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T-213

STOKE SMITH, CHEROKEE

INTERVIEWED BY: . CROSSLIN SMITH

INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 10, 1967

TRANSCRIBED BY: . LINDA BUTLER

GENERAL SUBJECT: CHEROKEE SONGS; MEANING OF RELIGIOUS RITUALS

TOPICS DISCUSSED:

MR. STOKE SMITH IS THE FATHER OF CROSSLIN SMITH

HE SINGS TWO SONGS IN CHEROKEE LANGUAGE

HE SPEAKS IN CHEROKEE LANGUAGE

INTERPRETS AND GIVES THE MEANING OF THE CHEROKEE
RELIGIOUS RITUALS

BACKGROUND OF INFORMANT:

At the time of this interview Stoke Smith was about 75 years of age. He is a full blood Cherokee of Vian, Oklahoma and has lived in this area all of his life. Mr. Smith is one of the traditional historians and a ceremonial chief. He is the Keeper of the sacred fire of the Cherokees. His father was Red Bird Smith, one of the earlier traditional leaders of the Keetoowahs. (full blood Cherokee Band)

Note: Stoke Smith speaks and sings in Cherokee language and the translation (or summary) was made by his son Crosslin Smith.

T-213

Stoke Smith, Cherokee

Interviewed and translated by: Crosslin Smith

Interview date: 5-10-67

Transcribed by: Linda Butler

(I am interviewing my father at his home, some six miles east of Vian, Oklahoma. Today's date is May 10, 1967. He is about to record two ancient Cherokee songs. The interpretation of these songs will be made by me, after my father has completed these songs.)

(Sings and speaks Cherokee language.)

INTERPRETS AND GIVES THE MEANING OF THESE RELIGIOUS RITUALS

The First Ancient song by Stoke Smith was the Cherokee Creed. This is the Ancient Cherokee Creed and the song goes along with the rituals.

This takes place at a stream when the sun is coming up. The song itself, when it is interpreted means, actually the following words: God I stand before you. I pledge my soul and all of my efforts in unison and working with all other races. You have created the red man in the east and then the white skin person in the north. And in the west you have created the yellow man, and in the south you have created the black man. The songs the words wa-ha-hen-a-do, wa-ha-hen-a-do, is a song that can never be interpreted. It's a sound from the spiritual world dedicated to God. Only he can understand those words. This part of the song is meant to be an appreciation to God. These ancient songs and rituals to these people. Only God can understand these words, for it was meant to be that way. This part of the song was created by the people themselves for the appreciation of the songs. And this Cherokee Creed, the traditional Cherokees are the only group that really understands the words and the meaning and the spirit they put forth into these songs. They pledge in every way possible to make their efforts towards the help of mankind; through spiritual world and prayers. This was, as I said the first song by Stoke Smith. The second song is by William Lee Smith, the

oldest son of Stoke Smith and my brother. His song was the song of the protection against the evil things and a ritual to be performed over a piece of tobacco in the ancient times. The native tobacco was red in color. And it grew in the wilds and when it matured it left a seed. And in this seed was this red powder. This red powder is the original war paint. It was never used as an elaborate decorative as you might see in the movies. It was kept in a buckskin pouch and with a little splinter taken from a cedar tree that was stricken by lightning but the tree lived. The lightning didn't kill the tree. So this stick is placed in the pouch. Whenever the protection is needed, the need for spiritual assistance is realized by a person in the evil world this confronting with some difficulty to the individual Indian. He uses the red tobacco and the stick along with these ancient prayers. And in according to the words of the ancient prayers, it goes as follows: To the stars, I am powerful enough to reach, a few are supporting me. And to the moon, I can go if you will assist me because you have spoken, you live. Don't let us be the walking dead. There must be a purpose for life. This is the purpose that we think we are created and through your prayers and ancient rituals we are now trying to contact you for your assistance. As we take upon ourselves to perform this ritual over this tobacco let it be known that it's a form of your Baptism over an object that the human body can receive strength from. For this and for everything, we thank you. There is a third song in this is the song: o-hu-na-do, o-hu-na-do, this song was recorded by my brother and it is a song against the night evils. It is a protection throughout the night that the traditional Cherokee can offer this at sun-up, high noon, or at sun down. That there will be no harm come to him while he sleep or

while his children and the whole family is at rest. And since of dedication is the nights are a time to rest and that if a person is not complying to the Golden Rule of getting rest during the night, that he's not involved in misdemeanor because he is dedicating himself to the good ways of life and not to the bad ways to live. So therefore he is asking God because he is trying to let strength come from above, to him through these rituals. These are the songs that have been in existence since the beginning of time, and they believe that God released these songs in person to man in some dark, dim, past of history. There may be no proof to this except that the people are living by these rules in which they believe. That these are the Golden Rules that man should live by.

(End of Interview.)

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