

## CANTE WANIKA (NO HEART)

(Sioux, ca. 1860s – 1870s)

*Sioux muslin painting*

Cotton, ink, pigments

76 x 178 cm

36 x 70 in.

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### Provenance

Frank Bennett Fiske (Frank Bennett Fiske was a renowned photographer of Plains Native Americans);

Judge Frank Zahn Collection;

Jonathan Holstein Collection;

Santa Fe Private Collection;

New York Private Collection.

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### Exhibited

*It's All Spiritual. Art from Tribal Cultures.* 7 June-27 July 2007. Betty Cunningham Gallery, New York.

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This important, rare painting was created by Sioux Chief Cante-Wanika (No Heart) (Fig. 1) in the Dakotas in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ca. 1860s-1870s, a time at which the Sioux were engaging in battles against American settlers. The piece depicts a victory ceremony, perhaps of a specific battle, and was originally worn, as displayed by the photographs below of Cante-Wanika's daughter and the famous Chief Red Tomahawk both wearing the painting (Figs. 2-4). Following ownership by Cante-Wanika and his daughter, it was owned by Frank Bennett Fiske, who photographed native peoples of the Dakotas, and authored the photographs of Cante-Wanika, his daughter, Red Tomahawk, and himself (Figs. 5-6) which are included below. Finally, it was owned by Frank Zahn, also known as Chief Flying Cloud (Fig. 7), a well-known half-native resident of the Dakotas, before being sold to the private owners mentioned in the piece's more recent history.

A full description of the iconography of the piece is included here:

In front of the first teepee on the left stands a warrior wearing a horned bonnet with a long eagle-feather trailer. He holds an otter-fur-wrapped society staff. Just below this teepee, a woman carries a bag—likely containing sacred objects. Many of the celebrating warriors depicted are of high status, identifiable by their eagle-feather bonnets and elaborate head decorations. Two of them wear important horned bonnets with long feather trailers: the upper figure carries a bow, while the lower holds an otter-skin-wrapped society staff.

To the right of the upper warrior is another dancer with two eagle feathers in his hair and an Omaha grass dance bustle tied to his back. He displays a scalp on a coup stick, perhaps the focus of the dance. Continuing to the right, the next dancer carries an otter-fur-wrapped society staff, and the dancer at the far right—distinctive in wearing pants rather than a breechcloth—wears a roach decorated with an eagle feather. To the right of the lower horned-bonnet warrior is a woman with a bucket or bag, again possibly containing sacred items. The next warrior holds a pipe tomahawk adorned with a fringed, triangular beaded panel, while the final warrior in the sequence carries a bow with a scalp attached near its lower end.

At the center of the composition, two seated drummers play a typical early-style square drum mounted on wooden legs with crooks at the top. A woman wrapped in a Navajo blanket sits to their right. The drummer on the left wears two eagle feathers in his hair, while the drummer on the right wears a roach made of horsehair or turkey beard, decorated with an eagle feather.

Nearby, a group of eight women—likely the dancers' wives—join in the celebration. Four of them hold their husbands' otter-fur-wrapped society staffs adorned with eagle feathers, while two others carry their husbands' quirts, the short whip-like staffs used for “counting coup.” Touching an armed enemy with a quirt was considered an exceptional act of bravery, granting a warrior the highest honor.

In the background, four teepees form a small camp. Buffalo meat hangs drying on a rack between them, with an additional rack to the right of the lower pair of teepees. On the far right, a woman cooks in preparation for the celebratory feast. On the left, another woman holds an oversized sacred arrow, tied to a teepee to indicate that it is either a medicine lodge or the dwelling of one of the celebrants in the victory dance.



Figure 1: Cante-Wanika (No Heart)



Figure 2: Daughter of Cante-Wanika (No Heart) with the painting



Red Tomahawk -  
Slayer of Sitting Bull -

© by  
F. B. Frissell

Figure 3: Red Tomahawk with the painting



Figure 4: Red Tomahawk with the painting



Figure 5: Frank Bennett Fiske, renowned photographer of Plains Native Americans

# Frank Fiske Dies Friday At Bismarck

Frank Bennett Fiske, 69, veteran Indian photographer, outdoorsman, artist, author and lecturer, died in a Bismarck hospital Friday morning. He entered the hospital the day before from his home at Fort Yates.

He was widely known in Mobridge and over this area. With his wife, Angela, who survives, and his daughter, Mrs. Dale Peters (Francine) and a Fort Yates cast, they presented the Indian play, "Cry of Lone Eagle" and a second based on the life of Sakakawea, in the Mobridge auditorium a decade ago when Indian Days were an annual event here. Mr. and Mrs. Fiske wrote and directed both plays.

On several occasions he appeared here on the municipal auditorium stage as an old-time fid-

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## FISKE

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dler, often with Lawrence Welk's orchestra, for Fiske and Welk were long-time friends.

At the time of his death he was living at Fort Yates where he had resided for the past 63 years.

Born in a fort while frontier conditions still prevailed, he lived among soldiers, river men, traders, trappers and Indians for many years and had explored little known historic sites from Custer's battlefield in Montana to Fort Yates.

In 1947, Fiske paddled a canoe from near the site of Custer's last stand in Montana to Bismarck, traveling down the Bighorn, Yellowstone, and Missouri rivers.

He wrote two books "Life and Death of Sitting Bull" and the "Taming of the Sioux". He was working on another at the time of his death.

Fiske, who had been in failing health for the past year, was an expert violinist, wrote an "Old-Timer's" column for newspapers and lectured on Indian and frontier lore.

He was born June 11, 1883, at Fort Bennett, an army post in what is now South Dakota but which at that time was Dakota territory.

The Fiske family later moved to Fort Yates where the elder Fiske was a wagonmaster.

Frank as a boy became interested in photography. He soon began building up a collection of Indian photographs.

Among his pictures is one of Red Tomahawk which later was reproduced and now is on North Dakota highway markers. He had pictures of many famous Indian chiefs.

In 1950, he received the North Dakota art award, having been recognized for his Indian portraits by the State American Art Week Committee.

Figure 6: Frank Bennett Fiske obituary (1883-1952)



## State Historical Society of North Dakota

Figure 7: Frank Zahn stands on the far left, his name is well-known in North Dakota's history. Zahn also called Chief Flying Cloud, was born on May 4, 1890, to William Zahn, a man who served under Reno in Custer's 7th Calvary, and to a Native American princess, Kezewin Flying Cloud, who was related to Sitting Bull. William Zahn had a trading post on the Standing Rock Reservation, and Frank Zahn was born there.

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