

“My Time in the Wilderness”

or

“I Slept on the Ground and Bugs Built a Nest in my Ear”

or

“The Noble Savages and their Primitive Government”

a report to the American Society of Anthropology

Preface. A note on language.

Following is a short description of my time spent in a rather remote part of exotic Chicago. As one might guess, there was no shortage of trouble with the language barrier. The natives of the local tribe speak a language that is not related to any modern language. It is a tonal language filled with embellishments such as grunts and squeaks, but surprisingly, it can carry a large amount of information and nuance. In the following description, I shall take the liberty of translating to modern English where necessary.

Part the First. An overview of government.

The natives, or Hitchcockians, have built a surprisingly complex political system to serve their needs. In contrast to many other hunter-gatherer societies, leaders are chosen via direct democracy, and a large bureaucracy assists in the handling of administrative tasks. Normally, one would expect that such a large bureaucratic class would preclude more vital tasks for everyday survival. This would be true, except the Hitchcockians seem much more organized and advanced than their savage counterparts; they have a primitive concept called *adamsmitt*, roughly analagous to “division of labor,” and have applied it to every facet of their lives.

As has been noted, the entire tribe chooses its representatives via an informal vote. Thus we see that the Hitchcockians have moved away from the traditional alpha-male leadership posturing and embraced more equitable distribution of power.

I managed to observe what might charitably be called an “impeachment.” It seems that one subgroup was unhappy with their current representative. Her native name has twenty-seven syllables (and several honorific titles), so for convenience I will label her Margot. After many displays of dissatisfaction, a small trial was held, and evidence was presented for and against removal. In the end, she was allowed to keep her post. I can only speculate on what might have happened had she been removed; some sort of ritualistic sacrifice to a volcano-god seems likely.

Part the Second. Local culture.

Culture for the Hitchcockians is relatively rich and varied. First, of course, there are contests of manly sports, as might be expected in any lower society. There were references to several such activities: as they were described to me, they might be similar to our modern-day basket-ball or soccer. They certainly have the same territorial undertones. They also described to me a local pastime called *brumbal*.

This sport cannot be succinctly described without a highly specialized vocabulary; it seems to involve striking a ball of some kind, and a lot of falling down, but the natives were unable to make

clear to me the precise rules of the game.

Hitchcockian culture also boasts a wide variety of arts and higher pursuits, such as drama. Crude adaptations of well-known tales are often performed. (This seems to lend credence to the idea that all human stories have their basis in some kernel of dramatic truth, long since lost to the mists of time, but still informing the psyche of every human alive today.) First, there is the archetypical “flying boy” story, with its anti-growing-up message. Secondly, an adaptation of one of their few written works, that we might translate as “Persepolis.” This “Persepolis” text is not, in fact, based in any written language, but is instead a pictographic representation of actions. Then, of course, there was the obligatory tale of fear and danger, which served reinforce the native's fears of certain canine subgroups.

Part the Third. Economics.

We have already discussed the Hitchcockian attachment to “division of labor.” This has given them economic and production capacities far beyond what might be expected of such a society. For example, they have split the cloth-making and dye-making processes into several distinct operations, and thereby have been able to produce approximately one hundred crude tunics in the time I was present. These tunics have a witty saying on them in the native language, but it shall be omitted since it loses much in the translation.

Part the Fourth. Conclusions.

Indeed, the Hitchcockian tribe is a hospitable and surprisingly advanced group. Near the end of my stay I was invited to join the natives in the ritual consumption of a local delicacy. This seemed to be a point of particular pride for them; apparently any nearby tribes do not have as refined palates or, as seems more likely, they starved to death.

I should like to return at some point later in the year to make more detailed observations of this society. I have heard whisperings during my time there, alluding to some sort of *scaf-unt*.

I can make only guesses as to what this means, based on context. It appears to be some sort of yearly festival. I shall tentatively suggest that it is a new-year's celebration. In the course of the celebration, many things much be gathered, not without significant difficulty. All this is apparently specifically designed to heighten the sense of community and unity among the Hitchcockians.

To serve the cause of knowledge, I shall return soon to exotic Chicago, and report back to this august society.