakis's *The Last Word*, or Wikan's *Managing Turbulent Hearts*. In both these later works the anthropologist seems to have placed herself as deeply as possible within the flow of events and the urgency of life lived by the natives³. None of these authors seems to feel

³ The term "native" is perhaps offensive to some readers and seems to have taken on pejorative connotations in some circles. Bourdieu, (Bourdieu, 1990) often puts the term in quotes. I use the term with the full respect cultural relativism extends to people born and living in other places and cultures. Native, to me means the equivalent of "inhabitant" but with deeper ties to place and culture.

as if his or her "objectivity" was threatened by intense, personally meaningful involvement, nor do they appear to have "gone native" despite participating as fully as possible in native practice.

Gleaning methodology from ethnography was crucial to the formation of my method and is as far as I had gotten in my methodology by the time I left for the field. However, it is not possible, in the scope of this essay to present clues to my methods through ethnographic exposition. A more direct, autobiographical ethnography of method is used, as I wish to give maximum space for symbolic and ritual analysis. Also, I would like a more solid theoretical foundation for presenting my methods than is possible in a review of ethnography; a methodology derived from theory but isolated from the field experience. It is also important to note that "going native," or maximum immersion in practice, has its philosophical critics in anthropology. However, before these academic considerations are taken up, the effects of two other factors in the construction of my method, UCRIHS and Charles Chipps, are show in narration.

The Structuring Structure of UCRIHS: Spring, 1993

We return to the chronology a few months before my departure for research in the summer of 1993. Preparing a research project proposal for UCRIHS was a cold awakening to the "real" world of social science research. Before reading

the requirements for approval, I naively assumed that I would personally be responsible for maintaining professional ethics in the field and in my research. I was quite wrong as the University, through the guidance of the Federal government, has an intense interest to insure "that the rights and welfare of human subjects are adequately protected..." (UCRIHS, 1993) Ironically, this reduction of human beings into human subjects is one of the things I had hoped not to do in my work. Germane to explaining the formations of my methods, however, is the one condition of UCRIHS that was most influential in the course of events of my research.

I was informed that current ethical standards, imposed through UCRIHS upon any research involving the University, required that I fully disclose my position at the Sun Dances as an anthropologist and request permission to perform research. To go into the field without announcing that I was an anthropologist would have required a month long full committee review of my proposal and, I was advised, could require several months of appeals and revisions if I chose to make things complicated in terms of "procedures" and "consent procedures." I took the option of having my research exempted from review by subscribing to tighter restrictions while trying to adapt them to my needs and the conditions of the field work environment.

The idea of obtaining consent did not bother me. Ethically I think that it is sound. However, the form of

permission available at a Sun Dance is difficult to translate into the legalized discourse of UCRIHS and vice versa. Ideally, UCRIHS wanted me to obtain a signed, written, permission form from every participant! This would have brought the research to a quick death. As I argued in the proposal:

Much of the subject population could be said to have a distrust of written documents requiring signatures such as waivers, contacts and especially treaties. Thus, with the exception of an anonymous survey, introduction of legalistic written documents, from a different and often oppressive values paradigm, into the social matrix would radically alter behavior and result in low quality research. (Stalker, 1993)

Through personal negotiation with UCRIHS officials and this argument in the proposal, I was eventually allowed to merely obtain oral consent from the Sun Dance Chief, Charles Chipps. I think UCRIHS was ultimately sensitive to the fact that the political discourse of rights, protection, power, and oppression, if initiated by myself in the field as an unwilling but legal representative of an institution seen to be potentially exploitative and oppressive, would result in my being "run out of town." UCRIHS, by anticipating political and legal rights, prefigures the field in terms of politics and law, a structuring of reality that has the possibility for disastrous results for the anthropologist. Imposing this discourse on the "native" practice places the anthropologist in the position of representing an institution that despite its attempts to be considerate of the rights of traditionally

oppressed individuals and groups, is still seen as an instrument of oppression. The role of "anthropologist" is thus made formal in terms of a legalistic discourse unfavorably viewed by the subject population. The conditions of field work and the position of the anthropologist are irrevocably altered by this feature. The field of law is effortlessly made dominant over the field of Sun Dance social customs if allowed to rule. I, and others at the Dance I suspect, wanted to avoid this and allow my position as anthropologist to be formed meaningfully one person at a time in ways appropriate to the individuals and events of that summer's Sun Dances. UCRIHS's concession to oral consent by Charles largely eliminated this problem of requirements for consent while causing new ones for me and my methods. My seeking permission from Charles became a pivotal moment in the development of my research of the Sun Dance.

The process of seeking UCRIHS approval had other influences on my method. In formalizing my research proposal I had to force a fluid method based on living, temporal negotiations of trust and mutual assurances, into a static model of legal and contractual limitations, fixed expectations, and litigation prevention. To attempt to find out who was at the dances and why on any large scale required assurances of anonymity or confidentiality as well as written survey forms with lengthy explanations of the research and legalistic disclosures and disclaimers of responsibility such

as I discussed above. A friendly trip to the Sun Dances to see what I would learn became a legally structured projection of method and position into an ideal future that I knew was dubious in its translated image into bureaucratic forms. Internally, my position of anthropologist became formal, legal, and my abilities to operate in the field poorly defined despite their rigidity. The values of ethics that UCRIHS required me to work under, law and institutional ethics, did not translate into the values of the Sun Dance, friendship, trust, and respect, but can over-ride them at any time that system is aggressively employed. I had to carry with me the trust of lawyers, an agreement with validity in a court of law, into the realm of the trust through faith in each other's integrity, humanity, and spirituality. The problem of working and translating between both worlds was stifling and occasionally seriously hampered my ability to let go of the academic and legal "white" world to immerse myself in the "red" world I had proposed to explore. Having taken on the institutional agreement and formal internal role of "anthropologist" I often felt like I was acting, one way or the other, either to UCRIHS or the brothers of the *inipi* ceremony I tried to endure.

Never-the-less, I did attempt to carry out my original intent of a participation oriented method despite my new found anxieties. The restrictions were largely mental and in the end UCRIHS requirements only forced me to do what I would have

done anyway, let Charles Chipps and the rest of the Sun Dance, tell me what I needed to know and do. It was only the need to gain expressed permission to study that specifically had any documented impact on my methods. The rest was temporarily drowned when I was plunged into being a Sun Dancer.

Influential Individuals: The Woptura Medicine Society Sun Dance of 1993

I arrived early at the Sun Dance grounds on the Chipps' family land on Pine Ridge Reservation. In fact, I beat Charles home by two days. I spent some time talking to *Unci*, Charles's mother, and getting lectured on not offering my advice to frustrated makers of *yuwipi* rattles that were not round enough in *Unci's* opinion. On the second day after Charles arrived home I talked to him about researching at the Dance. After a meeting with the few Sun Dance folks already arrived, he stood with me near the ceremonial house sweat lodge on top of a gradual hill looking down on the Sun Dance Arbor. Charles was born in this house, a grey, wood, three room shack used, with the sweat lodge, for his brother Godfrey's *yuwipi* ceremonies. Charles is an imposing man, powerful in his presence, and this land is the center of Chipps power. Ellis Chipps is buried here and is said to take watches from visitors when they are not looking. The land is sacred.

Nervously, I told Charles that I was there to support and

study the Sun Dance. I asked him if I could take notes on what I observed while I supported Kim and Stan in the Dance and generally helped out. I also asked him if I could implement the survey for which I had UCRIHS approval while I followed Stan as he made a list of Sun Dancers and their supporters. Slowly and seemingly with careful consideration he confirmed that this was only my second year at the Dance and then told me to just walk around. He reminded me, because I mentioned that I was a student of religion, that this was a spiritual event not a religious one. "Don't think about this," he said, "but just to know it." With that, he moved on to his own business and the conversation was over. In this way my methodology was established. Just walk around. This was basically what I had intended to do in the first place, prior to filling out UCRIHS forms. "Just walk around" does not sound very official though. I was actually relieved not to have to introduce myself to the other Sun Dance camps with a survey in hand. Still, it was not perfectly clear what exactly I could do in terms of note taking and the like. I assumed that I was free to record observation although I still felt this was best done in private. To this day, despite several conversations with Charles, I do not know exactly what the precise status of my permission regarding this research is with respect to Charles Chips. My assumption, given his obvious intelligence, is that he does not want me to know, or does not (yet) care.

On the first day of purification, another participant, involved in academics and developing her recently discovered Native American identity, urged me to make it absolutely clear to Charles what I was doing at the Dance. She apparently had overheard a phone conversation I had with my wife Kristen about how I was feeling a bit alienated and having a hard time deciding what I did and did not have approval to observe and record. Among other things, I had driven Philinea and Ben Chipps, who I had become friends with, several places on the Reservation and I wondered if I was putting myself at risk by going outside my proposed project. Also most people at the dance assumed that I was wholly ignorant about spirituality and Lakota tradition, especially if they found out I was an anthropology student, a fact I would not hide in conversation if it came up. The condescension on the part of some people was getting to me. In public I was an eager, and assumed ignorant learner. In my tent, usually during prayer inspiring thunder storms, I furiously typed out notes into a lap top and had absolutely no one with which to discuss my "professional" observations and many of my personal feelings. This was enough, when overheard, to prompt this woman to assert that I should explain to Charles why I was there.

I felt I already had, being one of the first people to arrive and having talked to Charles about it earlier. He had even had the opportunity to deny me permission to perform a formal survey. He had already pretty much established my

method. However, this woman is very close to Charles and perhaps knew something I did not. I also did not want to get caught up in the wrong end of a camp scandal, "exposed as the secret social scientist," a violation of my UCRIHS approval, with Charles too busy with a Dance of nearly over a hundred people, to remember exactly who I was, why I was there, or that I had made both clear a week ago. Furthermore, my experience with UCRIHS had made it completely clear that law suits against social scientists were feared by the University and should also be by myself. At a previous Sun Dance I had been unable to successfully negotiate with the hosting group's attorney for permission to research. As they were already engaged in litigation with a media source for unfavorable public representation, and I, like everyone else, had been required to sign a waiver, that this attorney wrote, of my right to legal recourse as a result of participation in the Dance, I decided expressed written permission would be prudent but failed to obtain it. The unlikely possibility of a law suit, stemming from confusion as to my research at the Woptura Dance combined with published information unfavorably viewed by someone from the Dance, helped lead me to confirm my approval. I also wanted to be co-operative. I approached Charles again for renewed specificity about my position at the Dance.

On the second day of purification at the Woptura Dance, I walked up to Charles who was leaning against the side

of a car with several other people waiting to speak with him as well. I was given my turn. I asked him if there was a time I could talk to him later, because I did not want to discuss my research in public. He asked me, "about what"? I told him about why I was at the Dance. He told me to talk to him about it now. I explained that I had intended to bring him a *canupa*, a pipe, to show him that my intentions were good and honorable. I had been advised to do so by Stan, our group camp "leader." Charles said that he trusted me and told me to spit it out. So I blathered on, in public view, about respecting the dance, the integrity of the people there, wanting to help maintain the tradition and so on, all truthful things. Finally I got to how I was also there to study the Sun Dance for my Master's thesis and I needed his explicit permission to take notes and the like. He told me what I must do to really learn about Sun Dance - I must do the dance. "One day, maybe two, and pierce." He smiled as he said this in the company of several Sun Dancers. Suddenly I was in the position of maximally participating as a condition of observing. "You got to give it up, boy," he said gruffly looking up at the Sun gesturing with open palms as if weighing the air. "You have a pipe?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You need a skirt and other things." He directed me to one of the Eagle Dancers and told him to make sure I knew about everything I needed and got it.

If I had said no, I might have been asked to leave and certainly would have lost any respect and standing I had in the community. But really, I had no time to think about saying "no." I was instantly whisked into the role of "first year Sun Dancer," and set in motion. The Eagle Dancer took me over to his camp, full of Germans, and Swiss. There he told one of the women in his camp to make me a skirt. She was already overworked but agreed without much complaint. I was sent on my way to gather the other things I would need for my regalia. When I arrived at camp and told Stan I was dancing, the word quickly spread and attention in the camp to preparing the Dancers included me. My methods became a full extension of participant observation. I found myself, as I would later understand, going beyond Bourdieu's allowable anthropological position in practice. I had entered into the dangerous realm of possibly being the mystified primitivist anthropologist?

The final form of my method, achieved at this point in the narrative, may extend anthropological investigation into a "new" realm, but it is scientific, and sound: learn what the "natives" think I need to know through observation and receiving instruction; abandon the position of detached observer for fully participant-observer, avoiding introducing intrusions alien to practice; realize the limits of this position.

The particular circumstance of my fieldwork made this possible and yielded excellent results. Through full

participation I realized, more effectively, my goals of understanding the Sun Dance. I became privy to information that would have completely escaped me, much like Walker becoming a Shaman. (Walker, 1917) I was instantly required to attend all the powerful ceremonies in the purification lodge held for Sun Dancers as well as the daily Sun Dancers' meetings. I was given advice and counseling from elder Dancers. I had to gather the necessary regalia and equipment and thus met many people I probably would not have and learned a variety of things in conversation. Instead of merely observing and contemplating variances in structure and symbolic content, such as those I briefly touched on in Chapter One on Sun Dance literature, I was instead in a position of carving my own piercing pins, contemplating the symbolic meaning of the decoration of my skirt and *canupa*, taking the axe to the Tree of Life, gazing at the Sun in the Arbor, feeling the weight of the rope connecting my body to the Tree, Earth, and Sky. I was still able to observe the Dance and to gain information traditionally gathered in fieldwork but I was also in a position, as Sun Dancer and anthropologist, to learn a whole new level of information. Some of this is present in accounts by Native Americans. (McGaa, 1990, and Mails, 1978) Some, to my knowledge, is new to anthropology as presented in my ethnographic chapters. I was taken into the realm of the numinous. Instead of observing a spectacle of religion and speculating upon the

experience of the participants, I felt first hand, the power of Lakota spirituality.

Field Methods Reviewed: The Fall of 1993

I read Bourdieu after my field work and found that he makes explicit elements of methodology that previously I had to deduce from ethnographic analysis and field experience. Pierre Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice*, because it is largely theoretically oriented, provides both an excellent and explicit guide for methodology as well as a recognition of its limitations. I take up here, from among many possible found in Bourdieu, only the issue of the importance of an awareness of the anthropological position. This forces a healthy consideration of the limits of knowledge gained from anthropological participation in practice. I feel that this allows me to stand on clear and firm theoretical ground for explaining my methods and also provides for a healthy self-analysis of those methods. While I use Bourdieu to inform my methodology, as is obvious from what I have presented so far, I do not fully subscribe to his limitations, even as I take his advice.

An awareness of anthropological position became key to my method. Bourdieu notes that if an anthropologist commits to practice, he or she is only going to minimally learn about native *habitus* because so much of his or her own *habitus* is alien. This alien *habitus* of the researcher will distort the

experience of practice and result in an in-authentic experience of native practice by the researcher. A certain sense of what is happening may be possible, but Bourdieu asserts that you have to be born with it to believe it.

Practical belief is not a 'state of mind', still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines ('beliefs'), but rather a state of the body. Doxa is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense. (Bourdieu, 1990:68)

Bourdieu adds shortly thereafter that the process of enculturation that begins with childhood and the inscription of *habitus* upon the body turns "[p]ractical sense, social necessity...into nature..." (Bourdieu, 1990:69) This is a fundamental theoretical consideration for the anthropologist in the field and one I take to heart. I fully agree that belief is not a state of mind but an aspect of whole human experience, a topic that is central to my analysis in Chapter Three. This is also crucial for it seems as if research abilities by the anthropologist are quite limited in the field of practice. Here we should ask too, if belief is necessary to understand practice? Furthermore, if belief is bodily then does it matter what the mental detachment of the anthropologist is? How much bodily inscription is required for belief? Could not, an intense ritual like the Sun Dance, overwhelm the mind with belief the body? In any case, according to Bourdieu, social practice can not be

authentically apprehended from the "outside" but neither can the anthropologist authentically penetrate it by placing oneself on the "inside." The outsider always remains as such.

This leads me to ask, somewhat rhetorically, how does one ideally perform anthropological fieldwork? I must admit that I am dissatisfied by Bourdieu's "answer" which seems to be observation with minimal participation, merely adding objectification of the objectified practice. Bourdieu is unable to overcome his constructed dilemma for he makes practice, and its accurate assessment and reproduction, of primary importance to anthropology but then denies the anthropologist the ability to apprehend it. I had a taste of this at the Pine Ridge Sun Dance while struggling to shed my UCRIHS inspired fears in 1993 and found that it had drawbacks. I was definitely not experiencing a "feel for the game" that Bourdieu asserts is necessary for proper study and representation of practice. However, later in the fieldwork I performed, it became possible to get excellent results by understanding Bourdieu while at the same time breaking his "rules." Practice, within limits, I found can be richly understood through anthropological participation.

Before continuing with this, however, it is best to continue with Bourdieu. It should be made clear that Bourdieu objects strongly to the anthropologist "gone native".

Undue participation of the subject in the object is never more evident than in the case

of the primitivist participation of the bewitched or mystic anthropologist, which...still plays on the objective distance from the object to play the game as a game while waiting to leave it in order to tell it. (Bourdieu, 1990:34)

Bourdieu does not object to objectification for he sees it as an inherent and useful feature of scientific inquiry. What he objects to is a lack of objectification of the process of objectification - a lack of awareness of the distortions the objectification of practice causes in the practical experience of practice and its representation. I interpret this quote further as a critique of a lack of disclosure of anthropological position and the effects this position has on the objectification of practice, as he also delivers a none too well supported attack against (an) unnamed anthropologist(s). In any case, we can conclude that the anthropologist must understand his or her position as an anthropologist and the effects upon data, analysis, and native practice that this has.

The issue of "undue participation" on the part of the anthropologist is basically a function of critical self-reflection and self-representation in ethnography. I certainly never thought at any point that I was becoming Lakota. Neither did I lose sight of my objective distance even as my subjective distance closed intimately into the reach of the symbolic and affective web of the Oglala Sun Dance. It was no secret to me or Charles who I was or why I was there except to the extent that all human spirituality is,

for him and me, mysterious. Once I was in the Arbor and committed to the Dance, I became the "anthropologist" Sun Dancing, the scientist getting a lesson in spirituality. The environment of the all nations Dance allows for just such oddities to happen with authenticity. I was not the only non-Siouxan individual participating in the dance. Most of the participants were of ethnic origins other than Sioux Indian. In this way, we were all like children, learning Sioux ways, and Charles has built his understanding of our ignorance into how he runs the Dance even within its very traditional style. It is expected that we are learning and that we want to. I did not pose as a "native," but I was essentially told to be one. (Native in the case of All Nations Dances is so very wide in its meaning that all participants could, at the narrowest, be said only to be native to the Earth.) I think that Charles expected that my experience of Sun Dancing would be not only intellectually interesting but spiritually awakening. He was quite correct. He knew that I would learn something, at least about my own spirituality if not Lakota spirituality, and I did. I think about both, as I will discuss in the next chapter. The day before I left, as we shared a *canupa*, he said, "now you have something to write about."

In this way I feel that despite my subsequent intense participation in the Sun Dance, I escape Bourdieu's scorn for undue participation by the fact that I am aware of the

limitations that this position had in terms of data. I am also aware of the aspect of "playing the game as a game" although, I assert, that the "game playing" was necessarily as urgent and meaningful for me as it was for many other of the "native" participants. This was partly a result of the All Nations make-up of the dance, as I have briefly touched on, as well as the symbolic and ritual actions of practice that are the subject of my analytical chapter.

Bourdieu's theory casts a necessarily critical eye upon my methods. Ironically, it is this very scrutiny, the relentless self-criticism and analysis of Bourdieu, that makes it possible to extend the study of practice deep into the practice without mystifying either the anthropology or subject. The environment of the All Nations dance also provides a great deal of help by widening the cultural field of participants to one in which I share background, and thus, some features of *habitus*. Ultimately, however, as I am sure Charles Chipps knows, it is the Sun Dance itself that makes the method of participation a learning experience and opportunity for the communication of enormous amounts of information. This is the logic of practice.

Chapter Three
Theory for Ritual and Symbolic Analysis

In my analysis of the 1993 Woptura Sun Dance data, I concentrate my efforts on the area of the body and how that is involved in ritual and symbolic practice. More specifically, I am concerned with the link between the experience of the individual Sun Dancer, and the larger social system.

I focus on the body partly because that element of the ritual was clearly suggested by my participation in the Sun Dance of that year, and from many previous sweat lodges. Both the Sun Dance and the *inipi*, the sweat lodge, are impressively effective ceremonies. Their ability to communicate large amounts of cultural information is obvious to the researcher. Also, the experience of the numinousness, the spiritual, "altered" state of consciousness achieved through participation, stimulated my curiosity and offered quite a challenge for interpretation and translation into academic discourse in writing.

In preparation for this thesis, I began reviewing sources that would help me analyze what I felt to be a crucial part of

the Sun Dance experience. I returned to Rappaport's ideas on the *numinous* aspect of ritual and the body as locus of symbolic and ritual activity. Rappaport forms the core of my theory for analysis of the Sun Dance of 1993 but, in my opinion, requires some modification to provide sufficient analysis.

I add a modicum of Bourdieu, because of his tighter integration of the body and social systems. Bourdieu places more emphasis, due to *habitus*, on the physical learning and incorporation of information. I feel he goes too far with it and thus, only employ a suggestion of his thinking. By combining the two authors, I get a well enough rounded theory to explicate the physically felt, affective, and nondiscursive aspects of Sun Dance ritual and how they are involved with larger scale social systems external to the individual.

A final key is Sperber's *Rethinking Symbolism*. In this work he discusses the social and individual nature of symbolic associations, especially their increased variance and individualization as the associations cognitively move farther and farther from the focalization point. As Sperber outlines it, it is the ability of symbolic systems to be both personal and cultural, and for meaning to travel along that continuum, that makes religious or spiritual experience so unique and powerful. His work also helps me to cope with the All Nations aspect of this Sun Dance as well as my own anthropological position during research.

What I apply to the Sun Dance is a theory of the action of ritual symbol systems in the human consciousness of lived experience, that makes religious, ritual, or spiritual practice special, pervasive, and attractive to contemporary practitioners. I feel that it is also important to lay out some theoretical considerations concerning representation before presenting the ethnographic information contained in the chapters following this one. Therefore, after laying out the basis for the theory I use to analyze portions of the Sun Dance, I will also offer some thoughts on the ethnographic sketches of the Dance that I give in Chapters Five and Six. These concerns center largely around the limits of anthropological knowledge and distortions caused by written and scientific representation.

Sources and Inspiration for Theory

Each author from whom I draw to construct this theory, offers the components I use in a larger more comprehensive theoretical frame work. It is not possible in this thesis to fully contextualize these elements despite the attraction of doing so. Each constituent, especially Rappaport and Bourdieu, complements the other by making up for deficiencies in the other. The result is a multi-perspective theory that allows for abstraction of the Sun Dance into an artificial structure alien to the practice of the Dance but highly amenable to scientific presentation and understanding, as well

as comprehension of the Dance in terms of its highly integrated actual form of structure and individual in practice.

As I mention earlier, Rappaport's work on religion and ritual was central to the development of this thesis. I attended Rappaport's lectures on religion and ritual at the University of Michigan during the spring of 1993, just before I did my official fieldwork. During one lecture, the concept of the *numinous* was introduced. From talking to Sun Dancers and from many experiences in the sweat lodge I recognized instantly the concept's ability to make much of the Sun Dance intelligible and presentable in written analysis. Here, I neglect most of the rest of Rappaport's argument on religion in ritual in the maintenance of economy of writing. However, it is important to mention that one of the main thrusts of the theory is to present a well structured model for understanding religion and ritual especially in terms of their ability to regulate and harmonize social life. The numinous does require that we consider what Rappaport calls the ultimate sacred postulate, for when the numinous is combined with the ultimate sacred postulate, the result is Truth, at least in terms of the system that generated that ultimate sacred postulate. We will also briefly review Rappaport on the importance of the body as locus of analysis of symbolic and ritual action.

Rappaport makes my work a little easier by defining both the crucial terms of numinous and ultimate sacred postulate in

relation to each other.

It is of interest that sacred propositions and numinous experiences are the inverse of each other. Ultimate sacred postulates are discursive but their significata are not material. Numinous experiences are immediately material (they are actual physical and psychic states) but they are not discursive. Ultimate sacred postulates are unfalsifiable; numinous experiences are undeniable. (Rappaport, 1979)

Many times in talking to people at Sun Dances, I watched and listened as their ability to describe their experience broke down quickly into an admission that it was impossible to describe, if it did not begin that way. Indeed, even in my own notes from the field, I find it impossible to account for all that is meaningful. Rappaport, in "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual," seems to find that there is an even more ecstatic state than the numinous, one that he calls the mystical.

Those who have reached those profound states called mystical report a loss of distinction, an experience of unification with what they take to be the divine object and perhaps the cosmos. The experience, they say, is ultimately meaningful, but being devoid of distinction is devoid of reference. (Rappaport, 1979)

The reason I mention this is that a few sentences later Rappaport notes that numinous experiences may fall short of mystical while still being undeniable. Thus, there may be some fuzziness and qualitative variance to the non-discursive aspect of the numinous. It may have some discursive elements as it will be connected to structures of symbolic discourse. It is perhaps safe to assume that in a numinous state a

certain amount of symbolic structuring is present in the bodily and emotive phenomenon and thus it may be partially discursive while it also remains largely non-discursive. In several of the sources that Rappaport gives his students to read on the numinous, (Bateson, 1972; Fernandez, 1965; Fernandez, 1986; and Kapferer, 1986) the feeling that the authors are trying to work with is one of "wholeness" or rather an experience of a whole that others experience as well. This seems to be the mystical experience Rappaport discusses while the numinous is less "whole" and more particular to the individual while still being largely shared with others. My dwelling on this fine level of distinction will become more meaningful when I take up Sperber and in example.

Another aspect of the numinous that I feel I must embellish is its very intellectual quality. By this I mean that it is described by Rappaport as an emotional feeling. He seems to give it no corporal or somatic sense. "Feeling" in Rappaport's sense is largely disconnected from the body, it is mental. "Feeling" in the sense I use it in this thesis is a body and mind faculty, a sensation that potentially involves the entire human being. Embarrassment for example, involves, among other things, an increase in heart rate, a flush in the face, and perhaps a sensation of hotness. Nervousness before an audience can involve sensations of "butterflies in the stomach" as well as sweating and even changes in body odor.

I want to ensure that we are not detaching the mind from the body, as I think Rappaport may have a tendency to do if only by simple, benign neglect. Thus, when I use his concept of the numinous, I do so insisting that it have a tangible physical sensation to it. This is achieved with a little help from Bourdieu. We should first turn attention to the ultimate sacred postulate.

Ultimate sacred postulates are components of what Rappaport calls the liturgical order, basically the ideas and actions of religion that remain fairly invariant - the body of knowledge, beliefs, and practices that make up a religion. The first Lakota I learned was "*Mitakuye Oyasin*" - "all my relations" or "we are all related." This is a Lakota ultimate sacred postulate that has undergone a rather difficult translation into English for non-native participants. "All my relations" is taken to mean that "we are all related." This in turn means all of us at the dance, all of us in the world, and all of us humans and the earth, sky, four directions, *Wakan Tanka*, the plants, the animals, water, and just about everything else. *Wakan Tanka* is (him) it self, an ultimate sacred postulate, and a very interesting one at that. *Wakan Tanka* is often translated for me as "Great Mystery," rather than "Almighty God," as in Mails. Great Mystery as an ultimate sacred postulate is very sensible to me as it posits an ultimate truth that everyone can easily experience, the inability of human beings to comprehend the entirety of the

world. I return to this idea later in my conclusions in this thesis. Ultimate sacred postulates are the most general and basic of concepts in a particular religion. They are often ambiguous enough to allow for re-interpretation, such as the shift in meaning of *Wakan Tanka* that I briefly pointed out in Chapter Two. What is crucial to take from Rappaport on ultimate sacred postulates is that they are neither falsifiable nor verifiable. One cannot disprove *Wakan Tanka*, nor can one prove *Wakan Tanka*. Still, *Wakan Tanka* is at the heart of Lakota practice and discourse and is taken to be fundamentally true. I do not focus on ultimate sacred postulates much in my work here for I find that they are well explicated in other works and rather easy to identify due to the structure oriented analysis of those works.

Rappaport takes lies and deceit to be one of the great problems confronting social orders and religions. Ritual ameliorates this problem by providing the unfalsifiable, unprovable ultimate sacred postulate with a link to a personal and undeniable experience of the numinous that makes the ultimate sacred postulate real. The numinous is the personal proof of the existence or truth of the ultimate sacred postulate. Ritual engenders a religious experience that validates the religion. Again, I emphasize that my reading of Rappaport finds the feeling of the numinous to be largely limited to the cognitive. I assert however, that religious experience is not just cognitive, not just contemplative, but

felt as well: cried, cut, and bled. Spiritual conviction exists on a level that need not be thought for it is part of the very experience of living.

Before providing a source to support this modification of Rappaport's numinous, I think that it is important, and only fair to Rappaport, to mention that he too is concerned with the body in ritual. Rappaport notes:

By drawing into a posture to which canonical words give symbolic value, the performer incarnates a symbol. He gives substance to the symbol as that symbol gives him form. (Rappaport, 1979)

This, I believe is another aspect of the numinous experience, the full incorporation of the human individual into the symbolic matrix that makes up the religious system. This is as much of the body as we really get from Rappaport, however. The numinous is an excellent theoretical consideration, and its relationship with the ultimate sacred postulate to make truth, is key to understanding why people Sun Dance today instead of participating in the religions they were raised to practice. However, we need to take this largely cerebral understanding of the action of ritual, point it in the direction of the body indicated here, and go deep into the organism of *homo sapiens*. Bourdieu waits there.

I have not enough room here to even scratch the surface of Bourdieu's theory of practice let alone the desire to try and summarize his raspberry thicket of theory. However, we should recall the incorporated and institutional aspects of

habitus that Bourdieu lays out in *Logic of Practice*. Incorporated *habitus* is the *habitus* that is learned by, and lived in, the body. Institutional *habitus* are the larger structuring structures that may have a small place in the body but largely remain in social domain outside of individual bodies. What I focus on in Bourdieu is the pervasiveness and power of incorporated *habitus* in light of the relationship of the numinous and ultimate sacred postulates.

Bourdieu asserts that *habitus* is the embodied generative schemes of cultural practice. Human practice has its basis in physical learning from socialization that is non-reflexive, felt, and acted. The experience of the individual in cultural practice is not one of thinking, weighing options, calculating strategies, and considering the responses of other actors. All these functions are largely performed by the basic generative schemes of *habitus* without need for the time consuming actions of reflection. Perhaps it is best for me to offer a sample of Bourdieu's own attempt to define *habitus*:

The conditions associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, the system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu, 1990:53)

Now Bourdieu modifies this sketch over and over and the true model of *habitus* lies in the entirety of *Logic of*

Practice, and unfortunately becomes so cumbersome as to defy application. However, it is not my purpose here to be an advocate for *habitus*. I find, and am not alone, that *habitus* offers little opportunity for self-reflection and self-awareness among other features of human consciousness which I observe in the field. *Habitus* is a bit extreme in the direction of the body and too complex to be useful in a limited work such as this. What it does provide me with, theoretically, is a crucial understanding of the importance of the human body in cultural practice.

Culture and its expression by humans is not a mental exercise alone. Bourdieu leads us to understand that much of human practice of culture is performed without reflection and is as much felt, bodily and emotionally, as it is thought. Body position and posture, gender construction, social division of labor by age and gender, and religious experience all intimately involve the body. Whether *habitus* is the only thing going in theory of practice or not is irrelevant to this thesis. What is taken from Bourdieu is an understanding that what people feel with their entire lived experience, conscious and "unconscious," is incredibly important. Comprehension of ritual action upon the body is key to an effective analysis of that ritual.

Through Bourdieu, we get a sense of the urgency and totality of physical human experience that is lost in Rappaport. This emphasis on the physical and emotional

importance of the body fills in Rappaport's numinous experience to make it a very powerful tool for explaining the Sun Dance. It is the whole experience of the ritual, intellectual, emotive, and somatic, that allows the numinous to validate and enliven the ultimate sacred postulates. It is the whole sensual immersion of the human being in the practice of the ritual of the Sun Dance that makes it profound and moving. Culture and religion are not so much intellectual enterprises as lived experiences and expressions. The Great Mystery does not just confound the mind of the Sun Dancer, it brings chills to the skin, it makes the stomach fall and the knees go weak, it is felt like a great loneliness at the same time it bursts the heart with joy of living. Rappaport gives us the clarity to see the separate components and their logical relationship. Bourdieu shows us how tightly the two are intertwined and allows us to understand their relationship in practice.

The final key to my theory is found in Dan Sperber's *Rethinking Symbolism*. I am very interested in the symbolic play of the Sun Dance especially since the mix of people at the dance is multi-cultural. The Sun Dance, as a living ritual, is entering a new phase of history of practice where it is extended to non-Lakota individuals. Sperber is key to helping this theory grapple with the largely disparate backgrounds of individuals in the Sun Dance and their involvement in a common ritual practice. Sperber offers a

quiet and understated understanding of the variations of experience that make individuals different even as they conform largely to shared beliefs. Sperber first asserts that linguistic models of symbolism have largely proven only their own inability to explain symbolism effectively. From there he moves on to attempt to offer a substitute. I would love to summarize his theory of symbolism for the reader here but this is beyond the reach of this thesis as we only require one feature of it. I do strongly urge the reader, if not familiar with this work, to read it. What I use from Sperber is his theoretical proposal involving focalization and evocation. This brief passage will summarize the necessary elements for my theory.

It is essential to understand that a symbolic representation determines a focal condition, determines an evocational field, but does not determine the paths of evocation. The focal condition is the very one which, by remaining unfulfilled, has led to the putting in quotes of the representation. [*A focal cue which does not invoke meaning becomes a symbol*] The evocational field includes all the information susceptible of fulfilling the focal condition. But, evocation may revive information that turns out to be more interesting, better able to capture the attention than the representation in quotes or the focal condition itself. This relative freedom of evocation is at the very basis of the social use of this psychological mechanism, symbolism. (Sperber, 1975:122)

Sperber repeatedly uses examples of smell. In some cases he shows, with the example of smells, how evocational fields do not have to be taxonomic. A smell of sage may evoke several feelings, mental images, other smells and memories

that are not related except by this momentary assemblage cued by the hint of a smell of sage. In turn, many of the items stored in memory may themselves be focalizations, in quotes, that are open ended in their meaning. A symbol, in my reading of Sperber, is a sign⁴ with unfinished business - one that is always looking to see what else it means. Where this is important is that symbols, even when they have publicly defined meanings, are such that they can continue to penetrate into the mind making more and more forays into more and more evocational fields thus creating extensive and elaborate webs of meaning. The meaning of the symbol, say one's *canupa*, then becomes both socially constructed and personally meaningful. In the very beginning of *Rethinking Symbolism*, Sperber says that it is his intention to work with symbols as both social and individual.

Now, returning to the comment I made in Rappaport about numinous and partially numinous state, we see making absolute distinctions is impossible. The numinous state is likely to become a focalization - "What is this experience? What am I feeling!?" The mind then goes about the business of trying to make this numinous experience meaningful in other terms and thus some aspects of it may eventually be linked to symbolic systems, or sign systems, that are discursive. For a numinous Sun Dancer, the teachings and prayers of the Sun Dance will

⁴ "Sign" in Sperber's use is a focalization that has a limited domain of/for meaning - a fixed invocation.

provide many of the meanings that society offers and these comprise one of the fields of evocation. Other fields may be highly individual or gradient blends of individual and social symbolic systems just like the Sun Dance will ultimately be. Bourdieu provides additional insight in this work of symbols. Sperber insists that evocational fields need not be linguistically ordered or taxonomic. Indeed, they may involve smells, sounds, sensory feelings, somatic feelings, and moving into Bourdieu's realm, body postures and emotional states associated strongly with bodily states such as the hot flush of embarrassment, or the deep nervous tension of sexual excitement. Thus, the pain of piercing can be a focalization partially connected to discursive ultimate sacred postulates. This whole complex may be later associated with other painful experiences, or later Sun Dances, to compound the meaning. At some level, the Sun Dance experience is fairly uniform for all Dancers and is thus discursive in socially constructed systems of meaning. At another level, the meaning of the Sun Dance is beyond the ability of social science to know as it is bound up within the living experience of the Sun dancer in his or her body and extensive passive memory. This individual aspect of the Sun Dance is significantly a non-discursive feeling and memory made discursive only in part and only through the socially constructed systems to which it is connected at levels possibly too distant from the storage of the numinous somatic and emotive conditions of the ritual to accurately

represent them for scientific purposes. However, this action of traveling from socially meaningful to individually meaningful, while foiling scientific attempts to know all, satisfies religion's aim, and what used to be Lakota society's need, to indelibly link the individual to the social. At the same time the Sun Dancer internalizes socially generated and meaningful information, it is being combined with personally meaningful systems of associations that are likely to be non-discursive and bodily but which make the experience of social systems intensely and intimately real as well as persistently unfolding, for the symbols employed in ritual are both visually inscribed upon the surface of the body and incessantly seek cognitive meaning, thus transcending the ritual itself.

I am not sure if this is what Charles Chipps wanted me to learn about the Dance. His belief that I should do the Dance, and my subsequent participation, certainly gives me an opportunity to inform the discussion in a unique and interesting way. While speculation about the numinous experience of the Sun Dance is intriguing, scientifically, it is unsatisfying for it is difficult to provide evidence or know example. Numinous, being non-discursive, is difficult to pull from informants. However, the anthropologist, through thoughtful practice, can possibly penetrate the numinous and bring back some understanding of it. What I soon attempt to present from this frame of analysis is a sense of what the

numinous is like. Of what feelings is it made and to what discursive cultural elements are those feelings connected? What is the sense of the numinous and the spiritual/religious experience it engenders?

Ethnographic Considerations

I will be brief, following that rather lengthy exposition of theory, in giving some general disclaimers before embarking on ethnographic description and analysis. Current anthropological standards require a great deal of awareness on the part of the author when constructing a text, especially when that text makes some claim to accurately represent a different cultural system. The theoretical considerations detailed above lay significant ground work for this short section.

To begin with, as I noted, it is impossible to know what is happening in the minds and bodies of Sun Dancers. The anthropologist can only speculate about much of individual experience. However, a certain amount of uniformity of experience is present in that a great deal of the ritual process and contents are common to all participants. Further, the basic action of symbolic communication between social structures and personal, bodily, and mental systems of meaning should be the same for all participants. While the variables, and thus the end product, may be different, the equation is the same. In my ethnographic description, the variables may

be from my own background, and thus, ultimately, so is the meaning. I try to insure that these personal moments are noted, for they are important to include, given my theory, but should be known for what they are. Many of the variables are shared with others. For example, I was pierced to the tree the same round as another first time Dancer and thus our piercing experiences, at least the external, social, and ritual process portions of them, were similar. Likewise, all Sun Dancers enter the Sun Dance lodge twice a day and from what I witnessed everyone suffers a good deal in several lodges while finding the strength to remain un-affected in others. Again, what I am attempting to do is flesh out one example of the operation of the theory explicated above. There must be some commonality just as there must be some individuality. I try to get at both and to make each element clear. If, occasionally, the reader has a hard time distinguishing between the two it is because, given the action of ritual, that should be the case. Given the theory, and I should be no exception to it, the line between social and individual should be ultimately indistinguishable. We can recognize, when deep in one field or the other, which one it is, but the boundary is often fluid, shifting, and elusive. Ultimately, the symbolic and ritual mechanics are operating, despite unique configurations, in the same way for myself and other Dancers.

I also want to note that I am abstracting from one Sun

Dance held in 1993 of which I was a part. I make no claims to represent "the Sun Dance," as there really is no such thing, only a pattern of actually enlivened rituals. I also make no claim to encapsulate this entire Dance. My depiction, due to the theory I attempt to illustrate, is decontextualizing and detemporalizing. I do, in my description of Sun Dance *inipi*, attempt to preserve some of the temporal feel of the ceremony but in no way do I claim to be able to translate lived ritual into static writing. Further, I can not provide all the information and points of view of the Sun Dance that make up its pool of variables for potential meaning. This ethnographic sketch is no substitute for being there. I am not claiming to represent practice in anything but an imperfect and constructed form. However, given the medium, and the goal of supporting a theory, I do what I can to make the most of writing.

While this is an imperfect art, and that it is an art should be clear, it does have the potential for effective communication, even between itself and other unlike systems like music, feeling, and spirituality. Realizing the difficulty, I still attempt to make discursive the non-discursive numinous for I feel it is better to craft a decent misrepresentation than to leave theory unsupported and thus confined to speculation or esoteric knowledge.

Chapter Four:

Inipi

The *inipi* was my introduction to Lakota ritual and in this thesis will be ours. It stands on its own as an independent ceremony, can be combined with pipe ceremony, and also forms one of the core ceremonies of the larger ritual practice of the Sun Dance. I represent *inipi* here not to attempt an exhaustive description of the ceremony or to comprehensively address the complex and widespread tradition. My use for the *inipi* in this text is something more parallel with what I believe to be one of the purposes of the ritual. I give this narration of *inipi* to give sense. In the previous chapter I asserted that ritual can create numinous states in the participant in order to combine a personal experience of the divine, the numinous, with discursive teachings about religion, or in the case of Charles Chipp's philosophy, spirituality. I also noted that, following Bourdieu, a great deal of information is transferred by ritual into the body - effective ritual is felt as much as it is heard or watched. In this way, religious experience is physical as well as cognitive. In this ethnographic sketch, I present the bodily impact of *inipi*. I try to communicate part of what the ritual

obviously tries to communicate - the bodily and spoken lessons to be learned. I am guided in what I present by this focus, by the theory that I have laid out. I am also guided by Charles' teachings about the lessons to be learned in the lodge.

It should be obvious that some aspects will be left out.

I eschew a direct structural outline of the process of *inipi* and its ritual features. I want to describe the experience of the lodge. I also am not describing an actual lodge that happened historically. Accurately representing a specific lived ceremony is difficult given the impossibility of technological data collection, as you will see, during the lodge. The semi-fictional *inipi* narrated here contains much that is important to understanding the theory that I have advanced and is quite true to practice. I have been in enough lodges to accurately depict one.

I structure this ethnography to follow the events of a sweat lodge as generally occurs from the time participants arrive to go into the lodge to the time they leave the area to go about their business. Where this chronology offers opportunities for me to embellish the representation with information that informs the activities I will do so. This will necessarily require that the artificial simulation of the natural flow of time be broken although in many ways it will mimic the way my mind wanders during practice. In these

cases, I present a specifically theoretical interpretation of events or add detail from other lodges that will show the variances within structure and tend to present multiple realities within a single time frame. Again in many ways this seems to me to mimic the actions of the mind endlessly recalling and reworking past experiences in the experience of the present. What you will read is a fictional representation of a Sun Dance *inipi* ceremony involving memory of actual sweat lodges of the past and reflecting a particular analytical orientation focusing on ritual action upon the body. My analysis of *inipi* is implicit in this representation. I make it explicit in the concluding chapter.

The lodge is presented as if you, the reader, were accompanying me, the author, in the present. This would make you male, as all sweats at the Chipps land are segregated by sex. Also notable is that this lodge will be a Sun Dance lodge. This makes for certain themes specific to the larger ceremony of the *Wiwanyag Wacipi*. I have never been in a Lakota poured *inipi* that was not related to Sun Dance, so I can not say whether or not the particular style I describe here is unique to Sun Dance or not. I do know that Charles firmly believes that you learn in the lodge the skills you need in the Sun Dance Arbor. Since most of the lodges that Charles pours involve little English, the language of most of the participants, he must believe that much of the knowledge comes through the body, and the spirit.

"Men's Inipi in Ten Minutes!"

Seth, one of the members of our small camp, a loose association of friends and acquaintances centered around Stan and Kim, both veteran dancers of three years, runs up from the fire of the lodge to tell us that the men's *inipi* will be starting soon and then runs back down. We walk down a slight hill toward the lodge from our camp up on the ridge overlooking a small flat that contains other group's camps and the Sun Dance Arbor with the lodges. A creek bed, dry last year due to little rain but wet this year, runs behind the Sun Dance Arbor. It is noticeable only because trees grow along its steep narrow banks, the only trees in the area. Night hawks swoop around overhead feeding on this summer's abundant mosquitos and making their muted trilling screech. The sun, low on the horizon, is finally weakening and the day is cooling off quickly without cloud cover from a high near or above one hundred degrees. We will most likely be in the lodge during sunset. We walk through the tall grass of the prairie. It is thick this year with small sun flowers and lots of sage thanks to the rain. It is a beautiful summer on the prairie for flowers. I make a tobacco offering and pick sage for in the lodge, at least one thick handful a foot or so long. The smell of fresh sage, almost mint like, is a smell of the Sun Dance and Lakota sacred ceremony. Sage is found drying in every camp to be used in ceremony and taken home. Sage is used in Sun Dance regalia and to wrap the Dancer's

canupa. Sage is used to smudge prayer ties, to cleanse areas for ritual, and to make tea. It dries on the dashboard of my truck and in my tent. Sage is everywhere at the Sun Dance.

The Arbor we walk toward is a circle of two rows of pine poles that support a roof of pine boughs cut from stands of trees on the edge of the badlands. The roof provides shade to spectators of the dance and a special part of the Arbor where the dancers rest between rounds. Some sleep there if the rains are not too strong at night. Today, the second day of purification, the Arbor is about half covered after the day's labor. Tomorrow we will work on it some more. The new Tree of Life is not yet up but last year's still stands, its leaves are brown and dry, the colors of the flags and prayer ties placed on it by last year's dancers are faded from exposure to the elements. It is still a magnificent sight and the ropes hanging along the trunk remind me of the piercing to come.

The sweat lodges, men's and women's, are on the west side of the Arbor, the side that the camps are on. The creek runs around the north, east, and south sides about ten yards at the closest to twenty five yards in some areas. During the Dance, the sweat lodges will be part of the general Arbor area which is cordoned off to prevent the entry of all but Sun Dancers, Fire Keepers and Sun Dance Helpers. It is now a sacred area in that it is the Arbor, and the Sun Dance lodges are there, but by the end of tree day, the fourth day of purification, it will be a highly sacred, restricted, and carefully controlled

area.

As we approach the men's lodge the basic, external, spatial layout and design of the structures become obvious. The lodges are canvas covered semi-domes about three and a half feet tall. Tall enough for a grown man to sit in but no more. They are, however, pretty big around, nearly ten feet in diameter. Each *inipi* sits with its one low door facing west, toward its fire pit. The door is a small arch about half as tall as the lodge, it stands open now. In front of the door, to the west, is a mound of dirt with a long red and black stick upright in it and the alter for a *canupa*, the sacred pipe, and other items used in the lodge: an occasional drum, herbs, jewelry that should not be taken in, or perhaps a pair of someone's eye glasses. They say you should not wear any metal in the lodge for you could get burned but I have never noticed either my wedding ring or my earrings in the lodge. Sometimes I remove my jewelry, sometimes I forget. The fire pit is circular, about as big around as the lodge, and about as deep as the lodge is high. The dirt taken from the pit is placed in a wall around the edge with the east side, the side facing the lodge, remaining open.

The fire is mostly burned down now into a bed of very hot coals and large, well-burned logs covering the stones to be placed in the lodge. Other men are gathered near the lodge waiting for the ceremony to begin. The fire keepers prepare the pitch forks and shovels to pull stones from the fire. At

the last minute, some men make prayer ties, small cloth squares filled with tobacco and tied on a string without knots, to take into the lodge with them. We made ours at camp; a time for conversation and reflection on the ceremony. Almost everyone is already changed into a towel wrap and maybe their shoes. There is talk of other lodges, camp politics, items needed for the dance, how hot the fire is, the days events and the things that must be done tomorrow. The atmosphere is jovial and relaxed but with quiet and reverent undertones. Since nearly everything in the Lakota world is sapient, deserving of respect, and watching, we should be on our best behavior, especially in an area as sacred as the Sun Dance *inipi*. I am usually a bit anxious about going in a lodge, it is almost always hard for me to endure. One of the things I will try and find out is who is pouring water. The water pourer decides how many rocks come in, how much water goes on them to create steam, and leads the prayers and songs. Different water pourers have different styles but if he is Lakota, you can bet your life it will be hot.

When the water pourer arrives, things get more serious. He discretely takes off his clothes, wraps himself in a towel and circles the lodge to enter from the south side of the door. There is a strong modesty in Lakota that requires that naked men be out of sight of women and *vice versa*. New Age mixed lodges of naked people are scoffed at by Charles. Other rules are important for the novice to pick up quickly. No one

is to cross the invisible line that connects the stem of the canupa, the pipe on the alter, to the fire pit. This is always a problem for people new to the sweat lodge. Never cross in front of a pipe. Walk all the way around the fire and the lodge if you need to but don't cross the pipe. Tonight there will be no pipe after the lodge, it is not required, but we still observe the restriction on motion. The total distance from lodge door to fire edge is probably ten to fifteen yards - far enough to be safe from the fire but not too far to carry heavy, hot rocks. Firekeepers can cross the line if they must but even they try to observe the pattern of clockwise motion with minimal crossing of the pipe.

The water pourer is smudged with smoke of cedar and sage and enters the lodge on hands and knees. Perhaps we can hear him say "*Mitakuye Oyasin*," as he crosses the threshold. He offers other prayers in Lakota as he circles the inside of the lodge around the stone pit to come to his place inside the lodge at the south side of the door after smudging the inside. When he gives us the cue, or we see everyone else beginning to line up, we follow and form a loose line around the back of the lodge to enter, as the water pourer did, from the south side. Thus, we have circled the lodge once already, clockwise. We are carefully smudged head to toe, front and back, by a fire keeper or lodge-mate with the smoke of cedar and sage, a distinct smell. I have been exposed to it enough already that it creates a calmness in me. It is, for me, the

smell of sacred Lakota ceremony and brings to me the Lakota spirituality that I have been taught. When lighting a bundle of sage for a class this fall, fresh from the field, I was calmly overwhelmed by the powerful associations, especially the physical feeling of ease and relaxation and the mental clarity and sense of purpose that the smell of sage brings. I get down on my hands and knees to enter the lodge. I place my forehead to the earth, as some others do, and say, as we all must, "*Mitakuye Oyasin.*" Men in and outside the lodge respond in kind or simply say, "hau." I crawl in the circle of the lodge to the next place to sit, today, the "hot spot", first row from the stone pit, opposite the door. The floor of the lodge, at least the first row today, is covered with fresh sage and the smell is beautiful. At another Sun Dance, the lodge had been in use for months and the grass floor had been worn to mud that smelled like a cattle yard. I had a cut on my big toe and tried to duck walk in the lodge to my place to keep the cut out of the mud. Red Feather, an experienced, Lakota, Sun Dance expert, and one of Charles's favorite helpers, sternly informed me that, "we all crawl in the lodge, nobody is different here."

There is some quiet joking in the lodge as the rest of the men file in. We welcome them with "*Mitakuye Oyasin,*" meaning literally, "all my relations." I think of this as an extension of ritual kinship to all our fellow corporeal participants as well as the ancestors, the *Tankashela* that are

integral semi-intangible participants. The Earth, *Maka*, the Water, *Mini*, the Sky, *Mahpiya*, and other numerous beings are also our relations. With *Mitakuye Oyasin*, we greet and acknowledge them all.

Invariably there is a late comer and everyone must pack together as tight as possible, knees under chins. There is a joke about how "in the men's lodge it's shoulder to shoulder, in the women's it's hip to hip." Not everyone in the lodge is a Sun Dancer but all the Sun Dancers should be in the lodge. The lodge is for purification of the Dancers and many of the supporters wish to be purified. Our minds and bodies are to be cleansed by the sweat. From the inside of the lodge, we can see the weave of willow saplings that make the frame in arches. There are sixteen saplings set in the ground and a number of them wrapped parallel with the ground to frame up the structure. The first layer of covering, the blankets, creates a motley pattern over the very geometric form of the frame wrought in organic materials. I take the prayer ties from around my neck and tuck them in between the frame and the blankets so that they hang above my head. I learned this from watching others. When everyone is in, towels are removed, if they were not taken off at the door. The water pourer tells us all to be quiet while the first five rocks are brought in. He tells the fire keeper, sometimes called the door keeper at this point, to bring the first five rocks. "*Hau*," confirms the fire keeper using a word with meaning from simple

acknowledgment to "good" or "I agree." It is also equivalent to "hello" and is pronounced in variations all the way from a non-verbal grunt to the enthusiastic "Ho!" I most often hear.

From where I sit, the hot spot, I can see the alter and beyond that the fire pit. I watch as they pull stones from the fire. One man pulls stones from the coals with a shovel and passes them on to the next man's pitchfork. The stone is then brushed vigorously with an evergreen branch to remove as much soot and dust as possible. This also leaves a pine scent on the stones. The stone is then carried to the door and the entire pitch fork passed carefully through. The man on the north side of the door, usually a trusted elder close to the water pourer, takes the pitchfork and uses it to place the first stone in the pit before me. Because Charles, the Sun Dance Chief, wants hot sweats for the dancers this year, the pit is very deep and very big - at least three feet deep and three feet across. The first stone is placed and the water pourer places a small amount of cedar or some other herbal substance on the stone to welcome it. These stones are our grandfathers, our *Tankashela*, we have been told, we should honor them and respect them. I may have gathered these stones myself in my pick-up yesterday or this morning from around Eagle Nest Butte a few miles away, a sacred area for vision quest, *hanbleca*, crying for a vision. The cedar burns when it contacts the rocks, said to be heated to thousands of degrees fahrenheit, filling the lodge with a light, aromatic smoke.

The silence in the lodge focuses the mind on the task at hand, keeps men from talking about things outside the lodge, keeps us in this domain and also inside ourselves.

The next rocks are brought in, welcomed with herbs like the first, and set clock-wise in the places of the four directions with one in the center. With this done, the fire keeper stands or crouches at the door averting his eyes from looking into the lodge, and awaiting the command of the water pourer. The water pourer then decides how many more rocks he wants in the lodge. Sometimes there is discussion between the two men about how many are in the fire, how many the fire keepers may want for their own lodge later, or other technicalities concerning the stones and fire. One stone is always left in the fire. Today we will get all but ten stones. Only the fire keeper, who placed the stones, and the water pourer, who asked for the stones, know how many this means. The rest of us will have to count. The fire keepers bring in the stones as fast as possible. Now each time a stone is passed in the door the door keeper says, "Mitakuye Oyasin." The men in the lodge, if they feel like it, reply in kind or with "hau." Some of the stones are deep orange - especially the ones that break as they are placed on the pile in the pit to reveal their heated core. As the pile of stones grows, the lodge begins to heat up. My mind wanders to the events of the day, my home, the future Dance, I loose count of the stones. They smell hot, dry, and dusty. The skin of the

men already glistens with sweat. There is also the odor of men, the fresh sage we sit on, grass, and the canvas of the lodge. There may be some talking but mostly there is silence, waiting. Over thirty stones ranging in size from that of a man's fist to larger than his head are brought into the pit. Over the shimmering heat of the stone pit I can see the fire keepers pile the remaining stones in the center of the fire and place wood on top of them to keep them "warm."

The water pourer calls for a bucket of water. The door keeper passes it through saying again, "*Mitakuye Oyasin.*" The water pourer and the man opposite the door from him grasp the galvanized steel bucket by the handle and touch it first to the stones and then set it on the Earth inside the lodge near the entrance. The handle of the bucket is wrapped in fresh sage and red cloth as is the handle of the aluminum dipper resting in the bucket. As it is brought in and touched to the stones the water pourer murmurs a prayer in Lakota the only portion of which I can understand is a prayer for health and happiness through the water.

"Close the flap," says the water pourer. The door to the lodge is rolled down and there is some rustling as those on the outside try and make sure all the light is sealed out. Around the lodge men may point out light leaks and the blankets and canvas are tucked and pulled to cover the areas as much as possible. We are plunged into darkness. The heat is dry and still. A few men cough or sigh heavily. There is

a long, quiet, contemplative silence.

At this point in the ceremony Red Feather, who often pours lodges at Sun Dances, will "dust off" the rocks by sprinkling just a little water on the stones. The action of the water turning to steam lifts any dust off the stones. The way this sounds in the dark *inipi* is dramatic. If the stones are good and hot, and you are sitting where you can see them, their orange glowing forms attract your eyes giving you an only roughly defined symbol to contemplate. Then we hear the water being lifted from the bucket and poured back in, over and over - a cool, wet sound of water in the dark heat. Many times at this point in the lodge I am already thirsty from working in the hot sun all day cutting boughs for the Arbor. Red Feather may quietly speak before pouring water or as he dusts off the stones. I cannot comfortably reproduce what Red Feather would say but it would be quiet and serious reminding us of the hardship to come in the Sun Dance and the need to pray hard for strength in the lodge. He may also talk to us about the day's work and what we will do the next. "Pray hard, boys," he has said more than once. "Remember your prayer ties. Ask the *Tankashela* for strength." The first few drops of water hiss sharply into steam as they hit the rocks and the orange glow turns dark. To me the jumping hiss of water speaks of the heat of the stones. The heat they radiate is felt on my skin but is nothing compared to the steam to come. This is a moment of anticipation for me when the

reality of the sweat lodge sinks in, the point of departure from the mundane world. The sound of water on hot rocks recalls the suffering and the sanctity of the lodges before this one. I have to face my fears of the trial I know I am committed to endure. Then, the singing starts.

Red Feather sings in a high, wavering, quiet voice, full, to me, of sorrow and suffering. This may just be the way that he sings, I do not know, nor have I ever felt like I could ask him, about his singing style. However, I am sure that there is some stylistic concern to his singing, and it does make part of the experience of the lodge. Head down, he sings the "Four Directions" song which honors each of the four directions, the sky, the earth, and the *Tankashela*. The first ladles of water fall, bursting into steam. The song has a chorus, easy to learn: "cekiya, cekiya..." (chay-kee-aye-auoooooo) in long soulful, mournful notes. "I pray to you, I pray to you..." And then it tapers off into words that I have not memorized yet to translate, that honor each direction followed by the chorus. Indeed, even trying to describe the effect, or perhaps the affect, of singing is impossible to do satisfactorily: sonorous, resonant, melancholy, empowering, humble, dutiful, lamenting, rejoicing, honoring... *Inipi* songs and Sun Dance songs, have affective tonal qualities that combine with the ceremony and the emotional content of the meanings of the words to unify the experience of the individual from feeling to prayer through song. Sadness,

strength, power, joy, and humility can all be felt simultaneously in the songs and one emphasized more than the others according to the needs of the individual. A lodge without songs is unthinkable. The power of songs to make feeling is undeniable. Interestingly, in the summer of 1993, no drums were used in the lodges.

As the song begins water is poured on the rocks in nearly full ladles. It is the steam that makes the lodge truly hot. It rises off the rocks and runs down the ceiling/walls of the lodge. If you are tall like me and sit up straight it blasts you right in the face - hot - and then pours down sunburned shoulders onto knees. The steam hisses loudly. Sometimes it whistles and howls. Men sometimes cough and choke in the hot steam that fills the lodge as they try to sing. Some know the words to the songs - some don't. The "Four Directions Song" is fluid in tempo and rises and falls in pitch and intensity. It begins with a strong articulated verse honoring a direction and then drifts into the long, deep, moaning verse that I quoted. After the chorus it flows quickly into the strong honoring portion again. Different men start the honor verse at slightly different times because of the looseness of the tempo of the song. The result is waves of delay in the voices of the song at this one juncture, with the singers of the lodge coming to some unity by the time the chorus is reached again. It is an hypnotic and other-worldly sound with no need for percussion to achieve spiritual transport.

I am familiar with the song and just started to learn to sing it this summer as my ability with songs and the Lakota language improved with exposure. Still, for me, there is no need to even know the words or the meaning of the song specifically because the sound carries a feeling for me that is equally important. I am told that this is true for others too. Even in the intense heat of the lodge I can get chills from the singing. Lodges where I don't know the long songs are torture. Chances are this will be the same for you. If the song does not move me affectively, the feeling is worse. It is best to try and sing what ever bit you can and maybe hum the rest, or pray.

After the "Four Directions Song," we move into another that I don't know. Steam just keeps coming, burning my cheeks, my ears, my knees, and my hands when I try to cover some especially exposed part of my body. This is one reason why I stopped to pick sage. Here in the dark I can put it behind my ears so that they are partly covered. I have a very short crew cut this summer to protect me from lice and other parasites while everyone else has long hair that protects their ears from the steam. If the air gets too hot to breath I can bunch up the sage in my hands and breath through it. Charles told us this trick last year. The smell of sage again. During one lodge I had the bundle of sage in my mouth to bite down on to help with the pain.

Some men who do not sing, pray - some very loudly.

Prayers can be about anything. Sometimes they are quite focused on the experience of the heat in the lodge, begging the *Tankashela* for help and strength to get through the lodge. Other times the prayers are cathartic supplications for forgiveness for wrong doings, requests for help for loved ones, admissions that the suffering undertaken here is to gain help for others, pleas for healing and purification. The intensity is enormous when a lodge is in full force of song and prayer, a cacophony of voices in spiritual harmony. Some prayers are openly wept. The body feels the effects of intense heat on the skin, in respiratory and cardiovascular changes, thirst and stomach cramps demand relief, the bladder notoriously wants to release but must be held, breathing is hard, sitting up is hard, staying in is hard. All this must be overcome and endured. Singing takes one's attention away from the feelings of the body and places consciousness in the flow of song, the sound of voices in harmony around, and an awareness of the ancestors for whom the songs are sung. The heat almost becomes a welcome counterpoint experience to the beauty of the songs, to the emotion of sadness and humbling within the tones. Prayers turn the mind to other people and to needs and wants, to problems that are hard to face in the comfort of the outside world. Here in the lodge everything is suffering and endurance, crying is common, it is a good time to face yourself honestly, to admit to yourself those things that you might otherwise ignore and maybe to admit them to

your "brothers" and "uncles" in the lodge. No one will take advantage of weakness or openness in the lodge except to help with your "healing" - spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, etc...

The song ends but the heat stays relentlessly surrounding the body - oppressive, thick. Men groan and pray. The water pourer may offer a few words or he may launch into the next song.

Charles Chipps belts out songs in the lodge in a loud, flat, sharp, and powerful voice. He gives off strength in his song while still achieving the same sense, for me, of humbleness and suffering before the *Tankashela* that Red Feather attains with his style. Charles also pours a really hot lodge. I have been sure that I was on the verge of death in lodges that Charles poured. To this day, I am curious about the possibility of brain damage or other medical complications in lodges but my curiosity fades with each lodge. I have never heard of anyone dying in the lodge, you only think you will. The saving grace in Charles' lodges is that there is little or no talking and the rounds go by fast.

The water pourer is in complete control of the timing of the ceremony. I have never been able to discover a set pattern to the rounds or "doors" of either Red Feather's or Charles' lodges. Maybe when all the singing is done and we have sat for an immeasurable moment in the steam and suffering, the

water pourer will yell, "tiyopa!" - "door!" In English we yell "open the flap!" Then, as the door is thrown open by the door keeper, everyone yells together, "Mitakuye Oyasin!" Our prayers escape with the steam to the west - the direction of the home of the *Tankashelas*, the direction the door of the lodge should face. Light from the day blinds us as it pours in. Or maybe, the gentle flickering light of the fire illuminates the inside of the lodge for it is night. Perhaps the moon is out and full and the world outside is cool, pale, white and dark blue. The effort of endurance shows on the faces of the men in the lodge. Maybe there is some talking, usually some joking about whether or not the lodge was hot enough. Some men try and lay down in the cramped space or were already doing so in the dark. Now is the time for informal lessons. Often, new comers will be allowed to ask questions and sometimes they will leave before a second round. If there is a lesson given it could be about the skills being learned in the lodge: strength through self control, deprivation, endurance, and prayer; bravery combined with surrender to suffering; humbleness in suffering before the *Tankashela*; the value of life, health and happiness. These are lessons that we just felt, still feel, and will feel again in moments. The lodge is not so much a place for preaching it is a place for doing, for "walking your talk," as Charles loves to say. Outside the door we can see the world that we live in from a different perspective. The air flowing in is

cool. There is sometimes the smell of food cooking. People laugh around a distant camp fire. Maybe at this time Charles talks to us about how you must die in the lodge to be reborn from it. Maybe here he talks to us about suffering to be humble before the *Tankashela*. Maybe here he talks to us about surrendering ourselves to the *Tankashela* as we will do in the Sun Dance. I can not recall the words exactly. So often Charles seems to understand that what he says is not meant to be a text frozen in words. "Hear me and understand this. Don't think about it, just know it."

I scrub my body with some of the sage that I brought. It smells wonderful and has an astringent quality that, along with the steam condensed on my body, really gets skin clean and removes body odor. With limited possibilities for showers at the very rustic Sun Dance camps, the lodge is a surprisingly hygienic option. That is of course, unless you succumb to the strong urge to lay on the always cool Earth. This invariably results in a coating of grass and mud on the skin and a tell tale sign of your weakness when you crawl out.

The door is closed again. The glow is now gone from the rocks and we sit in complete darkness. Having survived one round you know what to expect in the next. Sitting where I sit, in the hot spot opposite the door, there was little relief when the door opened because of the way the rocks affect the air currents in the lodge. Relief for me comes in

knowing that the pause in the ceremony is over and we are back under way - closer to the end. There is more singing. Another song I do not know.

I have been in lodges where there is a round of individual prayers, usually between songs. The water pourer establishes a theme, maybe prayers for loved ones, and then each person in turn, clock-wise always, says their prayer. This year, there were no such prayers. Probably this is because only Red Feather and Charles poured lodges. With them, all prayers said are during songs. The ceremony is conservative and as traditional as possible. The lodge may go on to be four rounds long, maybe more, often less. Charles submitted us to two round lodges of vicious intensity. The length of lodges, or number of rounds, was a topic of discussion one day in the lodge.

Four is an integral cosmological number in Lakota practice. It seemed to many that it was only sensible to do a four round lodge. Indeed, most lodges that I have been in were four rounds. Red Feather almost always pours four doors. So in a lodge with Red Feather a man asked why it was that Charles only poured two rounds the other night. Red Feather was not really sure but figured that it really was not so important how many rounds were poured, what mattered was the first five stones and the honoring song. After the first five stones are brought in everything else is optional. However, four doors of a lodge does allow for patterning the ceremony

in harmony with other cosmological systems involving fours, for example: the four directions; the four life stages of birth, childhood, adulthood, and death; the four seasons; the four "nations" of humans, white, black, red, and yellow; the four nations of animals, the four legged, the two legged, the winged, and those that swim and crawl; and so on. All these realms can be referred to in the lodge for particular rounds usually beginning with the basic pattern of the directions and then moving on up a stack of wheels of cosmology based on the arrangement of four division laid out like the four directions. West may be the direction of death, winter, the color black, the four legged nation, the ancestors, the rain, all invoked in the final of four rounds of a lodge - the "west door." Occasionally a different formation within the orientation of a particular medicine wheel is put in practice. For example, there is considerable regional variation among the Lakota of color correspondences to direction, sometimes west is black, sometimes it is some other color. However, by running a lodge in four doors the possibility is present to focus the individual on several corresponding cosmological levels that are not necessarily related but can be. Again, this is not required but individuals may make associations on their own without cues from others. In fact, Red Feather poured several four door lodges with little or no reference to the cosmological echoes possible in the structure. Charles may have had some reason to only do two door lodges. I never

got a chance to ask him, nor am I sure that the reason he would have given me, had he even chosen to, would have been the same reason at work in the lodge.

It may be possible, if you are conscious enough by the end of the lodge, to tell that it is near. The dipper scrapes the bottom of the bucket with a distinct sound when it is nearly empty. When the water is gone the end is near. Charles had a technique for the grand finale that was new to me this year.

The lodge is excruciatingly hot. My sun burn screams with pain under the assault of the steam. My ears are burning as are my knees. I try and cover my knees until the backs of my hands are burning, then I try to cover my ears. The wet, wilted, sage bundles behind my ears provide little protection now. Charles is hollering out a long prayer in Lakota most of which completely escapes my understanding. I know who he is directing the prayers to, but most of the content is beyond my limited vocabulary. It is so hard not to focus on the pain I experience since I am alienated from the language of the prayer - unable to transport myself into it, along with it. So difficult not to panic. I try to pray for strength on my own. It is an exercise of intense concentration on prayer while letting your body just go. The feeling is still there, it just ceases to be as important as it was. As I am getting away from the pain felt by my body and into the strength of my prayers I hear the sound of the bucket rattling empty on the

rock pile and a roar of steam and boiling water. Charles is on the last words of his prayer. I am brought back to waking consciousness, almost, by the sound of the bucket. The new, huge, wave of steam just begins to hit me, the talons of the eagle it is sometimes called, as Charles' prayer ends.

"*Mitakuye Oyasin! Tiyopa!*" yells Charles. There is a momentary, fearful pause as the fire keeper is slow to react. "*Tiyopa!*" yells Charles.

"*Mitakuye Oyasin!*" we yell in unthinking reaction. Charles is out of the lodge before I can even focus my eyes. The heat is at its climax but I stay, somehow, in the frame of mind and body that allows me to sit with calmness, pride, and strength as the men near the door scramble to get out. The world tilts, swells, contracts - my body throbs, thirst burns. The door keeper urges the first men leaving to keep their decorum.

"Easy brothers, be strong, move slowly!" One man is nearly unconscious, laying on the floor. He must be revived before the rest can leave for we should remain in order. There is a slight feeling of panic in the men at the end of the line but the air is already cooling from the open door. I remain calm feeling proud that I sat up the whole time and am not in a hurry to leave. I too am light headed, I feel as if I extend beyond my skin. The man is revived and crawls out the door covered in mud mumbling his requisite "*Mitakuye Oyasin.*" I follow saying the same. Outside the air is cool

and the stars are fantastic. It is dark, the moon is not yet up, and the fire has burned down so we can lay naked on our towels under the stars without worry of offending the women's adopted Lakota modesty. I stand and stumble off behind the lodge to lay down near my clothes. The stars spin in my hazy vision. I feel the coolness all over my body. I feel the pleasure of life. One of the fire keepers brings around a bucket of water and offers me a ladle full. I sit up. The water is everything that water should be and I feel it pooling cold and pure in my empty stomach. Even in the darkness I can see men moving about and laying around. I lay back down until the breeze cools my skin to a chill. Then, I rise, still weak, wipe myself down with my towel, put on my clothes, find a friend, and walk back to camp.

On the way we stop at another camp. There, in the active social interaction, the mental changes from the lodge are subtle, but tangible to me. The gentleness and pleasure of life is amplified. The young women who offer us cups of water seem especially beautiful, despite their dirty clothes and faces, and obvious fatigue from a long day. Their kindness is warm and deeply appreciated. The conversation around the camp fire is friendly and caring. The food smells great, and an offer to share a meager meal is welcome but we should move on to our own camp.

The stars...the coolness of the air...the moisture in grass wet on bare feet...the sounds of laughter from other

camp...thoughts ebb and flow with pure mindless experience of the evening and fatigue. On the hill where our camp is the wind urges warmer clothes. The simple experience of being alive needs, for a while, no improvement. Thirst quenched, even hunger can be put off for a few minutes of staring into the fire, then up at the stars, then off into the prairie hoping to hear coyotes.

Chapter Five:

Wounds, Scars, Symbols: the piercing experience

This second chapter of ethnographic example has as its subject the piercing of Sun Dance. Piercing is a powerful ritual action that joins the body to an entire symbolic system of religion. The resultant scars are an especially powerful symbol as they contain within them the experience of the piercing process connected to all that the Sun Dance is, should be, could be, will be, and was. The scars remain on the chest of the Dancer for life marking him for all that see his bared chest, including himself. The scars are an excellent example of a symbol that has both a physical and a socially constructed referent, a symbol that is both felt and known, a symbol that connects the individual's body to society and society to the individual's body.

In this chapter I describe the scars, the processing of piercing that produces them, and some of their more obvious practical functions. I also recount my own piercing - hardly a typical experience yet informative in some very important ways. I will be subsuming theory to sense in this second section as I did in the previous chapter on *inipi*. It is not intended to communicate carefully constructed ideas with forced clarity as much as it is intended to make an impression

worthy of the topic. The theory that I gave in chapter three guides my exposition - again, analysis is implicit in description. However, I wait to make the theory and ethnography specifically linked until the next chapter where everything is brought together in conclusion.

Sun Dance Scars

I saw my first Sun Dance scars just before I witnessed my first Sun Dance. I was waiting to be told what to do to help out with the work that needed to be done for the Dance. Since I was still healing my broken collar bone I could not participate in much of the heavy labor expected of men. A man walked up to the group I was standing with and began talking to the men who were in charge. He was obviously friends with them and at home on this land - unlike me. He had his shirt off and on his chest above and between his nipples were two scars, dark red against his tan skin. Despite the Lakota modesty adopted for the Dance, Sun Dancers, except women, are expected to go shirtless before the Dance to build up a tan. This man's scars were about an half an inch tall and a quarter inch wide. From what I now know, I would guess that they were from Crow Dog's Dance the year before, but I am not certain. In any case, the scars were obvious, and not knowing anything much about the Sun Dance, it took me a while to realize what they were. Still, they made an impression.

The scars are formed from piercing. At all the Dances I

have been to, the cut is made with a scalpel with the blade changed for each Dancer as a precaution against transmission of AIDS. An incision is made vertically, relative to the axis of the body, and then, I am told, the blade is pushed under the skin and the second parallel cut is made on the other side from inside the skin. The pin is then inserted and the next cuts made. No anesthetic is used. The cuts are not longer than three quarters of an inch and never go deeper than the dermis. I agree with Mails that previous authors assertions that the muscles of the pectorals were pierced are likely mistaken. A man can hang from the skin of his chest alone for hours if need be. The resulting completed pierce is basically a strip of skin, created by two parallel cuts, under which a pin of various material about one eighth to one quarter inch in diameter and about four inches long, is inserted. The pin is then attached to a "harness" which in turn is attached to a rope that the Sun Dancer tied to the Tree with his prayer ties on Tree day. When the Sun Dancer "breaks," he pulls against the rope until the skin that holds the pin tears, usually only at one end. The flap of skin is then trimmed off and buried in a bit of red cloth at the base of the tree. What is left on the chest is a shallow hole in the skin, something like a very deep scrape might leave. The wound is rubbed with golden seal and left alone. There is not much bleeding but there is some. My scars formed over four weeks or so and are still healing at this date some six months later. The redness of

new scar tissue is slowly turning white.

Certainly the pain varies individually. Nearly everyone describes piercing as painful. However, the piercing occurs in a ritual context that makes formulating the idea of pain a bit difficult. Also, the piercing is less traumatic for veteran dancers of more than two years. I am told by many that the second year is most terrifying as the Sun Dancer knows what to expect but has not had time to get used to it. Red Feather, who must have at least twenty-five sets of scars, can pierce himself. Regardless of the effects of repetition, there is arguably some pain involved anytime the skin is cut this deeply, a object forced under it, and then ripped through. Pain and blood are always part of piercing. It is my conclusion that this pain, in the context of piercing in the Sun Dance ritual, is the final element that almost guarantees a numinous experience.

Piercing Round of the Sun Dance

Somehow I managed to internalize the Oglala philosophy of Sun Dance that asserts that real Sun Dance requires piercing. I probably had the option to Dance without piercing but felt that I would be both avoiding something important because of fear of pain, and missing something important to the ritual. Preparation for piercing begins as soon as the Dancer knows he will pierce. At this point, before the scars even exist, their meaning is being created.

I had to make my own pins for piercing. It is rather an odd thing to do, carving away at choke cherry sticks and sanding them, with the thought that they will go through your chest. There is a certain fearful bravado in the meditation. Often at the Dance you will see men carving away at small sticks and then holding them up to their chests imagining their ultimate fit. A friend, Mike, a Monacan Indian, carved pins for me from deer antler. They are pins of superior quality, smooth and strong, that I should use for four years or more. A Dancer must also acquire a harness and rope. Traditionally these would be horse hair, and I did see a real horse hair rope this year. The next best material is natural fiber rope. I bought mine at a hardware store in Kadoka. The rope is decorated if the Dancer chooses, so that it can be identified when it is time to pierce. Many men hang feathers from their ropes or tie strips of cloth with personal meaning. I thought about it for a while and decided to be true to myself and use school colors. I had one section of green and white for my B.A., one section of green and white for my M.A., and a section of Blue and Gold to represent my goal of a Ph.D. at Michigan, way up near the tree branches. Conscious, due to my training perhaps, that I was constructing my meaning of piercing, I decided to make good use of it. I was also conscious that each decoration was a prayer and would later help focus my prayers as I looked up the rope from my piercing pins to the Tree of Life to the Sky.

I Danced the last two days. I entered the Arbor, as instructed, on the night before the second day. I slept in the Dancers area until it began to rain hard, then I moved into the very crowded Dancer's *tipi*, which leaked. The other Dancers most of whom had been there two days already, were grouchy and un-welcoming. They had endured two nearly sleepless nights already. In the morning I entered the lodge with the rest of the male Dancers. On this morning, after the first five stones were brought in and the lodge warmed a little, Red Feather discussed piercing. He wanted to know who had pierced already, and who wanted to do it when. In the lodge we all know that piercing, the timing of it, is supposed to be guided by a "vision." This term has loose interpretations and may be anything from a spiritual guidance from *hanbleca* to simply an inkling about the right timing. I had no vision for the timing of my piercing yet. Red Feather said that he knew that many of us had visions of when to pierce but for those of us who did not, he urged us to do it today, the third day. Traditionally, the fourth day is the day of piercing. However, Sun Dancing is popular enough that if everyone waited until the fourth day to pierce, it would be a fifth day before it was finished. Piercing on all days is now common, at least at Crow Dog's and other Dances that I have witnessed. So, I knew that I should pierce that day but which round was still my own choice. During the Dance I thought occasionally about when to pierce and waited for a

vision to help.

Finally, after the long break in the afternoon for everyone else to eat lunch, I knew it was time - no vision, just a feeling. I went up to Two Feathers, another veteran Sun Dancer Helper, and told him I wanted to pierce in the next round. A few minutes later he gestured to me, talking was forbidden among Dancers in the Arbor, and painted two circles on my chest with powdered pipe stone. I was then led by my sage arm band out to the Tree, turning clock-wise once in the west gate, where we pulled my rope down and staked it out where I would dance at the north gate. I returned to the other Dancers. The round went as usual until I was escorted out of the circle of Dancers and led to the Tree. While Dancing I had tried to get my breathing down in synchronization with the drum by blowing my eagle bone whistle. I knew that, like breathing control and exertion in bike racing and running, this helped attain a certain state of consciousness - endorphin flow - that would increase my strength and decrease my pain. At the tree I was told to pray to the Tree and the *Tankashelas* for strength and for the people. I did. The Tree is the haven for Dancers. If too weak to Dance we were allowed to go to the Tree, lean on it, or lay under it if we must, and pray for strength. I prayed with my head on the back of my hand, palm on the Tree. I felt the tree moving in the wind, like it was breathing, alive. I Danced and breathed in time until the Drum began to sing a

song that the lead drummer had just composed that summer. I knew it from singing the first two days, and at a previous Dance. I sang along proud to know a song new to the veteran Dancers around me. The buffalo robe was laid out and the piercing paraphernalia set up. I was led in a circle around the tree from where I was on the south side to the west side of the Tree. My crown was removed and I handed someone my pins - I was proud of them. I was laid down on the buffalo robe. The Sun Dance Mother put a bunch of fresh sage in my mouth and they urged me to hold still, I was still trying to dance and sing. I held still trying to relax and just let the anticipated pain flow. My pulse rate had to be pretty high. The Sun Dance Mother soothingly stroked my forehead and kindly spoke to me. "Be brave honey," she said over and over. "Just relax. Be strong, be brave, honey." The Sun Dance Mother, independent of her office, is a powerful, powerful woman who I had previously considered to be gruff, self-important, and generally unconcerned with anyone except those in her own camp. The moments of piercing and her genuinely sympathetic attention to me totally changed my opinion. I do not know who pierced me. The Sun Dance Mother's hand kept covering my eyes as she caressed my forehead holding my head down firmly with her other hand. A man held my legs down. I felt the Piercer scrub my skin with sage. The pain of the first cut into my skin was hot and precise then it expanded, deep and harsh as the scalpel penetrated to pierce the other side. The second

cuts were made with the same hot, wet pain of slicing followed by the tearing punch of penetration. The pins were pushed through - an expansion of the pain, colder, deeper. All of this took maybe a minute. I was given a hand up and heaved quickly into a standing position. My sage crown was replaced. I remember thinking, as the pain faded into a warmth, that it was not so bad - broken collar bones are much worse. Everyone involved was careful to guide me through the motions to insure that I did not fall or stumble off. I was confidently lucid but also still in a very aroused state. I was led out to my staked out rope. I held the rope up, careful not to let it touch the ground. A helper fastened my harness on and hooked me up to my rope, to the tree, to the earth, to the sky... I listened to the drum a moment and then began dancing to the beat blowing my whistle. I let the weight of the rope out of my hand and onto my pins.

I can not do justice in words to what I felt. The pain of piercing was nothing to the feeling of weight the rope had as it pulled against my skin. It really, really, hurt deeply. In that instant my mind split. At that moment, I knew, felt with my entire being, what it felt like to be the Earth. I looked at the Tree which was reflected in the trees of the ravine behind the Arbor, the grasses of the prairie hills to the east, the sky, the clouds, memories of the buffalo killed two days earlier that I helped skin and butcher. The earth gives Herself up like I did here and it hurt every time we

took something from her, pulled sage, cut a tree of life, killed an animal, but it was willing and loving. Tears rolled from my eyes. Images of soil and roots, leaves and water tumbled through my mind. At the same time, some faithfully anthropological part of my consciousness made note of the experience, instantly tracing it out to the conditioning of the past weeks and year. I knew that I had been primed for this vision, that the pieces had been placed in me ready for this unifying experience to make it all come together in this brilliantly impressive moment. It almost ruined the experience for me except that what I felt was so impressive as to transcend even the science I knew to be true. Science could explain the mechanics of what got me to this point but science has no tears for the Earth, no ability to link me, my whole being to the whole being of life on Earth, except through this participation. Science could not give me this intimate moment of communication with the Earth, a whole feeling of Herself pouring through me.

I leaned back against the rope knowing it would hurt bad but not wanting to give in to the pain. Like the lodge, power came from embracing it. I knew, from watching, what kind of Sun Dancer I wanted to be. Since I was here, I was going to do it right, make my wife and supporters, even Charles, proud, prove myself. The rope raised up as I leaned back, dancing and blowing my whistle. As the ecstasy of my vision, and my analysis of it, wore off, I began to remember the people

dancing behind me in support from my camp. Some had been out all day waiting for the round when I would pierce, send my power through their prayers. Soon, the two of us who were pierced were motioned to make our four approaches to the tree. As we moved forward the weight of the rope dropped off and the pain eased. We touched the tree and prayed. Another Dancer, four days, was at the base of the tree having a real hard time. I tried to give him strength through prayer and example. We were motioned away from the tree. When I released the rope from my hands again the pain, this time familiar, no vision, but I leaned back hard. I tried this time to make the *Tankashelas* proud. If "white" boys were going to do the Sun Dance, I wanted the original Dancers to be proud of the ones with whom it was now shared. Back to the Tree. I pray for a good break, the strength and bravery to do it in a good way. Back away from the tree, leaning into the pain again Dancing hard. Back to the Tree. It moves, undulates solidly in the wind. More prayer. Prayers spoken out loud for the Dancer collapsed at the base of the tree. Back out to the circle, the volume of the drumming and singing building, the energy of the Dance building to the small climax coming. Leaning into pain all the way now, if I break too soon now it is because I was Dancing hard, I was brave and strong. But I don't. The final trip to the Tree. Strong prayers for a good break. Strong prayers for the people, for healing the nation, for my relatives, my wife's family.

Prayers for Crisca, for mentors, for teachers, for the Chipps. The final prayer, the lesson I take from the Tree: "let me be brave enough to see the strength inside me." Backing away from the tree I know that the break will hurt but will release me. I want to break good, not to rush it, not to struggle. I let the rope go from my hand, it hits the ground briefly and then lifts as the pain of connection sets in warm, flooding my body, I relax and let it flow in me, I Dance backwards slowly but powerfully leaning hard. I remember my vision of the Earth - She can not break. I remember the ancestors who value the strong warriors, honorable men. I hit the end of the rope it is brought tight, my skin stretches unimaginably far. I concentrate on the Tree, thinking stops. I just lean harder and harder, dancing, ready to fall when the break comes. The pain is beyond pain now into sensations of light and heat. Flags blow in the Tree, my prayer ties are up there, the leaves flash in the wind. My vision begins to dim. SNAP! SNAP! My piercings give way one right after the other. In a haze, I see the ropes fly toward the Tree and then lay slack as I stumble backwards and am caught. I worry for a moment for my pins. The relief is wonderful, the weight of the Tree, Earth, and Sky are gone, but so is the power. I feel weak, small, human, light, but victorious, elated. I have danced the Sun Dance. I have pierced. I am rotated clock-wise and taken to the tree. There my piercings are trimmed of loose flesh- more pain but quick, easy, fearless. My hand is

shaken. Some helpers say thank you. I am danced to my place in the circle. The Dance goes on for the rest of the day and the next. The piercings are sore, tender, but there is no bruising, no tears. I was well pierced and broke well.

In my sleeping bag that night in the *tipi* I feel the tenderness of fresh cuts but it is not bad. It rains hard. Some men hold their mouths open under the streaming leaks for water. Others collect it in plastic and cups around the edges. Outside, I know there is a huge piece of plastic collecting water. In the morning, after talking to two Viet Nam vets smoking cigarettes in the shelter of the outhouse, I plunge my whole face into a pool and drink the ice cold water fresh from the Sky and the Thunder beings.

Wounds, Scars, Symbols

After the Dance I stayed at the Chipps' for several days hiking in the Badlands and generally just hanging out. I was in no real hurry to leave until the lure of swimming became so strong in the oppressive, shadeless heat of our camp, that we decided to go to Rose Bud. My travelling partner and ethnobotany/ethno-ornithology assistant, Dan, had become good friends with Pedro Red Hawk, the singer for every Dance we went to that summer. We decided to visit him at his home in Antelope on Rose Bud, just outside of Mission. Rose Bud, Pedro's wife told us one day over baloney and white bread sandwiches, is the civilized reservation when compared to Pine



Ridge. Rose Bud also has abundant places to swim. The first day we travelled to Mission we went swimming at a beautiful creek with an excellent rope swing. While we were there, we were joined by some of the local Lakota who were very nice and acted like there was nothing the least bit unusual about two white guys swimming in this out of the way place. We talked about the history of the swing, decades old, work on the reservation, weather and other things. A young child brought with him a water bottle handed out at an early spring mountain bike race in central Michigan last year - my last race before my accident. Maybe three hundred people attended. They did not know how they came to have it. When the topic of us being at a Sun Dance came around, I realized that my fresh piercing wounds were obvious. No one mentioned it. Neither of the men we talked to had danced - no scars except from stabbing. It could have been an awkward moment but was not.

The act of taking a shirt off has an entirely new aspect to it. In a recent movie filmed on Pine Ridge, *Thunder Heart*, an old man, a medicine man in the story, has his shirt ripped open by police during a raid to arrest an AIM member. He has scars. He is not just an actor. In the lodge the first day I joined the Dance, while they asked who was a first year dancer, Red Feather looked at my chest, and pointed me out to Two Feathers.

At a cocktail party for a local poet that I attend when I return in the fall, old friends of the family ask, "oh let

me see your scars!" They know little of the Sun Dance, but scars speak to them. I carry the weight of two worlds. One world sees the scars as objects to be studied, until now, largely divorced of their spiritual meaning. Or, perhaps, as in this last example, they are an exotic oddity like nipple piercing and tatoos - modern primitivism, the latest trend. Maybe, they are a mixture of both. In the other world, they have meaning that is known, not invented - they are *Wakan*, they remind me of my vision, my sacred path. I feel uneasy pulling down the collar of my t-shirt to display my spiritual marks.

At the Dance I prayed to the *Tankashelas* to make them proud, does this ruin it, do I shame them? Do I say, in the company of agnostics, poets, "my scars are sacred." Is either one really true? I danced as a scientist looking for the mechanics of belief. Belief I got, and the mechanics I understand but the belief doubts the validity of the science as ultimate truth and the science doubts the veracity, the verity, of the vision in its own terms. A friend of mine who dances told me one day about how he is always careful to cover his scars with a shirt at the gym while lifting weights. He does not want to face the explanations, the judgements. For the All Nations Dancer, the "white" boy, or whatever color, the scars carry meaning in two worlds, one of fear, scorn, and ridicule, another of honor, sacrifice, and tradition. This is an element common, perhaps, with all Sun Dancers, except those

who are *Tankashelas*. One of the last things Charles told me before I left was that people would think I was crazy. He also told me that many times, I would just have to sit on the floor and be, think, pray, for hours. In this Nation, today, the meaning of a Sun Dance scar is unknown, waiting to be formed with each person met with one's shirt off. From talking to other Dancers, I know that the struggle to maintain the spiritual integrity that the ritual and elders demand, can be difficult and lonely once the Dancer leaves the Chipp's Land.

Chapter Six:

Closure

In the previous three chapters I gave the reader a theory for analysis and two ethnographic sketches structured in terms of that analysis. I left the theory largely implicit in those two ethnographic chapters to preserve some of the sense of the rituals, some of the aesthetic atmosphere that is so important to understanding the Sun Dance. In this conclusion, I briefly make the operation of the theory I laid out obvious in example. I return to *inipi*, piercing and scars. Following this review of theory and ethnography, I explore the light it may bring to both historical and contemporary Sun Dance. I return to the theory to review it and bring it into a unified form. In light of the review of these elements of this thesis, I offer one reason why I believe Sun Dance has a growing number on non-Native American practitioners. Finally, I reflect on the work of this thesis in closure and try to restore some of the natural beauty and meaning of the Sun Dance that is stripped away by the narrow and very analytical focus of this thesis.

***Inipi* in Explicit Analysis**

As is required before entering the Sun Dance, we must first go to the sweat lodge. It is here that the fundamental "skills" for the Sun Dance are learned. Indeed, as I have argued, and will demonstrate again most explicitly, *inipi* during the four days of purification, is a ceremony that teaches the body as well as the mind. Furthermore, what the body learns reflects, in undeniable physical form, key ultimate sacred postulates and values derived from them. The "language" of *inipi* is one of physical symbols and symbol systems that not only mirrors the spoken discourse of those symbols and systems, but often transports individuals into numinous states further validating the postulates it enlivens.

Let us take only one example and explore the richness of this process. Now, as soon as I attempt to isolate just one variable, I find myself having to qualify that goal for as I have tried to show tacitly, we are dealing with webs of meaning. Let us just begin anyway, with suffering - a key concept at work in *inipi*. Suffering is linked with the ultimate sacred postulate that there are Lakota ancestors, *Tankashelas*, who are sapient and active, though not corporal. Charles says, in the lodge, that the ancestors want us to be humble before them and this requires suffering. Suffering is then induced in the lodge through heat, steam, and all their related effects. Suffering, therefore, becomes not only an idea, but a lived experience. Once we are suffering, the *tankashelas* are willing to hear our prayers.

Until now, I left un-analyzed the activity of praying so that it could be seen mostly in its own sense. At this point I am willing to put it under the knife. Prayer is linked tightly to suffering for one prays as one suffers. Prayer is an intense inward concentration of thought and emotion that has as its focus, in this case, an "outside audience," the ancestors. This audience is due to an ultimate sacred postulate - a feature of a social symbolic system. This postulate, the ancestors, is brought to mind and made operative in an atmosphere of severe physical stimulation. The combination has a unique result. Through this effort of concentration, a certain relief from physical suffering is possible. This relief is hardly mundane, however, for it comes within the context of suffering and prayer - a whole body experience also involving the mind and language abilities. Add to this just one important derivative of the ultimate sacred postulate of ancestors: that if you suffer genuinely and pray hard enough for strength to overcome that suffering, it may be granted. Suddenly, we have an experience of the numinous - the apprehension of the divine. The unfalsifiable ultimate sacred postulate of the existence of active ancestors is given proof in the strength to endure suffering, achieved through prayer in *inipi*. Prayers are answered. Most importantly, this is not just an intellectual exercise but one that involves somatic and affective sensations as well. One could say that when prayers are

answered the power of the ancestors is felt. Indeed, I have heard of ancestors being seen in lodges. There are areas outside the lodge where payers are answered as well. Marriages are repaired, children healed, and objects found.

Worship in the lodge involves the whole human being thus making what is learned and known both bodily and intellectual, often involving attainment of the numinous which can validate the very premises of the practice. Suffering is just one condition of spiritual experience in *inipi* that enlivens an ultimate sacred postulate.

If we return to contemplate the more complex illustration presented in my previous ethnographic sketch, we can see that this process is in action on many levels. For example, song is a physical activity with tremendous capacity for expression of affect, which I argued is both bodily and mental as well as nondiscursive. The discursive lyrics of songs communicate, and often establish, ultimate sacred postulates. Through the combination of *inipi* conditions and song, it is possible to link ultimate sacred postulates found in lyrics to numinous states achieved while singing. The very existence of the lodge is a result of the ancestors, who "told us to do things this way," and one prays to them within this structure of long tradition. Suffering is not the only theme either. Healing, strength, humility, purification, tradition, community, manhood, gathering of spiritual power, and others are all both

subjects of discourse in the lodge and enlivened through ritual activity, and thus incorporated into the participant as well as learned "rationally." There is a vast array of symbols, ultimate sacred postulates, and interpretations derived from them, to be communicated in *inipi* and it does so with particular excellence given its nature to make discursive but abstract notions physical, undeniable, and possibly numinous.

Sweat lodge is a rapidly spreading form of worship that is very attractive to large numbers of people across North America. Charles travels year round to build and pour lodges throughout the world. There is more to the attraction of *inipi* than just this process of whole being involvement that I have discussed above; however, I feel that this is at the core of *inipi*'s spread. People may want to go to a lodge to experience Native American culture or worship in a form of Mother Earth religion. What they experience when they get there is potentially profoundly engaging. Even before the lodge begins there is a blend of environment and spiritual attitude unique in a world of Judao-Christian practice. There is a fire with its sounds, heat, smell of wood smoke, and flames to gaze into. The sky above is visible as is, perhaps, the Sun or Moon. The natural environment surrounds the participant, providing the very things one holds sacred, to contemplate in their reality. Many of the symbols used in *inipi*, especially those of ultimate sacred postulates,

subjects and objects of prayer, have physical referents that are actual, fundamental, objects in daily life as well as in spiritual practice. The result makes the objects of worship⁵ most real, and real objects the subject of spiritual thought and ritual process. There is little arbitrariness in the symbols of *inipi*. In a world of lies, deceit, and advertising, the immediate, tangible, whole being experience of *inipi*, can be profoundly attractive and intensely satisfying.

Piercing in Explicit Analysis

Now let us examine the physicality of symbols, and the bodily connection and incorporation of symbol systems, in a second example - piercing. First, it should be recalled that a great deal of preparation goes into the moments of piercing. The lessons of *inipi* are a crucial precursor to the experience. Strength, endurance of suffering, prayer, endurance of thirst, all these skills and more are learned in *inipi* and taken to a another level of intensity in Sun Dance. The Sun Dancer has up to a year to prepare for the Dance and

⁵ I use the term "worship" here as I heard it used in practice. It is intended to communicate a sense of awe, reverence, and respect for natural objects that many find to be lacking in Christian faith. The term for some anthropologists has something of a derogatory tone, recalling disdain for the primitive prostration before the wrong deity such as found in the reports by Dorsey. For many people at the Sun Dance, the return to a sacred and humble relationship with the Earth, Sky, ancestors, and others is a careful effort to correct something erroneously absent in most Christian practice.

work with the symbolic potential of all the regalia. During the Dance, new symbols are invoked, new focalizations for meaning provided, all ultimately open ended yet also pointing to each other in a web that can be endlessly traveled. New ritual processes are introduced and enacted that recall previous practices, renewing and expanding their meaning while embodying new information and new opportunities to make meaning.

Piercing is a tremendous use of physical symbols and human bodies. I described the feeling of piercing, and its potential for the numinous. However, I only previously alluded to the connection of the Sun Dancer and the other "beings" to which he is linked. The body, obviously, is pierced, and thus physically, actually, undeniably bound to the symbolic system. Nearly all the elements of this system are direct physical referents. The pins connect the human to the rope, the rope to the Tree of life. The Tree of Life is itself an intricate web of meanings and further focalizations. For instance, it contains the prayer ties of the Sun Dancer, 550, plus five. The Dancer thus, has 555 prayers on the tree, along with those of others Dancers, along with flags for the seven directions, along with the effigies of buffalo and man. The Tree was cut down by the Dancers, carried by the Dancers, and raised in place by the Dancers. In effect, a social relationship exists between this Tree and the Dancer. Now, he is bound to it, connected without doubt to it. In turn, the

Tree is set in the Earth, where the flesh from offerings and the piercing of the Dancer, will be buried. The Tree itself is already of the Earth. The Tree also reaches the Sky. The Sun Dancer is thus bound to both the plain of the Earth with four directions and the vertical axis of Earth and Sky. In the Sky are the Thunder Beings, the Winged Messengers, the wind, the Moon, and the Sun. All these things are visible, tangible, and readily contemplated as well as experienced sensually during the course of the Sun Dance. During piercing, the Sun Dancer is physically, spiritually, symbolically, and socially, linked to all of creation. Each link in this huge chain of meaning is in turn linked to others.

The potential for making meaning of the immense symbolic web of piercing exceeds summarization or interpretation. Indeed, as one's mind attempts to contemplate the Sun Dance during practice, as one's body feels it, it is quite possible to realize that the meaning of the Sun Dance, and life itself, escapes complete understanding. I assert that this realization that the grandeur of both life and human interpretation of it through cosmology and religion are beyond the scope of intelligibility of one person, is a numinous experience in itself. There is something powerful in seeing the limits of one's mind. In the face of such magnitude of meaning, certainly mysterious in its extent, one clings to the small pieces of meaning that one understands. *Wakan Tanka,*

the Great Mystery, is consciously joined during piercing, and during this connection, one receives a vision, a small portion of the totality of existence, to give manageable meaning to life. Paradoxically, to grasp momentarily the Great Mystery, is to understand perhaps that its meaning is un-intelligible. Here, possibly, my interpretation of *Wakan Tanka* is as skewed by contemporary New Age infusions of Eastern Religions and philosophies in Woptura Sun Dance, as previous authors or Sun Dances have been affected by Christianity.

The Sun Dance is quite a unification for the Sun Dancer. Discourse, action, music, feeling, spirituality, and more, are brought into a harmonious flow of ritual where each level parallels and enriches the other. *Inipi*, we should be reminded, is even part of the Sun Dance. Indeed, lest one forget the lessons of the lodge, there is an *inipi* every morning before dancing and every evening when it is done. The *inipi* makes the day's Sun Dancing seem easier, the day's Sun Dancing makes the *inipi* seem easier. In *inipi*, ideas to contemplate during the day's Dance are offered by the water pourer, often a leading Sun Dance helper. Slowly, over the course of the Sun Dance, the world becomes redrawn in terms of the suffering, the endurance, the spirituality, of the Sun Dance. When it is over, the suffering ends, the thirst ends, the hunger ends, the spirituality lingers, the vision guides, the scars heal but remain to remind.

Scars

The scars as a lasting end product, a permanent symbol upon the body, have the ability to invoke the entire experience for the Dance as well as any other related experience or idea that can be associated with the scars. In the sense of symbols, the scars are the piercing. From my description of the piercing, it should be obvious that this is an inscription of cultural symbol systems into the body of the Sun Dancer. The inscription operates on as many levels as the Sun Dance and the scars are as highly complex a symbol as the Sun Dance is a ritual. Yet, the scars freeze the Dance in time and distill it down to a pair of symbols on the chest. At one time the scars are a mark of bravery, strength, endurance, sanctity, sacrifice, and membership among many other possible meanings. The scars are a mark of the spirituality of the Sun Dancer. Scars indicate a man who has been unified with the Earth and Sky, who has maybe had a vision, who has spiritual power, who has given his flesh for the people, who can perhaps heal. But this is an outside view of the scars. From the inside, the same things as above are true, but the meaning extends deeply into the personal. The scars to the man who owns them, are a reminder of experience of Dancing. The man knows after the Dance that he can face days without food or water, that he can endure pain, that he can surrender himself to the authority of elders and ancestors, and that he can endure suffering for the good of

the people. He does not know these things because he was told them, he knows them because he did them. And while he did them, he touched the divine, he felt the power of the Great Spirit in him and all things, he received a vision that may guide his life, he began to understand the meaning of all things in a way so powerful that he may never fully describe it. While these things are known to the properly enculturated observer, they are incorporated by the Sun Dancer. The man is bound to a common set of socially held beliefs, values, ethics, and the like through the invariant practice of ritual, and comes to hold those fiercely as his own for he not only knows them but feels them, but he does so in his own way. The Sun Dance scars say all this to him and those who see his bared chest, and understand the Sun Dance.

History's Warriors and Contemporary Sun Dancers

The power of Sun Dance, if we regard it historically, is somewhat lost on contemporary practitioners. The spiritual growth, the experience of the numinous, the sense of community and tradition are all important. However, very briefly casting ourselves back two hundred years we see some of the amazing effects of the Sun Dance. The pain and suffering become more intelligible. Today, participants in All Nations Sun Dances leave the thirst and hunger behind at the end of

the Dance⁶, unlikely to experience it again outside of situations over which they have some control - like fasting during vision quest. On the Plains before contact, hunger and thirst were more common and hardship more life threatening. Wounds from battle were likely. To have these experiences produced under controlled and highly sanctified conditions would be of great benefit. One's first wounds of battle come not from ones enemies but from one's elders, friends, and future warrior's society members in sacred ceremony. They are associated not so much with chaos, panic, fear, war, blood and terror as they are with the order of one's people and one's religion. The first wounds "of battle" lead to a vision, to a sacrifice that renews the Earth. Bravery, strength, sacrifice, duty to one's people, the help of the *Tankashelas*, sanctity, honor, and community approval are cut into the body, poured into the man through his sacred connection with the Earth and Sky through the Tree of life. These things he carries into battle living more than knowing, his very breath, his hunger, his thirst, his fear far from home, are sacred and opportunities for prayer and increased power. For a man who can live as a warrior for his people, the Sun Dance should be a life defining ritual in ways we can only appreciate through

⁶ Native American still experience hunger and malnutrition on the reservation. Many non-native Sun Dancers are poor and may themselves be hungry on occasion. However, as they are not part of a hunting community, the problem of hunger is a different one than for the Lakota of the Great Plains before U.S. expansion.

imagination today.

In contemporary Sun Dance, the warrior element of the Sun Dance is muted. In its place are themes that still echo traditional ones but have relevance to modern concerns: healing from drugs, alcohol and illness; reverence for the Earth. Perhaps the Sun Dance we see in Dorsey and Walker is as much a product of its time as today's? At the time of those field studies, the Lakota had just been forced onto the Reservations after surprisingly successful resistance to United States expansion. The Lakota people had been engaged in constant warfare with sporadic engagements for generations against the United States and other nations of Native Americans. Perhaps the theme of war was necessarily most compelling for the Lakota. If anthropologists had attended Sun Dances another century earlier, if they existed, perhaps other themes would have prevailed - something to do with the effigies of buffalo and man hung in the Tree. Even today, however, the bravery, strength, and tolerance for pain expected of a warrior are valued in a Sun Dancer. For Native Americans attempting to hold their traditional culture together and return pride, power, and resistance to their Lakota experience, the continuation of a warrior ethic makes sense. For the Sun Dancers of European descent at the Chipp's Dance what does it do?

One answer that I want to offer, is that it need not do anything. The lessons of the *inipi* transfer to the Sun Dance

but the warrior aspect of the Sun Dance need not be to a purpose. Some men will use it, others will not. Stan, one of my key sources, does not really express any of the warrior ethic. He is looking for the shamanistic side of the Sun Dance, the visions, the spiritual discipline. These are themes as traditional as war. The warrior skills are internalized but not connected to his personal system of meaning in the way that the more "purely" spiritual aspects of the Dance are. The piercing does not prepare him for the violence of the enemy, it connects him with creation, with the Great Mystery. The symbolic system of the Sun Dance will be fully internalized by all participants but only some of it will become significant to the individual depending upon that person's predispositions. Later, perhaps some other experience will recall some forgotten portion of the Sun Dance and that too will become meaningful. Another informant of mine values the warrior ethic of the Sun Dance while emphasizing that he is a "spiritual warrior." What really matters, is that we realize that the Sun Dance is different for every Dancer, but at the same time, similar enough so that all share common experiences and agree to certain meanings.

Conclusions on Theory

I want to draw in, as tight as possible, the relationship between the bodily learning through ritual, and the numinous

validation of ultimate sacred postulates. The numinous, I have argued is not just an intellectual experience but one of the whole human being. Thus, when this numinous experience provides undeniable evidence of the un-falsifiable ultimate sacred postulate, it does so not on just a cognitive level that could be debated or doubted, but on a tangible, sensory level that is nearly beyond question. Can one doubt the pain of piercing or the refreshment of water? Then how can one doubt the empathetic experience of feeling what the Earth feels as given in vision during piercing? In the end, what you believe about your religion is not just how you think about it but how you feel about it and perhaps more importantly, how you think about it when you feel about it.

Sun Dance does not have as a goal giving each participant the same vision or the same indoctrination. Lakota spirituality does not work that way - it has much room for individual variation. It does make those individual visions intelligible in common terms that all participants, and the community, can share in after the fact. For example, my individual vision may be something that I share with few people, it is highly personal and the custom that I have learned at the Sun Dance allows me the option of letting it remain so. However, the entire construction of meaning of the Sun Dance does not revolve around my personal interpretation of the experience. Before, after, or while I am Dancing, Charles may be saying to the observers, some of whom are there

to support me, that "the Dancers suffer so that the people may live," or, "the nation, the people, will be healed" or any number of themes that are spoken during the Sun Dance. The point is, while my vision and experience are individual, my Dancing is also a sacrifice for the oyate, the people. They look on. Those who support me look at my piercing and my breaking. They see the suffering, the blood, the wounds. We share friendships, love, food, water, respect, and caring. My pain evokes sympathy and empathy. This is combined with their prayer for my benefit and for others. It is entirely possible for onlookers, many of whom may have been in the hot sun for days dancing around the Arbor, to attain a numinous state as well. At the very least, they feel for the Sun Dancer, share in some associative way, the experience of Dancing. Furthermore, they see his sacrifice and his commitment to the ultimate sacred postulates at work in the ritual. The Sun Dancers belief, through their relationship to him, can become their belief as well. It is not just a statement of belief either, it is sacrifice in the name of the people, to the complex of religion/spirituality. It is proof in pain, blood, thirst, and hunger.

I was a bit surprised by the amount of appreciation that people showed to me for Dancing. In trying to cope with the intensity of personal experience, I nearly lost sight of the aspects of ritual Turner calls "communitas."(Turner, 1969) Communitas peaks at the end of the Sun Dance when the liminal

state of the Dancers draws to a close finalized in the last *inipi* following which the Dancer rejoins his or her friends and family. Together they share his or her Dance *canupa*, sacred pipe, and then line up for the feast. At the feast I was impressed with the comments and hugs by "my" supporters, other supporters, and other Dancers. To many who supported my Dance, and to others, I was dancing for their benefit. To what extent, I may never know, and it is not so important that I do really, any more than it is required of them that they understand my experience in the Arbor. Still, the participation of a Sun Dancer enmeshes him or her in a some community responsibility. At the end of the Dance, the Dancers file around in the circle of the Arbor to heal the people who watch and support. The only act of breaking the spiritual barrier between Dancers and Supporters comes in a gesture of healing and an introduction of the new possibilities of roles for healing, guidance, and proper use of new spiritual power for the *oyate*.

What needs to be healed during this end part of the ritual of Sun Dance is unknown to the Dancer for there is no speaking. Further, the Dancer's specialties in power to heal are unknown to the supporter. As the long line of Dancers slowly move by the supporters, the feelings of joy, gratitude, happiness and others flood both lines. That healing is taking place is known. What that healing is, is left to the individual to interpret. One expects, however, to look for

changes. It may be the surge of feeling during the moment, or it may be the illness of a distant relative suddenly cured. The domains that the focalization of healing seeks to make meaning of are not limited clearly in the Sun Dance and thus the individual is left to make meaning of this "symbol" on his or her own. In this way, the meaning maker will find what satisfies the quandary best and thus make the most of a spiritual opportunity. It is not so important in the Sun Dance that people have exactly the same experiences. Even carefully constructed in ritual, those deeply internal sensations and memories will remain largely unknowable to perhaps even themselves. What matters is that there are common terms in which to speak of powerful personal experiences with commonalities. Those common terms stem from ultimate sacred postulates, their interpretations, and the uniform action of ritual. Sun Dance makes unverifiable ultimate sacred postulates physical, obvious, and undeniable while placing them not only in the mind but in the body in a highly meaningful, personal web of meaning that involves discursive elements held mutually by the community.

All Nations Dancing: One answer to "why?"

In the 1990's, in the United States, many people find little in their world to believe in, to trust. Many people who come to the Sun Dance have experienced disillusionment with important aspects of their "indigenous" culture. They

cannot believe in the Church of their childhood, or the economic exploitation around them deemed by some many to be "natural" or even "God's great plan." Governments are caught in lies, churches smack of deceit, parents are found untrustworthy, drugs and alcohol further disillusionment. In the quest for something that makes life meaningful, some people have come across the Sun Dance, or perhaps, just the *inipi* near their home town. However, Sun Dance is not just for the disillusioned. Some come to it from a curiosity about Native American tradition. In it they find the same convincing, engaging system of symbols, belief, and bodily experience that satisfies those who are plagued with doubt. Regardless of what brings people to the Sun Dance, the ritual seems to impress upon nearly everyone there, its legitimacy and ability to represent truth about the world. New Dancers pledge every year.

However, this is only one aspect of Sun Dance that attracts and enthralls. I do not wish to give the idea that there is only some magic trick of conditioning and cognitively convincing symbolism of physical referents. The Sun Dance has strong aesthetic qualities to it. The values and directives explicated during the long week of ritual have their own worth and appeal. The community, friendships, and memories formed are cherished. The celebration of a ritual once aggressively oppressed is a welcomed return of respected tradition. The meaning of the Sun Dance far transcends the one small piece I

have presented in the cold, mechanical, language of analysis. While this action of ritual and symbolism of validating the ultimate sacred postulate with the numinous no doubt works for many people at the Dances, it must be remembered that the ultimate sacred postulates themselves, as well as the numinous, must be attractive as well. It is the whole Sun Dance, the experience of being outside on the Plains for over a week, the songs, the smells, the prayers, the friends, the teachings, the traditions, and on and on, that make the Sun Dance what it is. The operation of the creation of belief that I have explicated here is only there to make real what people want to make real. Sun Dance, like every other religion or ritual in America, competes for worshipers. Belief, commitment, the acceptance of truth, is a crux, in the long spiritual quest for understanding for many people. Most of all the people at the Sun Dance seem to want a beautiful world to live in - social, natural, spiritual.

Closing This Work

The All Nations Sun Dance of the Chipps provided a unique opportunity for anthropological study of the Sun Dance tradition. A great deal of previous work has been done on Sun Dance - enough to prompt Deloria to ask, "how many additional studies are going to be needed, or wanted, on the Oglala Sun dance?" He goes on to offer an important line of thinking:

Enthusiasts for these kinds of repetitive studies are often people who have recently

entered the field and have the energy and zeal of a newcomer. For those who are acquainted with the subject and the literature of the field, each new study that plows old ground is boring and stirs up considerable resentment. (Deloria, 1991:461)

I hope this work is neither boring nor plowing old ground. I have purposefully avoided a structural study of the Sun Dance as has been done previously. Further, the Sun Dance that I studied is remarkable in that it involves a large number of non-Native Americans. While this may be the object of scorn by some, I make no judgements about the Sun Dance, I simply study it. Whether or not All Nations Dances are acceptable to this or that community is largely a political decision that I want little part of and certainly will not accept responsibility for making. I think that something new has been contributed just by noting that people of non-Native American backgrounds find Oglala tradition to be particularly meaningful and important in their lives not as a passing fancy but as major commitment and component of their spirituality. Charles makes it very clear that the Sun Dance he is intercessing is not a religious ritual but a spiritual event. I take this to mean that the Sun Dance can be somewhat separated from the complete Oglala canon and appreciated on its own. It can be combined with other elements of other religions into a personal spirituality for each person who comes. Indeed, there is often talk of *karma* and other non-Native American spiritual elements at the Sun Dance. It is not necessary for everyone at the Woptura Sun Dances to

"convert to Lakota." It is necessary for everyone to respect the Oglala tradition, perform the ritual according to strict standards, and to pray and perform in earnest. Charles and many of the people who come are interested in unifying people, not segregating them by custom and tradition. This is not always easy and people who refuse to conform to the expectations of the Dance may be asked to leave but more often do so on their own. Charles opens a very traditional ritual up to very contemporary conditions and does the best he can to be true to the *Tankashelas'* wishes, the needs of the people, and the diversity of individuals that bring their own influences and beliefs to the Dance.

This openness at the Sun Dance, and the diversity of participants, allows the anthropologist to access parts of the Dance that previous authors seem to be unable or unwilling to apprehend. I was able to Dance the Sun Dance and be relatively unremarkable. I was highly different from many of the other participants in that my anthropological training made most of the workings of the Dance obvious to me in ways they were probably not for others. I can not believe. I did have what could be called a spiritual experience. I did have a vision, as I described. As I also noted, it was instantly subjected to the self-analysis inherent in years of university training in religion, ritual, and symbolism. Thus, my Sun Dance was not fully "native," as my internal web of meaning pretty much bars any form of belief in one system or another.

I was there to study - eventually myself. I doubt that any one else in the Arbor thought to themselves, "hey, I'm having a numinous experience in terms of the teachings I received in the lodge as well as other systems of meanings and values internalized over the past two years of study and fieldwork!" I did deeply feel my vision, however, and for the split second before my self-analysis kicked in, I was probably like everyone else to a degree, I was Sun Dancer in the grip of spiritual ecstasy. I bring that out of the Dance and I think that it is something new. I would not ask anyone else involved in the Dance to analyze their own spirituality for me in the way I have, nor would I feel comfortable doing it for them. These things are *Wakan*, and I respect that. Anthropology ruined a perfectly good ritual for me, although, I was there for anthropology not myself. I climb mountains for me.

This Sun Dance was not purely traditional, if there is such a thing, especially because of the influence of the personal beliefs of so many non-Natives. But the ritual process was perhaps one of the most true to tradition in decades. In this way, despite the All Nations aspects, I was able to see, and be a part of, something very ancient. I left the Sun Dance with an enormous amount of data relating to the experience of the Sun Dancer during the ritual, at least as far as ritual and symbolic action are concerned. The traditional nature of the Dance allows for this to be extrapo-

lated into history to shed at least a little light on ethnographic accounts short on affect and sense of spirituality.

I think that Charles's understanding of the Sun Dance, and my own are probably very close. His is the Lakota perspective of belief, and mine is the anthropological perspective of objectification. He knew that to understand what the Sun Dance was about I had to do it. For someone wanting to perform anthropology from the practice approach, this was a logical extension of anthropological position. I could not, of course, learn what anyone else was experiencing in whole but I did learn a great deal about the power of the numinous and the human body to create belief. Not just the leap of faith belief of philosophy but a belief that wells up from the heart and soul to flood the human with a total sensation of understanding and faith. My Sun Dance allowed me to bring life to a theory. I know a lot more about Sun Dance than if I had sat, detached and aloof, in the Arbor just taking notes. Ritual is not just a spectacle for observers, it is an experience for participants. Charles said, "you've got to give it up, boy." I did. I gave up thinking I knew more about ritual than the man who was charged by the ancestors to keep it alive. I surrendered myself and significant aspects of my research to the people who really know about the Sun Dance. I let them teach me what I should know. It worked. I had to pray and to suffer for this

thesis. Prayers do not come true without effort. Observing by Dancing made me realize the full extent of what is happening in this ritual. I have tried to give some of that to the reader in support of theory and in the sense of the ceremony.

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