

SONG REHEARSALS

As with church choirs, the leaders, both men and women, frequently assembled privately in a tipi to rehearse the new or old songs for the next dance. During the first winter spent among the Arapaho I had frequent opportunity of being present at these rehearsals, as for a long time the snow was too deep to permit dancing outside. After having obtained their confidence the Arapaho police invited me to come up to their camp at night to hear them practice the songs in anticipation of better weather for dancing. Thenceforth rehearsals were held in Black Coyote's tipi almost every night until the snow melted, each session usually lasting about three hours.

On these occasions from eight to twelve persons were present, sitting in a circle on the low beds around the fire in the center. Black Coyote acted as master of ceremonies and opened proceedings by filling and lighting the redstone pipe, offering the first whiff to the sun, then reversing the stem in offering to the earth, next presenting the pipe to the fire, and then to each of the four cardinal points. He then took a few puffs himself, after which he passed the pipe to his next neighbor, who went through the same preliminaries before smoking, and thus the pipe went round the circle, each one taking only a few puffs before passing it on. The pipe was then put back into its pouch, and Black Coyote, standing with his face toward the northwest, the messiah's country, with eyes closed and arms outstretched, made a fervent prayer for help and prosperity to his tribe, closing with an earnest petition to the messiah to hasten his coming. The others listened in silence with bowed heads. The prayer ended, they consulted as to the song to be sung first, which Black Coyote then started in a clear musical bass, the others joining. From time to time explanations were made where the meaning of the song was not clear. They invited me to call for whatever songs I wished to hear, and these songs were repeated over and over again to give me an opportunity to write them down, but they waived extended discussion until another time. Usually the men alone were the singers, but sometimes Black Coyote's wives or other women who were present joined in the songs. It was noticeable that even in these rehearsals the women easily fell under the excitement of the dance. Finally, about 10 o'clock, all rose together and sang the closing song, *Ni'ninitubi'na Huhu*, "The Crow has given the signal," and the rehearsal was at an end. On one occasion, before I had obtained this song, I called for it in order that I might write it down, but they explained that we must wait awhile, as it was the closing song, and if they sung it then they must quit for the night.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE DANCE

On several occasions the dance ground was consecrated before the performance, one of the leaders going all about the place, sprinkling some kind of sacred powder over the ground and praying the while.

1. Council -
2. Rehearsal -

all women of all
imperfect

a2

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