

THE SACRED BUNDLES OF THE ARIKARA

The Arikara nation is the northernmost of a racial group, which we call the Caddoan, from the name of one of the southern tribes of this stock, the Caddo, whose country was in what is now called Louisiana. Other nations of this stock were the Waco, Wichita and Pawnee. The several nations of the Caddoan stock have moved out through many centuries in successive waves from the southwest, perhaps from within Mexico. The Arikara, who appear to have been the pioneers in this movement, have advanced farthest from the southwest area of origin, successively occupying for considerable periods of time one area and then another all the way from the Rio Grande in the south to Missouri in the north. As they moved on farther north they were followed by their relatives, the Pawnee, and these in turn by the Wichita, until at the advent of the Europeans the Arikara were on the upper Missouri where it is joined by the Grand River flowing in from the west; the Pawnee were on the Niobrara, the Platte and the Republican rivers; and the Wichita were on the Arkansas River. Five centuries earlier the Arikara had dwelt for a long time in the area bounded on the east by the Missouri River, on the south by the Platte and on the north by the Niobrara. We have no definite knowledge at present as to the western limit of their territory at that time.

The religio-civic organization and customs of the Arikara and Pawnee were similar, and both nations were agricultural from time immemorial.

Both the Arikara and the Pawnee populations have been sadly diminished in recent historic times by contagious diseases new to them, and from other hardships and disasters, which also resulted from European contact. From the evidence we have it appears that in the time of their strength the Arikara nation had a population numbering several thousands of persons. The nation at that time was organized in twelve villages, with each village occupying a certain geographic position with relation to all the others. In all the centuries of their gradual migration northward to the upper Missouri these twelve villages maintained approximately the same relative positions in each area successively occupied.

Each village had its own local government in all home affairs, but the several villages were also organized for united deliberation and cooperative action upon matters of more general concern. To this

end, the twelve villages were disposed into four divisions of three each, one of which was designated as the head of its group. The village chiefs governed in local affairs, and the chief of the head village had, in addition, authority in matters affecting the three communities within that group. There was a principal chief of the nation, supported by a board of four associate chiefs, one from each of the divisions. This board was charged with the governmental affairs of the nation.

In all religious ceremonies of the Arikara, whether private or public in their nature, certain sacredly symbolic objects were used which served to fix the attention of those taking part upon the subject with which the ceremony was concerned, and with the particular teachings of the Sacred Legend bearing upon the matter. The Sacred Legend is the body of doctrine upon wisdom and morality which has come down through the generations from the venerable wise men of ancient times. It might be called the unwritten Bible of the Arikara.

The sacred objects were displayed to view during the ceremonies, but at other times were incased in wrappings, which protected them from injury and also veiled them from the vulgar gaze of the curious. Such Sacred Bundles, or collections of sacred objects, were of several classes according to their nature and purpose. Thus in their functions some were of personal significance and use, some had to do with household and home affairs, another with the functions of the Mystic Societies. As has been told in another relation,¹ there were eight of these Mystic Societies, which had their regular stations in the sittings of the great public ceremonies, such as those of Mother Corn and the Holy Cedar Tree. These Sacred Bundles were in the care and keeping of the officers of the societies.

Then there were the great Sacred Bundles belonging to the several villages. Each of the twelve villages of the Arikara nation had its own Sacred Bundle, which was in effect the palladium of the village. The specific contents of these twelve bundles differed somewhat, and the ritual of each differed in detail from that of every other, but their general purport was similar. These twelve great Sacred Bundles were in keeping of custodians, or priests, whose duty it was to guard the safety of these venerable objects, to perfect

¹ Pages 69-70 of "The Arikara Tribal Temple," *Pap. Mich. Acad. Sci., Arts and Letters*, 14:47-70.

themselves in the rituals pertaining to them, to teach these rituals to those who were to become their successors, and to take the lead in the celebration of the religious festivals. The priesthood, or custodianship, of the Sacred Bundles was hereditary in certain families, always with the provision that the candidates should demonstrate fitness and ability for the vocation.

When religious ceremonies were to be celebrated, the keeper of the Sacred Bundle brought it into the sacred lodge or temple. There it was opened upon the altar so that the holy objects contained in it were exposed to the reverent view of those who assisted by their presence and participation in the ceremonies of the festival. When a Sacred Bundle was opened on any occasion, the people brought offerings and gifts, which they deposited before the altar. Out of these voluntary gifts the keeper retained a part as fees for his services, a part he gave as fees to his assistants and the rest he distributed to the poor, the aged, the orphans and the sick and need of the village.

The teachings of the unwritten Bible of the Arikara, which are called to mind by the objects in their proper order in the Sacred Bundles, give an account of the origin and development and mutual interdependence of all living creatures, both plant and animal, and of man's place in that living world as a partner and companion with all other living things on earth. They inculcate the idea of gratitude due from man to vegetation and all species of animal life which have given their companionship and their good gifts for man's enjoyment. They teach also religious joys and duties, ethics and moral conduct, justice, mercy, self-control, habits of industry, hospitality to strangers, patience and forbearance toward fellow-men, compassion for the unfortunate, consideration for the aged, encouragement and persuasion of youth toward right courses in life directed to usefulness and honor, tenderness toward children and the duty of parents to teach and train their children and "to set their young feet in the right path."

Every one of the village Sacred Bundles has among its hallowed objects an ancient sacred pipe and a parcel of Arikara tobacco, and a mussel shell for use as a dish to contain the tobacco, four perfect ears of sacred corn and an ancient hoe, the blade of which is made from the shoulder blade of a buffalo and the handle of box-elder wood. On the outside of each of these Sacred Bundles there is a bar of wood to which are attached five ancient rattles made from the shells of bottle gourds. These five rattles are used by the

chief priest and his four assistants to beat time for the singing of the hymns and chants in the celebration of religious ceremonies. The bundles also contain the skins of certain species of birds and small mammals and fishes. Each of these objects serves to call to mind some particular item in the volume of teaching pertaining to the bundle.

The presence of a Sacred Bundle inspired in the people feelings of awe and reverence, but at the same time also feelings of joy and confidence, of hope and well-being, and sentiments of good will. On one occasion when a Sacred Bundle lay open before us upon the altar the priest said, in bringing our minds to a proper attitude of contemplation:

We are here in the presence of a Sacred Bundle. All Sacred Bundles give blessings to those who are privileged to see them, if such persons be in the right attitude of mind. It is your good fortune to be here today and to see this bundle opened, and you must be in the right frame of mind, which is fitting in the presence of this holy thing. It was our ancestors who placed all these things in this bundle as they were directed. It was not a thing of their own device, but they obeyed divine instruction in the making of it. Upon the man to whom it has been given to know, the ritual there rests a heavy burden. He has undertaken a great responsibility. He must take care to live a blameless life, giving no cause of offense to anyone. He must be temperate and mild in his speech, never uttering harsh words even under great provocation. Every day he must do right in all things, and be always kind and hospitable. He must be gentle and forgiving and cherish no ill-will against anyone even though one may have done him injury.

The chief priest and his four associates were in a manner symbolic of the being of *Neshanu Natchitak*, the Chief Above, and his four Aides. These Aides of *Neshanu Natchitak* are the spirits of the four quarters of the earth; namely, the Southeast, sacred to the Sunrise with its vivifying power and the Vegetation with its good gifts; the Southwest, sacred to Thunder, the giver of the water of life, and to the Animals, chief of which was the Buffalo; the Northwest, sacred to Wind, or the breath of life, and to Birds and other forms of life of the air; the Northeast, sacred to Night, the restorer, and to Mother Corn, mediator between man and the Chief Above, the dispenser of his good gifts to man.

The inclusion of ears of corn and of the hoe, an implement for cultivating corn, in all the Sacred Bundles is evidence of the all-important place which agriculture held, and for ages had held, in the life and thought of the Arikara people. Rituals of all phases of Arikara life, public and tribal, private and personal,

are replete with references to the divine gift of corn.

As an example of the character of the Sacred Bundles of the villages and of their contents, I shall describe one, which I had opportunity to examine on August 12, 1930. This bundle is no longer in use for ceremonies for the reason that no one now living is proficient in the ritual, which pertained to it, for the last priest who knew its ritual, died years ago. But the venerable shrine is still held in reverence and kept with solemn care. Because the lashings upon this bundle were so old and had begun to show signs of dilapidation, it was feared that it might fall to ruin. The present custodian decided to have it opened and retied with new lashings. Of course this act must be done with all due ceremony. A woman who was adept in the old-time craft of dressing skins had been employed to prepare a hide and cut from it a suitable thong for tying. The present custodian, not being proficient in the ritual of any of the Sacred Bundles, had engaged to perform the ceremony of opening and retying this now defunct bundle a man well versed in the ritual of another bundle which is still used in public ceremonies, so that so far as possible this silent presence from the past should be treated with all the respect and ceremony due to it.

The custodian invited me to be one of the company required to be present for the proper observance of the ceremony. This invitation gave me an unusual opportunity to examine the contents of the bundle, especially as I was allowed freely to handle the objects, and the advantage was still further enhanced by the permission quite willingly given me to bring in an ornithologist, Mr. Russell Reid, to identify the species of birds whose skins were among the objects contained in the bundle, and to make photographs for record. Every possible facility was given me, and the most cheerful patience was shown for the delay and inconvenience made necessary by our study of the objects and their placement for photographing.

In preparation for the ceremony, the fire-chief kindled a fire in the fireplace of the Holy Lodge, a buffalo skull was placed in its proper station by the southwest main post of the lodge, and the bundle was brought and laid upon a pallet prepared for it in the holy place before the altar. A new rawhide thong, which had been prepared to replace the old thong weakened by age and decay, was brought forward for the new binding.

Since the Holy Lodge had been floored with boards to meet modern requirements for other

purposes besides those of the old-time ceremonies, a circular earthen fireplace had been built of puddle clay in the center of the floor, and a vessel containing earth was prepared as a small fireplace on which to burn the sweet grass incense before the altar. The fire-chief now brought live coals from the fireplace and laid them on the earth contained in this vessel. Then from the wisp of dried sweet grass belonging to the Sacred Bundle a little was broken off and sprinkled on the coals. As the smoke arose, the priest lifted the Sacred Bundle from its bed, held it just above the bed of coals and allowed the smoke of the incense to rise and touch it on all sides. When he had done so he replaced the bundle in its resting place before the altar and himself returned and sat down at the back of the altar and made an address upon the character and significance of the great Sacred Bundles of the Arikara people, and of this one in particular, left as it was, silent and desolate by the death years ago of the last of its priests. He disclaimed any authority to speak for this bundle, but said that, since no one now living had the proper knowledge of the ceremonial pertaining to it, he, because he was acquainted with the ritual relating to a similar Sacred Bundle, had been asked and had consented to perform this ceremony to the best of his ability. Then he spoke of the purpose of our action in the renewing and retying the bundle in order that it might rest in greater security and receive the respect which it deserved, and that we might hold in honored and grateful memory those whose lives and thoughts and dreams in the distant, vanished past were bound up in it.

While he was speaking the bundle lay on its resting place before the altar in its ancient wrapping of buffalo hide tied with a thong, which had become frayed with age, and all colored a soft brown by countless incensings with the smoke of sweet grass. Attached to its upper side was a bar of wood to which were fastened the five ancient gourd shell rattles, their handles toward the altar, their bodies resting forward over the bar. When he had finished speaking, he called the fire-chief to assist him. The ancient lashing was untied and the wrapping turned back, exposing the contents to our view. The objects were all lifted reverently and laid out in order, and we handled and examined them with care and close attention. We identified and listed the objects and photographed them. See Plate III.

The bundle as wrapped and tied formed an oblong pack about two cubits in length, one cubit in width, and about half a cubit in thickness. The thong which bound the bundle was passed twice around it

lengthwise and twice crosswise, making four crosses of the thong on the upper side and four on the lower. Attached on the outside were the five gourd rattles before mentioned, four wildcat skulls discolored a dark brown by age and smoke, a sheaf of slender sticks of sandbar willow (*Salix longifolia*), whose use is explained in a former paper,² and some braids of dried sweet grass to serve as incense.

Within the bundle, we found a number of skins of birds and some other objects as follows: one Swainsons' hawk, one long-eared owl, one small northern loon, one duck hawk, one California parakeet, one Cooper's hawk (?), one western grebe and four burrowing owls wrapped in a fawn skin. Other objects were one small eagle feather and one downy plume, two large fresh-water mussel shells to serve as dishes for holding the sacred tobacco used in making smoke offerings, several ears of very old yellow flint corn, one large gar pike skin, one meat hook made of a long slender bird class attached to a wooden handle, four partly burned shafts of enemy arrows from battlefields, two curious flat objects of wood, shaped somewhat like the short Roman sword, two sacred pipes of catlinite carved in a curious archaic form, the stems of which were made of the same species of wood as the sword-shaped objects mentioned above. This is a species, which does not grow in the country now occupied by the Arikara, but farther to the south, where they formerly lived. For this reason, the species is not yet identified. The Arikara name of the tree is *nakis-atina*, which literally means "mother-wood." The enemy arrow shafts have been partly burned from serving as lighting sticks for the sacred pipes in making the ceremonial smoke offerings.

After we had examined and listed and photographed the objects in the bundle, the fire-chief filled and lighted the pipe and handed it to the priest to make the ceremonial smoke offerings. Then he passed around, extending the mouthpiece of the pipe to each person participating in this ceremony, so that all might be put in communion of spirit in contemplation of the sacred objects and in spiritual unity with all those persons connected therewith, from ancient times to the present, and that we might all bless ourselves from the sacred pipe. This is done by lightly laying both hands about the stem of the pipe at the moment the mouthpiece is presented to the lips and drawing the hands along the length of the pipestem towards one's

² "The Arikara Book of Genesis," *Pap. Mich. Acad. Sci., Arts and Letters*, 12 (1929):95-120.

person and then making a gesture of passing the right hand along one's left arm from hand to shoulder, then the left hand along the right arm to the shoulder, then both hands over the head and down the shoulders. This whole gesture is done as quickly and as easily as the Christian gesture of making the sign of the cross. When he had brought the pipe to everyone in the company the priest ceremonially emptied the ashes from it and returned it to the fire-chief, who placed it again in its resting place.

The supplies of food had already been brought in and set in their accustomed place ready to be served by the waiters. Now the herald went outside and extended to the people an invitation to come in to the feast. A community meal or feast is always part of any ceremony.

When the people bidden to the feasts had come in and seated themselves in their places, a representative of the Duck Society, one of the eight Mystic Societies of the Arikara nation, came forward to make smoke offerings on behalf of his association. A representative of the Buffalo Society did likewise for his organization. After the pipes were finished, they were emptied and returned ceremonially to the fire-chief.

Then the priest of the ceremony made an address to the assembled people, explaining to them the occasion of the ceremonial gathering. At any time when a Sacred Bundle is opened it is proper for any who desire to do so to make gifts and offerings, and for names and honors to be conferred publically and formally. Now the woman who had made this ceremony and feast for the purpose of having the bundle opened and retied, announced that she desired to have a name conferred upon her young daughter-in-law on this memorable and auspicious occasion. Then she made the usual gifts and the young woman was called forward and the priest formally conferred upon her the name which had been chosen for her, and he made public proclamation of the fact to all the people, and to the Sun, the Waters, the Wind and the Night; to Vegetation, to the Buffalo and other animals, to the Creatures of the Air and to Mother Corn, saying that this young woman should henceforth be known by the same name which he pronounced, a name which has been well loved by the Arikara people ever since ancient times and which means in English "Mother-comes"; it is an allusion to Mother Corn.

Then I heard myself called up by my tribal name. I rose and went forward, and gorgeous gift in the

form of a very splendid eagle-feather war bonnet, which was placed upon my head, was presented to me as an honorable decoration, whereupon a eulogium was pronounced upon me, praising and commending me for past services to the tribe, for continual interest and helpfulness to the people.

The sacred relic pipe was taken up and filled and lighted to make the smoke offerings and to bless the people. The offerings were made and the pipe was carried around in regular order to all the people in the lodge, first along the south half of the circle from the doorway to the altar, then along the north side. After all the people had had the opportunity to touch the pipe to receive a blessing from it this venerable object was ceremonially emptied and returned to its rest upon two billets of wood before the Sacred Bundle. Thereupon the priest blessed the food which had been provided for the feast, making an offering of a small bit of it to each of the four quarters, to the objects of the bundle, and finally to the pipes at the tobacco cutting board by the fire-chief's station.

When all this had been done, the people were told to set out their cups and bowls. The waiters then passed around with the food and drink and served the people. After all the people had been served, the signal was unobtrusively given and they began to eat. When all had been satisfied, a signal was given and the people rose and went out. Then the ancient hide covering of the Sacred Bundle was freshly spread, the objects were all replaced in their former proper order, a new supply of Arikara tobacco and of dried sweet grass was added, the cover was folded over, the new thong was lashed about the bundle in place of the old deteriorated one, and the ceremony was over. I did not see what disposition was made of the old thong, which had served its time, but the probability is that it was reverently carried away to some lonely hilltop and there left to the elements. Such disposition would be consistent with sentiment and custom regarding venerable outworn objects.

I shall describe another Sacred Bundle, which I have seen opened in ceremonies, that of the village called *Hukawirat*. The outside wrapping is buffalo skin cured with the hair on. In wrapping the bundle the hair is on the inside. The bundle is of about the same dimensions as the one already described, and is likewise bound around with buffalo-hide thong twice lengthwise and twice crosswise, thus making four crossings on the upper side and four on the lower side of the bundle. Bound lengthwise on the upper side

of the bundle is a stick or bar of the species of wood, which the Arikara call *nakis-atina*. To this bar of mother-wood are tied at equal intervals five large gourd rattles, one for the priest and one for each of his assistants in marking the cadence of the ritualistic singing. There is also attached to the outside of the cover a sheaf of thirty-four slender sticks of peeled sandbar willow (*Salix longifolia*), one span in length. The use of these sticks is described in another paper^{3**}.

When this Sacred Bundle is opened it is required that the sweet grass and tobacco in it shall be renewed by a fresh supply of three dried braids of sweet grass (*Hierochloe odorata*) and one whole plant of Arikara tobacco (*Nicotiana quadrivalvis*).

In this Sacred Bundle there was a pipe of greater than ordinary size; the bowl was made from catlinite and the stem of ash wood. The stem was about a cubit in length. At about the width of a hand from the upper end of the pipestem was fastened a split quill, and tied to this were a piece of scalp, a small bit of a red woolen blanket, and a small polished shell somewhat like a snail shell. In the carving of the pipe bowl was a perforation through which was passed a thong tied to the pipestem. On this thong was strung a copper or brass bead and two Hudson Bay trade beads of glass. The pipe was wrapped in the cardiac sac of a buffalo.

There was also a meat hook made from a hawk claw with a handle of mother-wood. It was used for lifting meat from the pot in serving the feasts.

Other objects in the Sacred Bundle were: four perfect ears of eight-rowed white flint corn; a sparrow-hawk skin with small shell beads for eyes; four white feathers, probably of the snow goose; a skin of a species of hawk (unidentified). Its name in the Arikara language is *nikritawikrisu*. Two small pouches of tobacco were tied to this skin.

Still other objects were: another hawk skin (species unidentified), with a pouch of tobacco attached; one valve of a fresh-water mussel shell to serve as a dish for tobacco to be used in smoking ceremonies; an enemy scalp fastened to a piece of hoof tied on the end of a braided buffalo-hair rope about eight feet long,

³ See note 2.

which also had fastened to it a round piece of elk skin. The scalp was taken from a Kiowa in battle about the year 1830. The broken piece of a gunlock was also attached.

Another hawk skin of a larger species (also unidentified) was included; also the skin of a small species of owl. The latter was wrapped with a cord twined from fibers of Indian hemp (*Apocynum cannabinum*). A twig of mother-wood was wrapped with the skin because this owl is a forest dweller. A man who was going out as leader of a war party might make petition to the keeper of the Sacred Bundle and be permitted to take this object with him, tied to his hair, as an invocation to the guardian spirit of this species of owl for aid in the success of his expedition.

We found also the skin of a garpike; a small mammal skin, apparently that of a raccoon; and the skin of another species of small owl which lives in the woods. With this skin was also wrapped a small piece of mother-wood, with cord made from fibers of *Apocynum cannabinum*.

The skin of a small burrowing mammal, the Arikara name of which is *suhcit*, was included. It was stuffed with buffalo hair.

There was also the skin of a prairie or burrowing owl. Although this species dwells on the prairie in the abandoned burrow of any small mammal, such as the prairie dog or the badger, it is the Arikara belief that its remote ancestors dwelt in the woods, and that by evolutionary process its habits have changed. Because of the belief that this owl also was once a forest dweller, as the other owls are today, this skin is wrapped, like the others, with a piece of mother-wood, and bound with cord made from *Apocynum cannabinum*. The twine used in wrapping was dyed red.

The skin of a bird, which appears to resemble a kingfisher, but is larger, was included.

There was one valve of a fresh-water mussel, to be used as a dish to contain the medicine for the ritual of "Comforting the Mourners," described in another paper entitled "The Arikara Consolation Ceremony."

Two more hawk skins were found, both apparently of Swainson's hawk, one having attached to it a

small pouch containing the immature seed capsules and inflorescence of Arikara tobacco used for ceremonial smoking.

Two of the bird skins were in wrappings of fawn skins, two in antelope skins, and one in a big-horn skin.

Last of all was a small parcel wrapped in calico, to represent in recapitulation the entire Sacred Bundle. This packet contained a perfect ear of white flint corn closely incased in a cardiac sac drawn over it while fresh, so that as it dried it shrank closely about the ear, and since it is very thin and clear, the ear of corn may be seen through it was through a sheet of celluloid. Besides the ear of corn there were a feather of each species of bird whose skin was in the complete bundle, a small piece of *Apocynum* fiber cord, a twig of mother-wood, and a whistle made from the wing feather and a small pouch containing a pulverized vegetable product of a species the name of which could not be ascertained. There were also a second pouch of this powder and another ear of corn wrapped in a cardiac sac. The purpose of this miniature bundle was for use in an emergence when it was impracticable to open the complete Sacred Bundle, as during close pursuit by an enemy force. In such a case the miniature bundle was opened, the bone whistle was sounded, and some of the powder was blown into the air in the direction of the enemy. It was believed that this would affect the confusion of the enemy, that a mist would fall, and that the enemy would not be able to follow and find the people.

I was also invited at another time to assist in the ceremony of opening and renewing another of the great Sacred Bundles of the Arikara, a bundle whose ritual had perished by the death of the last man who was versed in it.

The wrapping was the whole skin of a young black bear. It had been cured with the hair on. The bundle was wrapped with the hair side out. It is said that black bears were tamed and kept as pets in the Arikara villages in former times. There are now but four of the original five gourd rattles belonging to this bundle. Many years ago one of the five was broken accidentally. The fragments were therefore carried out to a solitary place on the top of a high hill, smoke offerings were made, and they were left to the elements.

This bundle was found to contain the following objects: a large catlinite pipe, wrapped in the skin of a buffalo fetus, in general type similar to the one described above, but having carvings peculiar to itself on the stem, which was of mother-wood; an object made of mother-wood, shaped much like a Roman short sword, broad and flat, but with scalloped edges; four ears of yellow flint corn; the skin of a sparrow hawk; the skin of a species of large owl; the skin of a little prairie burrowing owl; the head and neck of a snow goose; a gar pike skin; three scalps taken in battle, one from a Dakota, having attached to it the skin of a goldfinch, a bird of symbolic significance to the Dakota; one valve of a fresh-water mussel shell to be used as a container of the ceremonial tobacco for making the smoke offerings; the skin of a grebe; two of the enemies' arrow shafts, which had been picked up on the field after the battle, to be used as pipe-lighters in the ceremonial smoke offerings; two wildcat skulls wrapped in a piece of Scottish plaid goods, of the old Hudson Bay trade.

Sacred Bundles of another class are those of the Mystic Societies of the Arikara tribe. Of these societies, it is said there were originally four, namely, the Ghost, the Buffalo, the Owl, and the Bear. Later four more societies were instituted, namely, the Deer, the Cormorant, the Duck and the Sioux. But these latter were considered of minor importance as compared with the first four.

I have examined the contents of one such bundle, which belonged to an officer of the Owl Society. He is now deceased and the bundle has been acquired from his widow for the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan. See Plate IV.

Among the objects in this Owl Society bundle was the skin of an owl filled out over a stuffing of dried Indian hemp (*Apocynum cannabinum*). Its wings were folded down in natural attitude against the sides. In the eye holes of the skin had been set pieces of cunningly cut and fitted disks of buffalo horn, with polished convex surfaces to simulate the bird's eyes. The finished object forms a fair effigy of the living bird. This effigy was fixed upon the lodge wall above the station of the Owl Society at all times during their sessions in the Sacred Lodge. In symbolic significance, it represented Night. His eyes symbolized the Morning Star (*Hopirkusu*). His plumage betokened all kinds of woody vegetation, all the species of trees and bushes of the woods, wild fruit trees and vines.

There was a pair of bracelets made from the soft-feathered skin of an owl's legs, with the feet and talons left on and hanging as pendants from the bracelets. They were worn by members of the society as part of their regalia in all ceremonies and performances.

In addition there was an owl plume, which was worn, attached to the hair of the head by members of the society in all their meetings, and also when a member in his function as a physician was treating a patient. It was considered to be potent as an aid to drive away the disease.

The head and neck of another owl were included. They were used in sleight-of-hand performances before the lay people by members of the Owl Society in public spectacles on such occasions as the celebration of ceremonies. As an example of the performances, it is stated that a member of the Owl Society would start toward the doorway from the Society's station, which is at a position in the north side of the lodge circle in a radial line from the fireplace to the wall back of the northwest main post. When the member had walked from that station about halfway to the doorway, or a distance of about twenty-five feet, another member, still at the Society's station in the lodge, would cast this head after the first member, who was walking toward the doorway, and the head would alight upon his back and cling there. In another performance by members of the Owl Society on such occasions a man walked around the full circuit of the lodge circle, carrying upon his head a burning red coal of cottonwood as large as a double fist and suffering no harm from it.

A downy eagle plume with sweet grass (*Hierochloe odorata*) wrapped about the quill was also contained in the bundle. This plume, attached to the hair of the head, was worn by members as part of the regalia for all meetings of the society.

There were four pear-shaped hard skin rattles. Their bellies were made by sewing together two pieces of deerskin while still fresh and uncured. The pouch was filled and packed hard with dry sand. It was left thus till the skin was cured, when the stopper was drawn and the sand was poured out. Then five small gravel stones were put inside for sounders when the rattle was shaken to mark the cadence of the singing. These stones were said to represent the four societies, namely, the Ghost, the Buffalo, the Owl and the Bear, and the altar group of the chief priest, together with his four assistants. The altar group was

composed of those who had passed membership in all these four main societies, having made themselves thoroughly proficient in the rituals of all of them, one after another.

Besides the gravel stones there were also put into the rattle forty hard seeds of Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*). These seeds were said to represent the forty songs of the Owl Society. Then a handle made from mother-wood was fastened securely in place, and three down feathers were attached to the belly of the rattle, one in the center of the top, diametrically opposite to the handle, and one on each side midway between top and bottom. The feathered skin of an owl leg was attached to the handle with the talons pendant.

One more object was contained in this bundle, a buckskin pouch filled with leaves of red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*). The aromatic leaves of red cedar were burned as incense in all ceremonies of the Owl Society.

When the woman produced the Owl bundle to impart to me such knowledge as she had concerning it and to transmit the bundle to me for the Museum, she first brought a fire shovel of live coals from the stove and sprinkled leaves of red cedar upon them for incense. She then took up the rattles and incensed them in the smoke, together with the other objects of the bundle.

After the woman had told me all she knew concerning the Owl Society and this bundle and of the several objects in it, she transmitted it to my hands in the ceremonial manner. But she retained in her possession the outer cover, telling me at the same time that I could provide a new one. She did so because it was the old custom that, when a change was thus made with respect to these bundles, the old cover was carried out to some solitary place in the woods and left there to the elements, with a small pouch of tobacco and one of cedar leaves attached, prayers and smoke offerings being made and red cedar leaves burned as incense. Such was the disposition of the bundle of the Owl Society, because owls are creatures of the woods. Like disposition would be made of anything pertaining to the Bear Society, because bears also dwell in the woods. But any objects relating to the Duck Society, if they must be put away, would be consigned to some body of water, because ducks live by the water. And if objects of the Buffalo Society must be relinquished the proper thing would be to carry them far out upon the prairie, and there leave them

to nature, after the proper smoke offerings and sacrifice of a bit of tobacco had been made.

There remains another class of Sacred Bundles in the Arikara tribe to be mentioned briefly, a form of household shrine to Mother Corn. I have given elsewhere a short account of such an object. These Mother Corn shrines were not for use in public functions, but were of a private and domestic nature, functioning in household forms of worship and devotion. In the olden times they were commonly to be seen hanging on the walls in Arikara houses much as crucifixes are seen in Christian houses. These shrines were quite simple, commonly containing only a perfect ear of corn clothed in a suitable covering of buffalo skin, with a braid of dried sweet grass to be used for incense. Most commonly the ear of corn so enshrined in white flour corn, but sometimes it was a yellow or a red ear. In all such shrines that I saw the corn was of the flour corn type, white, yellow or red. I have seen none which used flint corn or sweet corn for this purpose.

The veneration of Mother Corn by means of this shrine had no set time or season. At any time, according to the desire of all its benefits and blessings might be given expression by acts of veneration to this shrine. A sacred fire was kindled, a bit of the dried braid of sweet grass was broken off and offered toward all four quarters, toward Mother Earth, and lastly to the Chief Above, and crumbled upon the coals. As the incense ascended the ear of Mother Corn was brought out to view, and both it and its covering were incensed in the smoke of the sweet grass. Members of the household also incensed themselves with the smoke and sought a blessing from the ear of corn, reverently touching it and drawing their hands over it to themselves, placing them upon their heads and passing them down over their bodies. Thus by prayers and honest intentions, by reverently beholding and touching the relic, and by the incense of the sweet grass and the recollection of the beautiful and exalted teachings of the cult of Mother Corn they sought to put themselves in accord and to have her blessing.