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German silver belts

CHAPTER XV

THE CEREMONY OF THE GHOST DANCE

In chapter XI we have spoken of the Ghost dance as it existed among the Paiute, Shoshoni, Walapai, and Cohonino, west of the mountains. We shall now give a more detailed account of the ceremony and connected ritual among the prairie tribes.

AMONG THE NORTHERN CHEYENNE

According to Dr Grinnell the Ghost dance among the northern Cheyenne had several features not found in the south. Four fires were built outside of the dance circle and about 20 yards back from it, toward each of the cardinal points. These fires were built of long poles set up on end, so as to form a rude cone, much as the poles of a tipi are erected. The fires were lighted at the bottom, and thus made high bonfires, which were kept up as long as the dance continued. (J. F. L., 5.)

AMONG THE SIOUX

Perhaps the most important feature in connection with the dance among the Sioux was the "ghost shirt," already noticed and to be described more fully hereafter. On account of the scarcity of buckskin, these shirts were almost always made of white cloth cut and figured in the Indian fashion. The Sioux wore no metal of any kind in the dance, differing in this respect from the southern tribes, who wore on such occasions all their finery of German silver ornaments. The Sioux also began the dance sometimes in the morning, as well as in the afternoon or evening. Another important feature not found among the southern tribes, excepting the Kiowa, was the tree planted in the center of the circle and decorated with feathers, stuffed animals, and strips of cloth.

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At a Ghost dance at No Water's camp, near Pine Ridge, as described by J. F. Asay, formerly a trader at the agency, the dancers first stood in line facing the sun, while the leader, standing facing them, made a prayer and waved over their heads the "ghost stick," a staff about 6 feet long, trimmed with red cloth and feathers of the same color. After thus waving the stick over them, he faced the sun and made another prayer, after which the line closed up to form a circle around the tree and the dance began. During the prayer a woman standing near the tree held out a pipe toward the sun, while another beside her held out several (four?) arrows from which the points had been removed. On