

Sioux Warrior Societies

Deadlands 1876

War Societies

Plains Indians generally organize themselves into fraternal orders called okhólakičhiye, usually translated as “warrior societies” or just “war societies.” With a focus on personal honor, bravery in battle, and the promotion of general tribal welfare, these war societies represent the elite warriors of the tribe, and are usually tapped by the tribal leadership to perform akíchita or “policing” duties. Across the course of his life, a warrior may belong to more than one society; but never more than one at a time.

Organization

Each society has its own set of initiation rituals, code of behavior, and special regalia; but most follow a similar organizational structure—“ranks” consisting of pairs. In most societies, the most important pair are known as “Lance Bearers.” The pair beneath this are called “Bonnet Bearers” in some societies, or “Pipe Holders” in others. Together these two highest-ranking pairs are known as the “Four Chiefs” of the society, although larger tribes may actually have more than two pairs of Lance Bearers and Bonnet Bearers. Below the Four Chiefs are the “Whip Bearers,” although there is, again, societal variation, and one sees “Rattle Bearers,” “Crow Skin Bearers,” “Short-Lance Bearers,” and so on. The lowest ranks are generally pairs of “Drum Bearers,” “Singers,” and sometimes a single “Herald” or “Crier.” The common rank-and-file lay members are usually composed of fresh initiates. Each rank is entitled to specialized regalia, often displayed at the society’s private lodge to be used during ceremonies or carried into battle. Additionally, every society has its own dances, songs, games, feasting practices, and other such customs, as well as specific peace-time obligations such as feeding the hungry, protecting war widows, or finding winter lodgings.

Akíchita

Usually translated as “warrior” or “police,” the akíchita are charged with keeping the peace, coordinating buffalo hunts, and carrying out special assignments. A cross between an elite guard unit and the tribal police force, the akíchita are chosen among the elite of the warrior societies, and the office is held on a rotating schedule. More on the role of the akíchita from Charles Trimble in the *Lakota Country Times*:

In Sioux camps in olden times, the police that kept order were the akicita (pronounced ah-KEE-chee-tah). These were men who were selected for their generosity, leadership, and most of all, their bravery. These men were of the warrior societies, the elite among the men.

Life in the camps on the Plains required much discipline on the part of individuals and families. There was no place for troublemakers who disturbed the peace by their behavior and by their disrespect for laws and authority. With families that were troublemakers, we are told, akicita warriors might call out the male head of the tiospaye, and humiliate him, sometimes whipping him from their horses with their quirts. A family that persisted making trouble, or trashing the campsite, would be ostracized to live away from the camp, and sometimes even to be expelled from the camp completely. This would doom that family because other camps would know that they were forced to wander because they were troublemakers, and nobody wanted troublemakers.

Frances Densmore elaborates in *Teton Sioux Music*:

The word aki'cita is commonly translated “soldier,” but its meaning is akin to “guard” or “police,” the proper word for “warrior” being ici'cize. Thus the aki'cita societies were those whose members could be required to act as guards or marshals when the tribe was moving, or as “police” in the village. The aki'cita were primarily associated with the buffalo hunt, in which they saw that no one disregarded the laws of the chase; they also preserved order in the camp and punished all offenders. They were primarily civil officers, though aki'cita might also be appointed to act in connection with a large war party.

Wissler states that the manner of selecting aki'cita was as follows: The chiefs chose the four “head aki'cita” from one society, who in turn chose their assistants from the society to which they themselves belonged. Thus the choice of the four head aki'cita was practically the choice of a certain society for this duty. The selection was usually made at the beginning of the summer hunt, and service continued to the close of the season. It seems to have been customary, but not obligatory, for the chiefs to choose from the societies in rotation.

Gameplay Notes

In general, an akíčhita warrior has the same stats of his particular war society, but temporarily gains the following bonuses when working among his tribe: Investigation d6, Intimidate +2, Persuasion +2, and Charisma +1.

Note on Sources

With the exception of the fictional Wanághi Wachípi Society, the information in this document relies heavily upon two sources: Clark Wissler's *Societies of the Plains Indians*, published in 1916, and Frances Densmore's *Teton Sioux Music*, published in 1918. As one of Densmore's primary sources was Wissler, the two books often share word-for-word descriptions, most of which were taken from native interview subjects they describe as “informants.” Both of these texts are in the public domain, and may be freely downloaded as PDFs. The following pages quote so extensively from these sources that Wissler & Densmore are simply credited rather than “block-quoted,” as whole sections have been lifted verbatim. In that respect, this document is more of a reprinting than an original piece, but it may be useful for Marshals and players wishing to incorporate Sioux customs into their game.

Spellings

When quoting from Wissler & Densmore, I retained their antiquated transliterations for Lakota words. However, when naming or describing these societies for gameplay usage, I use modern Lakota transliterations backed by the IPA spelling. For instance, Densmore & Wissler call the Kit Fox Society the “toka'la,” which I render as “T'hokhála,” based on the IPA “Thokhála.”

Chantét'inza

Strong Heart Society

Chantét'inza ♠

AGL d8, SMT d8, SPT d10, STR d12, VIG d10, PAR 9, TGH 7. Wounds S/3/I*. Guardian Spirit: Bull, Bear, or Lion. Edges: Block, Born on Horseback, Brave, Fleet-Footed, Medicine Bundle, Trademark Weapon, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d10, Counting Coup d10, Fighting d12, Intimidate d8, Notice d8, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Throw d8, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Various rifles or carbines; Bow & arrow, 1d6+d12 STR; War clubs, knives, tomahawks, 1d6+d12 STR. [+1 for Trademark Weapon]

Description (From Wissler & Densmore)

It was said that the Strong Heart society among the Teton Sioux, as it existed within the memory of the writer's informants, was organized by Sitting Bull, Gall, and Crow King, prominent chiefs, who were practically in command of all the warriors. It was their desire to have a body of fearless warriors to meet any emergency, and for that purpose this society was organized. If a man were known to be fully qualified for the honor of membership, it was not necessary for him to undergo any tests. All he had to do when initiated was to promise to be brave in the defense of the tribe, to take care of the poor and needy, and to maintain a good moral character.

The distinctive headdress of the society was a war bonnet made of the tail feathers of the eagle and having a pair of horns attached in front. Each member had one of these headdresses, which he wore only when going on the warpath or in actual battle. If a man had been uniformly successful and had never shown any sign of cowardice, he might be buried with this bonnet on his head; but if he showed cowardice on the warpath, he was punished on his return by being severely reprimanded in the presence of all the members, his headdress was taken away, and he was expelled from the society.

Members of this society were allowed to carry a banner made by fastening feathers to a long strip of flannel, which was attached to a pole. This was called *wapa'ha kamini'mini*, or "waving banner." Women whose relatives were members of this society and had been killed in war were allowed to carry this banner. The distinctive rattle of the Strong Heart society consists of a rawhide receptacle on which are traced the lines of a turtle. It contains a few small stones or shot. This rattle was used by the dancers. One of the customs of this society seems to have been designed to increase the self-control of its members. An informant said:

In the old days there were four lodges of the Strong Hearts in the center of the village. Every morning the Strong Heart men met in one of these lodges and sang their songs. Then two young men with rattles and two with bows and arrows went around the village and killed dogs which were to be eaten in their lodge. They killed the dogs of prominent families and when the dog was shot they shouted and shook their rattles. It strengthened a man's heart to have his dog killed and not show anger. The women skinned the dogs, cooked them, and took them to one of the Strong Heart lodges. There they all sang and danced, and the dogs were part of the feast.

Additional Notes

The Chantét'inza (Čhantét'ijza) are one of the largest and important of the Sioux war societies, and form the backbone of the Hunkpapa social structure. With their horned war bonnets, feathered lances, and bristling regalia, the Chantét'inza warriors are what most whites envision when they think of Sioux on the warpath. Sitting Bull is one of the founders of the Strong Hearts, although he is now the leader of the Silent Eaters. Many credit the Strong Hearts for putting him in power, and his most trusted councilors were all once part of this society.

Gameplay Notes

A Chantét'inza warrior is always a Face Card, and has the statistics of an elite warrior. He carries a Trademark Weapon, and his Medicine Bundle gives him a free Soak roll. Because most Chantét'inza warriors have completed a Sun Dance, the Marshal may offer them a free Sun Dance Soak Token as well.

T'hokhála

Kit Fox Society

T'hokhála ♠

AGL d12, SMT d8, SPT d8, STR d8, VIG d8, PAR 7, TGH 6. Wounds S/3/I.
Guardian Spirit: Fox. Edges: Acrobat, Born on Horseback, Counter-Strike, Frenzied Archer, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d12*, Counting Coup d8, Fighting d10, Intimidate d8, Notice d8, Riding d12, Shooting d10, Throw d8, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Various rifles or carbines; Bow & arrow, 1d6+d8 STR; War clubs, knives, tomahawks, 1d6+d8 STR.

Description (From Wissler & Densmore)

The society is so named because its members are supposed to be as active and wily on the warpath as this little animal is known to be in his native state. The members wear a kit-fox skin around the neck, the head before, the tail behind. To the nose some small bags of medicine are attached. The edges, feet and ears may be worked in porcupine quills and hung with bells according to the tastes of the individual owners. They take the jawbones of the toka'la, paint them red or blue, fasten them on a strip of otterskin or some similar material and wear the bones on the forehead. On the back of the head is fastened a bunch of crow tail feathers sidewise, and sticking up are two eagle feathers. When participating in a dance, the officers paint their bodies yellow. The teachings of the society inculcated "bravery, generosity chivalry, morality, and fraternity for fellow members." Men who joined the society were required to promise obedience to these teachings, and the whip bearers had whips of a peculiar kind with which they scourged those who disregarded their vows. One of the officers of the society was the custodian of the drum.

Gameplay Notes

The T'hokhála (T'hokhála) are one of the largest and most prestigious war societies. Their increased Agility and Acrobat Edge reflects their reputation for agility, while the Frenzied Archer Edge grants them two Archery attacks each round. They are often closely aligned with the elite Cheyenne Kit Fox Society, or Vóhkêséhetaneo'o, with intermarriage between Sioux and Northern Cheyenne families being commonplace.

Khangí Yuhá

Crow Owners

Khangí Yuhá ♠

AGL d10, SMT d8, SPT d10, STR d8, VIG d12, PAR 8, TGH 8. Wounds S/3/I. Guardian Spirit: Crow, Raven. Edges: Born on Horseback, Dead Shot, Frenzy, Medicine Bundle, Staked Down, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d12, Counting Coup d8, Fighting d12, Intimidate d8, Notice d8, Riding d10, Shooting d8, Throw d8, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Bow & arrow, 1d6+d8 STR; War clubs, knives, tomahawks, 1d6+d8 STR.

Description (From Wissler & Densmore)

Among the northern tribes the crow and the raven appear to be connected exclusively with success in war, the skin of the bird being worn around the neck or attached to the spear which was carried in war. A “Crow or Raven society” was noted among the Mandan and was mentioned by Maximilian. When asked why the crow was honored by the society, Eagle Shield said:

We want our arrows to fly as swift and straight as the crow. The crow is always the first to arrive at the gathering of the animals in the Black Hills. The reason why the Black Hills were so long unknown to the white man was that Wakan Tanka created them as a meeting place for the animals. The Indians had always known this and regarded the law of Wakan Tanka created concerning it. By this law they were forbidden to kill any of the animals during their great gatherings. In the Black Hills there is a ridge of land around which is a smooth, grassy place called the “race course.” This is where the animals have the races, during their gatherings. Even small animals like the turtle are there. The crow is always first to arrive, and the other birds come before the animals, while insects and creatures like the frog travel slowly and arrive last. Sometimes it takes 10 years for all the animals to arrive, as they come from long distances and camp wherever winter overtakes them.

Eagle Shield said further that among the Teton of Standing Rock the Crow-owners society had originally but ten members, but that later it became a large organization to which only successful warriors could belong. Such men of distinction could be admitted by making the request of the leader and giving a feast to the members of the society. A special tent in the village was used by this society as its meeting place. Eagle Shield said, “the village was full of noise, with children shouting at their games and women singing and dancing, and the members of the Kangi’yuha liked to spend the evenings in their lodge, singing and enjoying themselves.”

Over the door of this lodge was hung the “Crow lance” in its wrappings. According to Eagle Shield, this lance was decorated with a crow skin next to the lance head. Before a fight the lance was unwrapped and passed over the smoke of burning sweet grass. When stuck in the ground during a fight it marked a place from which the member of the society could not retreat unless they took the lance with them.

When going to war each man carried his crow-skin “necklace” in a rawhide case and before putting it around his neck he passed it over the smoke of burning sweet grass. Feathers for head decoration were also carried in this case. Eagle Shield said that before a fight the warriors always put on their finest regalia, so that, if they were killed, they would die in a manner worthy of their position. The sleeves of the war shirts were not sewed, but

were tied together under the length of the arm. Before a fight the warrior untied these fastenings and threw back the sleeves to permit free use of his arms.

Concerning the akicita duties of members of this society, Eagle Shield said: “These men were among those who protected the people and watched for buffalo when the camp was moving, and who assisted in the selection of suitable places for the winter camps.” Miss Fletcher states that, among the Omaha, “the wolf and the crow were not only connected with carnage but they had a mythical relation to the office of ‘soldiers,’ the designation given to certain men on the annual tribal hunt who acted as marshals.”

Gameplay Notes

If the Chantét’ínza are known for their strength, and the T’hokhála for their dexterity, the Khangí Yuhá (Khanǵí Yuhá) are famous for their bravery. Every Khangí Yuhá warrior has a crow-related Medicine Bundle that gives him a free Soak roll, while his “crow lance” is used to activate his Staked Down Edge. They are also superb archers, known for their precision and accuracy, and capable of dealing double damage when dealt a Joker.

Íkhoka

Badger Society

Íkhoka ♠

AGL d10, SMT d8, SPT d8, STR d10, VIG d10, PAR 8, TGH 7. Wounds S/3/I. Guardian Spirit: Badger. Hindrance: Vow. Edges: Born on Horseback, Brave, Hard to Kill, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d10, Counting Coup d8, Fighting d12, Intimidate d10, Notice d6, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Throw d8, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Various rifles or carbines; Bow & arrow, 1d6+d10 STR; War clubs, knives, tomahawks, 1d6+d10 STR.

Description (From Wissler & Densmore)

The term ihoka seems to mean badger-mouth, and was explained as referring to the characteristic grimaces and growlings of the badger when attacked. In the costume of lay members there seems to have been great freedom, many using otterskin collars, others bone-tube breastpieces. In painting, they had the curious custom of permitting the individual to choose his own mode, provided another duplicated it. Thus, in the dance procession, when they went in pairs, each line would be uniform.

The four singers are virgins. If they fall from grace, they are dismissed; if they marry, they must get the consent of the society which will make them valuable wedding presents. The husbands are taken into the society. At certain times these virgins may make a feast for which they have a special ritual containing a very long and difficult song, which they sing four times in succession.

If in battle a member falls wounded, his brothers must save him. Those with fast horses must aid those with slow ones. Members must manifest a brotherly feeling for each other. Like the badger, they must put up a strenuous fight.

According to user “Uncle Fred” on [Historum](#):

The order was founded by a man who dreamed a badger, and pledged to take on the aspect of the fearless badger. So, the society was renowned for extreme ferocity in battle, and fought fearlessly despite the number of the enemy. They displayed crooked lances wrapped in wolf skin and otter fur on the wrists and around the neck. It is said they embedded mirrors in the otter fur to reflect the sun and blind the enemy in battle.

Gameplay Notes

Fierce, individualistic, and slightly crazy, warriors of the Íkhoka Society (Íhoka) possess the Vow Hindrance, having taken a sacred oath to always assist their fallen comrades. Failure to do so results in a loss of face, banishment from the society, and a permanent loss of one Spirit die.

Miwátani

Owl Feather Society

Miwátani ♠

AGL d8, SMT d8, SPT d12, STR d10, VIG d10, PAR 8, TGH 7. Wounds S/3/I. Guardian Spirit: Owl. Hindrance: Vow. Edges: Born on Horseback, Brave, Level-Headed, Medicine Bundle, Staked-Down, Trademark Weapon, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d10, Counting Coup d8, Fighting d12, Intimidate d8, Notice d10, Riding d12, Shooting d10, Throw d8, Tracking d10+2, Stealth d12+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Various rifles or carbines; Bow & arrow, 1d6+d10 STR; War clubs, knives, tomahawks, 1d6+d10 STR. [+1 for Trademark Weapon]

Description (From Wissler & Densmore)

The Miwa'tani was an important military society among the Teton Sioux, the members of which were exempt from akicita duty. Charging Thunder said that he belonged to this society, that it was originated long ago by a man who dreamed of an owl, and that the society was sometimes erroneously called the Owl society. The word miwa'tani is not fully explainable, as it is not found in the common speech of the Sioux. Two informants said it is not a Sioux word, and that they thought it meant "owl feathers." According to one informant, this society, which by the way, is regarded as a very ancient one, was so named because an owl-being in conferring the ritual said, "My name is Miwa'tani." Our informants are all agreed that the term is associated with no concept other than that of a particular society. It is also their name for Mandan, the tradition being that the latter were named because of some resemblance to the Miwa'tani society.

Charging Thunder said the Miwa'tani society, besides being one of the most difficult to enter, was one of the most exacting in its requirements. Each member pledged himself to sacrifice his own life in defense of a wounded member, if such sacrifice became necessary on the warpath. When anything was needed by the society the principal officer appointed someone to collect what was required, and the demand was never refused. The collecting was usually done at a public meeting of the society and formed one of the tests by which the leaders of the tribe determined which men were qualified to be useful to the tribe. If an officer of this society saw in the camp a supply of provisions which should have been donated to the society, he could take it, either for the use of the medicine-men who conducted the ceremonies or for the use of the organization as a whole. He had the right to do this, and it was even expected that he would do so if donations were willfully withheld.

According to Charging Thunder the purpose of this society was to promote friendliness and helpfulness among its members. The more important of its meetings were for the initiation of new members. Any member of the tribe could apply for membership, and if his application was accepted he was notified by the crier. Before a meeting for initiation the candidates as well as members of the society were required to fast partially for four days. They assembled in their lodge, and once each day the leader brought in a pail of water, and after dipping into this a bunch of sweet grass, handed the latter to each member, with a very small piece of buffalo meat. This was all the nourishment they were allowed, hence the end of the four days found them greatly weakened. On the day of the ceremony the officers of the society, wearing headdresses of owl feathers, took their position in the place of honor, opposite the entrance of the lodge. In their hands they held

the owl-feather headdresses which the new members were to receive. All the members of the tribe were gathered to witness the installation of the new members. It was required that the newly elected men should show that they were qualified for the honor which had been conferred on them. Back of the fire was a “mellowed-earth space,” and the men were required to carry live coals in their hands and put them on the earth. Each man, rising from his seat, took coals in the palm of his hand, and turning to the left, walked slowly around the lodge. After the first round of the lodge, pausing at the mellowed-earth space, he pretended that he would place the coals upon it. After the fourth round of the lodge, slowly lowering his hand, he gently rolled the coals to the softened earth. If he did this without being burned he was considered qualified to be a member of the society.

As already stated, a headdress of owl feathers had been prepared for each of the new members. These headdresses were long, like war bonnets, but were made of owl feathers instead of eagle feathers. Quite a heap of coals lay on the mellowed earth after all the men had made the circuit of the lodge. Sweet grass was placed on this heap, and the headdresses were held in the fragrant smoke, after which they were placed on the heads of the newly installed members.

Gameplay Notes

Miwátani is the Lakota name for the Mandan people, a small tribe along the Missouri River related to the Arikara, but speaking a variant of the Siouan language. Although Charging Thunder believed the name for the society came first, it is also possible that the Miwátani society has origins outside the Lakota. Mystically dedicated to their art, Miwátani warriors carry stake-down sashes. They possess the Vow Hindrance, having taken a sacred oath to always assist their fallen comrades. Failure to do so results in a loss of face, banishment from the society, and a permanent loss of one Spirit die. Known for their wisdom in battle, their Level-Headed Edge gives Miwátani warriors a better chance for superior initiative cards.

Wanághi Wachípi

Northern Lights Society/Ghost Dancers

Wanághi Wachípi ♠

AGL d10, SMT d8, SPT d10, STR d10, VIG d8, PAR 8, TGH 6. Wounds S/3/I. Guardian Spirit: Any (except Tricksters). Hindrance: Vow. Edges: Born on Horseback, Brave, Combat Reflexes, Fleet-Footed, Level-Headed, Trademark Weapon (Saber*), Improved Trademark Weapon (Sacred Arrows**), Woodsman. Skills: Archery d10+2**, Counting Coup d10, Fighting d12+1*, Intimidate d10, Notice d8, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Throw d8, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Various rifles or carbines; Bow & arrow, 1d6+d10 STR+2; Saber, 1d8+d10 STR+1.

Description

In January 1876, a group of sixteen elite Hunkpapa and Oglala warriors gathered together under the northern lights and swore an oath to protect their sacred land from white invaders. Taking their name from the Lakota name for the aurora borealis, the “Ghost Dance” society pledged their unwavering fealty to Sitting Bull, each vowing to protect the great wicháša wakhán with his dying breath. In order to symbolize this vow, the right hand of each Wanághi Wachípi warrior is permanently dyed blue. Each new moon a Ghost Dancer must renew this vow, plunging his hand into a near-boiling mixture of herbal dye and repeating his original oath. Unlike other okhólakičhiye, there are no “lay members” of the Wanághi Wachípi—they are organized into eight equally-ranked pairs. When one of their members dies, his surviving partner recruits another candidate to take his place.

Battle Tactics

In battle, a Ghost Dancer wears a trailing war bonnet of eagle feathers with ermine drops, and sports a colorful war shirt with beadwork representing the aurora borealis. A band of blue warpaint masks his eyes, and exaggerated, skull-like teeth are drawn around his mouth. A Ghost Dancer carries a bowed lance as a token of his status, its point adorned with one owl feather for each time he’s counted coup. Each Ghost Dancer also carries a captured cavalry saber, painted blue and green and etched with medicine symbols. Additionally, each Ghost Dancer carries four “sacred arrows” in a buckskin bow-holder. Prepared during an elaborate lodge ceremony, these sacred arrows feature bone whistles that produce a high-pitched shrieking sound as they fly to impale their targets.

Gameplay Notes

Unlike the other Sioux societies detailed in this section, the Wanághi Wachípi (Wanághi Wachípi) are fictional. Their name is derived from a poetic Sioux term for the northern lights, but Sitting Bull is quite aware of its resonance with Wodziwob’s holy visions. In the milieu of *Deadlands 1876*, the Wanághi Wachípi Society is destined to become the nucleus of the Sioux Ghost Dance movement.

Historical Note: The whistling arrows described above are inspired by Mongolian arrows; the Sioux used a special type of fletching to produce a less-pronounced whistling sound. And finally, although there are several Lakota names for the northern lights, needless to say, using Wanághi Wachípi was irresistible!

Áinila Wóta

Silent Eaters

Áinila Wóta ♠

AGL d8, SMT d10, SPT d12, STR d6, VIG d8, PAR 6, TGH 6. Wounds S/3/I. Guardian Spirit: Any. Hindrance: Vow. Edges: Command, Inspire, Level-Headed, Mentalist, Strong-Willed, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d8, Counting Coup d6, Fighting d8, Intimidate d8, Notice d10, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Throw d6, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d8+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Various rifles or carbines; Bow & arrow, 1d6+d6 STR; War clubs, knives, tomahawks, 1d6+d6 STR.

Description

Not strictly a war society, the Áinila Wóta are a type of political fraternity known as a “feasting society.” Composed of mature warriors now holding leadership positions, the Silent Eaters are known for their serious discussions and sober approach to tribal life—they do not dance, sing, or play music when they feast. Often drawn from the ranks of former Chantét’ínza, Silent Eaters are marked by their social generosity and overall concern for the welfare of the tribe. From Wissler:

The society of the silent-eaters is spoken of as a feasting society composed of middle-aged men and is said to have been organized about the time of Custer’s defeat. It had a roll of about seventy members, scattered throughout the various Oglala bands. There were two headmen, two food bearers who always sat at the sides of the door, and a herald. There were no special singers and neither drums nor rattles. As there was neither singing nor dancing at the feast, they were called silent-eaters. At their feasts a hole is dug in the center of the tipi into which all toss the bones. At the end all make a pipe offering. One member is designated to care for the pipe and always prays, “These are all warriors; they always overcome enemies, etc.” War deeds are the usual topics of discussion. For food they are supposed to have the finest cuts of buffalo and dog. In most feasts guests are permitted to carry away food, but not here.

The members are required to exercise fraternalism. If one is in trouble, all give assistance. They must also help the aged and the very poor. If a member has a death in his family, a meeting is called at which steps for his consolation are taken. If a member dies, a kind of memorial is held for his relatives, at which time someone is also chosen to fill the vacancy. Un-deserving conduct at home or when among a distant tribe was punished by dismissal.

Gameplay Notes

Sitting Bull is the leader of the Silent Eaters, and this group of middle-aged “Big Bellies” acts as a *de facto* leadership council similar to a Načá Omníčiye. It has been said that if the Chantét’ínza put Sitting Bull in power, the Silent Eaters help keep him there. Being older, more experienced warriors, their reduced physical traits are balanced by a number of leadership Edges.

Shungská Akáyangka

White Horse Riders

Shungská Akáyangka ♠

AGL d6, SMT d10, SPT d8, STR d6, VIG d6, PAR 6, TGH 5. Wounds S/3/I. Guardian Spirit: Any. Edges: Command, Level-Headed, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d8, Counting Coup d6, Fighting d8, Intimidate d6, Notice d10, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Throw d6, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d8+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Various rifles or carbines; Bow & arrow, 1d6+d6 STR; War clubs, knives, tomahawks, 1d6+d6 STR.

Description (From Wissler & Densmore)

The term “white horse riders” is not an exact translation of the Sioux designation, the first word of which means “white horse,” while the second is a compound word indicating age and experience. One informant said:

The White Horse Riders were principally the old warriors. Those older people had a special liking for painting their horses on parades or on the warpath, as by that means they could show that the horse’s owner had done some brave deed. They rode white horses for two reasons. They liked the white color, because it was regarded as a genuine color, and also because a white horse was the only one on which the paint would show well. The usual decoration was a horse’s hoofprint and a hand, the hand being understood to represent the hand of the enemy. To people with an understanding the arrangement of these designs told the story of the man’s brave deeds.

The parade of the White Horse Riders was greatly admired in the camp. It is said that if the White Horse Riders came to the tent of a man who had been wounded in war, they fired their guns into the air, whereupon the women of the family cooked a quantity of food and placed it in the middle of the camp circle. The custom was that “those who had no one to cook for them went and ate this food.”

Gameplay Notes

Despite the claims by Wissler and Densmore, “akáyangka” means “rider.” (The IPA spelling of the society is Sungská Akáyangka). I’m not sure whether the given Lakota phrase didn’t actually match their source, or whether they simply misunderstood their informant. The White Horse Riders are among the oldest warriors in the tribe. As such, their reduced physical traits are balanced by a number of leadership Edges.

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