

## STONE AGE DAYS REVIVED IN U. S. BY HOPI TRIBE

Snake Dance This Year Is  
Ritual of Distant  
Past.

By NEA Service  
FLAGSTAFF, Ariz., Aug. 20.—  
Preparations are almost complete for  
the annual observance of the oldest,  
most colorful religious ceremonial on  
the North American continent—the  
world-famous Hopi Indian snake  
dance.

In all the world there is no ceremony  
like this. It is a religious rite  
performed exactly as it was ten,  
twenty centuries ago—a strange relic  
of the old stone age, when the dividing  
line between magic and religion  
was not clearly defined.

It will be witnessed by travelers  
from distant places. Men will come  
in automobiles, complicated products  
of the up-to-date twentieth century  
to watch the desert Indians perform  
rites that were time-worn when Eu-  
rope was an unpeopled wilderness.

### A Prayer for Rain

The snake dance is an annual  
prayer for rain—an invocation to the  
gods that live in the sky and control  
the clouds and to the gods that live  
under ground and control the springs  
and rivers, joined in by the residents  
of six Hopi villages on a long  
mesa north of here.

First the Snake and Antelope  
clans meet to study various meteorological  
signs and determine the date  
for the dance. This year's ceremony  
has been set for Aug. 21. Then come  
many days of preparation. In no  
Christian church are preparations for  
a sacrament more carefully made.

### A Town Crier

A town crier announces the date  
from the house tops. The priests of  
the Antelope clan meet to set up the  
altar. They make a mosaic of dif-  
ferent colored sands, which are  
sprinkled on the floor, with clouds  
and lightning represented sym-  
bolically.

Then the prayer sticks are made,  
with prayers and invocations at  
each step of the procedure. Each  
participant smokes the sacred pipe,  
and the altar is consecrated and  
blessed morning and night. Sixteen  
songs are chanted each day to the  
accompaniment of rattles shaken by  
the priests.

### Priests Are Anointed

At last the charm nears comple-  
tion. Each priest waves a "snake  
stick," with eagle feathers at-  
tached, and the sacred pipe is lit.  
The smoke being blown into the  
liquid. Four songs are chanted.  
Then the little chamber rings with  
the fierce Hopi war cry, the head  
priest mixes the liquid with corn-  
meal, sprinkles it to the four points  
of the compass, kneads it with white  
clay, and rubs the resultant paste  
on the bodies of all the priests.  
The ceremony is supposed to

protect them from snake bites in the  
dance that is to follow.

### Catch Rattlers

All of these ceremonies are per-  
formed by priests of the Antelope  
clan. While they are thus engaged  
the men of the Snake clan go north,  
east, west and south to catch the  
deadly rattlesnakes for the snake  
dance. When a rattlesnake is found  
a prayer is offered, meal is scattered  
on it and it is seized alive and  
brought back to the village. The  
Indians catch the snakes with un-  
canny skill. Four days are con-  
sumed in this snake hunt.

On the evening of the last day of  
the hunt the Antelope priests dance  
in the plain. On the morrow the  
snake dance begins.

### Young Men Race

It starts with the race of the  
young men. Long before sunrise

the young Indians start from a place  
far out on the plain, beside a sacred  
spring. They cover the intervening  
miles with remarkable speed, loping  
up the sloping mesa to the cheers of  
the crowd. The priests receive them,  
and each runner deposits prayer  
offerings at the altar.

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times there are as many as a hun-  
dred of them—are washed in the  
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