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# ANTHROPOLOGICAL PAPERS

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## THE PLAINS-OJIBWA OR BUNGI

HUNTERS AND WARRIORS OF THE NORTHERN PRAIRIES  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE  
TURTLE MOUNTAIN BAND

by

James H. Howard

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A third type is mentioned by Tanner (1830, p. 175). This was simple inhumation. Both this and the preceding type were practiced only at times of the year when the ground was not frozen.

In winter tree or scaffold burial was practiced. The body, protected by a wrapping of hide, was placed on a platform resting on the limbs of a tree. If no suitable tree were available, a high scaffold of poles was erected.

A fifth type is represented by a burial recovered archeologically. In October, 1952, the author excavated this burial, located in the side of a high hill opposite the site of Ft. Union, near Williston, North Dakota. Since this burial seems to be typical of one form of Plains-Ojibwa burial, a description of it may be pertinent at this point.

The burial consisted of a completely articulated male skeleton, representing a man of about fifty years of age. He was buried in an extended position, facing west. The body had been wrapped in bison hide and cattail matting, probably a house mat.

Several hundred seed beads accompanied the burial, indicating that the man wore an elaborately beaded costume. Some of the beads were of the Italian variety known as cornaline d'Aleppo. Near the man's skull was a raven's beak and skull, probably indicative that the man wore a raven-skin fillet about his head or possibly a necklace of raven skin. Several drilled bird claws and two bone beads found nearby were undoubtedly from a necklace or necklaces worn by the man. Two belts, one made from a harness strap, the other a wide leather belt studded with brass tacks, were found near the pelvic region. X

Other personal effects accompanying the burial were three eagle bone whistles, much blue paint (probably indicating the man's affiliation with the Midéw,wǫñ lodge), a snuff jar, a small leather purse, a grater made by punching holes in a small square of metal, a catlinite pipe bowl of the "prow" type, a red "medicine stone" about 2 1/2" in diameter, another small red stone, probably an amulet, a flattened rifle slug, and a birchbark pictograph. The rifle slug has been identified by Carlyle Smith, Kansas State University, as coming from an 1885 Winchester. The bark pictograph has drawings of a man, a horse, and what appears to be a trail or river. It depicts one of the man's war experiences, indicate his clan affiliation, or relate to the Midéw,wǫñ lodge. The skeleton and other objects recovered are now (1965) on display in the State Historical Museum in Bismarck.

The Bungi frequently thought of the dead, and often held feasts in their honor. Tanner (1830:288) describes a feast of this sort:

This feast is eaten at the graves of their deceased friends. They kindle a fire, and each person, before he begins to eat, cuts off a small piece of meat, which he casts into the fire. The smoke and the smell of this, they say, attracts the Je-bi (spirits) to come and eat with them.

In 1958 Joseph Greatwalker and the author visited a Plains-Ojibwa home on the Swan Lake Reserve, Manitoba, where such a feast was in progress. A member of the family explained that the ghost of an ancestor had appeared to members of the family and the feast was being held to put this ghost to rest.