



Traditions of the Arikara, Collected Under the Auspices of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (Classic Reprint)

George Amos Dorsey

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Excerpt from Traditions of the Arikara, Collected Under the Auspices of the Carnegie Institution of Washington

The Ankara traditions in this volume were collected during the year 1903, with funds provided by the Carnegie Institution. The work was part of a systematic and extended study of the mythology and ceremonies of the various tribes of the Caddoan stock. All of the tales here presented were secured through James R. Murie, of the Skidi band of Pawnee. The slight differences in language between the Ankara and Skidi were soon overcome by Mr. Murie, who, when a boy at school, had learned to speak Arikara fluently.

The Arikara belong to the Caddoan linguistic stock, and were formerly closely allied with the Skidi band of Pawnee, from which tribe they separated about 1832. After that time they made their home at various points along the Missouri River until, in 1854, they were placed on what is known as Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, along with the Mandan and Minitaree or Grosventres, the latter two tribes being of Siouan stock. With the Mandan the Arikara had been closely associated even before their removal to the Fort Berthold Reservation. Their dwellings and general mode of life had much in common with the Skidi. Like the Skidi, they constructed the earth-lodge, and their social organization and religious ceremonies in general were also similar to those of the Skidi. Inasmuch as the author has prepared a somewhat extended discussion of the Skidi in his introduction to the "Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee," it will not be necessary here to do more than to refer to that volume.

The Arikara to-day number about 380, as against 435 in 1890, and 725 in 1880. Owing to the continued severe hostility of the Indian Department, but little evidence of their former method of life remains. It is said that the last earth-lodge in use fell into ruins in 1900. In possession of certain members of the tribe are some of the sacred bundles or altars; but the people have been so intimidated that their religious ceremonies are, as a rule, held secretly.

In physique they seem hardier than their Skidi brethren on the south, and in disposition, more tractable. In dealings with the Government they have, as a rule, proved themselves men of high honor, and not since about 1820 have they manifested an unfriendly disposition toward the whites.

An examination of the tales here presented shows, as we might expect to find, many points of resemblance with those of the Skidi and other Pawnee tribes.

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