

WIYOT FOLK-LORE.

THE Wiyot Indians live on and near Humboldt Bay in northwestern California. They are the people whose myths have been discussed in this Journal under the designation Wishosk. This name, while frequently used by ethnologists, appears to rest on a misconception. It has been thought to be the term applied to these people by their Athabaskan neighbors, but is evidently their designation for the Athabascans. They lack any national designation of their own, though they call their language *sulatlek*. Wiyot, or a modification of this term, is the name by which they or their territory are most frequently called in the speech of those families of Indians who are cognizant of them, and has some literary usage.

Both men and women were shamans, but the best were women. Men had female supernatural helpers, women male supernatural helpers. These spirits were called *wishidiekwa*. The prospective shaman sat by a spruce-tree on a mountain at night. When she went back, she might be followed by her supernatural helper, who gave her her song. If she failed to be met by a spirit, she might go again some other night. Some shamans received their power easily. As the shaman sat on the mountain by the large fire which she had made, she would go to sleep, dream, and receive her song.

In doctoring, the shaman wears a headdress of two strings of feathers. This is tied around the forehead over the eyes, and the feathers fall on each side of the face, nearly to the waist. Shamans have long condor wing-feathers which they swallow until they disappear. They do this to make the disease go out from the patient more readily. The disease, objects or "pains," *silak*, are like worms, and animate. They are "like obsidian," that is transparent or glassy, but soft like saliva, and of various colors. Sometimes they are quite small, sometimes as long as a joint of the thumb. The shaman dances beside his patient, leaning on a stick and holding his long wing-feather. He uses no rattle or whistle, but sings. The dancing enables him to locate the seat of the disease. To a good shaman the patient's whole body is transparent. After dancing, the shaman, or another, a sucking shaman, sucks the patient and extracts the "pain," which he shows. Then he closes his hand and sings. After singing, he blows on his hand and opens it. It is empty. He has made the "pain" disappear by telling it to go away.

Sometimes the shaman sucks, not a "pain," but blood. It is thought that too much black blood causes sickness. Too much fat is also dreaded as a cause of disease, as it crowds the internal organs.

Plant-medicines seem to be considerably used, being soaked in water, which is drunk. These medicines are derived from *Gusheridalewi*.

An Athabaskan woman from Bridgeville, married to an Athabaskan

man from Dyerville, was taken sick at Loleta some years ago. Her husband paid two Wiyot shamans, a man and a woman, fifteen dollars and a horse. The man shaman danced and saw the pains in the patient's body and described them. He said that the woman's tribe, the people of Bridgeville, were bad and wished to kill her. Her dead relatives, especially a recently deceased daughter, were pursuing her and "kept her shut." The patient had for some time been suffering with pains at the back of her head, and at the present time was sick also in her stomach. The doctor said also that he saw a mountain near Bridgeville, on top of which was a rock. On this rock were horns, among which he saw the patient sitting. Then the woman shaman sucked from the patient's forehead, through her pipe, a disease-object something like a spider, without legs, but with a number of curved horns. It was as large as half the palm of a hand. From the patient's stomach she sucked something like a small water-dog or salamander. Then the patient recovered.

Powerful supernatural beings are called wakirash, or yagabichirakw. Among such are the inhabitants of lakes. When one of these takes pity on a man, he becomes physically strong and fierce.

Women in labor spoke, or had spoken for them, a formula which consisted of a myth regarding the culture-hero's first causing women to give birth. The plant thought to have been used on this occasion by the culture-hero was eaten by Wiyot women in order to make the child small and easy to bear.

Persons to be purified from contact with a dead body washed with roots called sisuloiyatgaktl, probably angelica.

Self-restraint was most important to success in life. People did not speak loudly or cry out without necessity. A man who was warm did not drink a large quantity of cold water, fearing to die. A man would be moderate in his eating.

Like the Yurok, the Wiyot are very careful not to eat while in a boat on the ocean. After crossing the bar into Humboldt Bay, they may eat.

The Wiyot held the usual ideas prevalent in northwestern California as to the incompatibility of sexual relations and anything connected with deer. A man who had slept with a woman did not eat deer for five days, or he would not live long.

A dance replacing among the Wiyot the jumping-dance of the Yurok and Hupa was held indoors, and lasted about five days. It was held at a place called Hieratgak, at the present shipyards on Humboldt Bay; but it is not known whether, like the jumping-dance, it could be held only at this or certain other particular spots. At this dance obsidian blades were used, but were hung by strings on the breast instead of being held in the hand, as in the deerskin-dance of the Hupa

and Yurok. It is said that a woman shaman stood in the middle of the dancers.

There was an elaborate ceremony at the puberty of girls, with dancing for five nights. For five days the girl sat indoors with her head covered, so as not to look at the fire. At the end of the ceremony a number of women accompanied her to still salt water, as in Humboldt Bay, which they entered to about the waist, standing abreast and holding each others' arms. Then they danced by bending their bodies forward repeatedly, causing waves like small breakers to roll inshore. According to another informant, the dancing lasted ten days, during which period the girl fasted.

White or albino deer, whose skins were a great treasure, were regarded by the Wiyot, as by the Yurok and Hupa, as living in the sky and coming to the earth only occasionally, when they might be seen or killed by a lucky person, especially a rich man. The creator, Above-old-man, who made the white deer and keeps them in the sky, would not allow a poor man to see one.

Salmon are different for each stream, even though they all have the same shape and appearance. The old salmon come up the stream, spawn there, the eggs hatch out, and in winter the young salmon come down the stream into the ocean. Next year they are grown and come back. A salmon arrives at a stream and smells of it with his two nostrils. "That is not where I was born," he says, and goes on until he comes to the mouth of his own stream, which he recognizes and ascends.

The sacred or ritualistic number of the Wiyot, like that of the other Indians of northwestern California, is five or its multiple ten.

Two redwood-trees on the north fork of Mad River, not far from Blue Lake, were regarded as being persons.

White people are called dikwa. This word appears to have reference to the supernatural. A medicine-man's guardian spirit is called wishidiekwa. The "poison" or supernatural means of killing an enemy is called dikwa or dikwa-getl. Menstruation is dikwa-lakwetl. The hero of a myth is called Dikwa-giterai.

Dark-colored stone pipe-bowls were called female; if light-colored, they were called male.

Red obsidian with black streaks in it was called a woman who had not washed at puberty, when she was rasha-wiliyur.

Stars, gumerachk, are also called wewewelir, sky-eyes. The stars trembling in the sky are women working. They are chopping their digging-sticks to sharp points to dig boderush roots. In the morning when they go to dig, in the daylight, they are blind. At night they can see again.

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