PRIMITIVE METHODS OF MAIZE SEED PREPARATION.

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The word "corn" in the Indian language has many forms. In the Sioux it is "wagamaza," in the Omaha it is "wahaba," in the Gros Ventre it is "holiati," in the Mandan it is "khati," while the Arikara calls it "nicissee." The word is one of the most important in the tribal vocabulary, since corn for generations was the main and often the only food plant.

In an investigation covering 15 Indian reservations in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana and Manitoba, the writer was much impressed by the agricultural practices of the Indians in connection with their corn production. None of these practices are of more interest than the preparation of seed.

The Indian designated time by referring to natural phenomena. Seed was prepared and corn planted when the wild turnips began to bloom, when the grass began to become green, when plums, wild grapes, or juneberries began to blossom, when the leaves began to uncurl, or when the first prairie flowers began to bloom. Superstition and suggestive magic played an important part in seed preparation. Red Bear, an Arikara of the Fort Berthold reservation, informed me that the oldest woman of each family was usually intrusted with this work and that it was partly a secret process and almost a sacred one. It was Red Bear's opinion that since the old methods had been discontinued the cornfields of the Indians produced lower yields and the plants were more susceptible to insects and to plant diseases.

Various standards were used as the basis of seed selection. Many of the Indians have told me that moldy cobs on ears in the fall were very undesirable. For the most part, well-filled tips were sought as well as straight rows of kernels. The tip and the butt kernels were discarded and the middle kernels used for seed, the explanation being that these were better producers. Seed ears were braided together by the husks every fall, the braids being about 5 feet long.

Indian informants on the Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Rosebud, Yankton, Standing Rock, Fort Berthold, Fort Totten, and Red Lake reservations, representing tribes of the Sioux, Gros Ventre, Arikara,

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