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Goldie Turner,  
Research Field Worker,  
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( Description of Various Pawnee Indian Dances  
As related by  
Mrs. Nora Keys  
Pawnee Indian Agency

Pipe Dance

The Pipe Dance usually lasted two weeks. It was similar to the rituals in a lodge. It was supposed to be held for four years in succession with the same members. If a member failed to attend, some misfortune usually happened to him. In this dance there were eleven participants; there were eight singers, two dancers and one chief. The secret part of the lodge was held in secret in a tent. No one was admitted but the persons taking part. In the secret part, there were only Indian men. If a father died, his eldest son was eligible to take part and, if something happened to him, his brothers took his place, each according to his age. No one outside of these certain families was allowed to take part. As soon as the son was old enough, say twelve or thirteen years of age, the father would begin instructing him in the rituals but he never took part in the dance until his father's death and never revealed to others what was being taught him.

On the last day of the dance two men dancers danced outside of the tent and gifts were exchanged among all the members of the tribe. On this day there was an open meeting and a princess of the tribe was chosen.

#### Doctor Dance

In the Doctor Dance no one but doctors took part but they could be men or women.

To be a tribal doctor, a child would begin his education when he was about twelve or fourteen years of age. He would be instructed by his father or mother as the case might be. The child had to study all the different herbs, know the habits, properties and names of plants used as medicine. They always chose some animal or bird to represent at the dances. Some of these were the otter, beaver, eagle and owl. At the dances they would dress in the skin of the animal represented or wear something taken from that bird or animal and carry out the actions of it so that the rest of the tribe would be able to guess which animal was represented.

This dance was held twice a year, in the spring and in the fall. They used a drum made of a keg which was half full of water with a piece of buffalo hide stretched

tightly over it. This was a secret dance also and was held in a tent. They allowed no disturbances when this dance was going on. If a baby began crying, one of the dancers came out and sang or chanted over it for a little bit and it would go to sleep. The doctors would heal the sick at the dance but also doctored persons at any other times as well. The Indian medicines were never bought or sold but were used by the doctors at their discretion.

#### Ghost Dance

In the Ghost Dance it took two weeks to prepare for it. Beeves were killed and dried or jerked, for during this dance nothing but dried beef was eaten. The dance lasted two weeks. In this dance the gourd containing pebbles was used to keep time instead of a drum. Both men and women took part in this dance. It started at noon in an open feast, then after eating, the Indians formed a circle in a large tent holding hands and singing and dancing until one of them went into a trance. The dancing then stopped until this person recovered. He would then relate his experiences while in

the trance and then the dance was resumed. The suppers were always held out in the open and all together but the rest of the meals were eaten in the separate tents. The last night the dance continued all night and until the sun rose.

This dance is held once in awhile now. The last time it was held was in the spring of 1937 at the Mud Lodge south of Pawnee. The Indians always pray before each dance and give thanks for their food before each meal. This custom is always observed among the Pawnee Indians of today.

#### Buffalo Dance

The Buffalo Dance is another secret dance that is not held now. The braves eligible for this dance gather on the inside of the mud lodge and hold the ritual in secret. Eligibility for this dance is the same as for the pipe dance.

The brave taking part wore a feather head dress, black moccasins and a buffalo skin around him. He was painted with clay from the waist up. During the ceremony one of them came out and climbed to the top of the mud lodge. Then standing straight up and with two corners

of the buffalo skin held in the hands, he would stretch out his arms and face the east, then the west, south and north. Then he would kneel and call through the hole in the top of the mud lodge to the men underneath. They would answer, then he would call again. This was repeated several times, then he would get down and go inside the lodge again.

For this dance they used a wood keg half full of water with a tightly stretched buffalo skin over the top for a drum, instead of the gourd or tom tom.

#### Otoe Indian Wedding

When the young couple decided they wanted to marry they told the bride's parents. The bride's parents then took her and left her at the home of the groom-to-be. She stays here from one to three weeks, never being permitted to see her future husband. Word is then sent to all the relatives of the husband-to-be and a feast is prepared for them. His relatives all come to the feast. After eating, the date for the wedding feast is set and the bride's parents and relatives are invited to the wedding feast.

At the wedding feast the groom's parents furnish all the food, prepare it for eating and furnish the gifts. The bride and groom meet for the first time since they were separated. After the feast a chief performs the marriage ceremony. The groom's parents then present the bride clothes and give gifts to her relatives. After this is over, the couple may stay with either of their parents or in their own home.

In ten days or two weeks the bride's relatives give a feast for the groom's relatives and present them with gifts.