

NAËZHOSH; OR, THE APACHE POLE GAME.

ALBERT B. REAGAN.

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Naëzhosh is the Apache tribal game. It is played most every day from early morning till late in the afternoon by the men; in fact they do but little else, except hunt horses in the hills and drink Indian whiskey. This game is sometimes played to pass time; but most always for gain. The Indians often bet all they have on its outcome, and then having suffered reverses, they brood over their losses in sullen silence. Below is a description of the game; and the requisites—the pole-stick, the pole-hoop, and the pole-ground:



Fig. 1.

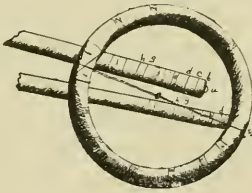


Fig. 2.

DIAGRAM OF POLE STICKS AND POLE HOOP.

Fig. 1. Pole Stick. The grooves b, c, d, g, h; the spaces e, f, i, and the point a are points used in the game.

Fig. 2. The Pole Hoop, etc. The spaces 1-4 and 6-11 and the groove 5 are the points on the hoop used in the game.

The Pole-Stick.—The pole-stick is a willow pole one and one-half inches in diameter at the larger end. It tapers to a point at its smaller end. Its length is about fifteen feet. It is made in three sections, the sections being spliced together with sinew. The larger end of this pole is called the counting end. On it are several transverse grooves. These grooves together with some of the intervening spaces are the points on the pole used in the game.

The Pole-hoop.—The pole-hoop is about a foot in diameter. It is made of a willow withe, the ends of which are tied together with sinew. A buckskin cord forms a diameter to it. On this cord are strung one hundred and one beads, one large center bead and fifty smaller ones on each side of it. These beads are counts used in the game. In addition to the bead counts, the hoop rim has several counts on it. They are its transverse grooves, together with certain intervening spaces.

The Pole-ground.—The pole-ground is a leveled spot thirty-six yards in length, by six yards in width, laid off in a north and south direction. At its center is the base, usually a rock, from which the pole-hoop is rolled and the poles, two in number, are hurled. Nine yards both to the north and also to the south of this base, are three hay ridges, the center ridge being on the north and south center line of the pole-ground. These ridges are three yards long and the distance from the outer edge of the east ridge to the outer edge of the west ridge is five feet. The furrows between the ridges are narrow. It is into one of these furrows that the hoop rolls, under which the poles are slid before the points are counted.

Rolling the Pole-hoop.—In rolling the pole-hoop it is held with rim vertical between thumb and second finger of the right hand, it resting on the extended front finger over which it rolls when sent on its mission of chance. If the hoop, when rolled, fails to enter either of the furrows, a break in the game is declared, and it is brought back and rolled again. On entering one of the furrows, the loose hay retards its speed, and it soon falls, to be slid under by the well guided poles. The hoop is always rolled twice to the south and once to the north, and so on for hours, till the game is finished.

Hurling the Pole-stick.—The pole-stick, when being hurled, is held so as to slide through the left hand. The propelling power is the right hand, the index finger being placed against the rear end. The pole being dexteriously hurled, slides into the furrow, and stops with the larger end beneath the hoop. The counting then begins.

Counting the Points.—All points on each pole that fall on or within the rim of the hoop are counted as are also all points on the hoop-rim, and all the beads on the transverse cord which fall within the edges of either pole. The points being counted, the players again proceed to the base and play again as before. This playing is continued for hours till one of the contestants gets the number of points agreed upon by the players to constitute a game. A transfer of the staked property follows. Then the betting begins for a new game.



The pole field.



Starting the pole hoop. The beginning of the game.



Hurling the poles.



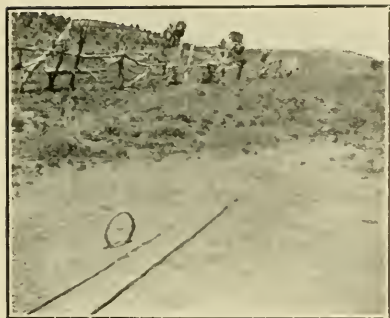
Hurling the poles.



The poles speeding on their way.



The hoop rolls wide of the counting field. A break in the game.



Hoop and poles entering the counting field.



Hoop and poles after motion has ceased. The hoop overlies the counting ends of the poles. The counting now begins.



Counting the points in the pole game.



Picking up the poles in the counting field.



Returning to the base.



The game begins anew.