12. Na′ iwi′ o′wi′ta′

Na′ iwi′ o′wi′ta′,
Na′ iwi′ o′wi′ta′;
Do′hya di′wabo′n na′ na′ iwi′ o′wi′ta′,
Do′hya di′wabo′n na′ na′ iwi′ o′wi′ta′;
Na′ha′ na′daka′a′, Na′ha′ na′daka′a′.

Translation

See! the eagle comes,
See! the eagle comes;
Now at last we see him — look! look! the eagle comes,
Now at last we see him — look! look! the eagle comes;
Now we see him with the people,
Now we see him with the people.

This refers to what the Caddo call the "return of the eagle feathers" in the Ghost dance. With the Caddo, as with other tribes, the eagle is a sacred bird, and in the old times only the few medicine-men who knew the sacred formula would dare to kill one for the feathers. Should any-one else kill an eagle, his family would die or some other great misfor-tune would come upon him. The formula consisted of certain secret prayers and ritual performances. Among the Cherokee the eagle killer's prayer was a petition to the eagle not to be revenged upon the tribe, because it was not an Indian, but a Spaniard, who had killed him — an indication of the vivid remembrance in which the cruelty of the early Spaniards was held among the southern tribes. To further guard against the anger of the eagles, the Cherokee eagle killer, on his return to the village, announced that he had killed, not an eagle, but a snowbird, the latter being too small and insignificant to be dreaded. The eagle-killing ceremony among the northern prairie tribes has been already described under Arapaho song 47. The Caddo eagle killer always took with him a robe or some other valuable offering, and after shooting the eagle, making the prayer, and pulling out the tail and wing feathers he covered the body with the robe and left it there as a peace offering to the spirit of the eagle. The dead eagle was never brought home, as among the Cherokee. The last man of the Caddo who knew the eagle-killing ritual died some years ago, and since then they have had to go without eagle feathers or buy them from the Kiowa and other tribes. Since Sitting Bull came down and "gave the feather"