

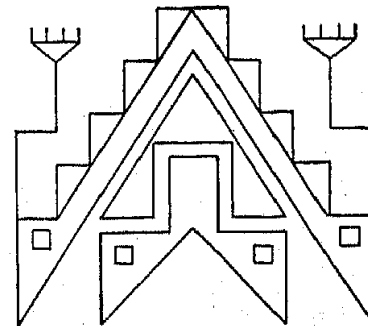
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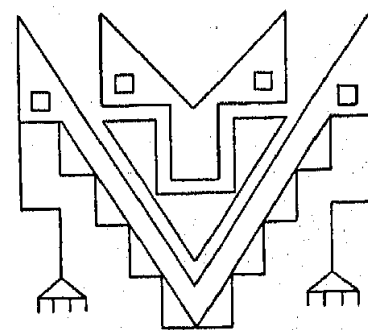
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THE SACRED PIPE



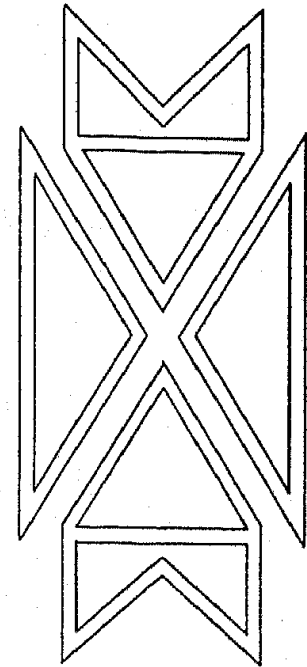
BLACK ELK'S ACCOUNT

OF THE SEVEN RITES OF THE OGLALA SIOUX

RECORDED & EDITED BY

JOSEPH EPES BROWN

PENGUIN BOOKS



Wiwanyag Wachipi: THE SUN DANCE

The *wiwanyag wachipi* (dance looking at the sun) is one of our greatest rites and was first held many, many winters after our people received the sacred pipe from the White Buffalo Cow Woman. It is held each year during the Moon of Fattening (June) or the Moon of Cherries Blackening (July), always at the time when the moon is full, for the growing and dying of the moon reminds us of our ignorance which comes and goes; but when the moon is full it is as if the eternal light of the Great Spirit were upon the whole world. But now I will tell you how this holy rite first came to our people and how it was first made.

Our people were once camped in a good place, in a circle, of course, and the old men were sitting having a council, when they noticed that one of our men, Kablaya (Spread), had dropped his robe down around his waist, and was dancing there all alone with

his hand raised towards heaven. The old men thought that perhaps he was crazy, so they sent someone to find out what was the matter; but this man who was sent suddenly dropped his robe down around his waist, too, and started dancing with Kablaya. The old men thought this very strange, and so they all went over to see what could be the matter. Kablaya then explained to them:

"Long ago *Wakan-Tanka* told us how to pray with the sacred pipe, but we have now become lax in our prayers, and our people are losing their strength. But I have just been shown, in a vision, a new way of prayer; in this manner *Wakan-Tanka* has sent aid to us."

When they heard this the old men all said, "How!" and seemed very pleased. They then had a conference and sent two men to the keeper of the sacred pipe, for he should give advice on all matters of this sort. The keeper told the men that this was certainly a very good thing, for "we were told that we would have seven ways of praying to *Wakan-Tanka*, and this must certainly be one of them, for Kablaya has been taught in a vision, and we were told in the beginning that we should receive our rites in this manner."

The two messengers brought this news back to the old men, who then asked Kablaya to instruct them in what they must do. Kablaya then spoke to the men, saying: "This is to be the sun dance; we cannot make it immediately but must wait four days, and during this time we shall prepare, as I have been instructed in my vision. This dance will be an offering of our bodies and souls to *Wakan-Tanka* and will be very *wakan*. All our old and holy men should gather; a large tipi should be built and sage should be placed all around inside it. You must have a good pipe, and also all the following equipment:

Ree twist tobacco
bark of the red willow
Sweet grass
a bone knife
a flint axe
buffalo tallow

a tanned buffalo calf hide
rabbit skins
eagle plumes
red earth paint
blue paint
rawhide

a buffalo skull
a rawhide bag

eagle tail feathers
whistles from the wing bones
of the Spotted Eagle.

After the people had secured all these sacred things, Kablaya then asked all those who could sing to come to him that evening so that he could teach them the holy songs; he said that they should bring with them a large drum made from a buffalo hide, and they should have very stout drum sticks, covered at the end with buffalo hide, the hair side out.

Since the drum is often the only instrument used in our sacred rites, I should perhaps tell you here why it is especially sacred and important to us. It is because the round form of the drum represents the whole universe, and its steady strong beat is the pulse, the heart, throbbing at the center of the universe. It is as the voice of *Wakan-Tanka*, and this sound stirs us and helps us to understand the mystery and power of all things.

That evening the singers, four men and a woman, came to Kablaya, who spoke to them in this manner: "O you, my relatives, for a very long time we have been sending our voices to *Wakan-Tanka*. This He has taught us to do. We have many ways of praying to Him, and through this sacred manner of living our generations have learned to walk the red path with firm steps. The sacred pipe is always at the center of the hoop of our nation, and with it the people have walked and will continue to walk in a holy manner.

"In this new rite which I have just received, one of the standing peoples has been chosen to be at our center; he is the *wagachun* (the rustling tree, or cottonwood); he will be our center and also the people, for the tree represents the way of the people. Does it not stretch from the earth here to heaven there?¹ This new way of sending our voices to *Wakan-Tanka* will be very powerful; its use will spread, and, at this time of year, every year, many people will

¹ In the *Atharva Veda Samhita* of the Hindu scriptures, we find a description of the significance of their World Tree, which is quite identical to the symbolism of the tree for the Lakota: "The World Tree in which the trunk, which is also the sun pillar, sacrificial post, and *axis mundi*,

THE SACRED PIPE

pray to the Great Spirit. Before I teach you the holy songs, let us first offer the pipe to our Father and Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*."

"O Grandfather, Father, *Wakan-Tanka*, we are about to fulfill Thy will as You have taught us to do in my vision. This we know will be a very sacred way of sending our voices to You; through this, may our people receive wisdom; may it help us to walk the sacred path with all the Powers of the universe! Our prayer will really be the prayer of all things, for all are really one; all this I have seen in my vision. May the four Powers of the universe help us to do this rite correctly; O Great Spirit, have mercy upon us!"

The pipe was smoked by all, and then Kablaya began to teach the songs to the five people. Many other people had gathered around the singers, and to these Kablaya said that while they listen they should frequently cry "O Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, I offer the pipe to You that my people may live!"

There were no words to the first song that Kablaya taught the singers; it was simply a chant, repeated four times, and the fast beat on the drum was used. The words to the second song were:

*Wakan-Tanka, have mercy on us,
That our people may live!*

And the third song was:

*They say a herd of buffalo is coming;
It is here now!
Their blessing will come to us.
It is with us now!*

The fourth song was a chant and had no words.

rising from the altar at the navel of the earth, penetrates the world door and branches out above the roof of the world (A. V. X. 7. 3.); as the 'non-existent (unmanifested) branch that yonder kindreds know as the Supernal' (A. V. X. 7. 21)." (Translated by A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Svayamatrna: Janua Coeli*," *Zalmoxis*.)

For a full explanation of the symbolism of the tree, see René Guénon, *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, Les Editions Vega (Paris, 1931); especially Chap. IX, "L'Arbre du Milieu."

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Then Kablaya taught the men who had brought their eagle-bone whistles how they should be used, and he also told the men what equipment they should prepare and explained the meaning of each ritual object.

"You should prepare a necklace of otter skin, and from it there should hang a circle with a cross in the center. At the four places where the cross meets the circle there should hang eagle feathers which represent the four Powers of the universe and the four ages. At the center of the circle you should tie a plume taken from the breast of the eagle, for this is the place which is nearest to the heart and center of the sacred bird. This plume will be for *Wakan-Tanka*, who dwells at the depths of the heavens, and who is the center of all things.

"You all have the eagle-bone whistles, and to the ends of each of these an eagle plume should be tied. When you blow the whistle always remember that it is the voice of the Spotted Eagle; our Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, always hears this, for you see it is really His own voice.

"A *hanhepi wi* [night sun, or moon] should be cut from rawhide in the shape of a crescent, for the moon represents a person and, also, all things, for everything created waxes and wanes, lives and dies. You should also understand that the night represents ignorance, but it is the moon and the stars which bring the Light of *Wakan-Tanka* into this darkness. As you know the moon comes and goes, but *anpetu wi*, the sun, lives on forever; it is the source of light, and because of this it is like *Wakan-Tanka*.

"A five-pointed star should be cut from rawhide. This will be the sacred Morning Star who stands between the darkness and the light, and who represents knowledge.

"A round rawhide circle should be made to represent the sun, and this should be painted red; but at the center there should be a round circle of blue, for this innermost center represents *Wakan-Tanka* as our Grandfather. The light of this sun enlightens the entire universe; and as the flames of the sun come to us in the morning, so comes the grace of *Wakan-Tanka*, by which all creatures are enlightened. It is because of this that the four-leggeds

and the wingeds always rejoice at the coming of the light. We can all see in the day, and this seeing is sacred for it represents the sight of that real world which we may have through the eye of the heart. When you wear this sacred sign in the dance, you should remember that you are bringing Light into the universe, and if you concentrate on these meanings you will gain great benefit.

"A round circle should be cut and painted red, and this will represent Earth. She is sacred, for upon Her we place our feet, and from Her we send our voices to *Wakan-Tanka*. She is a relative of ours, and this we should always remember when we call Her "Grandmother" or "Mother." When we pray we raise our hand to the heavens, and afterwards we touch the earth, for is not our Spirit from *Wakan-Tanka*, and are not our bodies from the earth? We are related to all things: the earth and the stars, everything, and with all these together we raise our hand to *Wakan-Tanka* and pray to Him alone.

"You should also cut from rawhide another round circle, and this should be painted blue for the heavens. When you dance you should raise your head and hand up to these heavens, looking at them, for if you do this your Grandfather will see you. It is He who owns everything; there is nothing which does not belong to Him, and thus it is to Him alone that you should pray.

"Finally, you should cut from rawhide the form of *tatanka*, the buffalo. He represents the people and the universe and should always be treated with respect, for was he not here before the two-legged peoples, and is he not generous in that he gives us our homes and our food? The buffalo is wise in many things, and, thus, we should learn from him and should always be as a relative with him.

"Each man should wear one of these sacred symbols on his chest, and he should realize their meanings as I have explained to you here. In this great rite you are to offer your body as a sacrifice in behalf of all the people, and through you the people will gain understanding and strength. Always be conscious of these things which I have told you today; it is all *wakan!*"

The next day it was necessary to locate the sacred rustling tree

which was to stand at the center of the great lodge, and so Kablaya told his helper of the type of tree which he should find and mark with sage, that the war party will be able to locate it and bring it back to camp. Kablaya also instructed the helpers how they must mark out the ground where the sacred sun-dance lodge will be set up, around the holy tree, and how they should mark the doorway at the east with green branches.

The following day the scouts, who had been chosen by the spiritual leaders, went out and pretended to scout for the tree. When it was found they returned immediately to camp, and after circling sun-wise around the place where the lodge was to be, they all charged for the doorway, trying to strike a coup on it. These scouts then took up a pipe, and, after offering it to the six directions, they swore that they would tell the truth. When this had been done, Kablaya spoke to the men in this manner:

"You have taken up the holy pipe, and so you must now tell us with truth all that you have seen. You know that running through the stem of the pipe there is a little hole leading straight to the center and heart of the pipe; let your minds be as straight as this Way. May your tongues not be forked. You have been sent out to find a tree that will be of great benefit to the people, so now tell us truthfully what you have found."

Kablaya then turned the pipe around four times, and pointed the stem towards the scout who was to give the report.

"I went over a hill, and there I saw many of the sacred standing peoples."

"In which direction were you facing, and what did you see beyond the first hill?"

"I was facing the west," the scout replied, "and then I went further and looked over a second hill and saw many more of the sacred standing people living there."

In this manner the scout was questioned four times, for as you know with our people all good things are done in fours; and then this is the manner in which we always question our scouts when we are on the warpath, for you see we are here regarding the tree as an enemy who is to be killed.

When the scouts had given their report, they all dressed as if they were going on the warpath; and then they left the camp as if to attack the enemy. Many other people followed behind the scouts. When they came to the chosen tree, they all gathered around it; then, last of all, Kablaya arrived with his pipe, which he held with its stem pointing towards the tree; he spoke in this manner:

"Of all the many standing peoples, you O rustling cottonwood have been chosen in a sacred manner; you are about to go to the center of the people's sacred hoop, and there you will represent the people and will help us to fulfill the will of *Wakan-Tanka*. You are a kind and good-looking tree; upon you the winged peoples have raised their families; from the tip of your lofty branches down to your roots, the winged and four-legged peoples have made their homes. When you stand at the center of the sacred hoop you will be the people, and you will be as the pipe, stretching from heaven to earth. The weak will lean upon you, and for all the people you will be a support. With the tips of your branches you hold the sacred red and blue days. You will stand where the four sacred paths cross—there you will be the center of the great Powers of the universe. May we two-leggeds always follow your sacred example, for we see that you are always looking upwards into the heavens. Soon, and with all the peoples of the world, you will stand at the center; for all beings and all things you will bring that which is good. *Hechetu welo!*"

Kablaya then offered his pipe to Heaven and Earth, and then with the stem he touched the tree on the west, north, east, and south sides; after this he lit and smoked the pipe.

I think it would be good to explain to you here why we consider the cottonwood tree to be so very sacred. I might mention first, that long ago it was the cottonwood who taught us how to make our tipis, for the leaf of the tree is an exact pattern of the tipi, and this we learned when some of our old men were watching little children making play houses from these leaves. This too is a good example of how much grown men may learn from very little children, for the hearts of little children are pure, and, therefore, the Great Spirit may show to them many things which older

people miss. Another reason why we choose the cottonwood tree to be at the center of our lodge is that the Great Spirit has shown to us that, if you cut an upper limb of this tree crosswise, there you will see in the grain a perfect five pointed star, which, to us, represents the presence of the Great Spirit. Also perhaps you have noticed that even in the very lightest breeze you can hear the voice of the cottonwood tree; this we understand is its prayer to the Great Spirit,² for not only men, but all things and all beings pray to Him continually in differing ways.

The chiefs then did a little victory dance there around the tree, singing their chief's songs, and as they sang and danced they selected the man who was to have the honor of counting coup on the tree; he must always be a man of good character, who has shown himself brave and self-sacrificing on the warpath. Three other men were also chosen by the chiefs, and then each of these four men stood at one of the four sides of the tree—the leader at the west. This leader then told of his great deeds in war, and when he had finished the men cheered and the women gave the tremulo. The brave man then motioned with his axe three times towards the tree, and the fourth time he struck it. Then the other three men in turn told of their exploits in war, and when they finished they also struck the tree in the same manner, and at each blow all the people shouted "*hi! hey!*" When the tree was nearly ready to fall, the chiefs went around and selected a person with a quiet and holy nature, and this person gave the last blow to the tree; as it fell there was much cheering, and all the women gave the tremulo. Great care was taken that the tree did not touch the ground when it fell, and no one was permitted to step over it.

The tree was then carried by six men towards the camp, but before they reached camp they stopped four times, and after the

² An interesting parallel to this attitude towards trees is found in an Islamic source: "[Holy] men dance and wheel on the [spiritual] battlefield: From within them musicians strike the tambourine: at their ecstasy the seas burst into foam. You see it not, but for *their* ears the leaves too on the boughs are clapping hands. . . . one must have the spiritual ear, not the ear of the body." (Jalaluddin Rumi, *The Mathnawi* [R. A. Nicholson translation, 8 vols., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1926], III 9.)

last stop they all howled like coyotes—as do the warriors when returning from the war path; then they all charged into camp and placed the sacred tree up upon poles—for it must not touch the ground—and pointed its base towards the hole which had already been prepared, and its tip faced towards the west. The lodge around the tree had not yet been set up, but all the poles had been prepared, and all the equipment for constructing the *Inipi* had been gathered.

The chief priest, Kablaya, and all those who were to take part in the dance, then went into a large tipi where they were to prepare themselves and receive instructions. The lodge was shut up very tightly, and leaves were even placed all around the base.

Kablaya, who was seated at the west, scraped a bare place on the ground in front of him, and here a coal was placed; as Kablaya burned sweet grass upon the coal, he said: "We burn this sacred herb for *Wakan-Tanka*, so that all the two-legged and winged peoples of the universe will be relatives and close to each other. Through this there shall be much happiness."

A small image of a drying rack was then made from two forked sticks and one straight one, and all were painted blue, for the drying rack represents heaven, and it is our prayer that the racks always be as full as heaven. The pipe was then taken up, and after being purified over the smoke, it was leaned against the rack, for in this way it represents our prayers and is the path leading from earth to heaven.

All the sacred things to be used in the dance were then purified over the smoke of the sweet grass: the hide figures; the sacred paints; the calf skin; and the buckskin bags; and the dancers, also, purified themselves. When this had been done, Kablaya took up his pipe, and, raising it to heaven, he prayed.

"O Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, You are the maker of everything. You have always been and always will be. You have been kind to your people, for You have taught us a way of prayer with the pipe which You have given us; and now through a vision You have shown to me a sacred dance which I must teach to my people. Today we will do Thy will."

"As I stand upon this sacred earth, upon which generations of our people have stood, I send a voice to You by offering this pipe. Behold me, O *Wakan-Tanka*, for I represent all the people. Within this pipe I shall place the four Powers and all the wingeds of the universe; together with all these, who shall become one, I send a voice to You. Behold me! Enlighten my mind with Your never fading Light!"

"I offer this pipe to *Wakan-Tanka*, first through You O winged Power of the place where the sun goes down; there is a place for You in this pipe. Help us with those red and blue days which make the people holy!"

Kablaya then held up a pinch of tobacco, and after motioning with it to Heaven, Earth, and the four Powers, he placed it in the bowl of the pipe. Then after the following prayers, he placed pinches of tobacco in the pipe for each of the other directions.

"O winged Power of the place where *Waziah* lives, I am about to offer this pipe to *Wakan-Tanka*; help me with the two good red and blue days which You have—days which are purifying to the people and to the universe. There is a place for You in the pipe, and so help us!

"O You, Power there where the sun comes up; You who give knowledge and who guard the dawn of the day, help us with Your two red and blue days which give understanding and Light to the people. There is a place for You in this pipe which I am about to offer to *Wakan-Tanka*; help us!

"O You, most sacred Power at the place where we always face; You who are the source of life, and who guard the people and the coming generations, help us with Your two red and blue days! There is a place for You in the pipe.

"O You, Spotted Eagle of the heavens! we know that You have sharp eyes with which you see even the smallest object that moves on Grandmother Earth. O You, who are in the depths of the heavens, and who know everything, I am offering this pipe to *Wakan-Tanka*! Help us with Your two good red and blue days!

"O You, Grandmother Earth, who lie outstretched, support-

THE SACRED PIPE

ing all things! upon You a two-legged is standing, offering a pipe to the Great Spirit. You are at the center of the two good red and blue days. There will be a place for You in the pipe and so help us!"

Kablaya then placed a small grain of tobacco in the pipe for each of the following birds: the kingbird; the robin; the lark, who sings during the two good days; the woodpecker; the hawk, who makes life so difficult for the other winged peoples; the eagle hawk; the magpie, who knows everything; the blackbird; and many other wingeds. Now all objects of creation and the six directions of space have been placed within the bowl of the pipe. The pipe was sealed with tallow and was leaned against the little blue drying rack.

Kablaya then took up another pipe, filled it, and went to where the sacred tree was resting. A live coal was brought, and the tree and the hole were purified with the smoke from sweet grass.

"O *Wakan-Tanka*," Kablaya prayed as he held his pipe up with one hand, "behold this holy tree-person who will soon be placed in this hole. He will stand with the sacred pipe. I touch him with the sacred red earth paint from our Grandmother and also with the fat from the four-legged buffalo. By touching this tree-person with the red earth, we remember that the generations of all that move come from our Mother the Earth. With your help, O tree, I shall soon offer my body and soul to *Wakan-Tanka*, and in me I offer all my people and all the generations to come."

Kablaya then took the red paint, offered it to the six directions, and again spoke to the sacred tree: "O tree, you are about to stand up; be merciful to my people, that they may flourish under you."

Kablaya painted stripes of red on the west, north, east, and south sides of the tree, and then he touched a very little paint to the tip of the tree for the Great Spirit, and he also put some at the base of the tree for Mother Earth. Then Kablaya took up the skin of a buffalo calf, saying: "It is from this buffalo person that our people live; he gives to us our homes, our clothing, our food, everything we need. O buffalo calf, I now give to you a sacred place upon the tip of the tree. This tree will hold you in his hand and will raise you up to *Wakan-Tanka*. Behold what I am about

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to do! Through this, all things that move and fly upon the earth and in the heavens will be happy!"

Kablaya next held up a small cherry tree, and continued to pray: "Behold this, O *Wakan-Tanka*, for it is the tree of the people, which we pray will bear much fruit."

This little tree was then tied upon the sacred cottonwood, just below the buffalo hide, and with it there was tied a buckskin bag in which there was some fat.

Kablaya then took up the hide images of a buffalo and a man, and, offering them to the six directions, he prayed: "Behold this buffalo, O Grandfather, which You have given to us; he is the chief of all the four-leggeds upon our sacred Mother; from him the people live, and with him they walk the sacred path. Behold, too, this two-legged, who represents all the people. These are the two chiefs upon this great island; bestow upon them all the favours that they ask for, O *Wakan-Tanka*!"

These two images were then tied upon the tree, just underneath the place where the tree forks; after this Kablaya held up a bag of fat to be placed underneath the base of the tree, and he prayed in this manner:

"O Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, behold this sacred fat, upon which this tree-person will stand; may the earth always be as fat and fruitful as this. O tree, this is a sacred day for you and for all our people; the earth within this hoop belongs to you, O tree, and it is here underneath you that I shall offer up my body and soul for the sake of the people. Here I shall stand, sending my voice to You, O *Wakan-Tanka*, as I offer the sacred pipe. All this may be difficult to do, yet for the good of the people it must be done. Help me, O Grandfather, and give to me courage and strength to stand the sufferings which I am about to undergo! O tree, you are now admitted to the sacred lodge!"

With much cheering and many shrill tremolos, the tree was raised, very slowly, for the men stopped four times before it was straight and dropped into the hole prepared for it. Now all the people—the two-leggeds, four-leggeds, and the wingeds of the air—were rejoicing, for they would all flourish under the protection

THE SACRED PIPE

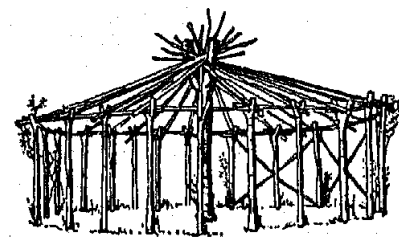
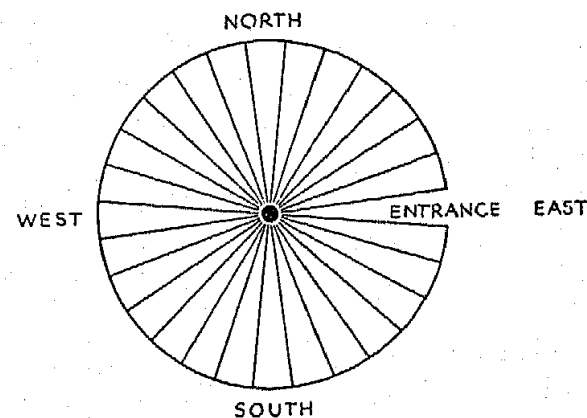
of the tree. It helps us all to walk the sacred path; we can lean upon it, and it will always guide us and give us strength.

A little dance was held around the base of the tree, and then the surrounding lodge was made by putting upright, in a large circle, twenty-eight forked sticks, and from the fork of each stick a pole was placed which reached to the holy tree at the center.

I should explain to you here that in setting up the sun dance lodge, we are really making the universe in a likeness; for, you see, each of the posts around the lodge represents some particular object of creation, so that the whole circle is the entire creation, and the one tree at the center, upon which the twenty-eight poles rest, is *Wakan-Tanka*, who is the center of everything. Everything comes from Him, and sooner or later everything returns to Him. And I should also tell you why it is that we use twenty-eight poles. I have already explained why the numbers four and seven are sacred; then if you add four sevens you get twenty-eight. Also the moon lives twenty-eight days, and this is our month; each of these days of the month represents something sacred to us: two of the days represent the Great Spirit; two are for Mother Earth; four are for the four winds; one is for the Spotted Eagle; one for the sun; and one for the moon; one is for the Morning Star; and four for the four ages; seven are for our seven great rites; one is for the buffalo; one for the fire; one for the water; one for the rock; and finally one is for the two-legged people. If you add all these days up you will see that they come to twenty-eight. You should also know that the buffalo has twenty-eight ribs, and that in our war bonnets we usually use twenty-eight feathers. You see, there is a significance for everything, and these are the things that are good for men to know, and to remember. But now we must return to the sun dance.

The warriors all dressed and painted themselves, and after entering the sacred lodge they danced around the center tree, for in this way the ground was purified and made smooth by the dancing feet. The chiefs then gathered and selected braves, one of which was to be the leader of the dancers. These chosen men then danced first towards the west, and then back to the center, then to the

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The Sun Dance Lodge

north and to the center, to the east and to the center, and finally to the south and then back to the center, and in this way they made a path in the shape of a cross.

Kablaya then entered the *Inipi* lodge, carrying the sacred pipe which had already been filled, and he sat at the west; all the other men who were to take part in the dance also entered, taking care not to pass in front of Kablaya, and then one woman entered last, taking her seat next to the door.

All the buffalo robes to be used in the dance were placed on top of the *Inipi* lodge, for in this way they are purified. The five hot rocks for the five directions were brought in and put in their proper places at the sacred altar, and then a sixth rock was placed upon the sacred path.

Kablaya held that pipe which was to be used in the dance, but a second pipe which was to be used for the rites of the *Inipi* was filled and was handed to Kablaya to bless and to light. This pipe was smoked around the circle in the ritual manner, purified by Kablaya, and was then handed out of the lodge. The door was closed, and now it was the time for Kablaya to explain his vision to the people.

"My relatives all—listen! *Wakan-Tanka* has been kind to us, and has placed us upon a sacred Earth; upon Her we are now sitting. You have just seen the five sacred rocks placed here at the center, and that sixth rock which was placed upon the path represents the people. For the good of you all *Wakan-Tanka* has taught to me in a vision, a way of worship—this I am now teaching to you.

"The heavens are sacred, for it is there that our Grandfather, the Great Spirit, lives; these heavens are as a cloak for the universe—this robe is now upon me as I stand here. O *Wakan-Tanka*, I show to You the sacred hoop of our nation, which is this circle within which there is a cross; this circle one of us wears upon his breast. And I show to You the earth which You have made, and which You are always making; it is represented by this round red circle which we wear. The never-ending Light which turns the night into day, we also wear, that the Light may be amongst our people, that they may see. I show to You also the Morning Star which gives knowledge to us. The four-legged buffalo whom You have placed here before the two-legged people is also here with us. And here is also the sacred woman who came to us in such a holy manner. All these holy peoples and holy things are now hearing what I say!

"Very soon I shall suffer and endure great pain with my relatives here, in behalf of my people. In tears and suffering I shall hold my pipe and raise my voice to You, O *Wakan-Tanka*. I shall offer up my body and soul that my people may live. In sending my voice to You, *Wakan-Tanka*, I shall use that which connects the four Powers, Heaven, and Earth, to You. All that which moves on the universe—the four-leggeds, the insects, and the winged—all rejoice and help me and all my people!"

Kablaya then sang his sacred song:

*The Sun, the Light of the world,
I hear Him coming.
I see His face as He comes.
He makes the beings on earth happy,
And they rejoice.
O Wakan-Tanka, I offer to You this world of Light.*

The pipe to be used in the sacred dance was then wrapped in sage and was taken out of the lodge by the woman; she carried it along the sacred path to the east and placed it upon the buffalo skull, being careful to have its stem point towards the east. This woman then remained outside the little lodge and assisted in opening and closing the door. The *Inipi* then began as I have described before, but after the second time the door was closed, Kablaya made a special prayer in this manner:

"Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, behold us! The sacred pipe which You have given to us, and with which we have raised our children, will soon go to the center of the universe; along with the buffalo, who has helped to make strong the bodies of the people. The sacred woman who once before came to the center of our hoop will again come to our center, and a two-legged who will suffer for his people will also go to the center. O *Wakan-Tanka*, when we are all at the center, may we have only You in our minds and hearts!"

Kablaya then sang another of the sacred songs which he had received in his vision.

*I hear Him coming; I see His face.
Your day is sacred! I offer it to You.
I hear Him coming; I see His face.
This sacred day You made the buffalo roam.
You have made a happy day for the world;
I offer all to You.*

Water was then put on the rocks as Kablaya prayed: "O *Wak-*

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an-Tanka, we are now purifying ourselves, that we may be worthy to raise our hands to You."

Then raising their right hands, all the men sang.

*Grandfather, I send my voice to You.
Grandfather, I send my voice to You.
With all the universe I send my voice to You,
That I may live.*

When the door was opened the third time, the men were all allowed to drink a little water, but this was the only time during the whole rite that this was permitted. As the men received the water, Kablaya said to them: "I give you water, but remember the One in the west who guards the waters and the sanctity of all things. You are about to drink the water, which is life, and so you should not spill any of it. When you finish you should raise your hands in thanks to the Power of the place where the sun goes down; he will help you to bear the difficulties which you are about to undergo."

The door was closed for the last time, and again all the men sang as the heat and steam purified them. And when the door was finally opened, they all came out, led by Kablaya, and they raised their hands to the six directions, saying: "*Hi ho! Hi hol Pila-miya!*" (thanks).

Each dancer had a helper, who took a purified buffalo robe from the top of the *Inipi* lodge and put it around the dancer. Kablaya then took his pipe which had been resting on the buffalo skull, and, with all the men, he entered a sacred tipi and placed his pipe against the little drying rack, which had been painted blue to represent the heavens. Sweet grass was put on a coal, and Kablaya and all the men purified themselves in the sacred smoke. After this, the drum and drumsticks were blessed and purified, and as he did this Kablaya said: "This drum is the buffalo and will go to the center. By using these sticks upon the drum, we shall certainly defeat our enemies."

All the clothing and equipment to be used in the dance were then purified; the four buffalo skulls were also purified, for one of

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the men would soon fasten these to his skin, bearing them in this way until they break loose.

Kablaya then explained to the men that their bodies had been purified and, thus were now sacred and should not even be touched by their own hands. The men must carry little sticks in their hair with which to scratch themselves, should it be necessary, and even when they paint themselves with the red earth paint they must use sticks instead of their hands.

Kablaya put around his neck the round blue hide circle representing the heavens, and each of the other men wore the different symbols: the circle with the cross; the red earth circle; the sun; the moon; and the Morning Star. The seventh man wore the buffalo, and the woman carried the pipe, for she represents the White Buffalo Cow Woman. The men also put rabbit skins on their arms and legs, for the rabbit represents humility, because he is quiet and soft and not self-asserting—a quality which we must all possess when we go to the center of the world. The men also put feathers in their hair, and, after these preparations, Kablaya instructed them in what they must do when they enter the sacred dance lodge.

"When we go to the center of the hoop we shall all cry, for we should know that anything born into this world which you see about you must suffer and bear difficulties. We are now going to suffer at the center of the sacred hoop, and by doing this may we take upon ourselves much of the suffering of our people."

Each of the men then declared which of the sacrifices he would undergo, and Kablaya made his vow first: "I will attach my body to the thongs of the Great Spirit which come down to earth—this shall be my offering."

(I think I should explain to you here, that the flesh represents ignorance, and, thus, as we dance and break the thong loose, it is as if we were being freed from the bonds of the flesh. It is much the same as when you break a young colt; at first a halter is necessary, but later when he has become broken, the rope is no longer necessary. We too are young colts when we start to dance, but soon we become broken and submit to the Great Spirit.)

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The second dancer said: "I will tie myself to the four Powers of the world which *Wakan-Tanka* has established."

Here the dancer actually is the center—for standing at the center of four posts, rawhide thongs from these posts are tied into the flesh of his shoulders, his breast, and his back, and in this manner he dances until these thongs have broken out from his flesh.

The third dancer made his vow: "I will bear four of my closest relatives, the ancient buffalo."

By this the dancer means that four thongs will be tied into his back, to which will be attached four buffalo skulls, and these four bonds represent the pull of ignorance which should always be behind us as we face the light of truth which is before us.

The fourth dancer said: "I will leave twelve pieces of my flesh at the foot of the sacred tree. One shall be for *Wakan-Tanka*, our Grandfather, one for *Wakan-Tanka*, our Father, one for the Earth, our Grandmother, and one for the Earth, our Mother. I will leave four pieces of flesh for the Powers of the four directions, and then I will leave one for the Spotted Eagle, one for the Morning Star, one for the moon, and one for the sun."

The fifth dancer said: "I will make an offering of eight pieces of my flesh; two shall be for *Wakan-Tanka*, two for the Earth, and four for the Powers of the four directions."

The sixth dancer said: "I will leave at the sacred tree four pieces of my flesh; one shall be for *Wakan-Tanka*, one for the Earth upon whom we walk, one for the people that they may walk with firm steps, and one for the wingeds of the universe."

The seventh dancer made his vow: "I will leave one piece of my flesh for *Wakan-Tanka* and one for the Earth."

Then the eighth dancer, who was the woman, made her vow: "I will offer one piece of my flesh to *Wakan-Tanka* and for all moving things of the universe, that they may give their powers to the people, that they with their children may walk the red path of life."

When all had finished making their vows, Kablaya told them to purify themselves by rubbing sage on their faces and all over their bodies, "for we are now about to approach a sacred place where

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the tree stands, as the pipe, stretching from Heaven to Earth. We must be worthy to go to this center!"

All the people of the band had gathered around the outside of the sacred lodge, and within the lodge at the south were the singers, with the women who were their helpers, and all were wearing wreaths around their foreheads and holding little sprigs of some sacred plant.

Then the dancers arrived, being led by the woman, who carried the sacred pipe, and followed by Kablaya, carrying the buffalo skull, and at the end of the line were the helpers who carried all the equipment. They all walked slowly around the outside of the lodge, in a sun-wise direction, and all the time they were crying most pitifully: "O *Wakan-Tanka*, be merciful to me, that my people may live! It is for this that I am sacrificing myself."

And as the dancers chanted this, all the other people cried, for they were the people—the nation—for whom the dancers were to suffer. The dancers entered the lodge at the east end, after moving around the lodge sun-wise, took their places at the west. Then Kablaya placed the buffalo skull between the dancers and the sacred tree, with the nose of the skull facing the east; and just in front of him, he set up the three blue forked sticks, and upon this rack the woman rested the sacred pipe.

The singers then sang one of the sacred songs:

*Wakan-Tanka be merciful to me. We want to live!
That is why we are doing this.
They say that a herd of buffalo is coming;
Now they are here.
The power of the buffalo is coming upon us;
It is now here!"*

After the chanting of this song the people all cried, and then, for the rest of the day and all that night, they danced. This dance, during the first night, represents the people in the darkness of ignorance; they were not yet worthy to meet the Light of the Great Spirit which would shine upon them with the coming of the next

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day; first they must suffer and purify themselves before they could be worthy to be with *Wakan-Tanka*.

Just before dawn, the dance stopped, and at this time the dancers, or their relatives, placed offerings outside the sacred lodge at each of the four quarters.

At dawn the dancers again entered the lodge, and with them there was the keeper of the sacred pipe; this holy man had been asked by Kablaya to make the sacred altar, but he had replied, "this is your vision Kablaya, and you should make the altar; but I will be present beside you, and when you have finished I will offer up the prayer."

Thus, it was Kablaya who made the sacred place; he first scraped a round circle in the ground in front of him, and then within this circle he placed a hot coal.³ Then taking up some sweet grass and holding it above him, he prayed.

"O Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, this is Your sacred grass which I place on the fire; its smoke will spread throughout the world, reaching even to the heavens. The four-leggeds, the wingeds, and all things will know this smoke and will rejoice. May this offering help to make all things and all beings as relatives to us; may they all give to us their powers, so that we may endure the difficulties ahead of us. Behold, O *Wakan-Tanka*, I place this sweet grass on the fire, and the smoke will rise to You."

As Kablaya placed the sacred grass on the fire, he sang this song:

*I am making sacred smoke;
In this manner I make the smoke;
May all the peoples behold it!
I am making sacred smoke;*

³ This coal was taken from a fire which had been kept burning all through the previous night, and which will burn every night during the dance. It is located to the east, outside the lodge, and, according to Black Elk, it is kept in order to remind the people of the eternal presence of *Wakan-Tanka*. During the day this fire is not necessary because the sun is then present as a reminder.

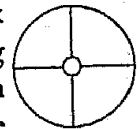
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*May all be attentive and behold!
May the wingeds, and the four-leggeds
be attentive and behold it!
In this manner I make the smoke;
All over the universe there will be rejoicing!*

The knife which was to be used for piercing the breasts of the dancers was purified over the smoke, as was also a small stone hatchet and a small quantity of earth. Kablaya was then ready to make the sacred altar; but first he prayed.

"O Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, I shall now make this Your sacred place. In making this altar, all the birds of the air and all creatures of the earth will rejoice, and they will come from all directions to behold it! All the generations of my people will rejoice! This place will be the center of the paths of the four great Powers. The dawn of the day will see this holy place! When Your Light approaches, O *Wakan-Tanka*, all that moves in the universe will rejoice!"

A pinch of the purified earth was offered above and to the ground and was then placed at the center of the sacred place. Another pinch of earth was offered to the west, north, east, and south and was placed at the west of the circle. In the same manner, earth was placed at the other three directions, and then it was spread evenly all around within the circle. This earth represents the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, the wingeds, and really all that moves, and all that is in the universe. Upon this sacred place Kablaya then began to construct the altar. He first took up a stick, pointed it to the six directions, and then, bringing it down, he made a small circle at the center; and this we understand to be the home of *Wakan-Tanka*. Again, after pointing the stick to the six directions, Kablaya made a mark starting from the west and leading to the edge of the circle. In the same manner he drew a line from the east to the edge of the circle, from the north to the circle, and from the south to the circle. By constructing the altar in this manner, we see that everything leads into, or returns to, the center;



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and this center which is here, but which we know is really everywhere, is *Wakan-Tanka*.

Kablaya then took up a small bundle of sage, and, offering it up to *Wakan-Tanka*, he prayed.

"O *Wakan-Tanka*, behold us! Next to the two-leggeds, the chief of all the four-leggeds is *tatanka*, the buffalo. Behold his dried skull here; by this we know that we, too, shall become skull and bones, and, thus, together we shall all walk the sacred path back to *Wakan-Tanka*. When we arrive at the end of our days, be merciful to us, O *Wakan-Tanka*. Here on earth we live together with the buffalo, and we are grateful to him, for it is he who gives us our food, and who makes the people happy. For this reason I now give grass to our relative the buffalo."

Kablaya then made a little bed of sage to the east of the sacred altar, and, taking up the buffalo skull by the horns, and facing the east, he sang:

*I give grass to the buffalo;
May the people behold it,
That they may live.*

Then turning, and holding the skull to the west, Kablaya sang:

*Tobacco I give to the buffalo;
May the people behold it,
That they may live.*

Then turning to the north, Kablaya sang:

*A robe I give to the buffalo;
May the people behold it,
That they may live.*

And turning to the south he sang:

*Paint I give to the buffalo;
May the people behold it,
That they may live.*

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Then standing over the sage, Kablaya sang:

*Water I will give to the buffalo;
May the people behold it,
That they may live.*

The buffalo skull was then placed on the bed of sage, facing east, and Kablaya placed little balls of sage in its eyes and tied a little bag of tobacco on the horn which was facing south, and he also tied a piece of deerhide on the horn at the north, for this hide represents the robe for the buffalo. Then Kablaya painted a red line around the head of the buffalo and drew, also, a red line from the forehead to the tip of the nose. As he did this Kablaya said: "You, O buffalo, are the earth! May we understand this, and all that I have done here. *Hechetu welo!* It is good!"

When the offerings to the buffalo had been completed, the dancers walked around the lodge and stood at the doorway facing east, in order to greet the rising sun.

"Behold these men, O *Wakan-Tanka*," Kablaya prayed as he raised his right hand. "The face of the dawn will meet their faces; the coming day will suffer with them. It will be a sacred day, for You, O *Wakan-Tanka*, are present here!"

Then, just as the day-sun peeped over the horizon, the dancers all chanted in a sacred manner, and Kablaya sang one of his *wakan* songs.

*The light of Wakan-Tanka is upon my people;
It is making the whole earth bright.
My people are now happy!
All beings that move are rejoicing!*

As the men chanted, and as Kablaya sang the sacred song, they all danced, and as they danced they moved so that they were facing the south, then the west, the north, and then they stood again at the east; but this time they faced towards the sacred tree at the center.

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The singing and drumming stopped, and the dancers sat at the west of the lodge, upon beds of sage which had been prepared for them. With sage the helpers rubbed all the paint off the men, and then upon their heads they placed wreaths of sage and plumes from the eagle, and the women also wore eagle feathers in their hair.

In every sun dance we wear wreaths of sage upon our heads, for it is a sign that our minds and hearts are close to *Wakan-Tanka* and His Powers, for the wreath represents the things of the heavens—the stars and planets, which are very mysterious and *wakan*.

Kablaya then told the dancers how they must paint themselves: the bodies were to be painted red from the waist up; the face, too, must be painted red, for red represents all that is sacred, especially the earth, for we should remember that it is from the earth that our bodies come, and it is to her that they return. A black circle should be painted around the face, for the circle helps us to remember *Wakan-Tanka*, who, like the circle, has no end. There is much power in the circle, as I have often said; the birds know this for they fly in a circle, and build their homes in the form of a circle; this the coyotes know also, for they live in round holes in the ground. Then a black line should be drawn from the forehead to a point between the eyes; and a line should be drawn on each cheek and on the chin, for these four lines represent the Powers of the four directions. Black stripes were painted around the wrists, the elbow, the upper part of the arm, and around the ankles. Black, you see, is the color of ignorance,⁴ and, thus, these stripes are as the bonds which tie us to the earth. You should also notice that these stripes start from the earth and go up only as far as the breasts, for this is the place where the thongs fasten into the body, and these thongs are as rays of light from *Wakan-Tanka*. Thus, when we tear ourselves away from the thongs, it is as if the spirit were liberated from our dark bodies. At this first dance all the

⁴ The Sioux also paint their faces black for the dance which is held when they return from the warpath, for, as Black Elk has said, "By going on the warpath, we know that we have done something bad, and we wish to hide our faces from *Wakan-Tanka*."



Sitting Bull, taken by Barry (*Smithsonian Institution*)

men were painted in this manner; it is only in recent times that each dancer is painted with a different design, according to some vision which he may have had.

After all the dancers were painted, they purified themselves in the smoke of sweet grass and put on the various symbols which I have described before. The dancer who had vowed to drag the four buffalo skulls wore the form of the buffalo on his chest, and on his head he wore horns made from sage.

When all the preparations were finished, the dancers stood at the foot of the sacred tree, at the west, and, gazing up at the top of the tree, they raised their right hands and blew upon the eagle-bone whistles. As they did this, Kablaya prayed.

"O Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, bend down and look upon me as I raise my hand to You. You see here the faces of my people. You see the four Powers of the universe, and You have now seen us at each of these four directions. You have beheld the sacred place and the sacred center which we have fixed, and where we shall suffer. I offer all my suffering to You in behalf of the people.

"A good day has been set upon my forehead as I stand before You, and this brings me closer to You, O *Wakan-Tanka*. It is Your light which comes with the dawn of the day, and which passes through the heavens. I am standing with my feet upon Your sacred Earth. Be merciful to me, O Great Spirit, that my people may live!"

Then all the singers chanted together:

*O Wakan-Tanka, be merciful to me!
I am doing this that my people may live!*

The dancers all moved around to the east, looking towards the top of the sacred tree at the west, and, raising up their hands, they sang:

*Our Grandfather, Wakan-Tanka,
has given to me a path which is sacred!*

Moving now to the south, and looking towards the north, the dancers blew upon their eagle-bone whistles, as the singers chanted:

*A buffalo is coming they say.
He is here now.
The Power of the buffalo is coming;
It is upon us now!*

As the singers chanted this, the dancers moved around to the west, and faced the east, and all the time they blew upon their shrill eagle-bone whistles. Then they went to the north and faced the south, and, finally, they again went to the west and faced towards the east.

Then the dancers all began to cry, and Kablaya was given a long thong and two wooden pegs, and with these he went to the center, and grasping the sacred tree he cried: "O *Wakan-Tanka*, be merciful to me. I do this that my people may live."

Crying in this manner continually, Kablaya went to the north of the lodge, and from there he walked around the circle of the lodge, stopping at each of the twenty-eight lodge poles, and then returned to the north. Carrying their thongs and pegs, all the dancers then did as Kablaya had done. When they all returned to the north and faced the south, Kablaya once again went to the center and grasped the sacred tree with both hands.

As the singers and drummers increased the speed of their chanting and drumming, the helpers rushed up and, grasping Kablaya roughly, threw him on the ground. The helper then pulled up the skin of Kablaya's left breast, and through this loose skin a sharp stick was thrust; and in the same manner the right breast was pierced. The long rawhide rope had been tied at its middle, around the sacred tree, towards its top, and then the two ends of the rope were tied to the pegs in Kablaya's chest. The helpers stood Kablaya up roughly, and he blew upon his eagle-bone whistle, and, leaning back upon his thongs, he danced, and continued to dance in this manner until the thongs broke loose from his flesh.

I should explain here why we use two thongs, which are really one long thong, for it is tied to the tree at its center, and also it

was made from a single buffalo hide, cut in a spiral. This is to help us remember that although there seem to be two thongs, the two are really only one; it is only the ignorant person who sees many where there is really only one. This truth of the oneness of all things we understand a little better by participating in this rite, and by offering ourselves as a sacrifice.

The second dancer then went to the center, and, grasping the sacred tree, he too cried as Kablaya had done. The helpers again rushed up and, after throwing him roughly on the ground, pierced both his breasts and both sides of his back; wooden pegs were thrust through the flesh, and to these pegs four short thongs were attached. This brave dancer was then tied at the center of four poles, so tightly that he could not move in any direction. At first he cried, not as a child from the pain, but because he knew that he was suffering for his people, and he was understanding the sacredness of having the four directions meet in his body, so that he himself was really the center. Raising his hands to heaven, and blowing upon his eagle whistle, this man danced until his thongs broke loose.

The third dancer who was to bear the four buffalo skulls then went to the center, and, after grasping the sacred tree, he was thrown on his face by the helpers, and four sticks were thrust through the flesh of his back. To these were tied the four buffalo skulls. The helpers pulled on the skulls to see that they were firmly attached, and then they gave to the dancer his eagle whistle, and upon this he blew continually as he danced. I think that you can understand that all this was very painful for him, for every time he moved the sharp horns of the skulls cut into his skin, but our men were brave in those days and did not show any signs of suffering; they were really glad to suffer if it was for the good of the people.

Friends or relatives would sometimes go to the dancers and dance beside them, giving encouragement; sometimes a young woman who liked one of the dancers would put a herb which she had been chewing into the mouth of the dancer in order to give him strength and to ease his thirst. And all this time the drum-

ming, singing, and dancing never stopped, and above it all you could hear the shrill call of the eagle-bone whistles.

The fourth man, who had vowed to give twelve pieces of his flesh, then went and sat at the foot of the tree, holding on to it with both hands; the helpers took a bone awl and, raising up little pieces of flesh on the shoulders, cut off six small pieces from each. This flesh was left as an offering at the foot of the tree, and the man then stood up and continued dancing with the others.

In the same manner, the fifth dancer sacrificed eight pieces of his flesh; the sixth dancer gave four pieces of his flesh; and the seventh dancer sacrificed two pieces. Then, finally, the woman grasped the sacred tree, crying as she sat down, and said: "Father, *Wakan-Tanka*, in this one piece of flesh I offer myself to You and to Your heavens and to the sun, the moon, the Morning Star, the four Powers, and to everything."

They all continued to dance, and the people cheered Kablaya, telling him to pull harder upon the thongs, which he did until finally one thong broke loose, and then all the people cried "*hi ye!*" Kablaya fell, but the people helped him up, and he continued to dance until the other thong broke loose. Again he fell, but, rising, he raised both hands to heaven, and all the people cheered loudly. They then helped him to the foot of the sacred tree, where he rested on a bed of sage, and, pulling the loose flesh from his breast, where the bonds had broken loose, he placed twelve pieces of it at the foot of the tree. The medicine men put a healing herb on his wounds, and they carried him to a place in the shade where he rested for a few moments. Then, getting up, he continued to dance with the others.

Finally, the man who had been dancing for a long time with the four skulls lost two of them, and Kablaya gave the order that his skin should be cut so that the other two should break loose. But even though he was free from the four skulls, this brave man still continued to dance.

Then the man who had been dancing at the center of the four posts broke loose from two of his bonds, and Kablaya said that he, too, had had enough, and with a knife the skin was cut, so that he

broke loose from the other two bonds. These two men each offered twelve pieces of their flesh to the sacred tree, and then all the men and many of the people continued to dance until the sun was nearly down.

Just before sundown, a pipe was taken to the singers and drummers as an indication that their work had been finished and that they may now smoke. Then the dancers and the keeper of the most sacred pipe sat at the west of the lodge, and the holy woman took up in her two hands the pipe which had been resting in front of her; holding the stem of the pipe up, she walked around the buffalo skull, and, standing in front of the keeper of the pipe, she prayed.

"O holy Father, have pity on me! I offer my pipe to *Wakan-Tanka*. O Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, help me! I do this that my people may live, and that they may increase in a sacred manner."

The woman then offered the pipe to the keeper three times, and the fourth time she gave it to him. "*How!*" the keeper said as he received the pipe; and then he went and stood under the north side of the sacred tree and prayed.

"*Hee-ay-hay-ee-ee!* [four times] Grandfather, *Wakan-Tanka*, You are closer to us than anything. You have seen everything this day. It is now finished; our work has ended. Today a two-legged person has made a very sacred rite, which You have appointed him to do. These eight people here have offered their bodies and souls to You. In suffering they have sent their voices to You; they have even offered to You a part of their flesh, which is now here at the foot of this sacred tree. The favor that they ask of You is that their people may walk the holy path of life and that they may increase in a sacred manner.

"Behold this pipe which we—with the Earth, the four Powers, and with all things—have offered to You. We know that we are related and are one with all things of the heavens and the earth, and we know that all the things that move are a people as we. We all wish to live and increase in a holy manner. The Morning Star and the dawn which comes with it, the moon of the night, and

the stars of the heavens are all brought together here. You have taught us our relationship with all these things and beings, and for this we give thanks, now and always. May we be continually aware of this relationship which exists between the four-leggeds, the two-leggeds, and the wingeds. May we all rejoice and live in peace!

"Behold this pipe which is the one that the four-legged brought to the people; through it we have carried out Thy will. O *Wakan-Tanka*, You have put Your people upon a sacred path; may they walk upon it with firm and sure steps, hand in hand with their children, and may their children's children, too, walk in this sacred manner!

"Have mercy, O *Wakan-Tanka*, on the souls that have roamed the earth and have departed. May these souls be worthy to walk upon that great white path which You have established! We are about to light and smoke the sacred pipe, and we know that this offering is very *wakan*. The smoke that rises will spread throughout the universe, and all beings will rejoice."

The dancers then sat at the west side of the lodge, and the keeper took the tallow from the top of the bowl of the pipe and placed it upon a purified buffalo chip. The pipe was then lit from a coal, and, after offering it to the six directions, and after taking a few puffs himself, the keeper handed it to Kablaya, who cried as he offered the pipe and, after smoking it a little, handed it to the person next to him. After each man had offered and smoked the pipe, he handed it back to Kablaya, who then handed it on to the next man. When all had smoked in this manner, Kablaya slowly and carefully placed the ashes upon the very middle of the sacred altar and then prayed.

"O *Wakan-Tanka*, this sacred place is Yours. Upon it all has been finished. We rejoice!"

Two helpers then placed upon the altar the ashes from the sacred fire at the east of the lodge; the purified earth was also placed upon the altar, and then all the wreaths, furs, feathers, and symbols which had been used in the dance were all piled up in the center of the sacred place. This was done because these things were too

sacred to be kept and should be returned to the earth. Only the buffalo robes and the eagle-bone whistles were kept, and these things will always be regarded as especially sacred, for they were used in this first great rite of the sun dance. On top of the pile of sacred things the buffalo skull was placed, for this skull reminds us of death and also helps us to remember that a cycle has here been completed.

The people all rejoiced, and the little children were allowed to play tricks on the old people, at this time, but nobody cared; and they were not punished, for everybody was very happy.

The dancers, however, had not yet finished, for they now took their buffalo robes and returned to the preparation tipi. Here they took off their clothes, except for the breech cloth, and they all entered the *Inipi* lodge, except the woman who guarded the door for the men. The five rocks were brought in, and the pipe was smoked around the circle; but, as each man took the pipe, he first touched one of the rocks with it. The door of the lodge was closed, and Kablaya spoke.

"My relatives, I wish to say something. Listen closely! This day you have done a sacred thing, for you have given your bodies to the Great Spirit. When you return to your people always remember that through this act you have been made holy. In the future you will be the leaders of your people, and you should be worthy of this sacred duty. Be merciful to your people, be good to them and love them! But always remember this, that your closest relative is your Grandfather and your Father, *Wakan-Tanka*, and next to Him is your Grandmother and your Mother, the Earth."

Water was put on the hot rocks, and, after a short time, when the little lodge was filled with steam and was very hot, the door was opened and water was handed in. Sweet grass was put in the water and was then touched to the mouths of the dancers, but this was all the water that was allowed at this time. The pipe was passed around; the door was closed; and again Kablaya spoke to the men.

"By your actions today you have strengthened the sacred hoop

THE SACRED PIPE

of our nation. You have made a sacred center which will always be with you, and you have created a closer relationship with all things of the universe."

Water was again put on the rocks, and as the steam rose the men chanted a sacred song. When the door was opened this third time the men were allowed to drink one mouthful of water; after this the pipe was passed around as before. Again the door was closed, and as the steam rose from the rocks, all the men sang.

I am sending a voice to my Grandfather!
I am sending a voice to my Grandfather!
Hear me!
Together with all things of the universe,
I am sending a voice to Wakan-Tanka.

Then Kablaya said: "The four paths of the four Powers are your close relatives. The dawn and the sun of the day are your relatives. The Morning Star and all the stars of the sacred heavens are your relatives; always remember this!"

The door was then opened for the fourth and last time, and the men drank all the water they wished; and when they had finished drinking and had smoked, Kablaya said to them: "You have now seen the Light of *Wakan-Tanka* four times. This Light will be with you always. Remember that it is four steps to the end of the sacred path.⁵ But you shall get there. It is good! It is finished! *Hechetu welo!*"

The men then went back to the sacred tipi, where much food was brought to them, and all the people were happy and rejoicing, for a great thing had been done, and in the winters to come much strength would be given to the life of the nation through this great rite.

⁵ The four steps represent, to the Sioux, the four ages or phases of a cycle: the rock age, the bow age, the fire age, and the pipe age. The rock, bow, fire, or pipe constitutes the main ritual support for each age. The four ages may also refer, microcosmically, to the four phases of a man's life, from birth to death.