

TANYAN, WESLEY

INTERVIEW
SEMINOLES

#12475

133

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An interview of Wesley Tanyan,
Hitchita Band, Age 38, Seminole,
Oklahoma

Billie Byrd, Field Worker
Indian-pioneer History
12-22-37

Dating back to 1840 up to 1848, the migration of the Seminoles took place and according to the legends of their travels, they left Florida and the country where they lived and moved to a new country which was the Indian Territory. This group of Indians were not satisfied with this move and after arriving in the Indian Territory they took up a trip which led into Mexico under their great leader, Co-wako-chee (Wild Cat).

Legends have been handed down and the older people are said to have told that there was one certain old Seminole man among the migrating Indians who was held in high esteem and regard for his powers as a tribal medicine man. He was Ah-ha-lak E-math-la. The only office held in the tribal towns or bands were those of a chief, spokesmen and the medicine man. Only outstanding men

were recognized and appointed to these offices, but the chief and the medicine man were the able leaders during the migration.

A-ha-lak E-math-la was my great grandfather and is said to have served as a right hand man to Wild Cat who first led his people over the trail that became known as the Wild Cat trail. The trail as we know is across the, or was laid across the eastern central portion of what is now Oklahoma and led on into the south into Mexico.

Even with the life in Florida, and in the wars that took place there, A-ha-lak E-math-la, my great grandfather, used his powers in the use of the medicine while he served under the Chief Osceola. He served Osceola until his death but he assisted in the escape of Wild Cat from the prison at Augustine, Florida, with the use of the medicine. The powers of the human prepared medicine and the results obtained are said to have been accomplished because the Indians were sometimes uncanny in their beliefs and their regular time spent in fasting to obtain the best benefits from all these rites. The medicine was strictly used during

all the time of the move to the new country.

The Apaches gave the Seminoles trouble when in the midst of their wanderings after they had been forced to leave their old homes. They were never satisfied in the new country and they took up to wandering around in different parts of the country under their leader, Wild Cat, while A-ha-lak E-math-la was serving as medicine man all this time.

The Apaches plundered and stole from the Seminoles anything they could get. When this trouble arose, the Seminoles were trying to make settlements but the Apaches were daring enough to steal some horses from them. The Seminoles could not do without their stock. A-ha-lak E-math-la took up the trail of the Apaches and followed the trail that led to a stream of clear running water. The stock had been driven across the stream at one place but instead of crossing at the same place, my great grandfather went or followed the course of the stream for a short time when he finally fell on his stomach to take a drink from the stream. Before he stood up or before he ever hardly realized what was happening, an arrow had been shot from the

opposite bank of the stream and found a mark on my great grandfather's left cheek. Glancing across the stream, he saw an Indian woman where she had lain in wait for such prowlers as he.

It is told that he didn't think much or was much concerned about the arrow, but he just pulled it away from its place in his cheek but he leisurely began to doctor himself. Probably there is no one now that can do what he did--he forced his tongue to the wound on his cheek and began to lick the place. There was no bleeding of the wound, and, in all, the incident did not seem to bother him. The woman on the opposite bank witnessed all this incident, and when she saw what the medicine man was doing to heal his wound, quickly disappeared into the thickets.

There was an agreement made by the Mexican government and the Seminoles, resulting during their travels and while they were in Mexico, that Mexico would give the Seminoles some land if the Seminoles aided the Mexicans in some trouble they were having with some hostile tribes. There is now a move

Tanyan, Wesley

Interview.

P. 5.

138
12475

being made by the older ones of the Seminoles who know of this agreement do take up the land that was promised to them. Those moves are made by members of the Bruner Band. (there are fourteen bands within the Seminole tribe.)