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BERRYHILL, JOE.

INTERVIEW

13728

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Bille Byrd,  
Investigator  
April 22, 1938.

Interview with Joe Berryhill,  
Thlopthlocco town (tulwa),  
Okemah, Oklahoma.  
Age 68.

#### CUSTOMS

The Shawnee tribe of Indians used to never bury their dead children who were under the age of one year; they were usually placed in hollow trees, between the crevices of large rocks in the hills or in the caves. The children over one year of age were buried with respect and ceremony. Usually anybody deceased was kept over night at the home before any burial ceremonies were conducted, and relatives stayed near and kept watch over the body at all times and closer friends and relatives were designated by the placing of a blue ribbon around their arm. Any of the relatives could select someone of the closer friends whom they wished to help in the digging of the grave or join in the mourning; they were all designated by the blue ribbon around the arm and they all knew just what they were to do without being told by anyone.

A feast was made ready and placed around the body of the dead, which feast would be left around the body all through

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the night and the closer relatives all joined in taking part in the feast at daybreak. Then the burial ceremony would follow and end the observance for the Shawnee dead.

The different Indians had a certain custom of burying their dead. The Euchee people kept a feast table set through the night for their dead on the fourth night following a burial ceremony. The feast was spread on a table and a full table made ready as if a whole family was to take part in it, but no one ever ate any of the things prepared, neither did anyone sit at the table. The table would be left as it was through the night and everyone retired for the night just as if nothing happened. This was done so that the spirit of the dead could return to earth and enjoy the feast prepared for that purpose. In some instances, I have heard tell of how signs were left showing that something had taken some of the things--maybe a drink of water from a cup or part of some of the other food.

While the Shawnees partook of the feast at daybreak, the Eucchees would throw away all their feast in the morning and make an entirely fresh meal. All joined in the feast and

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after the feast was over they all left for their homes as the observance in memory of their dead was usually held at some home or other designated place.

Among the Muskogee-Creeks, the younger Indians were forbidden to sit on the edge of the porch or to shout at night as something would answer back, that was taken as a bad omen. Nothing was to be thrown at night or something would throw back.

Some of the older Indians never showed their age in their faces because they kept close to some belief which had been handed down. They were never known to bathe the face in warm or hot water, warm or hot water caused premature age and wrinkles on the face.

It was always a set law for a woman to confine herself away from others during her monthly period. She could not eat out of the same dishes that others around her used or sleep with them in the same house. Another building was usually erected outside of the home for the women to use only at that time.

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The Western or Plains Indians always garbed themselves in scanty and gaily-ornamented dance costumes in their ceremonies and invent<sup>ed</sup> intricate steps for their dancing but the Muskogee-Creeks were never known to have ever used or followed that method at any time. They have no other manner of dancing except when all -- men, women and children, join in the dance around the ceremonial fire, which is always kept up all the time and never allowed to fully die down all during the time of the dance.

I don't know just why it was, but many times I have been corrected for stretching or yawning at the meal table. There seems that there were so many rules or beliefs connected with most little things that are not now kept up or known.