

SCOTT, BOSE

SECOND INTERVIEW
GREEN CORN DANCE (CREEK)

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Greek Green Corn Dance

The only religious ceremony of any great importance among the Creek Indians was the Bisk or Green Corn dance, an annual festival similar in purpose to our Thanksgiving. When Indian corn was grown, the ripening of the grain constituted an important era in the year. The whole band usually assembled to celebrate this feast.

It was the custom at that time to produce fire by rubbing two sticks together, and the fire thus produced was sent from band to band as a token of friendship.

At the place of assembly a large fire was kept up, and the warriors and women gathered around it dancing and singing songs of gratitude to the Great Spirit, for sparing them and their friends throughout the year. If famine had overtaken them or many of their people had fallen in battle, then these joyous songs were intermingled with wailing

and mournful sounds. This was attributed to the crimes of the people and pardons were revoked.

Before the feast commenced the "Black Drink" was handed around. This drink was composed of the leaves of a small bush known by them as "arsu." It was drunk in large quantities and being a powerful emetic, had the effect of cleansing their stomachs so thoroughly that they were in a fair way to do justice to the feast of boiled corn, which lasted for days at a time.

If a criminal escaped from his bonds during the festival and made his way into the charmed circle of the dance, he was considered under the protection of the Great Spirit, and his pardon was secured.

The Creeks did not look upon polygamy with any prejudice; on the contrary, it was adopted to a great extent by the leading chiefs and warriors, many of the more independent possessing three or four wives. Their choice in the matter was usually regulated according to their finances, and it was considered a grave breach of morals for a warrior to marry more wives than he could support in a comfort-

able manner.

The male children of the tribe were taught the art of hunting at an early age. The blow-gun was the favorite weapon among young boys. This was a hollow reed about eight or ten feet in length, from which a small arrow could be forced by the breath. They could secure quite a number of small game; such as, birds, rabbits, and squirrels by crawling close. These guns are called in Creek language Cohamotoka. The boys were also very accurate with the bow and arrow. Their success in killing fish by this method was wonderful, it being nothing uncommon to see a small boy of eight or nine years catch a buffalo or cat fish almost as large as himself.

When a boy accomplished an extraordinary feat or performed an exploit beyond his years, he was marked as having a superior spirit, which would distinguish him in after life. From this exploit he derived the name by which he was known among his people.