

JAMES MOONEY

THE SACRED FORMULAS
OF THE CHEROKEES

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of the Cherokees**

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Mooney J.

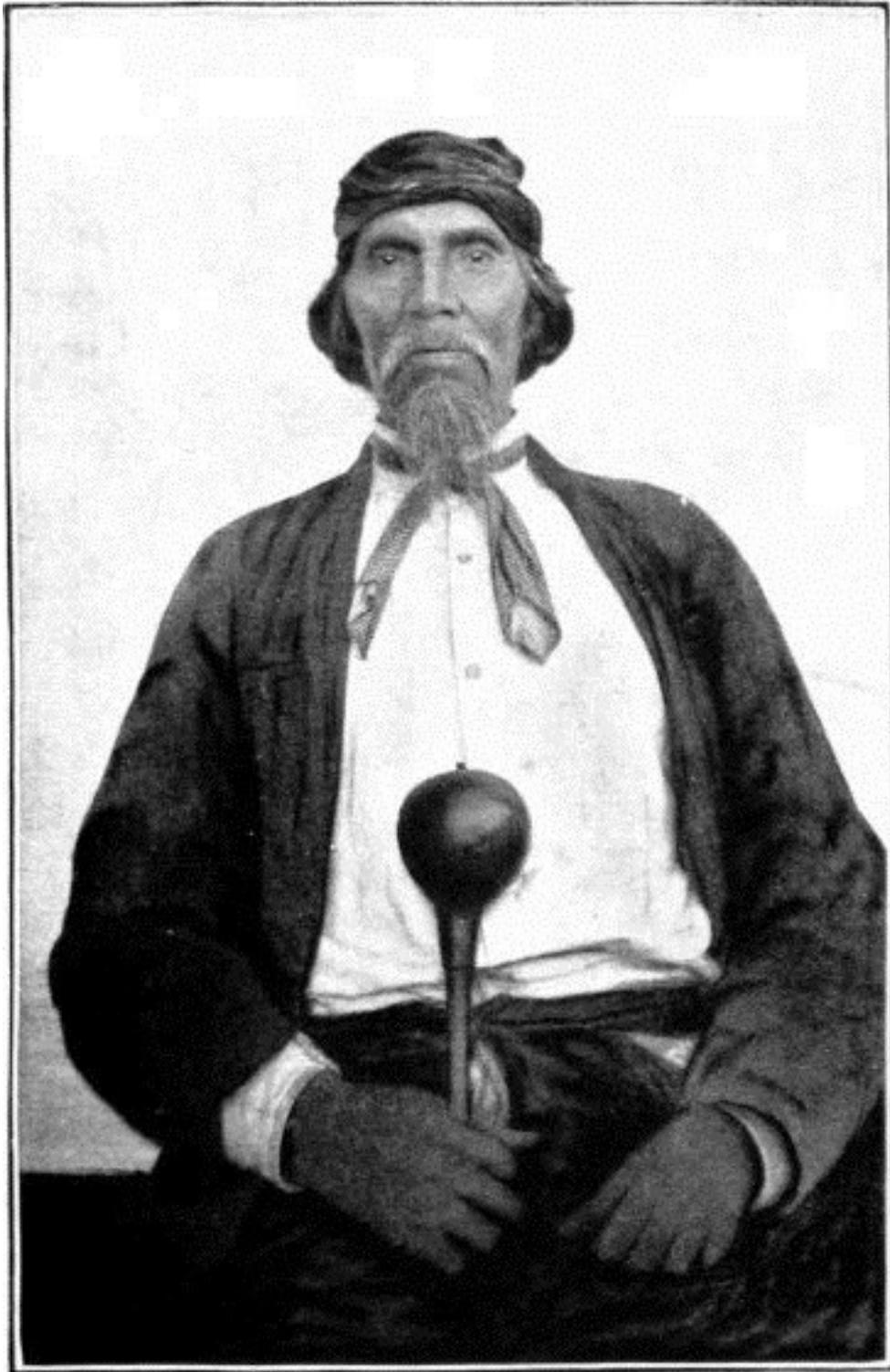
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James Mooney
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BUREAU OF ETHNOLOGY SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT PL. XXIV



A'YU^NINI (SWIMMER).

INTRODUCTION

The sacred formulas here given are selected from a collection of about six hundred, obtained on the Cherokee reservation in North Carolina in 1887 and 1888, and covering every subject pertaining to the daily life and thought of the Indian, including medicine, love, hunting, fishing, war, self-protection, destruction of enemies, witchcraft, the crops, the council, the ball play, etc., and, in fact, embodying almost the whole of the ancient religion of the Cherokees. The original manuscripts, now in the possession of the Bureau of Ethnology, were written by the shamans of the tribe, for their own use, in the Cherokee characters invented by Sikwá'ya (Sequoyah) in 1821, and were obtained, with the explanations, either from the writers themselves or from their surviving relatives.

Some of these manuscripts are known to be at least thirty years old, and many are probably older. The medical formulas of all kinds constitute perhaps one-half of the whole number, while the love charms come next in number, closely followed by the songs and prayers used in hunting and fishing. The great number of love charms will doubtless be a surprise to those who have been educated in the old theory that the Indian is insensible to the attractions of woman. The comparatively small number of war formulas is explained by the fact that the last war in which the Cherokees, as a tribe, were engaged on their own account, closed with the Revolutionary period, so that these things were well nigh forgotten before the invention of the alphabet, a generation later. The Cherokees who engaged in the Creek war and the late American civil war fought in the interests of the whites, and their leaders were subordinated to white officers, hence there was not the same opportunity for the exercise of shamanistic rites that there would have been had Indians alone been concerned. The prayers for hunting, fishing, and the ball play being in more constant demand, have been better preserved.

These formulas had been handed down orally from a remote antiquity until the early part of the present century, when the invention of the Cherokee syllabary enabled the priests of the tribe to put them into writing. The same invention made it possible for their rivals, the missionaries, to give to the Indians the Bible in their own language, so that the opposing forces of Christianity and shamanism alike profited by the genius of Sikwá'ya. The pressure of the new civilization was too strong to be withstood, however, and though the prophets of the old religion still have much influence with the people, they are daily losing ground and will soon be without honor in their own country.

Such an exposition of the aboriginal religion could be obtained from no other tribe in North America, for the simple reason that no other tribe has an alphabet of its own in which to record its sacred lore. It is true that the Crees and Micmacs of Canada and the Tukuth of Alaska have so-called alphabets or ideographic systems invented for their use by the missionaries, while, before the Spanish conquest, the Mayas of Central America were accustomed to note down their hero legends and priestly ceremonials in hieroglyphs graven upon the walls of their temples or painted upon tablets made of the leaves of the maguey. But it seems never to have occurred to the northern tribes that an alphabet coming from a missionary source could be used for any other purpose than the transcription of bibles and catechisms, while the sacred books of the Mayas, with a few exceptions, have long since met destruction at the hands of fanaticism, and the modern copies which have come down to the present day are written out from imperfect memory by Indians who had been educated under Spanish influences in the language, alphabet and ideas of the conquerors, and who, as is proved by an examination of the contents of the books themselves, drew from European sources a great part of their material. Moreover, the Maya tablets were so far hieratic as to be understood only by the priests and those who had received a special training in this direction, and they seem therefore to have been entirely unintelligible to the common people.

The Cherokee alphabet, on the contrary, is the invention or adaptation of one of the tribe, who, although he borrowed most of the Roman letters, in addition to the forty or more characters of his

own devising, knew nothing of their proper use or value, but reversed them or altered their forms to suit his purpose, and gave them a name and value determined by himself. This alphabet was at once adopted by the tribe for all purposes for which writing can be used, including the recording of their shamanistic prayers and ritualistic ceremonies. The formulas here given, as well as those of the entire collection, were written out by the shamans themselves—men who adhere to the ancient religion and speak only their native language—in order that their sacred knowledge might be preserved in a systematic manner for their mutual benefit. The language, the conception, and the execution are all genuinely Indian, and hardly a dozen lines of the hundreds of formulas show a trace of the influence of the white man or his religion. The formulas contained in these manuscripts are not disjointed fragments of a system long since extinct, but are the revelation of a living faith which still has its priests and devoted adherents, and it is only necessary to witness a ceremonial ball play, with its fasting, its going to water, and its mystic bead manipulation, to understand how strong is the hold which the old faith yet has upon the minds even of the younger generation. The numerous archaic and figurative expressions used require the interpretation of the priests, but, as before stated, the alphabet in which they are written is that in daily use among the common people.

In all tribes that still retain something of their ancient organization we find this sacred knowledge committed to the keeping of various secret societies, each of which has its peculiar ritual with regular initiation and degrees of advancement. From this analogy we may reasonably conclude that such was formerly the case with the Cherokees also, but by the breaking down of old customs consequent upon their long contact with the whites and the voluntary adoption of a civilized form of government in 1827, all traces of such society organization have long since disappeared, and at present each priest or shaman is isolated and independent, sometimes confining himself to a particular specialty, such as love or medicine, or even the treatment of two or three diseases, in other cases broadening his field of operations to include the whole range of mystic knowledge.

It frequently happens, however, that priests form personal friendships and thus are led to divulge their secrets to each other for their mutual advantage. Thus when one shaman meets another who he thinks can probably give him some valuable information, he says to him, "Let us sit down together." This is understood by the other to mean, "Let us tell each other our secrets." Should it seem probable that the seeker after knowledge can give as much as he receives, an agreement is generally arrived at, the two retire to some convenient spot secure from observation, and the first party begins by reciting one of his formulas with the explanations. The other then reciprocates with one of his own, unless it appears that the bargain is apt to prove a losing one, in which case the conference comes to an abrupt ending.

It is sometimes possible to obtain a formula by the payment of a coat, a quantity of cloth, or a sum of money. Like the Celtic Druids of old, the candidate for the priesthood in former times found it necessary to cultivate a long memory, as no formula was repeated more than once for his benefit. It was considered that one who failed to remember after the first hearing was not worthy to be accounted a shaman. This task, however, was not so difficult as might appear on first thought, when once the learner understood the theory involved, as the formulas are all constructed on regular principles, with constant repetition of the same set of words. The obvious effect of such a regulation was to increase the respect in which this sacred knowledge was held by restricting it to the possession of a chosen few.

Although the written formulas can be read without difficulty by any Cherokee educated in his own language, the shamans take good care that their sacred writings shall not fall into the hands of the laity or of their rivals in occult practices, and in performing the ceremonies the words used are uttered in such a low tone of voice as to be unintelligible even to the one for whose benefit the formula is repeated. Such being the case, it is in order to explain how the formulas collected were obtained.

HOW THE FORMULAS WERE OBTAINED

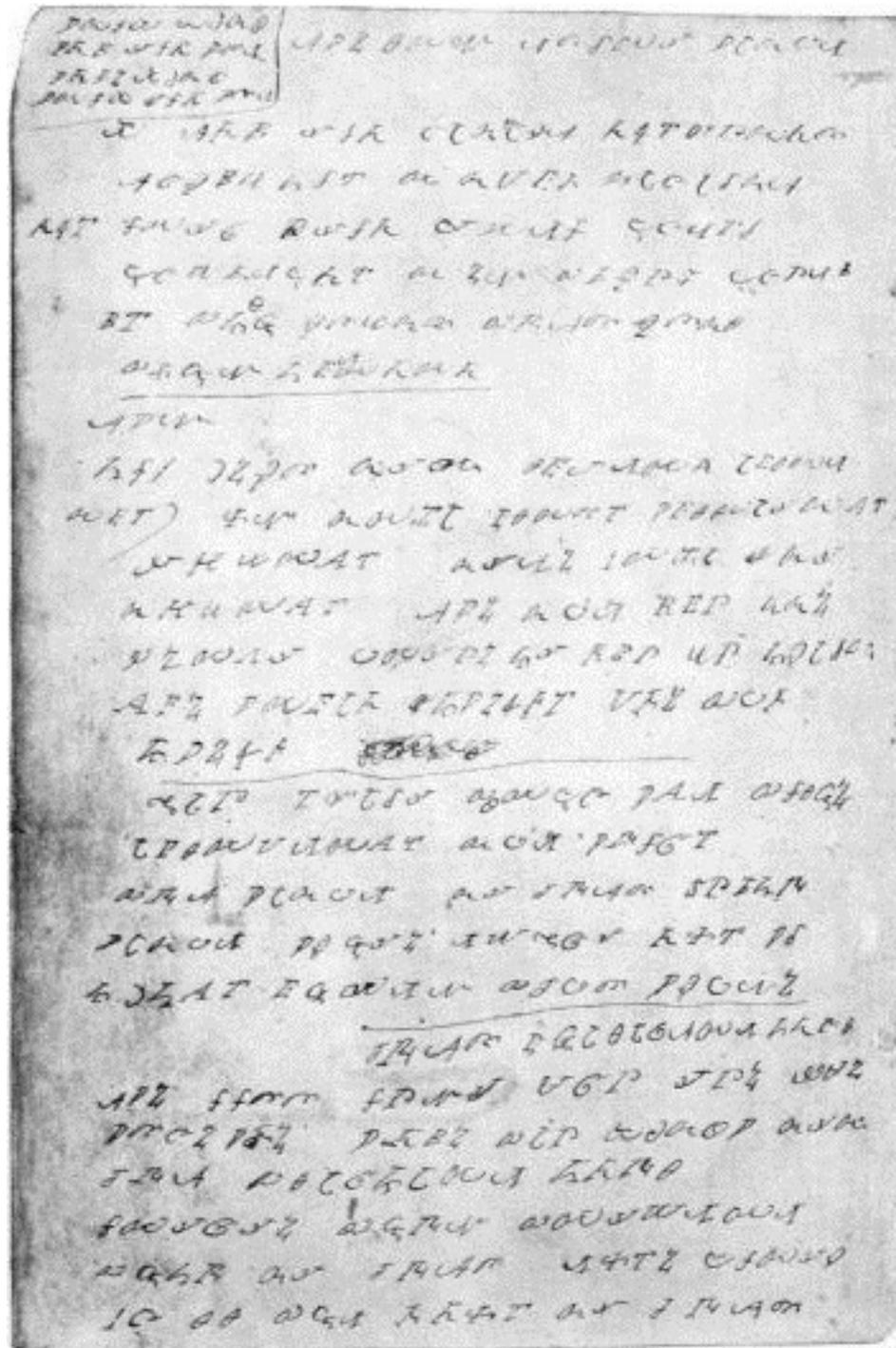
On first visiting the reservation in the summer of 1887, I devoted considerable time to collecting plants used by the Cherokees for food or medicinal purposes, learning at the same time their Indian names and the particular uses to which each was applied and the mode of preparation. It soon became evident that the application of the medicine was not the whole, and in fact was rather the subordinate, part of the treatment, which was always accompanied by certain ceremonies and “words.” From the workers employed at the time no definite idea could be obtained as to the character of these words. One young woman, indeed, who had some knowledge of the subject, volunteered to write the words which she used in her prescriptions, but failed to do so, owing chiefly to the opposition of the half-breed shamans, from whom she had obtained her information.

THE SWIMMER MANUSCRIPT

Some time afterward an acquaintance was formed with a man named A'yûⁿinĭ or "Swimmer," who proved to be so intelligent that I spent several days with him, procuring information in regard to myths and old customs. He told a number of stories in very good style, and finally related the Origin of the Bear¹. The bears were formerly a part of the Cherokee tribe who decided to leave their kindred and go into the forest. Their friends followed them and endeavored to induce them to return, but the Ani-Tsâ'kahĭ, as they were called, were determined to go. Just before parting from their relatives at the edge of the forest, they turned to them and said, "It is better for you that we should go; but we will teach you songs, and some day when you are in want of food come out to the woods and sing these songs and we shall appear and give you meat." Their friends, after learning several songs from them, started back to their homes, and after proceeding a short distance, turned around to take one last look, but saw only a number of bears disappearing in the depths of the forest. The songs which they learned are still sung by the hunter to attract the bears.

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¹ To appear later with the collection of Cherokee myths.



FACSIMILE OF GAHUNI MANUSCRIPT.

Formula for Didùⁿlěckĭ. (Page 349.)

When Swimmer had finished the story he was asked if he knew these songs. He replied that he did, but on being requested to sing one he made some excuse and was silent. After some further efforts the interpreter said it would be useless to press the matter then as there were several other Indians present, but that to-morrow we should have him alone with us and could then make another attempt.

The next day Swimmer was told that if he persisted in his refusal it would be necessary to employ some one else, as it was unfair in him to furnish incomplete information when he was paid to tell all he knew. He replied that he was willing to tell anything in regard to stories and customs, but that these songs were a part of his secret knowledge and commanded a high price from the hunters,

who sometimes paid as much as \$5 for a single song, “because you can’t kill any bears or deer unless you sing them.”

He was told that the only object in asking about the songs was to put them on record and preserve them, so that when he and the half dozen old men of the tribe were dead the world might be aware how much the Cherokees had known. This appeal to his professional pride proved effectual, and when he was told that a great many similar songs had been sent to Washington by medicine men of other tribes, he promptly declared that he knew as much as any of them, and that he would give all the information in his possession, so that others might be able to judge for themselves who knew most. The only conditions he made were that these secret matters should be heard by no one else but the interpreter, and should not be discussed when other Indians were present.

As soon as the other shamans learned what was going on they endeavored by various means to persuade him to stop talking, or failing in this, to damage his reputation by throwing out hints as to his honesty or accuracy of statement. Among other objections which they advanced was one which, however incomprehensible to a white man, was perfectly intelligible to an Indian, viz: That when he had told everything this information would be taken to Washington and locked up there, and thus they would be deprived of the knowledge. This objection was one of the most difficult to overcome, as there was no line of argument with which to oppose it.

These reports worried Swimmer, who was extremely sensitive in regard to his reputation, and he became restive under the insinuations of his rivals. Finally on coming to work one day he produced a book from under his ragged coat as he entered the house, and said proudly: “Look at that and now see if I don’t know something.” It was a small day-book of about 240 pages, procured originally from a white man, and was about half filled with writing in the Cherokee characters. A brief examination disclosed the fact that it contained just those matters that had proved so difficult to procure. Here were prayers, songs, and prescriptions for the cure of all kinds of diseases—for chills, rheumatism, frostbites, wounds, bad dreams, and witchery; love charms, to gain the affections of a woman or to cause her to hate a detested rival; fishing charms, hunting charms—including the songs without which none could ever hope to kill any game; prayers to make the corn grow, to frighten away storms, and to drive off witches; prayers for long life, for safety among strangers, for acquiring influence in council and success in the ball play. There were prayers to the Long Man, the Ancient White, the Great Whirlwind, the Yellow Rattlesnake, and to a hundred other gods of the Cherokee pantheon. It was in fact an Indian ritual and pharmacopœia.

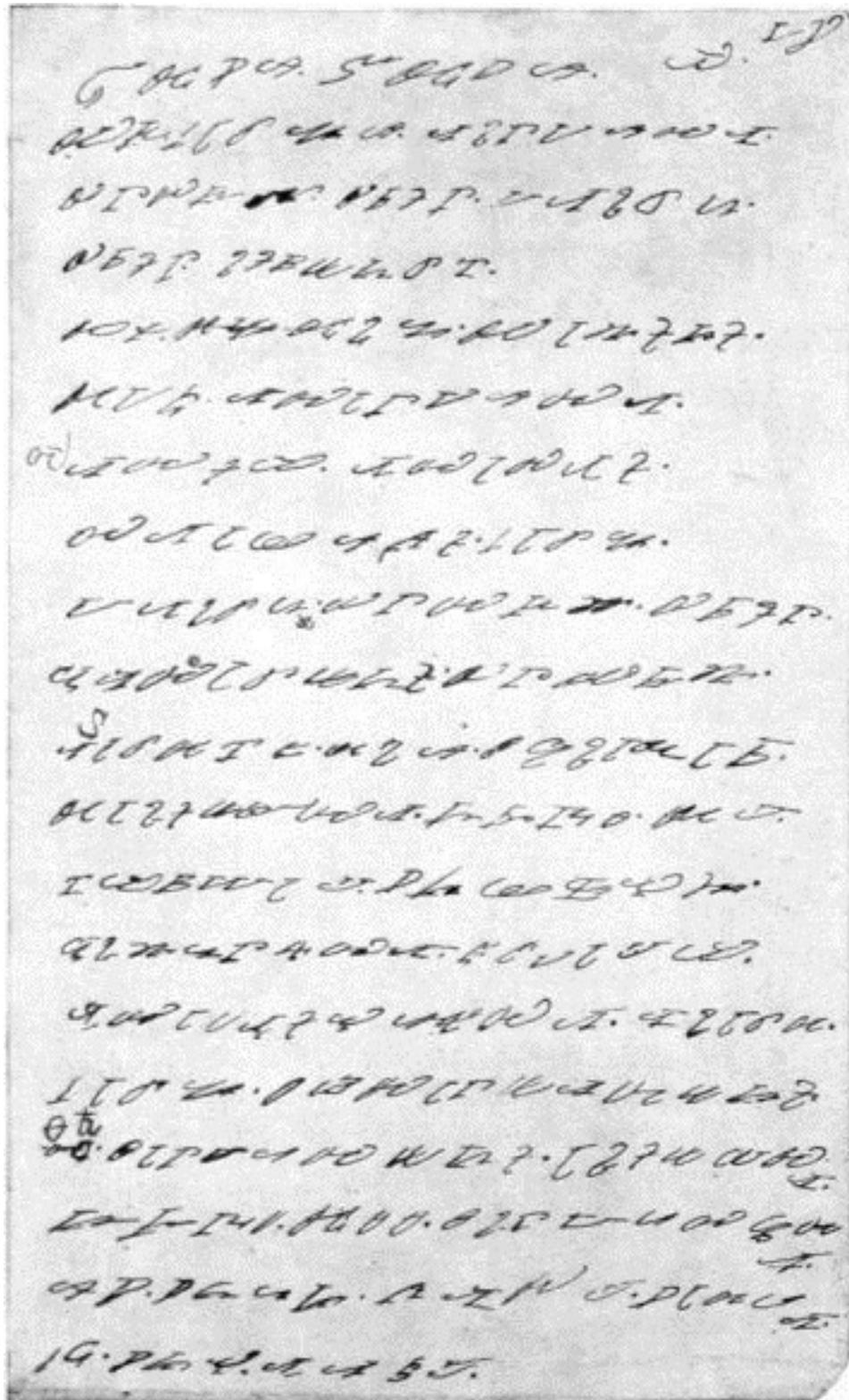
After recovering in a measure from the astonishment produced by this discovery I inquired whether other shamans had such books. “Yes,” said Swimmer, “we all have them.” Here then was a clew to follow up. A bargain was made by which he was to have another blank book into which to copy the formulas, after which the original was bought. It is now deposited in the library of the Bureau of Ethnology. The remainder of the time until the return was occupied in getting an understanding of the contents of the book.

THE GATIGWANASTI MANUSCRIPT

Further inquiry elicited the names of several others who might be supposed to have such papers. Before leaving a visit was paid to one of these, a young man named Wilnoti, whose father, Gatigwanasti, had been during his lifetime a prominent shaman, regarded as a man of superior intelligence. Wilnoti, who is a professing Christian, said that his father had had such papers, and after some explanation from the chief he consented to show them. He produced a box containing a lot of miscellaneous papers, testaments, and hymnbooks, all in the Cherokee alphabet. Among them was his father's chief treasure, a manuscript book containing 122 pages of foolscap size, completely filled with formulas of the same kind as those contained in Swimmer's book. There were also a large number of loose sheets, making in all nearly 200 foolscap pages of sacred formulas.

On offering to buy the papers, he replied that he wanted to keep them in order to learn and practice these things himself—thus showing how thin was the veneer of Christianity, in his case at least. On representing to him that in a few years the new conditions would render such knowledge valueless with the younger generation, and that even if he retained the papers he would need some one else to explain them to him, he again refused, saying that they might fall into the hands of Swimmer, who, he was determined, should never see his father's papers. Thus the negotiations came to an end for the time.

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FACSIMILE OF SWIMMER MANUSCRIPT.

Formula for Dalàni Ùⁿnagei (Page 364.)

On returning to the reservation in July, 1888, another effort was made to get possession of the Gatigwanasti manuscripts and any others of the same kind which could be procured. By this time the Indians had had several months to talk over the matter, and the idea had gradually dawned upon them that instead of taking their knowledge away from them and locking it up in a box, the intention

was to preserve it to the world and pay them for it at the same time. In addition the writer took every opportunity to impress upon them the fact that he was acquainted with the secret knowledge of other tribes and perhaps could give them as much as they gave. It was now much easier to approach them, and on again visiting Wilnoti, in company with the interpreter, who explained the matter fully to him, he finally consented to lend the papers for a time, with the same condition that neither Swimmer nor anyone else but the chief and interpreter should see them, but he still refused to sell them. However, this allowed the use of the papers, and after repeated efforts during a period of several weeks, the matter ended in the purchase of the papers outright, with unreserved permission to show them for copying or explanation to anybody who might be selected. Wilnoti was not of a mercenary disposition, and after the first negotiations the chief difficulty was to overcome his objection to parting with his father's handwriting, but it was an essential point to get the originals, and he was allowed to copy some of the more important formulas, as he found it utterly out of the question to copy the whole.

These papers of Gatigwanasti are the most valuable of the whole, and amount to fully one-half the entire collection, about fifty pages consisting of love charms. The formulas are beautifully written in bold Cherokee characters, and the directions and headings are generally explicit, bearing out the universal testimony that he was a man of unusual intelligence and ability, characteristics inherited by his son, who, although a young man and speaking no English, is one of the most progressive and thoroughly reliable men of the band.

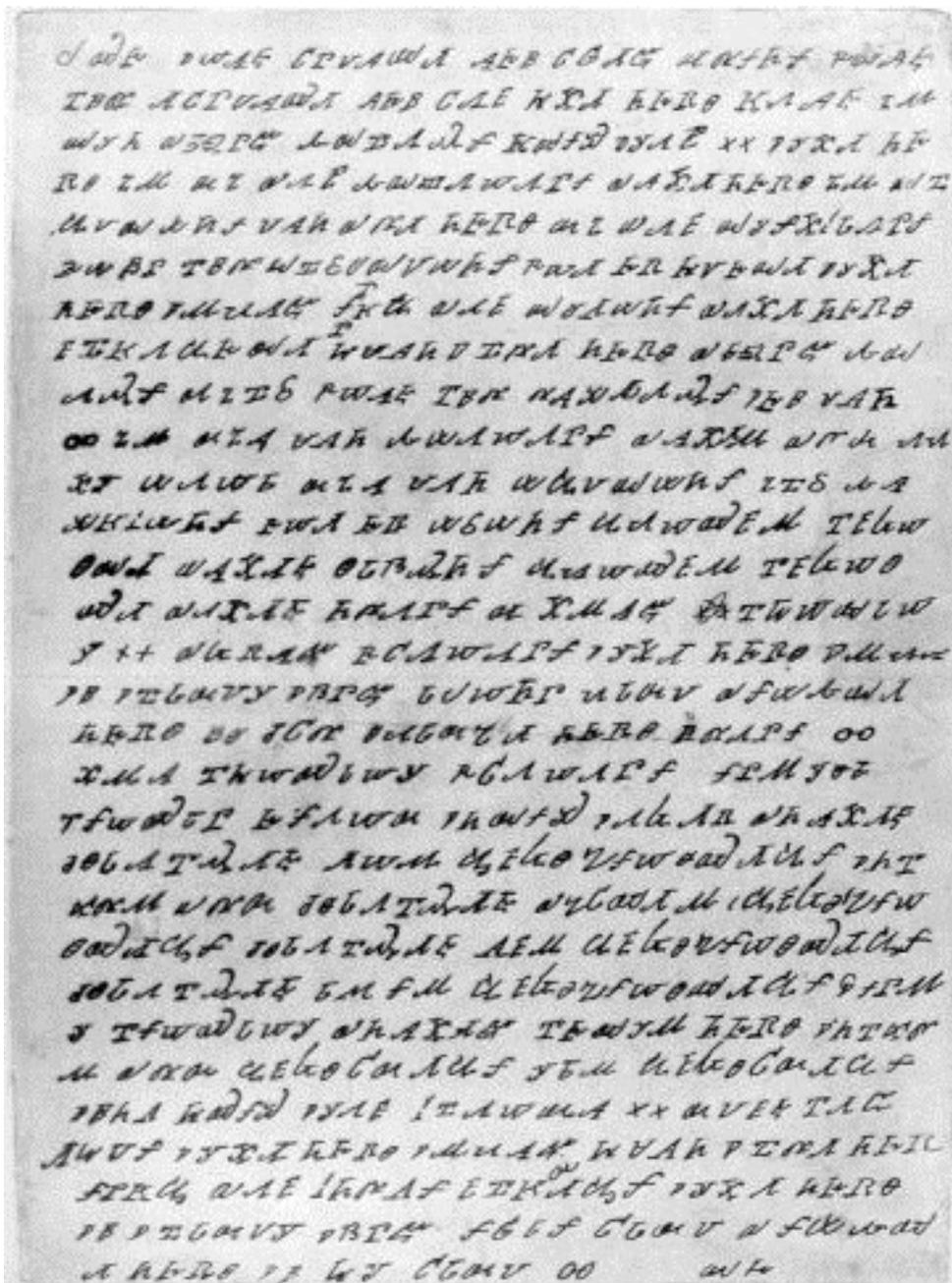
THE GAHUNI MANUSCRIPT

The next book procured was obtained from a woman named Ayâsta, “The Spoiler,” and had been written by her husband, Gahuni, who died about 30 years ago. The matter was not difficult to arrange, as she had already been employed on several occasions, so that she understood the purpose of the work, besides which her son had been regularly engaged to copy and classify the manuscripts already procured. The book was claimed as common property by Ayâsta and her three sons, and negotiations had to be carried on with each one, although in this instance the cash amount involved was only half a dollar, in addition to another book into which to copy some family records and personal memoranda. The book contains only eight formulas, but these are of a character altogether unique, the directions especially throwing a curious light on Indian beliefs. There had been several other formulas of the class called Y’ûⁿwěhĭ, to cause hatred between man and wife, but these had been torn out and destroyed by Ayâsta on the advice of an old shaman, in order that her sons might never learn them. In referring to the matter she spoke in a whisper, and it was evident enough that she had full faith in the deadly power of these spells.

In addition to the formulas the book contains about twenty pages of Scripture extracts in the same handwriting, for Gahuni, like several others of their shamans, combined the professions of Indian conjurer and Methodist preacher. After his death the book fell into the hands of the younger members of the family, who filled it with miscellaneous writings and scribblings. Among other things there are about seventy pages of what was intended to be a Cherokee-English pronouncing dictionary, probably written by the youngest son, already mentioned, who has attended school, and who served for some time as copyist on the formulas. This curious Indian production, of which only a few columns are filled out, consists of a list of simple English words and phrases, written in ordinary English script, followed by Cherokee characters intended to give the approximate pronunciation, together with the corresponding word in the Cherokee language and characters. As the language lacks a number of sounds which are of frequent occurrence in English, the attempts to indicate the pronunciation sometimes give amusing results. Thus we find: *Fox* (English script); *kwâgisĩ* (Cherokee characters); *tsú’lú’* (Cherokee characters). As the Cherokee language lacks the labial *f* and has no compound sound equivalent to our *x*, *kwâgisĩ* is as near as the Cherokee speaker can come to pronouncing our word *fox*. In the same way “bet” becomes *wěti*, and “sheep” is *síkwi*, while “if he has no dog” appears in the disguise of *ikwĩ hâsĩ nâ dâ’ga*.

THE INĀLI MANUSCRIPT

In the course of further inquiries in regard to the whereabouts of other manuscripts of this kind we heard a great deal about Inā'li, or "Black Fox," who had died a few years before at an advanced age, and who was universally admitted to have been one of their most able men and the most prominent literary character among them, for from what has been said it must be sufficiently evident that the Cherokees have their native literature and literary men. Like those already mentioned, he was a full-blood Cherokee, speaking no English, and in the course of a long lifetime he had filled almost every position of honor among his people, including those of councilor, keeper of the townhouse records, Sunday-school leader, conjurer, officer in the Confederate service, and Methodist preacher, at last dying, as he was born, in the ancient faith of his forefathers.



FACSIMILE OF GATIGWANASTI MANUSCRIPT.

Yugwilû' formula. (Page [375](#).)

On inquiring of his daughter she stated that her father had left a great many papers, most of which were still in her possession, and on receiving from the interpreter an explanation of our purpose she readily gave permission to examine and make selections from them on condition that the matter should be kept secret from outsiders. A day was appointed for visiting her, and on arriving we found her living in a comfortable log house, built by Inâli himself, with her children and an ancient female relative, a decrepit old woman with snow-white hair and vacant countenance. This was the oldest woman of the tribe, and though now so feeble and childish, she had been a veritable savage in her young days, having carried a scalp in the scalp dance in the Creek war 75 years before.

Having placed chairs for us in the shade Inâli's daughter brought out a small box filled with papers of various kinds, both Cherokee and English. The work of examining these was a tedious business, as each paper had to be opened out and enough of it read to get the general drift of the contents, after which the several classes were arranged in separate piles. While in the midst of this work she brought out another box nearly as large as a small trunk, and on setting it down there was revealed to the astonished gaze such a mass of material as it had not seemed possible could exist in the entire tribe.

In addition to papers of the sort already mentioned there were a number of letters in English from various officials and religious organizations, and addressed to "Enola," to "Rev. Black Fox," and to "Black Fox, Esq.," with a large number of war letters written to him by Cherokees who had enlisted in the Confederate service. These latter are all written in the Cherokee characters, in the usual gossip style common among friends, and several of them contain important historic material in regard to the movements of the two armies in East Tennessee. Among other things was found his certificate as a Methodist preacher, dated in 1848. "Know all men by these presents that Black Fox (Cherokee) is hereby authorized to exercise his Gifts and Graces as a local preacher in M.E. Church South."

There was found a manuscript book in Inâli's handwriting containing the records of the old council of Woftown, of which he had been secretary for several years down to the beginning of the war. This also contains some valuable materials.

There were also a number of miscellaneous books, papers, and pictures, together with various trinkets and a number of conjuring stones.

In fact the box was a regular curiosity shop, and it was with a feeling akin, to despair that we viewed the piles of manuscript which had to be waded through and classified. There was a day's hard work ahead, and it was already past noon; but the woman was not done yet, and after rummaging about inside the house for a while longer she appeared with another armful of papers, which she emptied on top of the others. This was the last straw; and finding it impossible to examine in detail such a mass of material we contented ourselves with picking out the sacred formulas and the two manuscript books containing the town-house records and scriptural quotations and departed.

The daughter of Black Fox agreed to fetch down the other papers in a few days for further examination at our leisure; and she kept her promise, bringing with her at the same time a number of additional formulas which she had not been able to obtain before. A large number of letters and other papers were selected from the miscellaneous lot, and these, with the others obtained from her, are now deposited also with the Bureau of Ethnology. Among other things found at this house were several beads of the old shell wampum, of whose use the Cherokees have now lost even the recollection. She knew only that they were very old and different from the common beads, but she prized them as talismans, and firmly refused to part with them.

OTHER MANUSCRIPTS

Subsequently a few formulas were obtained from an old shaman named Tsiskwa or “Bird,” but they were so carelessly written as to be almost worthless, and the old man who wrote them, being then on his dying bed, was unable to give much help in the matter. However, as he was anxious to tell what he knew an attempt was made to take down some formulas from his dictation. A few more were obtained in this way but the results were not satisfactory and the experiment was abandoned. About the same time A’wani’ta or “Young Deer,” one of their best herb doctors, was engaged to collect the various plants used in medicine and describe their uses. While thus employed he wrote in a book furnished him for the purpose a number of formulas used by him in his practice, giving at the same time a verbal explanation of the theory and ceremonies. Among these was one for protection in battle, which had been used by himself and a number of other Cherokees in the late war. Another doctor named Takwati’hi or “Catawba Killer,” was afterward employed on the same work and furnished some additional formulas which he had had his son write down from his dictation, he himself being unable to write. His knowledge was limited to the practice of a few specialties, but in regard to these his information was detailed and accurate. There was one for bleeding with the cupping horn. All these formulas obtained from Tsiskwa, A’wanita, and Takwtihi are now in possession of the Bureau.

THE KANÂHETA ANI-TSALAGI ETI

Among the papers thus obtained was a large number which for various reasons it was found difficult to handle or file for preservation. Many of them had been written so long ago that the ink had almost faded from the paper; others were written with lead pencil, so that in handling them the characters soon became blurred and almost illegible; a great many were written on scraps of paper of all shapes and sizes; and others again were full of omissions and doublets, due to the carelessness of the writer, while many consisted simply of the prayer, with nothing in the nature of a heading or prescription to show its purpose.

Under the circumstances it was deemed expedient to have a number of these formulas copied in more enduring form. For this purpose it was decided to engage the services of Ayâsta's youngest son, an intelligent young man about nineteen years of age, who had attended school long enough to obtain a fair acquaintance with English in addition to his intimate knowledge of Cherokee. He was also gifted with a ready comprehension, and from his mother and uncle Tsiskwa had acquired some familiarity with many of the archaic expressions used in the sacred formulas. He was commonly known as "Will West," but signed himself W.W. Long, Long being the translation of his father's name, Gûnahí'ta. After being instructed as to how the work should be done with reference to paragraphing, heading, etc., he was furnished a blank book of two hundred pages into which to copy such formulas as it seemed desirable to duplicate. He readily grasped the idea and in the course of about a month, working always under the writer's personal supervision, succeeded in completely filling the book according to the plan outlined. In addition to the duplicate formulas he wrote down a number of dance and drinking songs, obtained originally from A'yûⁿinĭ, with about thirty miscellaneous formulas obtained from various sources. The book thus prepared is modeled on the plan of an ordinary book, with headings, table of contents, and even with an illuminated title page devised by the aid of the interpreter according to the regular Cherokee idiomatic form, and is altogether a unique specimen of Indian literary art. It contains in all two hundred and fifty-eight formulas and songs, which of course are native aboriginal productions, although the mechanical arrangement was performed under the direction of a white man. This book also, under its Cherokee title, *Kanâhe'ta Ani-Tsa'lagĭ E'tĭ* or "Ancient Cherokee Formulas," is now in the library of the Bureau.

There is still a considerable quantity of such manuscript in the hands of one or two shamans with whom there was no chance for negotiating, but an effort will be made to obtain possession of these on some future visit, should opportunity present. Those now in the Bureau library comprised by far the greater portion of the whole quantity held by the Indians, and as only a small portion of this was copied by the owners it can not be duplicated by any future collector.

CHARACTER OF THE FORMULAS —THE CHEROKEE RELIGION

It is impossible to overestimate the ethnologic importance of the materials thus obtained. They are invaluable as the genuine production of the Indian mind, setting forth in the clearest light the state of the aboriginal religion before its contamination by contact with the whites. To the psychologist and the student of myths they are equally precious. In regard to their linguistic value we may quote the language of Brinton, speaking of the sacred books of the Mayas, already referred to:

Another value they have, . . . and it is one which will be properly appreciated by any student of languages. They are, by common consent of all competent authorities, the genuine productions of native minds, cast in the idiomatic forms of the native tongue by those born to its use. No matter how fluent a foreigner becomes in a language not his own, he can never use it as does one who has been familiar with it from childhood. This general maxim is tenfold true when we apply it to a European learning an American language. The flow of thought, as exhibited in these two linguistic families, is in such different directions that no amount of practice can render one equally accurate in both. Hence the importance of studying a tongue as it is employed by natives; and hence the very high estimate I place on these “Books of Chilán Balam” as linguistic material—an estimate much increased by the great rarity of independent compositions in their own tongues by members of the native races of this continent.²

The same author, in speaking of the internal evidences of authenticity contained in the Popol Vuh, the sacred book of the Kichés, uses the following words, which apply equally well to these Cherokee formulas:

To one familiar with native American myths, this one bears undeniable marks of its aboriginal origin. Its frequent puerilities and inanities, its generally low and coarse range of thought and expression, its occasional loftiness of both, its strange metaphors and the prominence of strictly heathen names and potencies, bring it into unmistakable relationship to the true native myth.³

These formulas furnish a complete refutation of the assertion so frequently made by ignorant and prejudiced writers that the Indian had no religion excepting what they are pleased to call the meaning less mummeries of the medicine man. This is the very reverse of the truth. The Indian is essentially religious and contemplative, and it might almost be said that every act of his life is regulated and determined by his religious belief. It matters not that some may call this superstition. The difference is only relative. The religion of to-day has developed from the cruder superstitions of yesterday, and Christianity itself is but an outgrowth and enlargement of the beliefs and ceremonies which have been preserved by the Indian in their more ancient form. When we are willing to admit that the Indian has a religion which he holds sacred, even though it be different from our own, we can then admire the consistency of the theory, the particularity of the ceremonial and the beauty of the expression. So far from being a jumble of crudities, there is a wonderful completeness about the whole system which is not surpassed even by the ceremonial religions of the East. It is evident from a study of these formulas that the Cherokee Indian was a polytheist and that the spirit world was to him only a shadowy counterpart of this. All his prayers were for temporal and tangible blessings—

² Brinton, D.G.: The books of Chilán Balam 10, Philadelphia, n.d., (1882).

³ Brinton, D.G.: Names of the Gods in the Kiché Myths, in Proc. Am. Philos. Soc., Philadelphia, 1881, vol. 19, p. 613.

for health, for long life, for success in the chase, in fishing, in war and in love, for good crops, for protection and for revenge. He had no Great Spirit, no happy hunting ground, no heaven, no hell, and consequently death had for him no terrors and he awaited the inevitable end with no anxiety as to the future. He was careful not to violate the rights of his tribesman or to do injury to his feelings, but there is nothing to show that he had any idea whatever of what is called morality in the abstract.

As the medical formulas are first in number and importance it may be well, for the better understanding of the theory involved, to give the Cherokee account of

THE ORIGIN OF DISEASE AND MEDICINE

In the old days quadrupeds, birds, fishes, and insects could all talk, and they and the human race lived together in peace and friendship. But as time went on the people increased so rapidly that their settlements spread over the whole earth and the poor animals found themselves beginning to be cramped for room. This was bad enough, but to add to their misfortunes man invented bows, knives, blowguns, spears, and hooks, and began to slaughter the larger animals, birds and fishes for the sake of their flesh or their skins, while the smaller creatures, such as the frogs and worms, were crushed and trodden upon without mercy, out of pure carelessness or contempt. In this state of affairs the animals resolved to consult upon measures for their common safety.

The bears were the first to meet in council in their townhouse in Kuwa'hǐ, the "Mulberry Place,"⁴ and the old White Bear chief presided. After each in turn had made complaint against the way in which man killed their friends, devoured their flesh and used their skins for his own adornment, it was unanimously decided to begin war at once against the human race. Some one asked what weapons man used to accomplish their destruction. "Bows and arrows, of course," cried all the bears in chorus. "And what are they made of?" was the next question. "The bow of wood and the string of our own entrails," replied one of the bears. It was then proposed that they make a bow and some arrows and see if they could not turn man's weapons against himself. So one bear got a nice piece of locust wood and another sacrificed himself for the good of the rest in order to furnish a piece of his entrails for the string. But when everything was ready and the first bear stepped up to make the trial it was found that in letting the arrow fly after drawing back the bow, his long claws caught the string and spoiled the shot. This was annoying, but another suggested that he could overcome the difficulty by cutting his claws, which was accordingly done, and on a second trial it was found that the arrow went straight to the mark. But here the chief, the old White Bear, interposed and said that it was necessary that they should have long claws in order to be able to climb trees. "One of us has already died to furnish the bowstring, and if we now cut off our claws we shall all have to starve together. It is better to trust to the teeth and claws which nature has given us, for it is evident that man's weapons were not intended for us."

No one could suggest any better plan, so the old chief dismissed the council and the bears dispersed to their forest haunts without having concerted any means for preventing the increase of the human race. Had the result of the council been otherwise, we should now be at war with the bears, but as it is the hunter does not even ask the bear's pardon when he kills one.

The deer next held a council under their chief, the Little Deer, and after some deliberation resolved to inflict rheumatism upon every hunter who should kill one of their number, unless he took care to ask their pardon for the offense. They sent notice of their decision to the nearest settlement of Indians and told them at the same time how to make propitiation when necessity forced them to kill one of the deer tribe. Now, whenever the hunter brings down a deer, the Little Deer, who is swift as the wind and can not be wounded, runs quickly up to the spot and bending over the blood stains asks the spirit of the deer if it has heard the prayer of the hunter for pardon. If the reply be "Yes" all is well and the Little Deer goes on his way, but if the reply be in the negative he follows on the trail of the hunter, guided by the drops of blood on the ground, until he arrives at the cabin in the settlement, when the Little Deer enters invisibly and strikes the neglectful hunter with rheumatism, so that he is rendered on the instant a helpless cripple. No hunter who has regard for his health ever fails to ask pardon of the deer for killing it, although some who have not learned the proper formula may attempt to turn aside the Little Deer from his pursuit by building a fire behind them in the trail.

⁴ One of the High peaks of the Smoky Mountains, on the Tennessee line, near Clingman's Dome.

Next came the fishes and reptiles, who had their own grievances against humanity. They held a joint council and determined to make their victims dream of snakes twining about them in slimy folds and blowing their fetid breath in their faces, or to make them dream of eating raw or decaying fish, so that they would lose appetite, sicken, and die. Thus it is that snake and fish dreams are accounted for.

Finally the birds, insects, and smaller animals came together for a like purpose, and the Grubworm presided over the deliberations. It was decided that each in turn should express an opinion and then vote on the question as to whether or not man should be deemed guilty. Seven votes were to be sufficient to condemn him. One after another denounced man's cruelty and injustice toward the other animals and voted in favor of his death. The Frog (walâ'sī) spoke first and said: "We must do something to check the increase of the race or people will become so numerous that we shall be crowded from off the earth. See how man has kicked me about because I'm ugly, as he says, until my back is covered with sores;" and here he showed the spots on his skin. Next came the Bird (tsi'skwa; no particular species is indicated), who condemned man because "he burns my feet off," alluding to the way in which the hunter barbecues birds by impaling them on a stick set over the fire, so that their feathers and tender feet are singed and burned. Others followed in the same strain. The Ground Squirrel alone ventured to say a word in behalf of man, who seldom hurt him because he was so small; but this so enraged the others that they fell upon the Ground Squirrel and tore him with their teeth and claws, and the stripes remain on his back to this day.

The assembly then began to devise and name various diseases, one after another, and had not their invention finally failed them not one of the human race would have been able to survive. The Grubworm in his place of honor hailed each new malady with delight, until at last they had reached the end of the list, when some one suggested that it be arranged so that menstruation should sometimes prove fatal to woman. On this he rose up in his place and cried: "Wataⁿ Thanks! I'm glad some of them will die, for they are getting so thick that they tread on me." He fairly shook with joy at the thought, so that he fell over backward and could not get on his feet again, but had to wriggle off on his back, as the Grubworm has done ever since.

When the plants, who were friendly to man, heard what had been done by the animals, they determined to defeat their evil designs. Each tree, shrub, and herb, down, even to the grasses and mosses, agreed to furnish a remedy for some one of the diseases named, and each said: "I shall appear to help man when he calls upon me in his need." Thus did medicine originate, and the plants, every one of which has its use if we only knew it, furnish the antidote to counteract the evil wrought by the revengeful animals. When the doctor is in doubt what treatment to apply for the relief of a patient, the spirit of the plant suggests to him the proper remedy.

THEORY OF DISEASE— ANIMALS, GHOSTS, WITCHES

Such is the belief upon which their medical practice is based, and whatever we may think of the theory it must be admitted that the practice is consistent in all its details with the views set forth in the myth. Like most primitive people the Cherokees believe that disease and death are not natural, but are due to the evil influence of animal spirits, ghosts, or witches. Haywood, writing in 1823, states on the authority of two intelligent residents of the Cherokee nation:

In ancient times the Cherokees had no conception of anyone dying a natural death. They universally ascribed the death of those who perished by disease to the intervention or agency of evil spirits and witches and conjurers who had connection with the Shina (Anisgi'na) or evil spirits.... A person dying by disease and charging his death to have been procured by means of witchcraft or spirits, by any other person, consigns that person to inevitable death. They profess to believe that their conjurations have no effect upon white men.⁵

On the authority of one of the same informants, he also mentions the veneration which “their physicians have for the numbers four and seven, who say that after man was placed upon the earth four and seven nights were instituted for the cure of diseases in the human body and the seventh night as the limit for female impurity.”⁶

Viewed from a scientific standpoint, their theory and diagnosis are entirely wrong, and consequently we can hardly expect their therapeutic system to be correct. As the learned Doctor Berendt states, after an exhaustive study of the medical books of the Mayas, the scientific value of their remedies is “next to nothing.” It must be admitted that many of the plants used in their medical practice possess real curative properties, but it is equally true that many others held in as high estimation are inert. It seems probable that in the beginning the various herbs and other plants were regarded as so many fetiches and were selected from some fancied connection with the disease animal, according to the idea known to modern folklorists as the doctrine of signatures. Thus at the present day the doctor puts into the decoction intended as a vermifuge some of the red fleshy stalks of the common purslane or chickweed (*Portulaca oleracea*), because these stalks somewhat resemble worms and consequently must have some occult influence over worms. Here the chickweed is a fetich precisely as is the flint arrow head which is put into the same decoction, in order that in the same mysterious manner its sharp cutting qualities may be communicated to the liquid and enable it to cut the worms into pieces. In like manner, biliousness is called by the Cherokees *dalâ'nî* or “yellow,” because the most apparent symptom of the disease is the vomiting by the patient of the yellow bile, and hence the doctor selects for the decoction four different herbs, each of which is also called *dalâ'nî*, because of the color of the root, stalk, or flower. The same idea is carried out in the tabu which generally accompanies the treatment. Thus a scrofulous patient must abstain from eating the meat of a turkey, because the fleshy dewlap which depends from its throat somewhat resembles an inflamed scrofulous eruption. On killing a deer the hunter always makes an incision in the hind quarter and removes the hamstring, because this tendon, when severed, draws up into the flesh; ergo, any one who should unfortunately partake of the hamstring would find his limbs draw up in the same manner.

There can be no doubt that in course of time a haphazard use of plants would naturally lead to the discovery that certain herbs are efficacious in certain combinations of symptoms. These plants would thus come into more frequent use and finally would obtain general recognition in the Indian

⁵ Haywood, John: *Natural and Aboriginal History of East Tennessee*, 267-8, Nashville, 1823.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

materia medica. By such a process of evolution an empiric system of medicine has grown up among the Cherokees, by which they are able to treat some classes of ailments with some degree of success, although without any intelligent idea of the process involved. It must be remembered that our own medical system has its remote origin in the same mythic conception of disease, and that within two hundred years judicial courts have condemned women to be burned to death for producing sickness by spells and incantations, while even at the present day our faith-cure professors reap their richest harvest among people commonly supposed to belong to the intelligent classes. In the treatment of wounds the Cherokee doctors exhibit a considerable degree of skill, but as far as any internal ailment is concerned the average farmer's wife is worth all the doctors in the whole tribe.

The faith of the patient has much to do with his recovery, for the Indian has the same implicit confidence in the shaman that a child has in a more intelligent physician. The ceremonies and prayers are well calculated to inspire this feeling, and the effect thus produced upon the mind of the sick man undoubtedly reacts favorably upon his physical organization.

The following list of twenty plants used in Cherokee practice will give a better idea of the extent of their medical knowledge than could be conveyed by a lengthy dissertation. The names are given in the order in which they occur in the botanic notebook filled on the reservation, excluding names of food plants and species not identified, so that no attempt has been made to select in accordance with a preconceived theory. Following the name of each plant are given its uses as described by the Indian doctors, together with its properties as set forth in the United States Dispensatory, one of the leading pharmacopœias in use in this country.⁷ For the benefit of those not versed in medical phraseology it may be stated that aperient, cathartic, and deobstruent are terms applied to medicines intended to open or purge the bowels, a diuretic has the property of exciting the flow of urine, a diaphoretic excites perspiration, and a demulcent protects or soothes irritated tissues, while hæmoptysis denotes a peculiar variety of blood-spitting and aphthous is an adjective applied to ulcerations in the mouth.

⁷ Wood, T.B., and Bache, F.: Dispensatory of the United States of America, 14th ed., Philadelphia, 1877.

SELECTED LIST OF PLANTS USED

1. UNASTEʼTSTIYŪ=“very small root”—*Aristolochia serpentaria*—Virginia or black snakeroot: Decoction of root blown upon patient for fever and feverish headache, and drunk for coughs; root chewed and spit upon wound to cure snake bites; bruised root placed in hollow tooth for toothache, and held against nose made sore by constant blowing in colds. Dispensatory: “A stimulant tonic, acting also as a diaphoretic or diuretic, according to the mode of its application; * * * also been highly recommended in intermittent fevers, and though itself generally inadequate to the cure often proves serviceable as an adjunct to Peruvian bark or sulphate of quinia.” Also used for typhous diseases, in dyspepsia, as a gargle for sore throat, as a mild stimulant in typhoid fevers, and to promote eruptions. The genus derives its scientific name from its supposed efficacy in promoting menstrual discharge, and some species have acquired the “reputation of antidotes for the bites of serpents.”

2. UNISTILʼŪʼISTĪ⁸=“they stick on”—*Cynoglossum Morrisoni*—Beggar lice: Decoction of root or top drunk for kidney troubles; bruised root used with bear oil as an ointment for cancer; forgetful persons drink a decoction of this plant, and probably also of other similar bur plants, from an idea that the sticking qualities of the burs will thus be imparted to the memory. From a similar connection of ideas the root is also used in the preparation of love charms. Dispensatory: Not named. *C. officinale* “has been used as a demulcent and sedative in coughs, catarrh, spitting of blood, dysentery, and diarrhea, and has been also applied externally in burns, ulcers, scrofulous tumors and goiter.”

3. ŪʼNAGÉI=“black”—*Cassia Marilandica*—Wild senna: Root bruised and moistened with water for poulticing sores; decoction drunk for fever and for a disease also called Ūʼnageʼi, or “black” (same name as plant), in which the hands and eye sockets are said to turn black; also for a disease described as similar to Ūʼnagei, but more dangerous, in which the eye sockets become black, while black spots appear on the arms, legs, and over the ribs on one side of the body, accompanied by partial paralysis, and resulting in death should the black spots appear also on the other side. Dispensatory: Described as “an efficient and safe cathartic, * * * most conveniently given in the form of infusion.”

4. KÂSDʼŪTA=“simulating ashes,” so called on account of the appearance of the leaves—*Gnaphalium decurrens*—Life everlasting: Decoction drunk for colds; also used in the sweat bath for various diseases and considered one of their most valuable medical plants. Dispensatory: Not named. Decoctions of two other species of this genus are mentioned as used by country people for chest and bowel diseases, and for hemorrhages, bruises, ulcers, etc., although “probably possessing little medicinal virtue.”

5. ALTSAʼSTI=“a wreath for the head”—*Vicia Caroliniana*—Vetch: Decoction drunk for dyspepsia and pains in the back, and rubbed on stomach for cramp; also rubbed on ball-players after scratching, to render their muscles tough, and used in the same way after scratching in the disease referred to under Ūʼnagei, in which one side becomes black in spots, with partial paralysis; also used in same manner in decoction with Kâsduta for rheumatism; considered one of their most valuable medicinal herbs. Dispensatory: Not named.

6. DISTAIʼYĪ=“they (the roots) are tough”—*Tephrosia Virginiana*—Catgut, Turkey Pea, Goat’s Rue, or Devil’s Shoestrings: Decoction drunk for lassitude. Women wash their hair in

⁸ The Cherokee plant names here given are generic names, which are the names commonly used. In many cases the same name is applied to several species and it is only when it is necessary to distinguish between them that the Indians use what might be called specific names. Even then the descriptive term used serves to distinguish only the particular plants under discussion and the introduction of another variety bearing the same generic name would necessitate a new classification of species on a different basis, while hardly any two individuals would classify the species by the same characteristics.

decoction of its roots to prevent its breaking or falling out, because these roots are very tough and hard to break; from the same idea ball-players rub the decoction on their limbs after scratching, to toughen them. Dispensatory: Described as a cathartic with roots tonic and aperient.

7. U'GA-ATASGI'SKĪ="the pus oozes out"—*Euphorbia hypericifolia*—Milkweed: Juice rubbed on for skin eruptions, especially on children's heads; also used as a purgative; decoction drunk for gonorrhœa and similar diseases in both sexes, and held in high estimation for this purpose; juice used as an ointment for sores and for sore nipples, and in connection with other herbs for cancer. Dispensatory: The juice of all of the genus has the property of "powerfully irritating the skin when applied to it," while nearly all are powerful emetics and cathartics. This species "has been highly commended as a remedy in dysentery after due depletion, diarrhea, menorrhagia, and leucorrhœa."

8. GŪNĪGWALĪ'SKĪ="It becomes discolored when bruised"—*Scutellaria lateriflora*—Skullcap. The name refers to the red juice which comes out of the stalk when bruised or chewed. A decoction of the four varieties of *Gūnigwalĭ'skĭ*—*S. lateriflora*, *S. pilosa*, *Hypericum corymbosum*, and *Stylosanthes elatior*—is drunk to promote menstruation, and the same decoction is also drunk and used as a wash to counteract the ill effects of eating food prepared by a woman in the menstrual condition, or when such a woman by chance comes into a sick room or a house under the tabu; also drunk for diarrhea and used with other herbs in decoction for breast pains. Dispensatory: This plant "produces no very obvious effects," but some doctors regard it as possessed of nervine, antispasmodic and tonic properties. None of the other three species are named.

9. K'GA SKŪⁿTAGĪ="crow shin"—*Adiantum pedatum*—Maidenhair Fern: Used either in decoction or poultice for rheumatism and chills, generally in connection with some other fern. The doctors explain that the fronds of the different varieties of fern are curled up in the young plant, but unroll and straighten out as it grows, and consequently a decoction of ferns causes the contracted muscles of the rheumatic patient to unbend and straighten out in like manner. It is also used in decoction for fever. Dispensatory: The leaves "have been supposed to be useful in chronic catarrh and other pectoral affections."

10. ANDA'NKALAGI'SKĪ="it removes things from the gums"—*Geranium maculatum*—Wild Alum, Cranesbill: Used in decoction with *Yânû Unihye'stĭ* (*Vitis cordifolia*) to wash the mouths of children in thrush; also used alone for the same purpose by blowing the chewed fiber into the mouth. Dispensatory: "One of our best indigenous astringents. * * * Diarrhea, chronic dysentery, cholera infantum in the latter stages, and the various hemorrhages are the forms of disease in which it is most commonly used." Also valuable as "an application to indolent ulcers, an injection in gleet and leucorrhœa, a gargle in relaxation of the uvula and aphthous ulcerations of the throat." The other plant sometimes used with it is not mentioned.

11. ŪⁿLĒ UKĪ'LTĪ="the locust frequents it"—*Gillenia trifoliata*—Indian Physic. Two doctors state that it is good as a tea for bowel complaints, with fever and yellow vomit; but another says that it is poisonous and that no decoction is ever drunk, but that the beaten root is a good poultice for swellings. Dispensatory: "Gillenia is a mild and efficient emetic, and like most substances belonging to the same class occasionally acts upon the bowels. In very small doses it has been thought to be tonic."

12. SKWA'LĪ=*Hepatica acutiloba*—Liverwort, Heartleaf: Used for coughs either in tea or by chewing root. Those who dream of snakes drink a decoction of this herb and *I'natû Ga'n'ka*="snake tongue" (*Camptosorus rhizophyllus* or Walking Fern) to produce vomiting, after which the dreams do not return. The traders buy large quantities of liverwort from the Cherokees, who may thus have learned to esteem it more highly than they otherwise would. The appearance of the other plant, *Camptosorus rhizophyllus*, has evidently determined its Cherokee name and the use to which it is applied. Dispensatory: "Liverwort is a very mild demulcent tonic and astringent, supposed by some to possess diuretic and deobstruent virtues. It was formerly used in Europe in various complaints, especially chronic hepatic affections, but has fallen into entire neglect. In this country, some years

since, it acquired considerable reputation, which, however, it has not maintained as a remedy in hæmoptysis and chronic coughs.” The other plant is not named.

13. DA`YEWÛ=“it sews itself up,” because the leaves are said to grow together again when torn—*Cacalia atriplicifolia*—Tassel Flower: Held in great repute as a poultice for cuts, bruises, and cancer, to draw out the blood or poisonous matter. The bruised leaf is bound over the spot and frequently removed. The dry powdered leaf was formerly used to sprinkle over food like salt. Dispensatory: Not named.

14. A`TALI` KÛLĬ=“it climbs the mountain.”—*Aralia quinquefolia*—Ginseng or “Sang:” Decoction of root drunk for headache, cramps, etc., and for female troubles; chewed root blown on spot for pains in the side. The Cherokees sell large quantities of sang to the traders for 50 cents per pound, nearly equivalent there to two days’ wages, a fact which has doubtless increased their idea of its importance. Dispensatory: “The extraordinary medical virtues formerly ascribed to ginseng had no other existence than in the imagination of the Chinese. It is little more than a demulcent, and in this country is not employed as a medicine.” The Chinese name, ginseng, is said to refer to the fancied resemblance of the root to a human figure, while in the Cherokee formulas it is addressed as the “great man” or “little man,” and this resemblance no doubt has much to do with the estimation in which it is held by both peoples.

15. ÛSATĬ UWADSĬSKA=“fish scales,” from shape of leaves—*Thalictrum anemonoides*—Meadow Rue: Decoction of root drunk for diarrhea with vomiting. Dispensatory: Not named.

16. K`KWĚ ULASU`LA=“partridge moccasin”—*Cypripedium parviflorum*—Lady-slipper: Decoction of root used for worms in children. In the liquid are placed some stalks of the common chickweed or purslane (*Cerastium vulgatum*) which, from the appearance of its red fleshy stalks, is supposed to have some connection with worms. Dispensatory: Described as “a gentle nervous stimulant” useful in diseases in which the nerves are especially affected. The other herb is not named.

17. A`HAWĬ AKĀ`TĀ`=“deer eye,” from the appearance of the flower—*Rudbeckia fulgida*—Cone Flower: Decoction of root drunk for flux and for some private diseases; also used as a wash for snake bites and swellings caused by (mythic) tsgâya or worms; also dropped into weak or inflamed eyes. This last is probably from the supposed connection between the eye and the flower resembling the eye. Dispensatory: Not named.

18. UTĬSTUGĬ=Polygatum multiflorum latifolium—Solomon’s Seal: Root heated and bruised and applied as a poultice to remove an ulcerating swelling called tu`stĭ, resembling a boil or carbuncle. Dispensatory: “This species acts like *P. uniflorum*, which is said to be emetic. In former times it was used externally in bruises, especially those about the eyes, in tumors, wounds, and cutaneous eruptions and was highly esteemed as a cosmetic. At present it is not employed, though recommended by Hermann as a good remedy in gout and rheumatism.” This species in decoction has been found to produce “nausea, a cathartic effect and either diaphoresis or diuresis,” and is useful “as an internal remedy in piles, and externally in the form of decoction, in the affection of the skin resulting from the poisonous exhalations of certain plants.”

19. ĂMĂDITA`TĬ=“water dipper,” because water can be sucked up through its hollow stalk—*Eupatorium purpureum*—Queen of the Meadow, Gravel Root: Root used in decoction with a somewhat similar plant called Ămăditá`tĭ ũ`tanu, or “large water dipper” (not identified) for difficult urination. Dispensatory: “Said to operate as a diuretic. Its vulgar name of gravel root indicates the popular estimation of its virtues.” The genus is described as tonic, diaphoretic, and in large doses emetic and aperient.

20. YĀNA UTSĚSTA=“the bear lies on it”—*Aspidium acrostichoides*—Shield Fern: Root decoction drunk to produce vomiting, and also used to rub on the skin, after scratching, for rheumatism—in both cases some other plant is added to the decoction; the warm decoction is also held in the mouth to relieve toothache. Dispensatory: Not named.

The results obtained from a careful study of this list may be summarized as follows: Of the twenty plants described as used by the Cherokees, seven (Nos. 2, 4, 5, 13, 15, 17, and 20) are not noticed in the Dispensatory even in the list of plants sometimes used although regarded as not officinal. It is possible that one or two of these seven plants have medical properties, but this can hardly be true of a larger number unless we are disposed to believe that the Indians are better informed in this regard than the best educated white physicians in the country. Two of these seven plants, however (Nos. 2 and 4), belong to genera which seem to have some of the properties ascribed by the Indians to the species. Five others of the list (Nos. 8, 9, 11, 14, and 16) are used for entirely wrong purposes, taking the Dispensatory as authority, and three of these are evidently used on account of some fancied connection between the plant and the disease, according to the doctrine of signatures. Three of the remainder (Nos. 1, 3, and 6) may be classed as uncertain in their properties, that is, while the plants themselves seem to possess some medical value, the Indian mode of application is so far at variance with recognized methods, or their own statements are so vague and conflicting, that it is doubtful whether any good can result from the use of the herbs. Thus the Unaste'tstiyû, or Virginia Snakeroot, is stated by the Dispensatory to have several uses, and among other things is said to have been highly recommended in intermittent fevers, although alone it is "generally inadequate to the cure." Though not expressly stated, the natural inference is that it must be applied internally, but the Cherokee doctor, while he also uses it for fever, takes the decoction in his mouth and blows it over the head and shoulders of the patient. Another of these, the Distai'yï, or Turkey Pea, is described in the Dispensatory as having roots tonic and aperient. The Cherokees drink a decoction of the roots for a feeling of weakness and languor, from which it might be supposed that they understood the tonic properties of the plant had not the same decoction been used by the women as a hair wash, and by the ball players to bathe their limbs, under the impression that the toughness of the roots would thus be communicated to the hair or muscles. From this fact and from the name of the plant, which means at once hard, tough, or strong, it is quite probable that its roots are believed to give strength to the patient solely because they themselves are so strong and not because they have been proved to be really efficacious. The remaining five plants have generally pronounced medicinal qualities, and are used by the Cherokees for the very purposes for which, according to the Dispensatory, they are best adapted; so that we must admit that so much of their practice is correct, however false the reasoning by which they have arrived at this result.

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