

THE ARIKARA METHOD OF PREPARING A DOG FOR A FEAST

Among the Arikara, the serving of dog meat is proper for a feast on some high day, as the serving of turkey is with us at Thanksgiving and Christmas. The flesh of young dogs is preferred. It was my good fortune to be able to observe, on Saturday, July 24, 1926, the killing, dressing, and cooking of a dog for a feast of the Buffalo Society, one of the eight mystic fraternities of the Arikara tribe concerned with socio-religious observations. An old man named *Kunuĥ-wahat* had invited his fellow-members to feast on the occasion of the celebration of the mysteries of the Holy Grandmother Cedar Tree.

The Arikara methods of killing and butchering a dog are different from those of other tribes. The dog selected on this occasion was not yet full grown. It was mostly white, but had a few splotches of color. The work of preparing it devolved upon the wife of the host. Seizing the dog by the hind legs Mrs. *Kunuĥ-wahat* whirled it several times in a vertical circle and then struck its back and head with great force upon the ground. While it was stunned, she placed she placed her left foot upon its neck, resting all her weight on it, thereby preventing the recovery of respiration until she was sure it was dead. In reply to a question, she explained that swinging the dog around was an act of mercy to make him dizzy in order to lessen the pain as he hit the ground. The only sound from the dog was a little whimper as the swinging started.

After killing the dog Mrs. *Kunuĥ-wahat* kindled a fire and laid the body on it. Watching it closely, she continually turned it about until the hair was all singed off. By this means, the skin was blistered till it was puffed out all over the body¹. She then washed off the singed hair, using plenty of water to make the carcass entirely clean before butchering it. As she slit open the body from throat to tail she was careful to keep the vents closed in order to prevent soiling the meat. She removed all the viscera and washed out the trunk. Then she cut off the head and tail, which were discarded with the viscera.

The dressed carcass was divided into portions in accordance with a well-established tradition. These portions are the two forequarters, the two hindquarters, the two sets of ribs, the cervical and dorsal

¹ I have been told that this method of removing the hair is employed by the country people of France then they are butchering a hog.

vertebrae with adjacent bones and muscles between the shoulders, and the lumbar vertebrae with the bones and muscles which form the pelvic girdle.

The Arikara cut up the carcass of a dog with the skin still upon it, as is the case when white people butcher a hog. Mrs. *Kunuĥ-wahat* said in explanation: "The skin is too rich to lose."

There is nothing distinctive in the last steps of the preparation for the feast. As the water is being heated in a kettle, the portions of the meat are cut into small pieces, washed for the final time, and then put into the pot to boil. When the cooking is completed, the meat is ready to serve.