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LEGEND & STORY FORM  
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION  
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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BOHANAN, EMIZIAH.

INTERVIEW.

7348.

Field worker's name Pete H. Cole.

This report made on (date) August 24, 1937

1. This legend was secured from (name) Emiziah Bohanna

Address Darwin, Oklahoma.

This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,

If Indian, give tribe Chectaw Indian

2. Origin and history of legend or story Legend on ways of custom-tradition and ways of Chectaw Indians of the Olden days.

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 8

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Pete W. Cole,  
Interviewer.  
August 24, 1937.

Interview with Emiziah Bohanan,  
Darwin, Oklahoma.

I am a full blood Choctaw Indian, living near Lane, in Atoka County. With reference to the Indian Cry of the olden days, when members of the family agreed on time and place, the minister was selected and notified to perform the ceremony and it was customary and was required of the neighbors to bring with them necessary groceries or other necessities of life such as coffee, sugar, corn meal and different kinds of corn prepared for cooking, while the members and relatives of the deceased would furnish and kill hogs, beef or both and prepare for the occasion. Men and women were selected for each different kind of work and that would be their required work to perform during their stay and no one was allowed to interfere with each other's task or detail. I do not know of any instance where a beef or pork was ever barbecued at any of these places, as the rule they had adopted was that depending on the size of crowd in attendance, enough meat was butchered daily for

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three meals a day and if all meat was consumed during the day the number of beeves or hogs, would be killed the next following day and so on until the service is over. Sufficient meat was butchered daily until after the memorial, before the crowd would be dismissed to return to their homes. This would end the "cry" until time is set by some other of the family who would want to hold a memorial over their deceased loved ones.

There are no two parties who can explain how the wedding took place in the old Choctaw Indian days, but we are satisfied that the custom they followed is based nearly on the same principle, except with a slight change as to their tradition which will not mar or change the custom, and that the performance as staged by friends and relatives of both parties was done only so as to enjoy great times and to entertain the other young generations and have good times together.

There are a father and a mother who have a son. He is not allowed to marry until he is twenty-five or thirty years of age. The father sets aside a small tract of land

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for him to farm. The boy plants and works all he can raise. He is first taught how to work and maintain a home and to learn how he can support his wife and family. He is to be independent, as after his marriage he must look after his own interest as he was not allowed to live with his or the girl's parents. This is the first step. The uncle of the boy calls him off to one side and questions him if he wishes to marry and have a home; if the answer was in the affirmative the girl sought by the boy was given to the uncle, father and the mother for consideration, and if everything was satisfactory with the boy's parents, the next step was that his uncle would make a date with the girl's uncle or next nearest relative beside her parents and bring the subject or message from the boy and the acceptance of the boy's parents to their matrimony. This third party would communicate with the girl's parents, then the parent would break the news to the girl and if she accepted the proposal then the news was given out to the community. After the news was given out, the friends and relatives of the boy would wish for all women to bring some -

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thing to eat that is known to them and the friends, and relatives of the young bride would ask for deer, beef, pork or turkey or all as a part of the feast. Everything is accepted as asked and must be provided. The women begin at once and the men would go on a hunt and by the time a day was set for the marriage and big feast, everything would be ready and ceremony would be performed by some minister, or if there was no minister to pronounce the marriage ceremony, the friends and relatives of both parties would lecture to them as to their behavior and would tell them they must <sup>live</sup> together as man and wife, until separated by death. This was one of the vows that was pronounced to them and they lived true to their promise in most cases. At the feast all different dishes known to the Choctaw Tribes of Indians were prepared and a grand time was enjoyed by all who were at the wedding.

The people were subject to conditions of poverty more or less at various times which is natural. There were seasons when hard times came and knocked on their doors, which were at the times when corn for food would be consumed in the neighborhood, that while there may be plenty of meat

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there would be no bread nor anything to make it out of. The scarcity of meat would be for only a short time. They did not care to kill any game unless there was plenty of bread in store and when there was no bread, those who had milk cows would take the chabber and boil it until hard, season it and it was usually eaten with sweet milk which answered the purpose as bread until times became better. Depending on the number in any one family, wild artichokes were dug up, two or three to each person, washed, cleaned and trimmed, sliced and spread on top of house in the sun and allowed to cure and when cured and dried were beaten in a mortar and sifted until they made a fine meal which was substituted for bread and when baked was eaten for bread.

In my young days, before my marriage, the most enjoyment I had and ever realized was when I was hired out to work for some one. At one certain place I was hired to make a crop for a man of my own tribe and race named Simon Mashintabby. He was a good hard worker and usually had enough to tide himself over through the winter but at

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one time he became a member of church and was so religious that he did not believe in any church member working for a living. His mother and her little boy were living with him when his conviction was so strong that he would not work nor buy any groceries for the family. He lived on bread and water three times a day for two years that I know of because I was hired to work for him and that was all I had to eat during the time I was there. His mother and her little boy would go out and kill a rabbit but since he would buy no groceries there was nothing in the house which she could cook the rabbit with so she boiled it in water until cooked which was a delicious dish for the hungry mother and her boy

Ever since there began talk among the tribes about the Indian Territory becoming a state made of the land allotted to the Indians and it was said that the country would be ruled by a white form of government, some were in favor of this measure as well as those who were in opposition to the proposal. The fight was between the two parties, and a third party was organized amongst the Choctaws known as the Snake Party under the leadership of Jerry White in Wade

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County now LeFlore County and Elliot Cusher in Nashoba County now Pushmataha County and in other different counties.

Each district would select delegates to represent them at meetings at certain places, and when elected a Light-Horseman, a member of their organization, would notify them and they would meet at some selected place and hold their meetings there and no one allowed to attend their meetings unless he was a member.

Their platform was that as to their understanding, that when the Government in making a treaty with the Indians at Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830 agreed that the land should belong to the Indians as long as grass grew and water ran and that no other power or nation should ever molest them or deprive them of the rights or property belonging to the Indians. Upon this theory these bands of Indians were against Indian Territory becoming a state and against the allotment of lands.

It was at this time when this organization was organized and held meetings at various places to unite together and agreed that in case of trouble they were to remain

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neutral and that if Statehood came or if the allotting of lands to the Choctaw Indians and the Chickasaws was to be made they were not going to take any part in allotting of lands and did not allot any land unless the Government took side in their favor by allotting them land added to that which they own.

In surrendering our rights the last requirement that the chief of the tribe made with the white Government was when with swords crossed he said; "Your soldiers and my warriors are witnesses, that in surrendering my rights, you have taken over all responsibility upon your shoulders in taking care of my tribes and warriors whom you know nothing about. You may take them, train and educate them, give them knowledge, but let them learn how to farm as well. You must not deprive them of their custom, tongue or their favorite tradition nor let them forget their hunting and fishing".

These were the words of one of the chiefs in asking the Government for his warriors and his tribesmen that though they may live under different administrations he asked of them not to rid the Indian of his customs, tongue and his hunting ground.