THE WICHITA - Part 1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

THE Wichita, often referred to as the "Grass-house People," are members of the Caddoan linguistic stock which in Oklahoma includes also the Caddo, Waco, Tawakoni, Hainai or Ioni, and Pawnee. In the eighteenth century a southern branch of the Wichita was known as the Tawehash, a name that seems to have been sometimes applied to the entire Wichita group.

The general habitat of these linguistically related groups at the time they first became known was the broad plains area now included in western Texas, Oklahoma, and central Kansas and Nebraska. The first mention of the Wichita and their grass-houses was made in the narratives of Coronado's journey in 1541-1542 to the Province of Quivira, situated in the valley of the Arkansas river in the present Kansas. Juan de Padilla, a zealous Franciscan, remained behind to make Christians of the Wichita who, after watching his missionizing efforts, closed his labors at the end of the third year by killing him. Thus tragically ended the first missionary work attempted among the Indians of the buffalo plains.

One hundred and seventy-eight years after Coronado's visit to the region (1719), the Frenchman La Harpe noted a camp of the "Ousitas" (Wichita), who were then close to where they are today, at the western bend of the Canadian river where it almost contacts with the Washita. In 1758 the Spanish mission and presidio of San Sabá, on a tributary of the upper Colorado river in Texas, established the year before, was attacked by a combined force of Comanche and their allies, including the Wichita and other Caddoan tribes. A retaliatory expedition by the Spaniards under Parrilla in the following year against the main Wichita town, about the junction of Wichita and Red rivers, retreated after severe losses. Later, in 1765, Tremiño, a Spanish captive, recorded many of his experiences at the main Tawehash town on Red river. In 1772 the commander Mezières visited them and neighboring tribes to arrange for peace. From tribal tradition it is evident that whatever may have been their wanderings in hunting or warfare, the central homeland of the Wichita was in and around the mountains of Oklahoma that bear their name.

The Tawakoni and Waco, affiliated units of the Wichita, formerly occupied villages in Texas. Texas was generous in respect to its aboriginal inhabitants, being ever willing to give its Indians to any one who might want them. In fact, the Texas mandate, though not recorded in the statutes, was, "Go elsewhere or be exterminated." The state was so successful in its process of Indian elimination that whenever its citizens now contemplate a frontier celebration and feel the urge for local color, they are compelled to borrow the needed Indians from the sister state of Oklahoma.

An interesting fact is that while Oklahoma now has within its border about a fourth of the Indians of the United States, the Wichita and other Caddoan groups are its only original natives.

The pre-Columbian habitat of the southern Caddoan tribes was the region of the Red river of Louisiana and its tributaries in Arkansas and southern Oklahoma, and the drainage area of the Brazos, Neches, Trinity, and Sabine rivers of Texas. Since its territory bordered the Plains and Southeastern culture areas, the Caddoan culture contains a mingling of the characteristic traits of both.[1]

The Wichita proper consisted of a confederacy of tribes closely related linguistically to the Pawnee, of whom the Skidi have always been on terms of intimacy. With the Wichita are affiliated the Waco, Tawakoni, and Kichai, often regarded as sub-tribes. The Wichita themselves claim that they consist of four bands, each with a chief and a sub-chief, namely,the Wichita, Wéeko (Waco), Tawákudi (Tawakoni), and Ísiis. The Kichai remnant has been incorporated into and completely assimilated with the Wichita.

From the time of La Harpe's visit until well after the close of the Civil War, the Wichita met with many vicissitudes. When asked to name their Indian enemies, they enumerated about every tribe known to them, except their own congeners. The Osage harassed them from the northeast; constant conflict with American settlers diminished their numbers; the Texans were determined to exterminate them; smallpox epidemics swept across their land; failing to ally themselves with the Confederacy at the coming of the Civil War, they were compelled to flee into Kansas.

1 Clark Wissler, The American Indian, pages 220, 237, New York, 1922.

At the close of the war they were given a reservation in the valley of the Washita within what is now Caddo county, Oklahoma. In 1902 their lands were allotted and the remainder of their reservation was thrown open to settlement. At that time their population was 310. They now claim to number about 350.

The present Wichita territory in Caddo county is one of rich agricultural possibilities — a gently rolling country of fertile soil with abundant moisture, insuring ample crops. While oil and zinc have not yet been discovered within their boundaries, as in the case of the more fortunate Osage and Quapaw, nevertheless the more progressive Wichita who till their own lands have been able to raise successfully crops of cotton, wheat, and the many varieties of corn introduced by white men, in addition to their native products of maize, melons, pumpkins, and beans. The less progressive Wichita lease their property, being satisfied to subsist on the small income thus derived. In former times to these native crops were added such vegetal products as the wild sweet-potato and the pond-lily bulb. The several kinds of pumpkins were cut into strips and sometimes plaited for drying for winter use, and when needed were pounded with a stone hammer. Fruits native to the region, such as the blackberry, elderberry, ground-cherry, persimmon, and grape; the walnut, chestnut, and acorn; wild game indigenous to the territory, especially deer, antelope, and buffalo — all went in their seasons to augment the Wichita larder. While they made use of the buffalo in many ways, they were by no means so dependent on that animal as were their more nomadic neighbors.

Surrounded as they are by such typical Plains tribes as the Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Kiowa Apache, the Wichita offer a strong contrast in physical appearance as well as in culture. In build they are shorter and stockier; in color, darker than the surrounding Plains type.

A sedentary agricultural people, the Wichita were necessarily village dwellers, hence they erected substantial and often large habitations, conical in shape and thatched with grass, commonly called "grass-houses." A few such dwellings still remain, but the art of building them is as decadent as most of their native culture. The process of erecting the grass-house was not only complicated, but was always accompanied with an intricate ceremonial procedure, the details of which are known to few. A portion of this ritual as used in the building

of the ceremonial lodge is a vital part of the Deer dance described in this volume. The divine instruction for the building of the grass-house is indicative of all Wichita culture. Their legends show that not only did all spiritual knowledge come to them through revelations, but all knowledge of material advancement came likewise from the spirits.

The family grass-house was from eighteen to thirty feet in diameter. The exact location of the openings was prescribed in the spirit instructions for the building of the ceremonial lodge, and the same formula was followed strictly in building a family dwelling. The beds, four to twelve or more in number, depending on the size of the family, were raised a few feet above the ground and each consisted of four crotched posts which supported a light frame of poles upon which was lashed a covering of buffalo-hide. On occasions when the house was used for a feast or a ceremony, the framework of the beds was tilted back against the walls.

With all the Indians of the southwestern region east of New Mexico the summer arbor was scarcely less important than the house itself. In the shade of such bowers the natives lived during the summer months. In constructing the arbors most of the tribes first erected a dome-shape framework, made simply and easily by planting the butt-end of a sapling in the ground, then arching it and sticking the other end in the earth, the series of saplings so used giving the structure either a dome or a rectangular shape. This framework was covered with brush, skins, or canvas. The Wichita, however, made their summer arbors in the same fashion as the grass-house itself. The frame was solidly constructed by first erecting a number of crotched poles in a rectangle, then laying timbers in the crotches. Next, long cedar poles were set vertically against the timbers, one end sunk in the ground and the tops tied together. Lashed to the cedar posts were many horizontal rows of saplings to support the thatch of grass on the roof and upper portions of the side walls. The thatched cover only formed a dome-shape roof, leaving a large open space between it and the ground. The arbors were generally much more roomy than the houses. In shape they were usually twice as long as wide; but their size, like that of the regular dwellings, depended on the number in the family.

A third type of structure consisted of a low-walled, thatched hut erected on a platform, used as sleeping quarters for the maidens. This high-perched sleeping room was reached by means of a ladder, which

the mother removed after her young daughters had climbed to their quarters. The space beneath the platform was used for drying sliced or braided pumpkin and other foods.

The handicraft of the Wichita was not extensive. They claim that in former times they made pottery utensils, and indeed there is both legendary and archeological evidence of the use of such.[2] Mortars and wooden receptacles, large and small, were in common use. Grinding stones for corn and for pounding strips of pumpkin, similar to the metates of the Pueblo tribes of the Southwest, are a part of their domestic equipment.

In the old days there was not much pride in dress. The women wore but a scant skirt and the men a breech-cloth. For winter, buffalo-robes furnished the necessary protection. But what the Wichita lacked in dress was more than compensated by their elaborate tattooing; in fact, they derived their name Kídikidesh ("Raccoon Eyes") from a unique form of this custom. Complete circles were tattooed about the eyes, covering upper and lower lids, with a horizontal line extending from the outer corners, the effect giving the eyes the appearance of those of a raccoon. It was due to the custom of tattooing that the French called the Wichita *Panis Piques*.

The men also kept record of their war deeds by tattooing symbols on their arms and chests, thus using their own bodies as tally-boards and obviating the need of carrying coup-sticks such as were used by the Dakota, for example. The acme of tattooing was reached by the Wichita women. Dr. George A. Dorsey[3] describes this so well that we quote him at length:

Among the women, the most complete and most common is a

2 See the Genesis Legend, page 49. Pottery fragments in considerable numbers, some of them showing ornamentation with incised patterns and by the application of designs with cord-wrapped paddles, have recently been found on various sites in Rice county, Kansas, within the ancient Wichita Province of Quivira. Associated with this earthenware are numerous excellently chipped projectile points, knives, drill-points, and scrapers, together with metates and manos, and pipes of catlinite and other stone. While systematic excavation has not yet been conducted, the superficial remains suggest those of grass-houses.

3 Mythology of the Wichita, page 3, Washington, 1904.

single line which passes down the nasal ridge and is carried to the end of the upper lip, from which a line passes in each direction to the corners of the mouth where each joins a short line passing downward and terminating in another line directed toward the center of the lower lip. Before these lines meet, they turn downward to the chin. The space between these two lines is occupied by two short parallel lines and all four terminate in a line which passes entirely around the jaw from ear to ear, and which is surmounted by a row of solid triangles. Similar rows of triangles pass across the neck and across the upper part of the breast.

Down each arm are two series of four parallel zigzags, while four long lines pass down the middle of the breast. Above each of the breasts are three pairs of lines, each pair crossing at a wide angle, [2] the open space at each end being occupied by V-shaped connecting lines. The nipple is also tattooed, and around it are three concentric circles.... The whole tattooed design is said to have been derived from the buffalo. The girls are told that by receiving these marks they enjoy a more perfect life. They are also told that the concentric circles about the breasts prevent them from becoming pendulous in old age.

The Wichita claimed that the chief object was to distinguish the women, not only from other tribes but especially from slaves.

Childbirth and the naming of children were attended with marked consideration of the spirits. Elderly women cared for the mother during delivery. The water sanctification of the child occurred at dawn of the day following its birth. Some woman well versed in the lore of the moon carried the infant to the nearest stream where she prayed to Bright Shining Woman, spirit of the moon; to the spirit of the water, the Woman Living Forever In The Water; and to Kinni-kásus, that the child might grow rapidly and have good health. Then it was bathed in the running water.

Children were named at birth, and sometimes before birth, after a bird, an animal, a dream, a vision, a dance, game, or what not, or it might be a name handed down in the family. As an illustration, when a woman gave birth, one of the women present by chance opened a door and saw the snow falling, so the child was named Natskíwus ("Snowbird"). If a child had good health it retained the birth name, though if the mother deemed it advisable she went to some man who had enjoyed good luck all his days and invited him to a feast. After eating,

which included a ceremony of prayer and blessing, he would ask the woman what she wanted of him, and she responded that she desired a name for her child. After receiving food and being asked a favor, the man could not refuse the request, so he would give the child a name. A woman once dreamed that she had entered a house in the other world and that she had been asked to sit down where the spirits were telling stories. From this dream she gave her grandson a new name, Witsakwékaas ("Listening To The Party"). A man could assume a name from some good deed performed in war or in the chase. For instance, a chief had a son, to whom at birth was given the name Wháskwats ("All Red Like The Indian People"). After the son grew up, he received a new name from an old man who had once brought in two prisoners. This new name was Itskawádolis ("Brought In To Be Killed").

The making of the cradle for a child was attended with much care. The father was sent to the woods to gather the needed slender willow withes for the cradle frame. On finding the desired tree, he addressed it as though it were a person: "You are the willow; you grow by the water; you are like the water. I have come to take your life; you will forgive me, for you are to be used for a cradle for my child."

In cutting the osiers, the usual observance of the cardinal points was followed. The father peeled the sticks to be used, and the bark and shavings were carefully hidden lest they fall into the hands of witches.

To make the cradle, the father selected some woman of good health who knew the lore of the moon. The making was attended by an invocation to Kinnikásus and the Spirit of the Moon, that it might be well made and that the child might have good health and grow fast.

Marriage was arranged by the relatives of the betrothed couple. Parents who regarded favorably a certain young woman as a prospective daughter-in-law sent a relative, or at any rate a middle-age person, to ask her parents' consent to marriage with their son, or vice versa. If all were favorable, the young man went to the girl's lodge the next evening. Again, a young man falling in love with a girl would make gifts to her brother. If the brother accepted them, the girl was obliged to marry. In every respect, those to be married followed the wishes of the parents. Whenever marriages were arranged between families, rather than mutually by the couple concerned, the relatives of the man gave a feast to those of the woman, with gifts of wearing apparel for the bride, at which time much gratuitous advice was offered to

the prospective bridegroom, such as how to get along with his wife's family, to bring in game, scalps, horses, etc. A man was not obliged to marry outside of his own band, but if he did so he went to live with the band of his wife. In this respect the Wichita social organization is loosely maternal. There was no mother-in-law taboo, but if either of the bride's parents should say, in the presence of the son-in-law, some such phrase as "We are out of food," or any similar statement implying a request, he must fulfill their wishes without comment, regardless of what they are. However, it is considered the duty of parents-in-law to guard their tongues when a son-in-law is near.

When domestic affairs were such as to reach a crisis, divorce was easily effected, though reconciliation was advised whenever possible. If the wife was unable to live happily with her husband and desired a divorce, the husband, with many gifts, went to the wife's brother, who in turn went to her parents, who called in the wife, saying: "You love your brother and he has brought many gifts. Your husband wants to continue to live with you, so you must return to him." If on the woman's return the couple were still unsuccessful in their marital affairs, she went to live either with her parents or the grand-parents on either side. Should they have possessed a grass-house, it became the sole property of the wife.

When a man caught his wife *flagrante delicto* with a man, he usually divorced her, if for no other reason than that wives were easy to obtain. On the other hand, were the husband guilty, the woman went to live with her parents; then should the husband return to her, they might continue to live together, though not in the former manner of husband and wife.

There was no tribal punishment of either party for adultery, but private revenge was sometimes inflicted, as in the instance of a woman with two children who seduced a married man so that he left his own wife and went to live with her. While he was away hunting, his wife and her relatives gave the adulteress a severe beating, in the midst of which, aroused by her screams, her relatives appeared. The result was a mêlée in which the side of the wife was defeated. When the husband returned he left his mistress because he did not like her appearance after the fight. He felt ashamed and went to his wife, expressing his penitence by giving her his horses and other possessions.

The dead were disposed of by inhumation in a slightly elevated

place, the grave being of sufficient length to accommodate the remains fully extended. The body, painted and adorned with various ornaments, was kept in the house for a period of mourning extending over two to four days. With the body at the graveside, the man in charge prayed to Mother Earth:

> From you all things come.
> You have taught us to care for all things
> Which spring from your bosom.
> You have taught-it us that
> All which springs from your bosom returns to you.
> From you this man came.
> To you this man returns.

The body was then placed in the grave with the head toward the east.

Following the filling of the grave, it was covered with logs or with slabs of stone placed conically about four feet in height. After the burial the relatives purified themselves by bathing in a stream, four immersions each day for four days. At the end of the fourth day of such purification, obvious mourning was supposed to cease and the people of the village were expected to resume their normal mode of life.

Chieftainship was not hereditary. Each band, and consequently each village, had its own chief and sub-chief, elected in a similar manner. When a general council was called, since the chiefs were of equal rank, one of the number was elected head-chief by the group assembled; his power was merely that of a parliamentary chairman. In the selection of a chief the procedure was somewhat as follows:

A boy was taught honesty, obedience, and "good ways" by his parents, and it was impressed on him that if he did not heed these teachings he could never become a chief. But if he conscientiously followed the rules as expounded by his elders and gained a reputation as a leader through his ability and hardihood while on hunting and war expeditions, people would take notice of him. If he had been a leader of four war-parties, each one successful in bringing in a scalp, people would say, "He is a good young man; let us watch him." Perhaps even some chief would hear of him and say to himself, "I want that young man to take my place some day."

When a chief was to be elected, perhaps at the time when some

old chief wished to retire, a council of the whole village was called. To the man whom he had chosen as successor, the chief would say, "I want you to become a chief." People then urged him to accept the position, giving many homilies along the lines of conduct becoming a chief; but the young man always remained silent, listening. After the people ceased their urgings, the relatives would beseech him in their turn, saying, "The people want you to become chief that you may take care of them."

But still he would remain silent, thinking to himself, "If that certain relative of mine asked me to become chief, I should accept."

Soon when this particular relative urged in his turn, the young man would modestly answer, "I shall accept, though I am unworthy."

After he had answered thus, the old chief would embrace him and give much advice as to his duties toward the village and the people. Some one was then appointed to offer a prayer, giving thanks to the powers with food; then a feast was held. Meanwhile, a crier was sent throughout the village to herald that the council had gathered, that the old chief was ready to retire, and had selected a man to take his place.

The Wichita had fourteen known dance societies, but much information regarding them has been lost in the transition of the tribe from their former state of being to their present civilized condition, so that while some of the ceremonies are presented as completely as possible in following pages, of others little or nothing is now known.

The first is T!a, the Deer dance, in which all societies were welcome to dance and show their "powers."

Similarly in Hádes, the Doctor dance, borrowed from the Pawnee, all societies might dance if they wished. As the name implies, in this dance appeared the medicine doctors and their pupils.

In the war-dance anybody was free to join, but only members could sing their war-songs. The members do not act as camp police.

When Kidawastèkiâs, the Gift dance, is held, the participants visit every house, telling in song what they desire. The families then reward them with gifts.

The men had five other dance societies, the names alone of four remaining to the present generation. These were the Horn dance, Buffalo Bear, Big Dog or Many Dogs, and the Mythic Animal of the Mountains.

There were three dance societies for the women. The function of the first, the Fancy Woman dance, has been lost. In the Turkey dance

the women performed about a pole decorated with a scalp while a man sang for them. In the same manner Itsasúkatahits, the Flat dance, is performed, but the women sing for themselves. At the end the leader sings four songs and all run to the river and bathe, the leader last.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The pantheon of the Wichita compared with that of most tribes is rich in its inclusions, a richness which indicates more than the ordinary consideration of the Infinite. Such comprehension of the spirits and such definite theological conclusions as exist with these people may be looked for only among sedentary or semi-sedentary groups.

Kinnikásus is the foremost of supernatural beings. The Wichita definition of Kinnikásus is "Man Never Known On Earth." To amplify, it might be said "Not Known To Man," or beyond human knowledge. That which is beyond the understanding of man is necessarily the Infinite, hence Kinnikásus is the figurehead of the Infinite.

Kinnikásus was the creator; he created man and all things on the earth. In prayer the Wichita invoke many supernatural beings, but the invocation invariably includes Kinnikásus as the Spirit Over All.

In personification and deification of the animate and inanimate, a definite division of the divine ones is made — the sky gods and the earth gods. So pronounced is the consideration of the stars and planets that a hasty conclusion might class their beliefs as astrolatry, yet it is most unlikely that the religion of any people ever could have been correctly so regarded. Each myth character bears a name, which analyzed describes the function of the personage; for example, Kússagahigutídisi ("Bright Shining Woman"), the moon, and Otskehánetshoidiyee ("Woman Forever In The Water"), the spirit of the water. As the untranslated name can convey no information to the reader, and as he will not be likely to attempt to pronounce one of these agglutinations, further reference to the characters will be by functional name only.

As previously stated, Man Never Known On Earth is the foremost figure of the pantheon. The Morning Star, Having Power To Carry Light, is the spirit of the first man created. He was the prophet teacher of the people and is included in most prayers.

The next character is of utmost importance in Wichita mythology. It is the spirit of the moon, Bright Shining Woman. The moon was the first woman created, and the wife of Morning Star, thus was the

mother of the universe. This goddess controls all things feminine or procreative. It matters not whether it is human birth, the propagation of animals, or the planting of crops — all come within the province of the Moon Goddess. On approaching motherhood a woman constantly implores her beneficence, and the new-born child is held in outstretched hands to the moon while the mother prays that it may grow strong and have long life.

The sun is Man Reflecting Light. His advent followed Morning Star and Moon; in fact, his creation was the first important act of Morning Star. The Wichita insist that the sun is an important spirit, yet their concepts do not bear out that claim. Rarely is the spirit of the sun included in their invocations. Indirect information suggests that there is an unexpressed, indefinable association between Man Never Known On Earth and Spirit Of The Sun, almost to the extent that the two are one and the same. The obvious anachronism is not greater than is often found in mythology and theology.

The spirit of the water, Woman Forever In The Water, is closely associated with the Moon Spirit, yet their functions differ: one creates life, the other makes possible its growth, its continuation. As an illustration, a woman desiring a child would not pray to the Water Spirit, but would address her supplication to the Spirit Of The Moon; then when the child was born the mother implored the beneficence of the Water Spirit, the Moon Spirit, and included the supreme spirit, Man Not Known On Earth.

A special function of the Water Spirit is to guard the virtue of women. During their husbands' absence on the warpath or the hunt, wives went each day to the river to bathe, and to pray to the Water Spirit, begging that she protect them from disaster. They would include the Morning Star and the Moon Spirit in their prayers. Even in the changed conditions today, this theory and practice remain.

The earth is Earth Mother, the mother of all life. From her man was created and upon his death he returns to her bosom. From her body sprang all things which nourished and maintained man. Wind is life, the breath of the Earth Mother, and is associated with the soul. Wind as here referred to is not associated with the four cardinal points.

The South Star is special guardian of the male; its beneficence gives the man vigorous sons and guards him in warfare.

The North Star, The Light Which Stands Still, is to be feared; it

brings death, yet it also gives life. Perhaps it gives life through withholding death. The medicine-men look to this spirit to assist them in their healing rites. In all probability the healers in imploring this spirit are in fact begging him to stay his icy hand.

In the west is "The Light That Flies," that is, meteors. This spirit of the west has also power to aid in healing sickness. An unidentified faint star at the zenith, personified as "Flint Stone Lying Down Above," is included as a spirit in many invocations.

As indicated in the culture legends, animals often become beneficent spirits. Such spirits should not be confused with the Sky spirits or gods, but rather should be viewed as personal-property spirits, in that the recipient for a consideration could transfer power or knowledge so received.

As with the majority of American Indians, the concept of afterlife is vague. Immortality, through belief in or desire for it, is accepted. The belief that the afterworld or spirit land is somewhere in the sky seemingly antedates any contact with missionary teaching. The celestial location of their spirit land is the obvious conclusion of a people whose religious beliefs centralize so completely around the stars and planets.

The state of existence in the afterworld is a natural creation born of human desire, a life of happiness free from all earthly discomfort. Seemingly the only insurmountable bar to entrance into this heaven is suicide. The spirits of those who commit self-murder may hover near and be conscious of the delights of heaven, but may not enter.

The culture legends of the Wichita afford the best insight into their perception of the Infinite. To question even the best-informed men as to their religious beliefs would result in little information, particularly as the Indian, like the Caucasian, is apt to confuse religion with religious manifestation, the former being the seed, the latter the flower. Perhaps to emphasize, say religion is instinctive, a manifestation coming within the realm of reasoning. Each culture legend conveys a teaching — "manifestation." We see back of that, however, the instinctive belief-perception of the Infinite, and it is in the indicated perception that we find the greatest value of the legends. They convey not alone inherent concept of the Infinite, but many teachings for right living. In fact, in a measure the moral lessons taught overshadow consciousness of the Infinite.

Each legend presumes to convey the teaching of some spirit which

appeared to the individual and imparted this knowledge. Coming from divine sources, the knowledge was regarded as supernatural power. "Power" is the equivalent of the Wichita term. None but the worthy, men of exemplary life, were supposed to receive instructions — revelations — from the spirits. This is shown in all the legendary stories in which the spirits say, "I have watched you and I like your ways." These legends show that with them all knowledge, spiritual and temporal alike, comes from the spirit sources, the gods. Their expression is Sky gods and Earth gods, but as a result of Christian influence it has come to be the Heavenly gods and Earthly gods.

As with all American Indians, the basic beliefs of the Wichita are animistic, that is, every thing, animate or inanimate, possesses a spirit, a soul. Animals could take on spirit form and bestow supernatural power upon men; stars could assume human form and likewise bestow supernatural power.

An analysis of the legends shows that:

(1) The spirits (call them gods if you prefer, the Wichita do) taught that disregard of spiritual instruction brought evil upon the offender. This teaching is suggested in the Girl in the Moon legend, emphasized in the Morning Star legend.

(2) Thoughts, good or evil, brought their own reward: good thoughts bringing good, evil thoughts bringing evil and disaster to the thinker. Evil thought was equivalent to an evil act, as shown in the legends of the Water Spirit, the Moon Spirit, and the Morning Star Spirit.

(3) Spirits at all times knew the thoughts and acts of humans, as shown in the legend of the Water Spirit.

(4) Humans are guarded from wrong-doing by the thoughts of the spirits; they are under the guidance of spirits. Here is the thought that conscience is of the spirits. This teaching is shown in the legend of Bear Broken Leg .

(5) Upright living brought reward from the spirits, as shown in the Surround-the-Fire legend and the legend of Bear Broken Leg.

(6) The exercise of spirit power should be used devoutly, without personal pride and display. This is strongly suggested in the legend of Buffalo Ghost and is taught in all culture legends.

(7) Spirit-given powers can be recalled by the donor; but while lost to the transgressor they are not lost to the universe. This teach ing is shown in both the Morning Star legend and the Buffalo Ghost legend.

(8) All constructive thought comes from the spirits.
(9) The mind should dwell upon spiritual things. The individual should at all times carry prayer thoughts — silent prayer. This is a teaching of the Morning Star legend.
(10) Through faith comes accomplishment.

Spiritual instruction bearing on religious and moral life comes more from the so-called Sky gods and Earth gods, the spirits of animals and objects, than from the supreme Power Over All. The teaching of Kinnikásus seemingly dealt more with the material problems of life, as shown in the legend of the Deer Dance and the Building of the Grass-house. It should be borne in mind that when the suppliant invokes any of the lesser spirits, he invariably includes Spirit Over All, Kinnikásus.

Several of the legends suggest that breath is life, vaguely, soul; also that breath and wind are as one. As breath is all that leaves the body upon death, it must be the soul.

GENESIS LEGEND

In the beginning all was darkness. There was no day. The world was voting and not yet finished. There was but one man on earth. He had been created by Kinnikásus, and was lonely. He thought, "Why am I alone?" Kinnikásus took pity on him and created for him a wife from one of his ribs.[4] The spirits then taught them how to make all things and how to live.

A little later the woman observed that her body commenced to swell, but she did not know why it should be so, nor did the man. In those times all events transpired quickly, and soon she gave birth to a child. The father was pleased to have the child and to see it grow so fast. The couple continued to have children, who in time had offspring. The intermarriage of all this progeny increased the population.

The man was satisfied with all that he had, but he did not like the continual darkness. He was told in his heart that it was easy to change the dense gloom, that he must go to the south where he would see some deer. The deer which was striped with black and white must be killed — then the darkness would change to light, an there would be alternating light and darkness. He was told that the light would be for

4 The effect of Christian teaching is obvious.

the purpose of seeing and the darkness for rest and sleep.

After the light came, the people were surprised to see things growing. There was a woman who had a garden, to whom all said,"What is that?"

She answered: "This is food for the people. This is black, yellow, red, and white corn."

The woman went to her garden, where she picked seven ears of the corn, which she gave to some one. This person asked, "What is this?"

She answered, "Go and eat this corn, which is the same as nursing from your mother's breast."

The corn was not cooked at that time. When the person bit into it, white milk ran out and dripped on his hand. He asked what the milk was; the woman instructed him to eat, for that was nourishment. Corn has come down to the people since that time.

The man was told that the animals were to be his food, but to kill them he must make a bow and arrows. From the dogwood he made a bow; from the dogwood his arrows, and this is the way he made them: He peeled the bark from the sticks, which he allowed to dry in the sun. Then he straightened them by hand, tied them in a sheaf, and hung them beneath the smoke-hole of his lodge for the smoke to season. After the fourth day of seasoning he once more straightened them, then cut them to the required length. The ends were notched, and selected feathers were bound on with sinew which had been softened in water. He prepared flint points which he inserted in notches in the ends of the arrows and bound them on tightly with sinew.

The man was eager to test his new weapons, so he started in search of same. At last he came to two deer and succeeded in killing one of them. This he skinned and butchered with a flint knife. The people wondered what to do with the meat — how they should eat it. It was revealed to a woman to slice the meat in thin slices and string it up to dry. Then it must be cut up and boiled in an earthenware pot.

In those days the people hunted game afoot. Whenever a scout reported game, the chief called the people together and they all went out. They divided into groups, some going north, others east, south, and west, until the animals were surrounded. Then they gradually closed in, causing the game to mill around, then shot down what they needed. Medicine was put on the arrow-points to direct them to game.

In warfare poison was used to insure death to those hit.

THE DELUGE

It was told from father to son, from generation to generation, that some day something was going to happen to the people; that there would come a time, no one knew how far off, when there would be continuous rain and all the world would be covered with water. The people knew in their hearts that this flood was coming and their minds were prepared for it. But they were worried because it might happen tomorrow, or this summer or in the following year; they were anxious because they did not know when it would occur. They ever cautioned the children not to wander off, because they might be caught in the flood if they were too far from home.

Then came a time when it commenced to rain. The people were not sure whether or not this was the time of the deluge, but they were afraid, and all remained indoors. So great was the downpour that at the end of three days the people felt that this must be the promised flood, so they began to talk of what to do and where to go. The women cried and wailed in fright.

An old man spoke, saying: "What is the matter? What are you thinking of; why are you uneasy?"[5]

He called together the old men. "I have something to tell you men. I feel sorry for the people who are crying." To the young men he ordered, "Go to the forest; cut dead cottonwoods and bring them to me, for they are light."

The young men brought back long, stout logs, which the old man ordered cut into even lengths. "Now go back-and cut three more," he directed.

With the first logs he made a foundation for a raft by laying them side by side. The three brought in last he notched at intervals and laid across his raft foundation, one at each end and one in the middle. He lashed these to the logs with withes.

A young man asked, "Why do you notch the logs?"

"To secure them firmly by making them fit closely together. These

5 The informant said that the time of the story was so long ago that the man's name has been lost, but he assumed that he was a chief.

logs are dry; they will never sink," he answered.

All the time the rain fell.

The young men brought armfuls of osiers which the old man used to bind the timbers together. He used also the soapweed which he made into rope. The raft was so large that it took many men to interweave the willows and the soapweed rope.

The young, men were sent to fetch willow poles. One of these was set upright on each corner, notched, and lashed firmly in place. Two more were set up in similar manner on each side of the raft near the middle. Others were laid horizontally, one on top of the other, the ends lashed to the corner and middle poles, to form walls for the raft.

The work proceeded rapidly because it still rained. The old man directed that branches be brought, such as are used for making arbors; these were spread on the bottom of the raft. He went about the village, saying to the women, "You women commence to prepare food that the children will have something to eat, because something is happening."

All over the village could be heard the pounding of corn. Other people brought enough leaves and brush to cover the bottom of the raft. People began to be greatly frightened, standing about and talking in groups. One of them cried: "Look over there! Something is happening!"

They saw a dark wall of water rising. The old man directed the women to bring the seed of the corn, which he placed in the joints of cane and planted them firmly in the earth. The water came up higher; they asked one another, "What is going to happen?" The old man called the people to the raft, but they were terrified and cried, "This thing will sink!"

When the water rose still higher the people went aboard the raft. Its walls had been built so high that there was no danger of its occupants falling overboard. As it rose in the water many people were frightened because they did not know what was to happen. There was a motion to the raft; it rocked and was whirled about by the swirling currents.

Now they noticed that the flood was up to the necks of the "Four

things standing. in the water" — monsters.[6] They were gradually sinking out of sight as the water rose.

The people became hungry; first the children were provided for, then the adults. The older ones talked, trying to encourage the others. One very old man said: "Do not be frightened; be contented. Remember that long, ago a certain person told us that it would rain twelve days. It is getting near the end of that time now. Soon the rain will cease."

The water rose higher and closer to the heads of the four huge beasts. One of the four declared, "I have got to give up; I am going to fall to the south." Soon another said, "I must give up; I am going to fall to the west." The third announced, "I am going to fall toward where the cold wind comes from." The fourth said, "Some time when our bones dry out and people find them, they will keep pieces of bone for their medicine.[7]

Before this time the people did not know the four directions. From the last words of the monsters the people learned them.

After twelve days and nights the rain ceased and the waters receded. The people felt glad, for they knew that some one had cared for them. The saw that the joints of cane with the corn seed were still standing. if these had been lost, the people would not have had the corn which they now have. Soon the raft grounded, but no one dared to get off because of the deep mud. Though the wind blew continuously, twelve more days and twelve nights passed before it dried the earth firmly enough to walk on. There was no village left when the people finally landed. The old man said: "Do not be sad because you have lost your homes. One good thing has happened; you are still living." He took up the canes with the corn from the around. He gave the corn seed to the older women, the good workers. Then they searched for the sites of their former homes; they could barely see where their

6 This informant made no mention of the four monsters until the hour of embarkment, and at this inclusion termed them "Four things standing in the water."

7 Many medicine-men of the tribe dug up bones of prehistoric animals and used them in their healing practices. Whenever such bones were found in the Wichita country, they were attributed to the four monsters.

houses had been.

The Wichita had two distinct deluge legends. One faction of the tribe firmly maintains that it has the true one, while the other as strongly advocates its own. The principal point of difference is that in one legend a raft is built on which a portion of the people are saved; in the other, the people are all drowned and the earth repopulated through a miraculous birth. The latter account of the deluge seemingly is the more common and best known in the tribe. Dr. George A. Dorsey[8] gives two versions of this form of the story.

The legend of the raft was related by Henry Lamb, a very old man and the best-informed story-teller among the Wichita. This informant claimed that the story came to him directly through the men of his family, to his knowledge, back to his great-grandfather. This evidence would seem to indicate that the story is of pre-Caucasian origin and that the incident of the raft is not Biblical. On first thought one would naturally attempt to account for the two legends through the incorporation of an alien group into the tribe, but no indication of such an inclusion is traceable.[9] Informants of this generation are not particularly clear as to the details of either of the legends.

Informants knew nothing of the saving of the animals; in fact, they insisted that none of the animals were rescued. In one of the stories collected by Dr. Dorsey it is stated that some animals were saved. How this was accomplished is not touched upon; in fact, from a careful reading of the story it would seem as if the informant had injected this incident and left the animals playing about in the air. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that none of the stories suggests that any of the land animals survived the deluge.

Another version of the deluge myth, related by another informant, is as follows:

In the old days there were many Wichita villages. One, where lived the chief-over-all, was larger than the others. This chief had a wife, but no children. His heart longed for sons, but his wife refused

8 Mythology of the Wichita, pages 290, 294, Washington, 1904.

9 The remnant of the Kichai, a Caddoan tribe ravaged by war and disease, is now incorporated with the Wichita, but informants were positive that the legend is Wichita.

to be a mother. Many years passed with no children in the lodge of the chief, then the wife gave birth to four uncouth creatures, which rapidly grew into monsters. The chief was troubled, and called a council of his men to ask what should be done with these strange beings. Many urged that they be killed, but their mother begged that they be spared. When very young these creatures did no harm, but as they grew older they became vicious, killing children and wrecking the village.

The chief and his council then decided to move the monsters outside the village. Their bodies grew rapidly, but their legs did not grow. All of the men of the tribe joined in moving them from the village. They were placed on high ground, all four in a group, with their rumps together and their heads facing toward the four directions. By this time their bodies had become so large that their legs would not carry them. Their necks extended to great length. They continued to grow very huge and tall and wicked. They reached out and snatched people or animals who journeyed forth, so that the villagers came under the complete control of the monsters. The people starved, for if they went out for food, the monsters would get them. The headman did not like this, so he went to the turtle, saying, "I need help, even if everyone is destroyed. I want you to do something to these monsters."

The huge turtle went underground until he was beneath the feet of the monsters. Then the rain came; but the birds flew over before the rain commenced, as a sign that a flood was approaching, which was the arrangement the chief had made with the turtle. After the birds had been seen, the sky grew black with great clouds, and the rain poured. As the water rose, the monsters stuck up long necks, holding their mouths to the sky and moving their feet as if to stretch them long.

The people had been told that when the birds flew over, something would happen, so they became frightened, trying to escape as the water swallowed them up. The turtle moved under the feet of the huge beasts, making the ground soft, and the water came so high that nothing but their heads was above water. Then the monster in the south said, "I am falling south; I can not stand on my legs any longer." The one in the west cried, "I am giving out and falling to the west." The monster in the north said, "My turn has come; I am falling." The monster in the east declared, "My turn has come; I am falling east."

The rain continued until there was a great flood which destroyed all the people. There was nothing left but land floating in water.

In the northeast, under the water, the beaver had a home where perhaps other people were. The wind also lived there.

In those times the people were very wise. The thought came into the mind of the Wind to set forth and see how everything was; that perhaps it was drier now, but he delayed going out. The spirit had put that thought into his head. Three other times the thought came, each time being put aside, but the fourth time Wind went up and over the earth. He could travel fast and cover much land, and each day he went out, going a little farther each time until finally he had covered the whole earth. He was the one who was drying up the water. After a while he found that conditions were getting better, because after the deluge the land and the water were mixed, floating around together, but now high spots of the land were becoming dry.

When Wind was travelling about one day, he saw a white streak in the west, coming down from the sky — a dream, a vision. He turned and went in another direction; but the thought entered his mind to go back and see what the sign was, so he went to it. When he reached there he saw a woman lying on her back with her head to the northwest. Wind was wise, but this was a puzzle to him. He wondered why and how the woman had come there; but he continued with his work, not stopping. Again the thought told him to go and look at the woman, but he kept on instead. Then the thought urged that this must be some sign for him, but he disregarded it. When the fourth thought was sent, Wind noticed a change in the woman, for her body was swelling. When he saw that, he knew that it was a sign, for he believed that there would be a birth. He decided to watch her, to see her now and then while continuing to work.

After coming again, Wind saw that the woman was very much swollen; her breasts were large and the nipples were turning black, so he knew that soon a child would be born.

Some time later he saw that the woman had given birth to a little girl, who was on her breast. Again when he returned he found that the child had grown much larger, for in those days things grew fast. This child grew through the power of some one who was great.

The Wind kept on going around, but he was interested in the woman and child. Soon the girl was large enough to sit on her mother's lap. The woman began to sink into the ground.

Wind continued his work, but as he was coming back again he

saw that the child was sitting on the ground. She became frightened of him and crawled to the mother. When Wind embraced the infant and picked her up, he heard a voice from above, saying, "You are scaring my child." He put the child down.

Another time Wind saw the girl a short distance from her mother, who had sunk farther into the ground. Once more he heard the voice, just as before. When Wind came around again he noticed that the girl had grown much larger and that the woman had sunk until only her breasts remained above ground. Milk was flowing down her sides to provide the child with nourishment.

On Wind's next return the woman was almost out of sight, while the girl was still larger.

Once more Wind came back, after doing his work, and this time, through the spirit, the girl was not afraid of him. The voice commanded him to take her to the home of the beavers and care for her. When he arrived there, he told the beavers that he would leave the girl with them because he had to be out doing his work and could not come home often.

She stayed there, and time passed quickly. In a short while the girl had become full-grown. In that home she noticed a man who always used the bed on the north side. This man, of yellowish complexion, was very handsome.

When Wind came back from another journey he found that the girl had married the man. They were living together, and Wind was satisfied. She became pregnant by her husband, whose name was Nitsakssiikáha ("Sunbeam"). When the baby was ready to come into the world, the mother heard it say, "Where shall I be born?"

"There is a place for you to be born," the mother answered.

When she gave birth, it was a boy. In a short while he could walk and talk, because things grew fast in those times. The first thing he said was that he wanted arrows; but the father said that there were none, because nothing grew with which to make them.

When the boy was larger he wanted to go out on the land, but how he knew about land was a mystery. The people refused to let him leave, but he went against their wishes. The people there, who were wise, and also his parents, knew there was something extraordinary about the boy, so after he went they decided that it was all right for him to have gone.

In the evening the boy came back. Every day he went out and returned in the evening. Each time he asked his father for arrows, but each time the father said there was nothing with which to make them. Once he came back carrying some immature dogwood sticks. When the people saw these, they knew that the boy had power, but they did not know that each day he was preparing things. He made arrows from matured dogwood which he had brought in after the second trip. By this time he was a young man. He made a bow of moose-horn. No one knew where he found the horns. When he returned evenings, he brought objects such as grass and sage to show the people that they might see that things were growing.

Now he was a full-grown man. He told his parents that this was the right time to come up on land. Then he went out, only to come back later, saying, " Now is the time."

They emerged to the land, to a home which he had made. He said to them: " I am a full-grown man. I want you to help me and do as I tell you. What you see here, grass, trees, and other growing things, I have completed. I have not quite finished, so I shall ask you not to live as married people until I am through doing these things."

They did not move from that home. The young man got the seed of the corn, which the people planted, but they did not know whence it came. Corn became their chief food; it was the first food. He worked every day preparing and making many different things.

While the young man was away the parents disobeyed his instructions. He knew as well as themselves what they were doing. When he arrived home, he stopped a little distance away, saying that they had disobeyed him and done wrong. "I was not through with my work," he said. "If you had not done wrong, a person would be able to return to earth in four days after death. From now on when any one dies, he will have to go to another place, the place of the dead. You must go your own way now. You will have more children; the first will be a girl and the second a boy, in that order. When you have a great many children, they will marry. My work, so far as it is done, is complete. I am going where those who will die in the future are going. I am going up above to become Hásaiúsida ['Morning Star']."

The first two children married and had children. Their children married, and so on down. The more the people increased, the more the corn increased. Before this time, just before Morning Star had depart-

ed, he had looked after the people. After he left, the spirit took charge of them. He would tell them in their hearts what to do. Expressing a wish meant fulfilment.

They had no food other than corn. The people knew little of how to live. The other food came through the spirit in answer to a wish. The people were like children in mind.

The spirit put the thought in a man that he should wish for something. He wished for some dogwood from a tree. It fell down to him. The spirit gave what he wished to give to the people through thought. He put it into the mind of a man to wish for the stem of soapweed; with this the man made fire by using it on soft wood and spark into flame. The thought came to the people to cook. It was as if they were waking up or growing up in mind. The spirit put the thought into them that the animals, made by Morning Star, were to be killed and eaten. When the people were thus able to take care of themselves and advanced in knowledge, the spirit withdrew his thoughts after telling the. people how to pray to him.

Morning Star had said that when the time draws near for something to happen again, like the flood, a sign of that will be the too closely intermarrying of people.

WITCHCRAFT

When the Caucasian attempts to analyze the mental processes of the Indian in his belief in what we term witchcraft and he calls evil spirits, he often is in a state of perplexity, for he is dealing with a subject which is difficult for him to grasp. It is a common practice to speak of the religion of the Indians as superstition; but in dealing with their witchcraft it can rightly be said that we are touching upon the most vital parts of their superstition. It may be correctly stated that witchcraft permeates the beliefs of every Indian tribe, notwithstanding the fact that almost all interpreters and informants will deny its existence among their people. It is a subject which the Indian instinctively feels should be kept from the white man.

The present study of the Wichita may be cited as an illustration. These Indians are subjects of witchcraft to an unusual extent. The two principal informants were not unwilling to impart vital information respecting secret rites, yet when questioned directly or indirectly as to witchcraft, they insisted that their people knew nothing whatsoever of

the practice of sorcery. Information procured later proved that both men were members of the "Evil Spirit Cult." Those who do not belong to this cult are of the opinion that more than a third of the tribe are members of the witchcraft group. However, no one outside of the order can tell who is or who is not a witch or a wizard. For this reason the non-sorcerers must be extremely careful not to mention witches or witchcraft. Death is likely to be the penalty for violation of this unwritten tribal law.

The best Wichita informant on the subject of sorcery consented to reveal something of its practice, but not all, stating that, "If I told you all, I know my whole family would be dead in a month." That such a condition should exist among Indians living under the laws of the land and in close contact with the white race may seem unbelievable. But there are many ways in which seemingly accidental death can occur, and regardless of laws and association, the Indian does not air his inner troubles to an alien race. On rare occasions a break in the chain of secrecy occurs and some Indian is tried in the courts for murder; yet when the crucial test of evidence comes before the court, friend or foe will rarely depart from Indian tradition and give testimony which would reveal the hand responsible for a "silent death." An Indian, however willing, would find it difficult to give illumining information as to a subject such as this in answer to abstract questions. It is only through stories dealing with the subject that worthwhile information can be educed.

The following fragmentary tales of the Wichita give an insight into the practice of evil magic, their beliefs in it as well as some of its many contradictions. The included incidents and other information show that in the old days, to become a member of the witch cult, one had to offer the life of some relative or close friend. The giving of the life signified his cooperation in the destruction of that individual. Thus the new member was a brother in guilt. The stories also show that the principal forms taken by witches were the owl, the snake, and the dog. Further, that a person when dying from witchcraft was likely to have revealed to him the sorcerer responsible for his condition. In mass or mob, the friends of the dead often openly destroyed the one who was pronounced the cause. Those who were openly killed as witches were not granted burial, but their bodies were carried from the camp where coyotes could strip the bones.

A common way of wishing "slow death" upon any one was to procure a lock of his hair or some other object from the victim and place it in a knurl hole in a tree. As this small hole grew closed the victim would wither and die. A quicker way of bringing "silent death" was to put a lock of hair into the mouth of a toad, then kill the toad. As the animal decayed, so would the victim. Direct poisoning was often resorted to; yet with all the actual deeds of the witches, in all probability most of those who thought they were dying of witchcraft were suffering from natural causes.

THE STRONG MAN WHO OVERCAME THE WITCHES

Once there was a large camp of Wichita near the site of Anadarko. In the village dwelt a middle-age man who had been in many battles and raids, who had a reputation for bravery. Every expedition he had been with had been accompanied by some noteworthy deed, like the taking of scalps or the capture of many horses. But now the war days were over. The man was of fine appearance; he lived quietly and in a good way, doing many favors for people and being well liked; in every way he was a worthy man.

This man had a friend who was like a brother to him. They hunted together and spent long hours in talking of the old days. One time he felt so ill that he had to take to his bed. He worried because this best friend did not come to see him in his sickness. His friend knew of his distress and kept thinking that there was something mysterious about it.

One evening at dusk the friend was walking and thinking about the sick man. As he reached a point some distance east of the village he came upon a small group of people, men and women, who were standing about as though they were all held by some thought in common. At once he was certain that it was his friend they had in mind. They seemed glad of his coming, welcoming him when he approached. They told him that they had been discussing whether he could be relied on, because he was never serious but always making jokes. He answered them that he could be trusted in every way.

This group had been sent out by the evil society, the sorcerers. Whenever one joins, he must give a close relative to be killed — a father, mother, sister, brother. These witches thought they could get this man to join them by giving up his friend as an offering. They

had already caused his illness. He went with them to the gathering of the witches, whose meeting-place was on a hilltop among trees. They were seated in a large circle. Most of them had their faces covered with blankets, but some not. These did not seem to care who knew that they were members of the society.

At that time, and even today, if a man is brave, he is hard to kill. Or if he is a hard worker it is difficult to kill him. When the sorcerers decide to do away with such a man, the deed must be undertaken by the most powerful of their number. In the circle they left an opening to the east. In the centre sat an old man who was so strong in witchcraft that he had never failed. He sat with his mouth wide open. In a vision appeared the sick man driving a herd of horses. The horses the wizard swallowed, but the sick man came to him and tried to stab him. Then the wizard disappeared. All the people yelled for the sorcerer to try harder. He reappeared and the vision returned. This time all the deeds of the sick man appeared, and the wizard swallowed them. If the wizard could swallow the man, he would die. The young friend saw all; he saw a medicine — a sliced human liver passed around the circle for each one to eat. When it came to him he pretended to eat, but stealthily dropped his portion on the ground.[10]

The third time he tried, and again swallowed the horses, but now the man succeeded in stabbing the wizard. The friend jumped up and ran to the village, pursued by the witches, who nearly caught him. When he reached the village he went straight to his friend's house. He embraced the sick man, saying, "You are surely brave; you have killed him."

The sick man was puzzled, for he did not know what his friend meant when he kept repeating, "You have killed him." All he could say was, "Do not say that."

Over in the east of the village a wailing was heard. The wizard was dead. The man recovered and the wretches were afraid of him because he had killed the leader of their society.

THE SNAKE SORCERER — TRIAL BY COMBAT

10 This liver, claimed to be from a human, was supposed to make people wild and to have visions. It is likely that it was treated in some way, thereby producing a frenzied condition.

One night, when his family were visiting some friends, a man sat alone by the south side of his fire in the lodge. He noticed a small snake going round and round a little puddle of water in front of him. He took up a stick to beat it and finally punched it in the head, pushing the end of the stick entirely through. It came into his mind that this was not a real snake, that it was witchcraft. He thought to take it to a friend who could tell him how to dispose of it, but instead he put the thought out of his mind and threw the snake to one side.

At that moment he heard a wailing at the other end of the village as if some one were dying. A friend came to him. asking: "Do you hear that man crying? You nearly killed him." The man's head was all bloody and he had pointed out who was trying to kill him.

The wounded one, the sorcerer, came over, but the man said, "Come south with me; we can not fight here."

They went to the south, followed by the people, until they came to the bank of a creek where they began to fight. Suddenly the wizard disappeared. The man had to find him; his life was forfeit if he did not. As he stood there, something flew down from the sky, a human form. It plowed the water with its foot and kicked the head of the wizard. The spirit above had helped the man. The sorcerer fought again, but once more disappeared in the water, where he was discovered by the form sent by the spirit. Four times this happened, and the last time the water vanished, showing the wizard hiding in the shallow mud. The wizard's followers tried many tricks on the man, but he bested them all. He won and was not killed.

THE WIZARD WHO BECAME CRAZY

In the village lived a man who was feared by every one because at the least thing he would become angry and kill some one. There arrived a time when the chief became very ill. The wizard was trying hard to kill him; trying hard because if a wizard fails he either dies or goes crazy. Finally the chief died, but before he expired he pointed out the man, saying, "He killed me."

In some way the chief had possessed a power which "tangled up" the power of the wizard so that he went crazy. The first thing he did after becoming crazed was to attempt to stab his son. When the people discovered his condition they wanted to kill him.

The wizard climbed to the top of an earth-lodge, where the peo-

ple surrounded him. He imitated a bear, raising his hands alternately to the sun. His breath was colored blue. He showed what he could do. He said, "You can not hurt me unless you shoot me in the palm of my hand."

The people shot at him, hitting him in many places, but to no avail. Finally one man rubbed his bullet and gun with an herb, so that he could not miss, and the missile hit the wizard in his palm.

As he toppled off the lodge, he howled like a bear. When he reached the ground he was dead, so the people dragged him outside the village where the coyotes would eat him. When witches were killed, they were never buried. The whole village had participated in this witch-killing, so all were responsible. The wizard's friends might take revenge, but could not do so openly.

THE YOUTHFUL SORCERER

In a village north of the Red river, people had gathered to feast and to tell stories. While they were talking they heard some one approaching, who turned out to be a youth. The people nearest the door shouted at him in welcome, a welcome is if he were a man of importance. A prominent man inside said, "I thought a great man was coming in, since he was welcomed so gladly." Thus he spoke of the youth in a derogatory manner.

All sorcerers know one another. The young man knew the man who spoke, and answered: "I am just as you are. You think you are some one because of what you have, but I want to say that I have as much as you."

After the feast was over and all had gone home, the youth found that he was shot through both legs. His knees pained so that he was unable to walk. He became very thin, as if he were drying up. He told his parents to call the man, for when a wizard has cast his spell upon some one, he is paid well to remove it. However, the man refused to come, because he knew the youth had a gun hidden under his bedding with which he meant to kill him.

When the young man's parents were going to visit another village, he had them leave him water and food, for he knew that he was too much of a care to take along.

THE CADDO SORCERER

A certain Caddo, with his two wives, used to attend the Doctor dance of the Wichita, a dance borrowed from the Pawnee to which all societies are invited. Each time this Caddo attended the dance it was noticed that some Wichita who had been present died.

When it was thought that he had gone too far with his witchcraft, a certain other wizard said: "When that man and his wives come again, leave matters to me. I shall challenge him."

They were glad to turn affairs over to him, and when the next dance was given he was all ready. He had the people sing his song, a song of the owl. While they were singing, he jumped from his place and commenced to dance, holding hidden in his hands a ball of dogwood-bark peelings, which he ate as he performed. This formed a protective coating around his heart and kept the other sorcerer from killing him.

The dancing wizard wore a long red feather in his hair. He danced round and round the fire. Each time as he passed the Caddo sorcerer he bowed his head close to him. The feather was fire, and in this way he scorched the heart of the enemy — burned it without giving the Caddo a chance to use his power. No one else saw what he was doing, for the Doctor dance was going on at the same time. On his way home, the Caddo died.

THE OWL WIZARD

A woman of a family which lived east of the dance-grounds became very ill and grew worse and worse all the time. The medicine doctors found that the illness was in her abdomen and that it was moving around inside like a snake.

There was an owl which used to alight on the projecting poles of the grass-house. The woman said to her parents: "That owl which comes every night is the cause of my trouble. He is doing this." When a person is dying, he or she always knows the wizard who is causing the death. It just comes to him.

When the owl came again, a man of the family rubbed his gun and a bullet with an herb which makes it impossible to miss anything one shoots at. He hit the owl in the leg, so that it fell to the ground, where he killed it.

The following day it was found that a man who lived across the creek was so crippled in the leg that he never stood upright again.

Father De Smet, who spent so many years among the Indians and

who was an exceptionally keen observer, records a remarkable story of the "silent death" among the Potawatomi — clearly a case of poisoning.[11]

The Potawatomi who gives frequent feasts is, according to the expression of their songs, one of the heroes of the village. At the beginning of winter, when the hunt has been successful, every lodge presents a scene of rejoicing. Night and day the sound of the flute is heard, together with the deafening clamor of the teweêken or drum, accompanying the monotonous songs of the savages. There is a sacred custom among them, that he who gives a feast may take no share in it himself; he would be dishonored and deemed sacrilegious. The hunter cuts up the animal that he has killed into as many pieces as he wishes to send invitation-sticks to his friends. Any one who cannot come to the feast sends back the stick with some tobacco or some other small present to smooth over his refusal. Generally the whole village is invited, for each of the inhabitants lives in a continual dread of being poisoned by some jealous neighbor. A savage keenly resents a slight or snub; he is vindictive in the extreme, and vengeance being a virtue, according to his ideas, sooner or later he will find occasion to vent all his anger upon any one who has dared to scorn him.

The tragic story which I am about to relate is a striking proof of this. I have it from the nephew of Kitchechaonissi himself. One of the finest villages of the Potawatomies, before their emigration to Council Bluffs, was on the point where the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers unite to form the Illinois. Kitchechaonissi or Great South Wind, a famous warrior, was their chief. His bravery made him feared; but at the same time, by his fatherly kindness, he had won the esteem and love of all his people. He was so fortunate as to have six sons, brave as himself and excellent hunters. He often gave feasts and entertainments to all his village. Sometimes, however, he dared to brave one or another of his neighbors, neglecting, whether in contempt or for any other cause, to send them invitation sticks.

The Indians carry their knowledge of poisons and the art of admin-

11 H. M. Chittenden and A. T. Richardson, Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1801-1873, Vol. III, pages 1094-1098, New York, 1905.

istering them very far; they make use of them with admirable dexterity upon whomsoever displeases them. The five eldest sons of Kitchechaonissi died one soon after another in the course of the same year, victims of the secret vengeance of some envious or vindictive savage. The old man's grief was long and bitter; years passed without his giving a single feast, and he obstinately refused all invitations. His remaining son was his only consolation, his sole hope and the prop of his old age. Endowed with all good qualities in mind and body, brave in war, skillful in the chase, he was especially noted for a filial devotion and submission, until then unequaled among the Indians. Kitchechaonissi loved him as much as a father and chief can love a distinguished son, the favorite of the village, the hero of the nation. His only pleasure was to deck him with the richest and finest adornments known to the nations. The son, by his assiduous care, had brought back the old brave to his former serenity, and apparently to all his happiness.

One day he returned from the hunt with a large bear that he had killed, and according to his custom he laid it at the feet of Kitchechaonissi. The old man bade him cut tip the beast and invite all the elders of the village to the Feast of the Bear. Through oversight, the young hunter forgot four old men of the great medicine band; but he resolved to return to the desert immediately after the feast, in order to invite them the first to a second banquet. The mirth and rejoicings of the people were great on this occasion, for it was the first time since the death of his five sons that this beloved chief had taken part in a great solemnity. Everything went off most harmoniously. Kitchechaonissi was at the height of pleasure, listening to the praises of his son, and the songs that celebrated his great bravery and lofty virtues. Alas! grief followed closely this paternal triumph; the next day the young hero found himself unwell; the most famous jugglers were called in to his aid; but all their methods, songs, dances, the power of their breath, were practiced to no avail; the sickness quickly made fearful progress, and on the eighth day, all the village, mourning and weeping, accompanied Waâpekiejeck, the Dawn, which was the young warrior's name, to the tomb of his unhappy brothers.

Kitchechaonissi painted himself black and disappeared from the village, after the burial; his people sought him everywhere, but in vain. He had withdrawn to the most desert place, among the cliffs, to weep. Often, in the bitterness of his heart, he prayed the Master of

Life to permit him to go and join his dear children in the land of souls. One day while seated at the edge of a torrent plunged in reveries, he thought he heard a voice saying, "Rise, Kitchechaonissi, rise quickly; cross the river, climb the steep hills, and you shall see your son whom you so mourn." He rose at once; the sun had just finished his course and disappeared behind the distant bluffs. The old man looked about him on all sides; but seeing no one, he raised his eyes and hands toward heaven, exclaiming, "How now! Shall I see my son? My fingers closed his eyes; my hands dug his grave; my lips kissed his pale and livid brow, before lowering him beside his unhappy brothers!" But an irresistible power seemed to drag him on; he obeyed it. He threw himself into the torrent and gained the opposite shore; it was a desert place, difficult of access. How great was his surprise when he heard the dull sound of a drum, coming from a ravine on the farther side of the great hill. Like the hunter who has found the trail of the animal he pursues, the old man crossed the high mound with a speed astonishing for his age. The sound of the drum becomes louder and louder as he proceeds, and his uneasiness and curiosity are extreme. He stops an instant to take breath, and to look about him with caution. He soon discovers, in a deep ravine, a bark lodge, whence the noise issues. Under cover of the darkness he hastens with a light step toward the mysterious spot. He trembles in all his limbs; his blood is ice in his veins; scarcely can he breathe. A thousand phantoms rise before his imagination, excited and disturbed by so many troubles. The promise that he had heard upon the rock, "You shall see your son," at last reanimates his courage. He takes a few steps forward, looks in at a chink in the lodge, and is seized with astonishment, indignation and horror; he recognizes the four old men who did not take part in the Feast of the Bear, busied in horrid incantations with their medicine bag spread out before them. He looks more closely and sees five skulls upon posts. He goes around the cabin, looks through another crack, and discovers by the firelight a fifth Indian standing motionless at the farther end of the lodge. — Is it his son? He examines him attentively. He has the same garments, the same ornaments, with which he was buried. It was thus that he had painted his face at his last feast. — But why this livid hue, these closed eyes, this corpselike appearance? How has he come to this fearful desert? and in a society a thousand times more fearful yet? For a long time Kitchechaonissi had suspected these four old men of being

the cause of his sorrows. Thoughts of vengeance, hope, doubt, were toiling in his breast. He knew not what to do; he watched all their motions and listened atten tively. The one who had the drum began beating it again; the next shook his gourd rattle, the third blew the flute, while the fourth addressed the most insulting language to the young hero, boasting at the same time of the great power of their medicines, which neither he nor his brothers had been able to resist. Like a tiger, or a lioness robbed of her young ones, Kitchechaonissi felt all at once his vigor return, his blood boiled in his veins. Armed with his terrible tomahawk, he rushed into the lodge and discharged all his fury upon the terrified murderers of his children; he laid them all dead at his feet, and they dared not try to resist him. Then he went to embrace his son, and found that he bad in his arms only his stuffed skin. — This occurrence was soon known to all the village; the young man's grave was opened; his remains were not there, nor those of his brothers. Circumstances proved beyond a doubt that the old men were the poisoners, and that they had received, according to Indian customs, the just penalty of their crimes.

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