

MODERN

SCALP

ORNAMENTS



BY

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The practice of tying feathers and other ornaments to the scalp is no doubt an old custom among the Indians of the Plains. Several of Catlin's portraits of the Crow, Blackfeet, Mandan and Eastern Sioux of the late 1830's depict hair ornaments fashioned from feathers and trade items tied to the front of the scalp. Evidence of this practice on the Southern Plains in the 1890's is shown in the cover photo and in the replica in photos 1 and 2.

By the 1920's photos of the Osage, Omaha, Ponca, etc. show that it was common to wear one or two major eagle plumes, or a group (two or more) of feathers, tied to the scalp. Photos 3, 4, 5 and 6 from the collection of Dr. James Howard are examples of the hair ornaments worn during this era.

Today, a set of scalp feathers is worn by each straight dancer. In addition, a fair number of feathers dancers are also wearing a smaller, more highly decorated version of these scalp feathers. Among the straight dancers, scalp feathers used to designate family or clan affiliation; however, at present scalp feathers are usually considered to be just another necessary decorative item of the outfit.

In contrast with the past, scalp feathers are tied to the roach string at the base of the roach rather than directly to the scalp. However, with long hair in style and the use of wigs, the past could very well become the vogue. The feathers may hang over either the left or right temple. Most dancers prefer to wear a pair of feathers; yet groups of three or four are occasionally seen (photos 7 & 8).

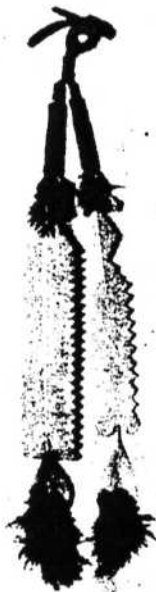


- 1 Delaware, made by Fred Washington, Ca 1925
- 2 Made by J. Howard, copy of a Tonlawa speciman
- 3 Fred Washington, Delaware about 1925
- 4 Fred Washington, Delaware
- 5 Lower Yanktonai Dakota (Hunkpati). Given to J. Howard by August-with-the-Horns, Ft. Thompson, South Dakota, 1968
- 6 Omaha-Ponca. Gift to J. Howard from Wilson Wolfe, Macy, Nebraska, 1964
- 7 Quapaw. Gift to J. Howard by Billy Killough, 1959
- 8 Steve Goodwin
- 9 Craftsman H. (Shorty) Quillen, Pawnee, Okla
- 10 Unidentified
- 11 Kiowa. Purchased in Anadarko by J. Howard
- 12 Pawnee craftsman Julius Caesar, 1960
- 13 Northern Ponca. Gift to J. Howard from the late Peter LeClaire, Merrick, South Dakota 1963
- 14 Nebraska-Winnebago. Gift to J. Howard from Edward Black Well, Sioux City, Iowa, 1966
- 15 J. Howard -craftsman
- 16 H. Tucker
- 17 Medallion & dangles by James Kagmega; feathers added by J. Howard
- 18 Steve Goodwin



1

2



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