

LOWE, CONUKEY

INTERVIEW

#12238

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OLD STORIES

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An interview of Conukey Lowe,
age about 58, Wewoka, Oklahoma

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
Indian-pioneer History
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There has lived an Indian prophet known as Alabama Chupco or George Kee-tha in and around Weleetka, Oklahoma. He was noted for his telling many things and he was different from any other person so that he seemed inhuman in his actions as well as his appearance. No one thought very highly of him although he was known by many. No comb seemed to have been put through his hair and he never had a hair cut so that his hair was always long, shaggy and matted, almost covering his face and eyes. He never wore shoes even in the hottest or coldest weather. He may, at some time, have slept in some comfortable bed but from all appearances he always could be found in some out-house and among rubbish. When his actions became feared by the public from the vicinity where he lived they reported him as insane and the authorities had him placed in an asylum where he spent the remainder of his days. Since he was a prophet, he never had to be told all the things he told because he seemed to have knowledge of the things.

Alabama Chupco, the prophet, was a member of the Alabama tribal town, and he has told this tale:

"Back in the old country, the Alabama town (tulwa) was a strong and powerful tribe and had to be divided into two divisions because of too many members. The tribe could not properly work as one unless the division was made and in these two divisions were each a chief, the medicine man and the other customs that kept the workings of a separate and different tribal town. From the two Alabama towns, many of its members perished either from illness or some tribal uprising, but it is to be remembered that these two towns were of the same tribe, being large and speaking the same dialect.

There came a time when one of the two divisions disappeared--that of the younger brother town of the Alabama town. This was not caused by any epidemics or sickness but was caused by the birth of a certain child.

In the midst of the younger Alabama divisions lived an old woman with her niece. Their names are not known but they lived alone in some hills but near the ceremonial grounds of their tribe. They were faithful to its traditions and respected their mother council fire laws.

To the isolated and lonely dwelling of the old woman came a mysterious young man visitor. No one seemed to know anything about him. He made many visits in this home and even if he did enter the house, he never uttered one word.

By and by the young niece gave birth to a baby boy. No one knew for a certainty if the father of the child could be the mysterious visitor. He is said to have never stayed all night but that he had been a frequent visitor. As the days passed, the child grew more beautiful.

The members of the younger Alabama division thought so much of the beautiful child that they began to hold celebrations in its honor. All the known rites and ceremonies were conducted in the honor of the child at certain intervals.

This tribe was at one time in the midst of their celebrations for the child. All at once the ground where all these people were gathered seemed to have been swallowed. In the very spot where the people had been gathered was soon covered by water and a large lake formed there. The child was the one that caused the loss and destruction of this younger sub-tribe.

Thereafter, the beautiful child was seen in and near the waters of the lake in the form of a spotted water tiger. The noises akin to the sounds made the ceremonial grounds with the singing, yelling and the beating of the tom-toms have been heard coming out of the waters of the place where the Alabama tribal town had disappeared."

ORIGIN OF THANKSGIVING

The honor of setting a time to give thanks was first brought about through the efforts of one Muskogee chief for the people in the Indian Territory. I never could make certain who that chief was but it was some time in 1860 to 1866 that this idea was first thought about and that time the Muskogee leader was Opothleyahola, a great Tucki-butchee leader.

This chief is said to have thought about the stories he had heard of the other people giving thanks for their abundant harvests or for their good health.

He knew of the hard times that the first white settlers had to go through when they were waiting

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for a delayed cargo of supplies. It was upon the order of the leader that the people began to fast and pray until their cargo of supplies reached them. Upon the arrival of the cargo, the people were joyous and thankful for the supplies that they celebrated in a day of giving thanks.

The longer ~~the~~ Muskogee chief thought of these things, the more he felt that his people should take up that old custom to spend some time in fasting and prayer because many desires of his people had been fulfilled. In his orations, he told of this idea and the others of his people were ready to do this.

~~It was agreed upon that the time of thanksgiving would be after all the harvests of the crops but only a few joined in these observances at first, but with the passing of the years, those observances have grown larger and larger as the people began to realize the importance of giving a time for thanksgiving for what they had been given during the year.~~