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## PRIMITIVE CUSTOMS AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE INDIANS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST COAST.

In the presentation in this paper of the customs and religious beliefs of the Indians on the Pacific Northwest Coast, it is not contended by the writer that these customs and beliefs obtained among all the Indians of that region, but they are to be regarded as being held and observed more particularly by the tribes who practiced the custom of flattening the heads of their children.

The tract of country occupied by these people included all the region west of the Coast Range of Mountains from Yaquina (Indian, Ya-co-na) Bay on the south to Cape Flattery on the north, and thence extending easterly to the southern shores of Puget Sound, including the Nisqually and adjacent tribes, and following the Columbia River from its mouth to The Dalles, including the Cowlitz (Indian, Cowalitz) Valley and the Willamette Valley as far as the falls at Oregon City, and also embracing the Tualatin (Indian, Twhality) country.

South of these limits in the Willamette Valley this custom of flattening the head begins to fade away; that is, the head is flattened but lightly, and is practiced less as you proceed south, until it disappears entirely; and the same is true in going east from The Dalles.

Intermarriages between flatheads and nonflatheads were indulged in to a limited extent only. The different tribes composing these people oftentimes made war upon each other, but they never made prisoners of each other

for the purpose of enslavement. Within the limits of their territory no person having a flattened head was ever held as a slave. If any of these people should be so held by any outside tribe, no flathead would purchase him unless it was to ransom him that he might be given his liberty. This mark identified them rather as one people. Although several of these tribes speak an entirely different and distinct language from any of the others, and are classed by scientific writers as belonging to different stock, yet I believe that for centuries past they were one people. Their custom of intermarriages would unavoidably lead to this.

The men of the different tribes, to a large extent, especially from the principal families, sought wives from the various tribes other than their own. For instance, a Tillamook man would seek a wife from the Chinook or Chehalis (Indian, Tseh-hay-lis) tribe, and this compliment would be reciprocated by the men of these tribes going after wives from the Tillamook, or some other clan not their own, and in like manner of all the other tribes; and this process has been going on for ages, until these people have really become of one type.

They are very similar in facial contour, size, and form of body. Some writers seem to believe that the flattening of the heads of these people has had the effect of blunting their intellects. The facts in the case, I think, hardly warrant this conclusion. They certainly compare favorably with any of the other Indians inhabiting the old Oregon country in things pertaining to the affairs of this life. They constructed better houses for their habitations than the tepees used by those east of the Cascade Mountains. Their canoes for beauty of model, finish of workmanship, and for utility, were far superior to anything in that line made by the inland people; their methods of catching fish with the seine were ahead of any of the other

devices employed by those beyond the mountains; and some of these people north of Grays Harbor in the earlier days even used to pursue and capture the whale, it constituting a portion of their ordinary subsistence. Without question it required a far higher order of intellect and ability to launch out on the ocean in a small craft and to capture and compass the death of one of these monsters of the deep—the largest animal that ever lived and one of the most dangerous when aroused—and yet escape unharmed, than simply to shoot a buffalo after it had been chased down with a horse.

It is quite a fashion with some writers to institute comparisons between the Indians east of the Cascades and those on the west, and always to the great disparagement of those nearer the coast. They will speak of the squat bodies and bowlegs of the coast Indians, but in reality the bowlegs, so far as these people are concerned, are a myth. These Indians—and I speak of them as they were before the higher civilization of the whites began to interfere with their primitive customs—made it their aim to have the arms and legs of their children develop straight and shapely, even to the extent of binding the legs of the child together during its sleep if it were necessary to do so to constrain a correct growth of those members.

In the consideration of this subject the fact must not be overlooked that at all times there were two classes of people to be considered—the slave and the free. These tribes held as slaves members from the various tribes inhabiting the region north of the Straits of Juan de Fuca to nearly the Alaskan border, and also from those of Southern Oregon and Northern California, including the Rogue River Indians, Shastas, Klamaths, Modocs, and occasionally some from the Snakes. Almost every lead-

ing family held from one to half a dozen slaves, and some of the chiefs having even many more. Among these slaves, gathered in this promiscuous way from these various sources, it would be nothing strange to find a good many who would be bandy-legged and otherwise ill-shaped; and the earlier writers observing these, and not making the proper inquiries as to where they originally belonged, it was noted down by them that the Chinooks and other Indians on the lower Columbia were bow-legged, which statement is ever afterward reiterated by writers who are not themselves informed on the facts by personal observation. It is not denied here that occasionally some of these people were crooked-limbed, but the rule was the other way—that they usually had well-formed extremities.

In like manner, on imperfect information, a belief has become prevalent that the process of flattening the head of the babe is attended with great pain to the child. I find on careful inquiry that this is not so. It should be remembered that at birth the bones of the head of the child are extremely soft. When the babe has been properly wrapped and fastened in its wooden cradle, a little bag, say four inches wide and eight inches long, filled with feathers or some other soft material, is placed longitudinally upon its forehead and bound on; it is then nursed to sleep. When it wakens, this, in due time, is taken off. This treatment is kept up for eight months or a year, some mothers continuing it longer than others. The child is always laid on its back during the treatment, and the weight of the feathers causes the head to flatten in its growth, and it is attended with no pain to the child.

These Indians believed in one Supreme Being, the creator of all things, and they call him "Ecahnie." Then they have subordinate gods, and the principal one is

“Talipas.” This divinity possessed some creative power, and he came among men to teach them ways of living, and in his travels he would assume the form of the coyote, hence his name (Talipas being the name of the coyote). He taught the people the art of building canoes and of navigation, of making nets and seining for salmon, of building houses for their dwellings, and all the various customs and rites which they observed. On account of his creative qualities his character is sometimes blended in with the Supreme Being, and at such times, in referring to him, they award him the title of Ecahnie.

And, again, they have divinities presiding over certain special interests, such as the run of fish and the like. The heart of the salmon must never be given to a dog to be eaten, as on account of his base nature it would be an act of impurity, which would provoke the disfavor of the god presiding over the destinies of the salmon, and would cause a failure of the season’s run of fish. The first salmon caught in the spring season must never be dressed or cooked until after the sun dips below the horizon in the west—everything is got in readiness for the feast, but all must wait until the sun disappears.

When the species of wild raspberry, which abounds in the coast region of Oregon and Washington, first ripens in the spring, the salmon, when caught, are laid with their heads pointing up stream, and then a berry of this variety is placed in the mouth of each fish, to remain there, however, for only a limited space of time, and hence the name of salmon berry, which it now universally bears. From the observance of this ceremony the early traders on the Columbia River, who witnessed the same, gave the berry that name. This rite, however, is only a propitiatory offering to the divine influences which are supposed to control the migration of the salmon.

The "Tamanawas" is a tutelary or guardian spirit or god who is supposed to see to the welfare of its subject and to give warning of approaching events of a portentous character. Every person having a tamanawas is not necessarily a doctor or medicine man or woman, but every medicine man must have a tamanawas. These personal gods were not considered to possess equal attributes—some were supposed to be endowed with greater qualities than others. Some individuals claimed that their gods could disturb the elements of nature; that is, could cause storms to arise, the lightnings to flash and the thunders to rumble, and other disturbances as well.

These people believe in the immortality of the soul; they believe in a spirit life and in a spirit land; they believe that the spirit of other animals go to the spirit land as well as that of men. Their conception of the spirit land is quite beautiful and pleasing. There it is always spring or summer; the fields are perpetually green, flowers blooming, fruit ripening, and running waters diversify the scenery of the beautiful landscapes, with always an abundant supply of game, and of course the inhabitants are in a continuous state of felicity.

They believe that when a person becomes very sick the spirit leaves the body and seeks the shores of the spirit land, and unless it is recaptured and returned to its original tenement, the person will of course surely die. In such cases the services of a skillful tamanawas doctor are engaged, and an assistant is furnished him to accompany him on his journey of discovery to the land of the dead. The assistant is given a baton, ornamented in the upper part with plumes of birds and claws of beasts. The doctor manipulates his assistant until he has him mesmerized; also the baton, which is in a continuous state of agitation; he then places himself in a

trance state, meanwhile keeping up a vigorous chant, and they start on their excursion to the shadowy shores. If they should be fortunate enough to find the absconding spirit, the doctor secures it and brings it back with him, oftentimes keeping it over night, and restoring it to the patient the next day. Should the patient recover it is proof of the great powers of the doctor, but if, on the contrary, the patient pass away, it is evidence that the spirit ran away the second time.

They also believed in giants who possessed a more material nature, having the human form. These inhabited the recesses of the woods and devoured humankind as well as other animals. They name these giants "Cheatco." If a tree should happen to fall in calm weather as is often the case, it is at once attributed to the cheatco striking it down with his cane.

I will close this article by relating the legend of the surf as given by the Clatsop Indians. Before we come to the story, however, I think a little explanation may be needful. In speaking of the surf in this instance, I do not mean the breakers nor the noise that accompanies them as they roll in on the seashore, but I mean the other roar of the sea, that which, at any distance from one half mile to five miles away from the ocean, may be heard as coming from some particular point at sea, either southwest, west, or northwest. When stormy weather is approaching the roar is at the south; when fair weather is to prevail the sound is in the northwest; when the sound is directly west it indicates a change, that is, it may become fair, and in that case the sound will bear to the north, and in like manner it will bear to the south in case of a storm. This sound is really caused by certain meteorological conditions that prevail out at sea, and when these conditions change, the direction of the sound



changes also. The detailed explanation of which is not now necessary to give.

#### THE LEGEND OF THE SURF.

In the long ago there dwelt an Indian on the Columbia River at or near Point Adams with no companion other than his faithful dog. This was in the time when all animals possessed the faculty of speech, and oftentimes the dog and master would hold sweet communion together. Upon a certain evening, as the shadows of night began to gather, and while the man and dog were rehearsing the events of the day, a loud knock was given at the door. In answer to the call, the man opened the door and what should meet his startled gaze but the gigantic form of a monster cheatco, who was awaiting there the answer to his raps. He wished to know if he could be entertained there with a supper and lodging for the night. Of course there was but one thing to do and the man invited the monster in and to partake of his hospitality, otherwise he might have invited immediate destruction to himself. He prepared his guest with as sumptuous a meal as his limited larder and bachelor skill could provide, and in due time showed him to bed. Soon after the dog and his master also retired.

Some time in the night, as the Indian awoke from a sleep, he overheard the cheatco talking and chuckling to himself as to the nice meal he proposed to make of his host. Upon discovering the evil design of his guest, terror seized the soul of that poor Indian, and he immediately resolved to find some way of escape. He thought it not safe to attempt to go out by the front door lest the giant should notice him as he passed the place where he lay. So he dug a hole through the ground under the walls of the lodge at the rear end. He laid a stick of wood in his

bed and covered it with his robe to carry out the deception that he was still there. He told his dog his proposed plan of escape, that he intended to seek safety in flight beyond Tillamook Head, and that he wished him, after he had gone out, to lay curled up at the mouth of the hole so as to obscure the passage. If the cheatco should ask him which way his master had gone to send him off in the opposite direction; then bidding his dog a hasty farewell he hastened away. Fear lent speed and strength to his feet as he sped down the coast. The dog lay at the hole as he was directed to do.

When the giant got up to have his feast as he had planned, he lunged upon the bed of his host, but clutched only the stick of wood; he found that his intended victim had outwitted him and had already made his escape. As he looked around the room he saw the dog lying down, and asked him which way his master had gone. The dog pointed his nose up the river and said, "Ya-wa," (that way). The monster rushed out and took his course up the river. After running about two miles, looking the meanwhile for tracks or other signs of flight and not finding any, he concluded that he had been misdirected, and his wrath against that faithful friend of the Indian knew no bounds. He determined that the dog should suffer for the deception he had practiced; so he returned to the lodge. The dog was still at his post, blocking the hole with his body. The giant went up and said, "You lying dog, you deceived me!" and gave him a kick; the toes striking the dog, tore him into pieces and threw him away from the hole. This revealed the way the Indian had gone. The cheatco immediately devoured the fragments of the dog and then gave pursuit down the ocean beach after the man. He was so large and fat and his weight so great that his tread as he bowled along the ocean shore sounded like the rumbling of distant thun-

der. About two miles north of Tillamook Head the Necanicum (Indian, Necaynihum) River empties into the ocean. The one who ferried people over at this place was "Old Thunder" ("Kon-wahk-shoo-ma"). He had his seat somewhere on Tillamook Head. His foot was of great length, and his method of ferrying was to reach his foot over the water and it would span the stream from shore to shore, over which the passengers would pass in safety. The Indian was considerably ahead of the giant, and had been ferried over some time before his pursuer reached the stream. The cheatco carried a great staff or cane, made from the bones of the dead. Now the dead, or things pertaining to them, were unclean and impure to the gods. They were considered to have an evil taint which would defile the gods if they should come in contact with them. So when the cheatco hailed to be set across, Old Thunder, immediately perceiving that his staff was of the dead, told him that he would ferry him over, but warned him that he must not touch him with his cane, to which the giant agreed. Old Thunder then swung his foot across the river, over which the ogre started to pass, but, in his eagerness after his prey, was peering in different directions in his effort to catch a glimpse of the fleeing Indian, so that when about midway over he forgot the ban that had been placed against his staff, and set it down on the foot of the god. Instantaneously Old Thunder felt the defilement, and as quickly withdrew his foot, plunging the cheatco into the river. There being at the time a great freshet in the stream, the current was rushing out with fearful force, and it immediately swept the monster into the breakers and was carrying him out to sea. Then Old Thunder promulgated one of those unalterable decrees of the gods, saying to the cheatco: "You will pass on out to sea, and for the information of all mankind your office will be, for all time to come,

when storms are gathering, to pass and roar at the south; and when they prepare to pass away you will pass and roar at the north.' And the cheatco ever since that fateful day has faithfully attended to the duties assigned him by the thunder god; so when storms threaten you will hear his angry tones in the south, and when the clouds begin to roll away you will notice the song of his milder mood in the north.

SILAS B. SMITH.