

SCOTT, JAMES

INTERVIEW

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"E-CHA-TE-CH-KA & RED CLAY"

AN INTERVIEW OF JAMES SCOTT,
Age past 68 yrs., Tribal Town
(tulwa), unknown, Okemah, Okla.

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
Indian-pioneer History
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The early Indians before their civilization used different methods of marking themselves to make themselves and their tribal members distinguishable from other tribal town members especially of an enemy, and it was mostly during some small war or uprisings that the signs were used.

There were such things used from roots, certain kind of berries, certain plants and the rare red clay which was found in what was believed to be some sacred and secluded spot.

Every Indian was not privileged to go near the place where the red clay could be obtained until there had been four days of fasting and the taking of the emetic rites had been performed. Neither was the clay used by anyone or just for any thing but only for some specific purpose, and that, not until it had been put through some rite or it could not be used to advantage by any one.

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The red clay being considered sacred and very powerful had to be given certain treatment or else it wouldn't benefit the possessor but would cause bodily harm. The certain treatment was given only through the possessor of the red clay, staying up all night without sleep and going without eating for several days as well as not drinking any sort of liquid. It was similar to the livestock which have to be fed in order to give or have showing of good results in their work and that was the same regarding the red clay to expect its power to work. During the war, it was the leader of the tribal towns or tribe that furnished the nourishment for strengthening the red clay to obtain the proper and best results. Although any opposing sides would probably have used the red clay, but the possessor of the stronger, the one who had taken the proper care of the red clay was usually the stronger in any dispute.

The red clay being relied upon was also feared because of the bodily harm that it could do to its

possessor if it was not properly nourished and given the proper care and treatment. It caused the swelling of the body at any place, the swelling would grow until the skin bursted.

It was not used only in times of war but it was used by single persons to have revenge, to cause any deadly missiles to go in a wrong course or to witch men or women. The Indian men used the red clay to attract the attention of women although not for serious purposes as the power of the red clay would work into the woman so as to cause her bodily harm as well as mental anguish. These mental anguishes would often drive a woman or man insane or cause an early death. All these things not resulted from being the possessor only but to accomplish these powers had to result through going through the rites and incantations of a medicine man. The tribal medicine men would not do these things for a small fee but a payment of a large fee had to be made.

This red clay in being used as a war sign by a certain tribe was always applied in a way that could

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be easily and readily recognized by any member of respective towns and was applied either to the body, head feathers and ornaments, to the bows and arrows, camp sites, face, arms and weapons of any kind. They were marked in identical ways that was known by the members of one town or tribe.

Cho Yahola was one of the older Indians that had come from the old country and he told of taking part or was in the "e-cha-te-ck-a". "Tu-le-bo-tha" is a Muscogee-Creek word that embraces a wide area in its use and meaning because it can be used when it has no reference to one certain thing but that there always had to be two things or sides. It referred to opponents, enemies, foes or the other side whether of persons, nations or the tribal Indian towns. The white man was the "tu-le-bo-tha" to the Indians in the early days. There was this feeling even in the tribal towns of two or more divisions--a feeling of unfriendliness.

The first Indians came to the Indian Territory, lived through those first days in the new home, took part in and lived through the days of the Civil War and saw its close to become old and grey headed. These were the ones who could tell many things if they would.

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To those that were born in the Indian Territory were anxious to learn of the removal and what the talk, "I took part in 'e-chi-te-ck-a' time". It sounded strange, a distant and unknown topic as well as being new but the old were firm in their belief that the younger Indians should not ask questions, but were left to puzzle and wonder over many things that they overheard their elders talking about. It was the removal, deaths of friends and family, separations and the suffering of the removal that had caused the shattered happiness of many of the older Indians and their hearts and minds were of the old homes that it was no easy thing to talk about life in the old country.

It was Cho Yahola that told of the echatecka time as he had taken part in it. He has been dead a long time and is supposed to have been buried in what must be in a direction southwest from Okfuskee, Oklahoma, but the grave site is unknown.

This "e-chi-te-ck-a" time was an uprising taken part in by several towns. The red clay was used to make identification marks of their weapons, face and

body. He was on the side that used the red clay as markings. It is thought to have been among the towns of Coweta, Inlopthocco, Artusse and Hothli able tribal towns and the war that Cho Yahola took part in was probably the Red Stick war sometimes called "E-cha-te-ck-a" which is believed to have been in 1812 or 1814 in the old country.

When the side that Cho Yahola was in, took or captured another band of Indians he told of noticing their sign, as they scampered and fled over their enclosure, that it was a-sah (sort of wood fashioned into some object) that was stuck into the back of their breech cloth.

Any of the enemies that were overpowered and captured either surrendered easily mostly for the sake of their children and families and were willing to be adopted into a tribe while others of the enemy side would fight to their death. That was why so many of the Indian members of one tribe became members of another tribal town--through captivity. Any of white men that were killed in battle were scalped and if they were taken alive, they were burned at the stake. The Indians did this because they took the

white men as being their worst enemy.

The bodies of women, children and Indian men could be strewn along the way with an occasional body of the white man. Some bodies were seen here and there, dead from the arrow which had pierced their bodies and was still there.

The first thing to arrive in the Indian territory attempted to establish trade posts but when the government gave them authority to make permanent homes, they would choose sites along and near the banks of clear large streams or selecting regions in the hills and choose the valleys. Along those streams were established the summer camps where it was cool and near enough for fishing while the valleys would be chosen for the winter camp, the mountains serving as a protection from the winter winds. The good permanent homes could not be made quickly. Deer hides and elm bark came into good use to further the shelter purpose. Later on, poles were cut and the logs used to make log houses but not a nail was used. In placing the logs upon another as in the old-fashioned log houses, there were no notches and to keep from rolling off, two pieces of stick for props

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were placed long opposite from one another along the sides of the log and fastened by tying with barks or stout easily bent and tied sprouts. The main poles were then placed upon another and built up from the ground. Each log being held in place by being tied and the spaces being filled in by mud.

(Note: No effort has been made to edit this manuscript since the Field Worker writes in typical Indian style. Ed.)