

Indian War Bonnet

Q-11

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F. H. Douglas, Curator
Dept. of Native Art
The Denver Art Museum
1300 Logan Street
Denver, Colorado

Dear Mr. Douglas:

I was very happy to learn that I had helped you and am grateful for your offer to send me a photograph of your four-horned bonnet. I congratulate you too on your new scalp shirt.

I cannot express an opinion as to when the beaded or quilled shoulder straps on Indian shirts came in, but I believe they occur in the earliest paintings of Catlin and Bodmer made on the upper Missouri in the 1830's. It may be that these were used among some of the tribes farther east, though I cannot be sure of that. I suspect, however, that the hair may have been used to adorn the shirt before the beads or quills were thought of.

If Frederick Weygold of Louisville, Kentucky, were alive he could probably give you a better opinion than anyone. If you should ever visit that city, by all means make it a point to see his collections in the museum there. He was a collector for many years for European museums, and illustrated my HAPPY HUNTING GROUNDS. He had made drawings to scale in color of innumerable costumes and could identify the work of any tribe on the Plains.

He was particularly expert in the older stuff, most of which, as you know, was in the European museums such as that at Bern, Switzerland, and various museums in Germany. In fact, being an artist himself, he knew that Bodmer's Indian figures had been posed in Germany and went round to the then Prince Von Wied, explaining that somewhere in his castle there were a lot of rare old Indian costumes and artifacts. The Prince allowed him to search, and Weygold found them.

I believe the hair shirt men were a very limited group and quite important officials, but I cannot offhand recall the references which describe their functions. It is possible that Radisson's VOYAGES describing his meeting with the Sioux in the seventeenth century may have reference to the decorations of the shirts. As I recall, he told enough to enable me