

COLF, ALICE BOND

INTERVIEW #12405

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LEGEND & STORY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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COLE, ELIGE BOND

INTERVIEW

12405

Field worker's name Pete W. Cole

This report made on (date) December 15, 1937

1. This legend was
secured from (name) Alice Bond - Cole
Address Atoka, Oklahoma.
This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,
If Indian, give tribe Choctaw Indian
2. Origin and history of legend or story Indians as believers in witch craft.
3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank
sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets
attached _____

Pete W. Cole
Investigator
December 15, 1937

Interview with
Alice Bond Cole
Atoka, Oklahoma.

WITCHCRAFT

I was told by my parents that my grandfather came from the state of Mississippi but my grandmother was raised in Indian Territory, in what is now Oklahoma. They lived to be a ripe old age when they died. During their lifetime they often related stories, traditions of the Indians and legends of how they used to live in their days. These stories were told to my mother especially as my father was not at home at all times; and he did not care to listen to the stories of the old Indian days.

The Indians (the Choctaws in this case) are strong believers in the existence of isht ahullo (witches) even as the enlightened ancestors in the days of Cotton Mather according to history, although different in this manner. Among the Choctaws they usually select some old and decrepit woman as victims of their superstitions or

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witches while their witch brothers of the white boasted civilization and rendered more of their superiority in intellectual attainments over the Indians, by selecting young people as their victims. It seems that old men as well should be eligible to witchcraft, but the aged and decrepit women usually got the credit of being a witch while now and then the man gets his part of the credit of being a witch, especially if he should be living with his grandmother; since the credit is given to the aged women.

There might have been incidents happened and history recorded pertaining on this subject; nevertheless the incidents as told by my grandparents relates as far back as 1818 (incidents happened handed down from generation to generation) when my grandfather who fought in the Civil War remembered of the story as told by his parents.

A missionary who had been sent among the Indians was taken sick or his health failed him and he went to what is now Dwight Mission in the Cherokee Nation. After his recovery he came to Choctaw Nation sometime

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in the year 1818 and there organized a mission about three miles from Yaloboshe River (Tadpole in English) and later this place was called Yaloboshe-aiasha or Tadpole Settlement. A few log houses were constructed and a school was organized by the missionaries. School opened with about ten pupils. Subject as to how the school should be maintained was the next thing on the program. A suggestion was made of subscribing money or livestock, as they cho se to do, when one man Apakfohlichit ubi (Ancircle to kill) put up about \$200.00 while others give 90 cows and calves with the promise of that many more yearly if needed, which was faithfully paid.

When the school opened, students began to arrive. Before many days a sad incident happened when an aged woman who lived only a little ways from the school was found murdered. Her name was Illi-che (cause to die) who had two daughters and two granddaughters who loved her dearly. She also had endeared herself to the missionaries by her many acts of kindness and assistance.

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The cause of the killing was:

A certain Choctaw Indian girl who lived about thirty miles distant, while on a visit, was taken sick and an old Choctaw Indian woman, a herb doctor or rather a conjurer, took over the patient to cure her of her sickness. After her examination she gave her some treatment of tea of some herb and after waiting a few days, at the same time going through her magic chant and going through her wild ceremonies, pronounced that she would recover. After pronouncing the girl's recovery soon and the father being duly informed of the change, he gave the doctor a pony for her success doctoring his daughter, and he retired for the night with the intention of taking the daughter home the next morning. During the night the daughter became worse and died, and of course the members of the family wished to know the cause of the death of the girl. It was decided that the patient's sudden death was caused by an isht-ulbih (witch ball) which was shot from an invisible rifle in the hands of the

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witch. At once and in a rage of anger the father of the deceased with several others, armed, went to the house of the physician and entered the home of Illi-che.

Before being questioned she displayed her hospitality as usual to all visitors among the Indians by setting before them the best of feed that she had in the house, though scanty. After they had partaken of the widow's feed, the father sprang to his feet demanding to know why she witched and killed his daughter, and cried out "Chim-ilhfiyopa ano chompa li, Ish a-hullo chia hokut ik-chilli." (Your life I bought. Die.) To which the kind lady Illi-che, realizing her doom, replied calmly "Holobi osh yomi kia okla hash e yimmi". (Others lie but you all believe). In a few moments she was stretched out on the floor a dead corpse.

The son who was absent during the tragedy, returned home. His feelings may be imagined but cannot be described. Rather than to take up for his mother, he had better sense than to try to start any roughness because

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he would not have lasted only a few minutes, but hastened to the missionaries and told them of the happening. After witnessing the corpse a coffin was made and the woman who was very kind to all strangers and acquaintances was laid away with the five children watching her as she was placed in the grave to await for the resurrection morn.

According to ancient Indian custom, the relatives and friends of the deceased placed all of her belongings and what little money she possessed in the coffin and the grave was filled up.

To the present generation this was a sad incident of the belief and the traditions of the Indians, yet we must also remember our professed civilized and Christian ancestors, The Pilgrim Fathers, stand also guilty of the same charge. Professing what they did, they were more guilty than the Choctaws. Since the Choctaws have been taught and instructed in the impropriety and wrong of killing one for a witch, no life is sacrificed any more to avenge the death of relative or friend.

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The Choctaws also believed that there were witches among the white class of people; yet they never attempted to kill a white witch for the reason that the white witch ate so much salt that a witch ball would not penetrate into the flesh, but would fall harmless and neither would a white witch's shot penetrate the flesh of an Indian.

Another incident as told by my grandmother who had an aunt. My grandfather had gone out on a hunt to kill deer and while on this hunt he sighted a deer and shot him. The deer ran out of sight and while my grandfather was tracing the blood in the way the deer went, he saw an object in a form of a human crawling on all fours as though tracking. Upon close investigation he found out that it was this woman and hollered at her as to what was the idea of crawling around there out in the woods. She was tracking the deer and was licking up the blood of the wounded deer, and when she heard a voice she became frightened and took through the briar patch and bushes and through the woods. In

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so doing she tore all of her clothes off her back and scratched herself up very badly from which she died shortly afterward. It was a talk in the settlement of her being a witch, which convinced them more so after finding her in the act of licking up the blood of a wounded deer.

The combat between the witch and the Indian doctor is that if one is witched or has been shot with a witch ball, a doctor alone has the power to remove the fatal bullet; but the doctor himself cannot shoot or witch as it is against his rule by nature to do so. But since the Isht shollo (witch) Evil Spirit, is always out for mischief, it can witch a doctor as well as any one else from an invisible rifle in the hands of an invisible witch which left no visible signs of its mysterious power; but the secret effects of which were beyond the skill of any and all doctors, to which his dupes gave assent.

Note: This manuscript remains as written by Pete W. Cole, Investigator, who so carefully follows the Indian expression of knowledge and ideas held by the Indian interviewed. -Editor