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LETTER

Dear SAS Members:

Jean Allen's 1985 Student Paper Competition winning paper will be published in two parts, the first appearing in this issue. The second will appear in the next issue of *The Southern Anthropologist*. If you would like to read the entire paper before the next issue, write directly to Jean Allen at Rt. 1, Box 342, Moundville, Alabama 35474.

Patricia B. Lerch, Editor

CONVENTION NOTES

The 1986 Annual Meeting of the SAS in Wrightsville Beach, N.C. promises an exciting program. Professor Rodney Needham, Oxford University, has agreed to present the keynote address. He will discuss "features of h[illegible]an thought" with reference to coastal cultures. The key symposium, entitled "Cultural Adaptations on the Southern Coastal Plain," will span the prehistoric, historic, and contemporary scene. In addition, the meeting theme is continued in four invited sessions on "Southeastern Archaeology," "Contemporary Southeastern Indians," "Coastal Folklore," and "Coastal Resource Management."

Based on the abstracts (95) received thus far, we will have the following states represented on the program: North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, West Virginia, Virgina; and two foreign countries, Great Britain and Switzerland.

The Planning Committee is meeting in early January to organize the program. The meeting participants will receive a letter from the Program Chair shortly thereafter with information concerning the time and date of the paper presentations. All abstracts submitted have been accepted on the program.

Both Piedmont Airlines and United Airlines (after Jan. 6, 1986) offer air service to the New Hanover County Airport, Wilmington, North Carolina. However, Piedmont probably will offer the best fares.

Hotel reservations should be made early and directly with the convention hotel (see Abstract information sheet for rates). The hotel addresses and phone numbers are: **Blockade Runner Hotel** (919-256-2251), 275 Waynick Blvd., Wrightsville Beach, N.C. 28480. **Summer Sands** (919-256-4175), 104 S. Lumina Av., Wrightsville Beach, N.C. 28480. **Sheraton Hotel** (919-256-2231), 1706 N. Lumina Av., Wrightsville Beach, N.C. (919-256-2231). Although we encourage people to stay at the convention hotel, for those who may wish less expensive lodging, Wilmington's Market Street and College Ave. are within 10 minutes of the convention site at the Beach.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cover Design: Artist Virginia Wright Frierson received a B.F.A. degree in Painting from UNC Greensboro. After graduation in 1971, Ms. Wright Frierson moved to New York to study at the Art Students' League. Before settling in Wilmington, she studied at the University of Arizona in Tuscon. Her paintings and drawings have been exhibited at the St. John's Art Museum in Wilmington, N.C. Ms. Wright Frierson has taught courses in life drawing and watercolor at UNCW and at St. John's Art Museum. In addition, Ms. Wright Frierson is an illustrator of children's books.

Call For Volunteers: The 1987 SAS Annual Meetings will be held in Atlanta, Ga. Georgia State will handle local arrangements. Volunteers are sought for Program Chair, Key Symposium Organizer, and Student Paper Competition Chair. A complete description of the responsibilities of each of these positions has been sent to department chairs. Interested persons should contact:

Dr. Holly Mathews, Secretary/Treasurer
Southern Anthropological Society
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Economics
East Carolina University
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Richard Kania Receives N.C. Criminal Justice Educators Award: On Friday, September 27th Dr. Richard Kania was named the 1985 recipient of the Margaret Lang Willis Award, as the Outstanding Criminal Justice Educator in North Carolina. The award is given annually by the North Carolina Association of Criminal Justice Educators in recognition of the recipient's contributions to the field of criminal justice education. Kania has a bachelors degree from Florida State University (Anthropology, 1968), and his masters (1974) and doctorate from the University of Virginia (Social Anthropology and Sociology, 1982). He is an assistant professor of administration of justice at Guilford College.

Position Open: The University of North Carolina at Wilmington announces a tenure track position in Anthropology. The starting date is August 1986. The Department seeks an Anthropologist with specialities outside of the Americas and who is able to teach both methods and theory in cultural anthropology. Other interests are open. Applications are to be sent by January 31, 1986 to:

Dr. Patricia B. Lerch, Chair
Search Committee
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1985 WINNER OF STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION

CHOTAW WITCHCRAFT:
A SYNTHESIS OF THE ETHNOHISTORIC ACCOUNTS

Jean Allen
University of Alabama
Paper submitted for Student Paper Competition
Southern Anthropological Society Meetings
Fayetteville, Arkansas
April 10-13, 1985

Abstract

"Belief in witches, which seems to have been an overshadowing horror to so many people, was equally rampant among the Choctaw" (Swanton 1931:239). Although there is little doubt of the existence of witch beliefs and their persistence within this Southeastern Indian group, documentation of the subject is severely limited. This paper reviews available sources with a consideration of their restrictions. As with most groups who conceive of witches, there is the logical assumption that witchcraft is involved only in events that cannot be accounted for through obvious explanations.

Introduction

This study advances some generalizations and speculations on the cognitive aspects of Choctaw witchcraft. The topics addressed concern culturally recognized categories of witches, witchcraft methodology, identity of witch suspects and victims, and how one recognizes events where witchcraft is involved.

Traditional anthropology recognizes a dichotomy of witch versus sorcerer established by E.E. Evans Pritchard (1976:1) for the Azande. The Choctaw do not make clear distinctions in these two categories. Choctaw witches are believed to intentionally create misfortune for their fellow man through supernatural techniques or abilities. Using supernatural techniques for evil purposes, whether through ritual or psychic actions, may be viewed as morally equivalent (Fogelson 1975: 127). Contemporary Choctaw accept the English term witch in this context despite distinctions which may be made in native categories of occult specialists. Therefore, for the purposes of this essay, witchcraft and sorcery will be collectively referred to as witchcraft.

There is a dearth of information on Choctaw witch beliefs. Therefore, documentary sources gathered from various Choctaw communities during different periods of Choctaw history have been combined to produce a synthesis. This syncretic approach, though not without inconsistencies, has the advantage of revealing motifs with considerable time depth. Through historic repetition, a motif's relevance in the ideological context of witch beliefs can be established. This process may be viewed as analogous to recording repeated occurrences of a motif in a collection of synchronic case histories. It further serves to demonstrate the enduring elements of witch beliefs. Occassional

references to closely related Indian groups are employed when there is a hiatus in the Choctaw records.[2]

Data Collection

The ideal study of witchcraft includes careful descriptions of a society's belief and behavioral systems in its own terms. This needs to be established before attempting cross-cultural comparison and generalization. In the case of the Choctaw, only a general description of witchcraft beliefs can be approximated from the available data.

The available material on Choctaw witchcraft beliefs is restricted by a variety of factors. This can be viewed from a twofold perspective. One concerns the people recording the beliefs and why their accounts are incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. The other relates to emic restrictions since the Choctaw are reluctant to discuss the subject.

Initially, explorers and traders, and later, missionaries and early ethnographers gathered information from various groups of Choctaw, usually during brief visits. Many of the early European reports were made by people who were not fluent in the native language. Usually recording religious or ritual data was secondary to their purpose, which was, in most cases, to profit from their encounter with the Indians. Alternatively, missionaries were interested in eradicating aboriginal religious practices when they could not syncretize them into some semblance of Christianity. The idea of witchcraft, specifically, was not a problem for pre-nineteeth century Christians, for many of them also believed in the existence of witches. In the middle to late 1800s, during the missionization period of the Choctaw, Christian witchcraft beliefs were no longer in vogue. As a consequence, the missionaries discouraged Choctaw witchcraft beliefs.

Early twentieth century ethnographers such as Swanton, Bushnell, and Densmore did much to record traditional beliefs and practices. The magnitude of their work is a testimony to their achievement, however, their accounts are not without bias. Often, they trained informants to describe events in conformance with the categories they thought significant. Blanchard (1980, 1981) gathered considerable information on contemporary Mississippi Choctaw witch beliefs. His efforts are primarily involved with ritual in the context of athletic activities.

Native informants may feel genuine discomfort discussing topics that are defined by their culture as evil or ugly (Kluckhohn 1972:13). John Peterson (personal communication, 1983), who has done extensive work with the Mississippi Choctaw, says the ethnographer has to make a choice whether or not to bring up the subject of witches and thereafter be considered an individual of extremely poor taste. He also believes ethnic and linguistic differences between the ethnographer and the Choctaws would severely inhibit information flow on the subject. Working with the Louisiana Choctaw, H. F. Gregory (personal communication, 1985) expresses similar sentiments and further remarks that it is very dangerous to talk about witchcraft. He says the Choctaw believe witchcraft comes in episodes and they never mention it for fear doing so will start one. Moreover, one cannot speak of witches without them knowing they are being talked about, no matter how far away the speaker is and this

greatly constrains the Choctaw from discussing witchcraft. Blanchard (1981: 152) says an accused witch who is being talked about may put a spell on the one telling the story or making the accusation. Blanchard found Choctaw informants would talk about deceased witches since they were "safe" to discuss. Also, in the context of sports activites, where a witch represents his community's interests, there was a more relaxed attitude about discussing witchcraft (Blanchard 1980:89, 1981:156).

Blanchard said that informants hesitant to talk about the techniques of doctors and witches, especially providing their names, were much more open about these matters in conversations concerning the sport and recreation program (Blanchard 1980:89). When discussing these subjects in general dialogues they would be described in broad terms, however, when they were brought up in connection with athletic events informants would be very explicit in giving names, dates, and places. The reason for this phenomenon, suggests Blanchard, is that the sport context "lowers the anxiety normally associated with certain dimensions of the extraordinary" (Blanchard 1980:89).

An informant who discusses witches may appear to "know too much," become suspected of witchcraft himself, and risk community ostracism and reprisal (Blanchard 1981:152). Would-be Choctaw witches also invite attacks from their more experienced brethren who do not relish new competition (Blanchard 1981: 155).

A Chickasaw informant, Zeno McCurtain, told Swanton (1928c:27) that: "Wizards would not disclose the specific things they could do, for they claimed that this would cause them to lose their power."

Another inhibiting factor for the informant might be fear of ridicule. Usually the white man makes no effort to disguise his amusement or skepticism of Indian rituals and beliefs (Capron 1953:160).

General Background

The Choctaw Indians were the largest group within the Muskogean stock. Related both historically and linguistically to the Chickasaws, and, to a lesser extent, the Creeks and Seminoles, they were the largest tribe in the Southeast next to the Cherokee, although the Creek Confederation may have equalled or surpassed them at various times (Swanton 1946:121).

At the beginning of the European contact period, they occupied the central and southern part of present-day Mississippi and a large area of southwestern Alabama. At the present time, over 4,000 Choctaw still inhabit their traditional homeland in Mississippi (Peterson 1979:142). Over 19,000 live in Oklahoma. Although only these two groups have federal recognition, there are other communities in Louisiana and Tennessee that consider themselves ethnically Choctaw. Today's Choctaw communities range from dispersed rural settlements to towns, with public schools, tribal offices, housing developments, and businesses.

For much of their history, the Choctaw were a sedentary horticultural group living in small villages (McKee and Schlenker 1980:193). Traditionally, formal social organization was based on matrilineal exogamous moieties divided

into nontotemic clans, a territorial division into three or four groups of "towns," and four social classes (Eggan 1937:35). In historic times the moieties went out of existence (McKee and Schlenker 1980:46). This alteration of the traditional kinship system was effected by missionaries. They perceived women's roles in matrilineal society as contrary to Christain doctrine (Eggan 1937).

Today, as a result of the missions, most Choctaw belong to one of several churches. These include Baptist, Methodist, Church of God, Episcopalian, Mennonite, and Roman Catholic. Although most Choctaws consider religious questions from a Christian perspective there is still evidence of an earlier belief system (Blanchard 1981: 146).

According to Swanton (1931:195), Rev. Alfred Wright left the best account of aboriginal Choctaw religion. Wright said a supreme diety was associated with the sun and, although he was all powerful and his support was requested in war, he expected and required no other form of worship (Wright 1828: 179-80). Cushman (1899:159) claims good and evil spirits had a more direct effect on human life. This good versus evil concept may have some basis in fact, though it is more likely that Choctaws made no clear distinction, the nature of spirits depending on circumstances.

Most Southeastern Indians believed all animate and inanimate objects had varying degrees of power or spirit. These spirits were not of themselves necessarily evil. They were viewed as very human and justifiable. Spirits took revenge for certain abuses such as lack of respect and slights people committed against them. Or they could be manipulated to good or evil ends by human agency (Mooney and Olbrechts 1932:19).

Human ritual practitioners magically engaged these spirits, along with their own, in a kind of cosmic power play. The Choctaw recognized several categories of these occult specialists including rainmakers, medicine men, prophets, and witches.

Definitions

The established anthropological distinctions between sorcery and witchcraft were originally formulated by E. E. Evans-Pritchard to accommodate his Zande data. Among the Azande, some people are thought to be witches and they injure others through an inherent quality without the use of rites, spells, or medicines. A sorcerer, on the other hand, harms people while applying such techniques (Evans-Pritchard 1976:1). The influence of Evans-Pritchard has caused many anthropologists to force their data into this scheme (Fogelson 1975:118). The Evans-Pritchard model disavows any need to instruct witches in malevolent skills since their ability is due to an innate quality. With the Southeastern Indians it would seem that the propensity for evil behavior may be an innate character flaw found in witches but that knowledge of witchcraft procedure is usually acquired. A similar pattern occurs in Europe where witchcraft was considered an art that had to be learned and was not hereditary as in many African tribes.

Part of the difficulty in identifying possible witch "types" among the Choctaw arises from the confusion of the early observers. The terms witch,

wizard, sorcerer, priest, medicine man, witch doctor, conjurer, juggler and shaman are often used interchangably. Although not all of these terms are used to describe malevolent personnel, the designations for ritual specialists clearly overlap in the observed or alleged actions attributed them. One might add the Choctaw diviner, prophet, or seer to this list of terms, though a more consistently positive association is evidenced by this role.

Other terminological problems are generated by historical changes in the social definition of ritual specialists among the Southeastern Indians (Hudson 1978:337). Further, the Indians themselves may have difficulty categorizing ritual specialists. This can be aptly illustrated by the remarks of Zeno McCurtain, a Chickasaw informant of Swanton's. McCurtain says:

> The procedures of the conjurer and the wizard were slightly different, but the ignorant did not know in what this difference consisted. . . . There was another kind of wizard whose methods were somewhat different [from the conjurer]. He had magic power to injure or kill persons at a distance, but he could do nothing else and so was not a true wizard. Yet he was called by the same name. These wizards sometimes killed children. . . . The doctor is supposed to hold himself entirely apart from other conjurers or wizards. Another sort of wizard was called Yucpakama or juggler. . . . (Swanton 1928c: 271).

According to Blanchard (1981:148), among contemporary Mississippi Choctaw there is also much disagreement as to their perception and classification of the roles of ritual personnel. He said most people recognized two distinct types of ritual specialists, the Choctaw doctor (alikchi) and the witch (hatak holhkonna). Some people reported that the doctor assumes both roles, a doctor being good or bad depending upon how he uses his talents.

Other clues to Choctaw witch distinctions might be found in Byington's (1915) A Dictionary of the Choctaw Language. Byington offers the following as Choctaw terms for witch: chuka ishi kanchak, hatak holhkunna, hatak yushpakammi, holhkunna, isht ahollo, nan apoluma, nan isht ahollo, ahoyo isht ahollo. After the word sorcerer we find: isht ahollo. For the term wizard he suggests: hatak holhkunna, hatak isht ahollo. Byington also gives terms for: witch, a ball-play; witch, a great; witch, to; witch ball; witchcraft; and witchcraft, to pretend to. As can be seen from the above, the English terms witch, wizard, and sorcerer appear to have little linguistic distinction in Choctaw; whereas, there appears on surface observation to be quite a few expressions for "witch". Tracing the terms in reverse in the Choctaw-English section reveals the following results:

chuka ishi kanchak, n., a witch; a hobgoblin. [chuka, a dwelling, ishi, a grasp; someone who seizes or takes; to take, kanchak, a corncrib.]

hatak holhkunna, n., a witch; a wizard; a dreamer; a necromancer. [hatak, a man; holhkunna, a witch.]

hatak yushpakammi, n., a witch; a bewitcher; ikhi^{n}sh isht yushpakammi. [yushpakammi, sorcery; ikhi^{n}sh, medicine; pakammi, a deceiver; isht pakammi, to witch.]

isht ahollo, n., one who performs miracles; a wonderful being; a witch; a demoniac, a sorcerer.

nan apoluma, n., a witch. [nan, a thing; apoluma, a conjurer at ball plays, called a ball play witch.]

nan isht ahollo, nan isht ahullo, n., a witch; a spirit; an invisible being; a supernatural being; a mammoth.

ohoyo isht ahollo, n., a hag; a shrew; a witch. [ahoyo, a female.]

hatukchaya, hatukchaya, n., a great witch; an imaginary being who makes Choctaw doctors.

isht albi, n., a witch ball; a bait; a trap; a snare; a net; a springe.

fappo, fahpo, n., magic; tricks; enchantment; witchcraft; conjuration; a charm.

isht ahollo ilahobi, isht ahullo ilahobi, v.a.i., to juggle; to conjure; to pretent to witchcraft. [ilahobi, a pretender, a hypocrite.]

kanapa, n., an injury in some mysterious witchcraft-like way; isht kanapa.

Using the defining characters for witch as a human being who creates misfortune through supernatural agencies, some of these possible categories can be eliminated. Chuka ishi kanchak may be more of a goblin than a human witch. Wright (1880:217) offers the following definition for kashikanchack; a hobgoblin, a witch, a fairy, in Choctaw fable, the children eater. Hatak holhkunna is cited most frequently as the Choctaw counterpart of the English term witch and has specifically evil connotations (Blanchard 1981:146, Byington 1915:607, Bushnell 1909:29, Cushman 1899: 155, Sepulvado 1983:80, Swanton 1931:239, Wright 1880:158). Hatak yushpakammi, is the type of wizard McCurtain referred to as the Chickasaw Yucpakama or juggler. His specialty was said to be sleight-of-hand performances and McCurtain did not consider him a "true wizard" (Swanton 1928c:271). Lincecum (1904:526) mentions the yushpakammi as being conjurers of every grade. Lincecum also refers to people called Isht ahullos. He talks about the ". . . Isht ahullos, conjurers and dreamers, who according to their own words, are the only men through which the spirits can make manifest to the nation their burthensome and hurtful desires" (Lincecum 1904:527). This seems to indicate that the isht ahollo was a type of religious specialist or priest and was not particularly evil. Isht ahollo or nan isht ahollo is also used to denote anything which excites surprise or possesses some occult or superior power[3] according to Wright (Swanton 1931: 195). Cushman (1899: 211) says: "The true signification of the word Nahullo is a superhuman or supernatural being . . ." Nan apoluma is a conjurer at ball plays. Whether the ball play witch is also hatak holhkunna is less certain. Perhaps he only assumes this role when his use of magic at the ball game is an unethical harming of individual players as opposed to manipulating the total game context. Hatukchaya may not be a human being. He apparently serves a role in helping doctors. Supernatural little people are also credited with this activity. Perhaps these supernatural entities serve a similar function. Isht albi, a witchball can be a ball used in a ball game that a doctor (alikchi) has treated so the other team cannot score with it (Blanchard

1981:156). A doctor might also diagnose a witchball as the cause of his patient's illness. The "ball" would have been shot by psychic means into the patient's body through the actions of a witch. Fappo apparently refers to magic and has no specifically evil overtones. Isht ahollo ilahobi, to conjure or pretent to witchcraft might be similar to the idea expressed by Swanton's Chickasaw interpreter:

> At times a person who had a grudge against another would go to a wizard and pay him a good price in injure his enemy. Certain persons claimed to be wizards, but were not. That caused much trouble among the Indians, for the object was usually to extort money, and if such an one were found out he was killed (Swanton 1928c:271).

Kanapa, an injury in some mysterious witchcraft-like way, clearly refers to the belief that only unusual or inexplicable injuries are due to witchcraft, not ordinary events.

From this analysis it appears that the Choctaw may not clearly define categories of supernatural evil doers such as the roles of Azande sorcerer and witch.

Another category of Choctaw witch terms concerncerns the owl. Swanton (1931:189, 1946:777) specifies the horned owl, Ishkitini, as a "sinister character" associated with witchcraft. He was believed to prowl about at night killing animals and men. This association may equate the owl as merely an evil omen or it could refer to the witch's ability to shapeshift into owl form. Both the Cherokee (Mooney and Olbrechts 1932:29) and the Seminole (Howard 1984:97) believe in the man-owl as a kind of witch. The Seminole also accuse horned owls (stitikini) whereas the Cherokee avoid suspicious hoot owls (tsi:kili). Another owl/witch association is mentioned by Blanchard (1981:148). He identifies the hopa alikchi, literally, owl doctor, as "one who hides behind the owl." The hopa is a large owl. Again this may refer to the doctor shapeshifting into an owl or it could refer to a "grade" of medicine men such as existed among the Creek. A Creek who had gone through complete priestly instruction was allowed to wear the feather of a horned owl to signify his status. Some priests even carried a stuffed owl (Hudson 1976:34, Swanton 1928b:617-621). Romans describes a Choctaw expedition that had what he calls a "genius of the party." This was a large stuffed owl which was carried, guarded, offered meat, and used as an omen (Romans 1962:76). This may have been the property of a medicine man. The hopa alikchi is the equivalent of hatak holhkonna, the witch (Blanchard 1981:148).

The Choctaw Doctor

The Choctaw medicine man (alikchi) or "doctor" might be equated with the witch doctor/sorcerer of European folk communities. These Europeans, like their African colleagues, had methods of divination which enabled them to discover who had bewitched a man or his possessions. They performed anti-witchcraft rites and spells and provided charms to protect their clients from new bewitchings (Henningsen 1980: 10). The Choctaw doctor provided similar services as part of his profession. Not all illnesses were thought to be the result of witchcraft since some were the result of the patient's breaking a

behavior code or due to other negative influences. However, it is not surprising that Choctaw witches are usually detected by medicine men.

The Choctaw had two classes of doctors. One type of medicine man was primarily an herbalist. The other used occult powers for prophecy and healing (Swanton 1946:778, Blanchard 1981:149). The occult specialist was viewed as the more powerful of the two. He also used herbs in some of his treatments. In order to attain his position, he may have had to go through ordeals similar to the training Creek priests underwent (Swanton 1946:778).

Although being a medicine man or doctor is not the equivalent of being a witch, the translation "medicine" is often synonymous with magic when dealing with references to the American Indian. By this definition, witches could be considered as a subset of medicine men. Since witches often cause illness, physical disability or other misfortune and, ideally, the doctor trys to cure these same problems, their control over medicinal magic is closely related. For this reason, doctors are frequent witch suspects.

According to H. F. Gregory (personal communication, 1985) the medicine man has "power" and that can be for good or evil. The Western idea of an either-or division of good versus evil is absent in tribal tradition. Even the best-loved doctor he heard people talk about came with the admonition that she could be "very dangerous." Medicine men, if offended, can behave as witches.

One of Swanton's Choctaw informants, Simpson Tubby, refers to wizards as bad doctors (Swanton 1931:240). Some of Blanchard's (1981: 148) informants also identify bad doctors with witches. The European folk concept of white versus black witches expresses a similar division of medicomagical practitioners.

A Choctaw doctor could be male or female. Among contemporary Choctaw, male doctors predominate (Blanchard 1981:149, Sepulvado 1983: 92). Whether this was true before the breakdown of the matrilineal system is less certain. Debo (1972:233) said doctors were frequently women. Folsom claimed there was an equal number of men and women doctors and that women were as successful as their male counterparts (Cushman 1899:367). It seems likely that female doctors with any great degree of power would have needed to be past menopause.

In addition to the use of herbs in his curing practices, the doctor had other remedies. Incantations, singing, administering emetics and cathartics, cauterization, sweating, accupressure, and sucking might also be used. Often, the sucking doctor cut a small X on the patient's skin. He then placed the large end of a hollow cow horn over the cut. He sucked the blood into the horn. After he removed the horn he analyzed the coagulated blood.

Simpson Tubby explains that the doctor's sucking actions could also be used to remove an object some wizard had injected. Doctors extracted lizards, snakes, terrapin, millipedes, or earwigs from their patients in this manner. These bodily intrusions could "aggrevate a person to death" (Swanton 1931: 236).

An eighteenth century Jesuit witnessed Choctaw doctors revealing "bison wool or a little piece of wood" in the bottom of the sucking horn as evidence of a patient's bewitchment (Swanton 1918:62).

Sampson Collin said:

> The extraction of witchballs was a customary Choctaw medical practice. The theory, that disease was caused by something secretly thrown into the patient's body by a witch, resulted in attempts to remove the object. The witchball had to be extracted from the patient by some type of powerful suction . . . (Allen 1970:64).

When her elder sister was ill, Emma Christian recalled a woman doctor's steam treatment:

> After the time of steaming was over she showed Mother a little ball, presumably made of hair and a clot of something like blood on it. She pretended that she drew this out of Sister's side by the steaming process. She said that Sister had been shot by an enemy with a poisoned ball . . . (Christian 1931:161).

Edwards also remarks on the belief in witchballs:

> Again, they extract the witchball. The theory of disease at the foundation of this is that it is caused by something secretly thrown into the body by a witch. It may be a wolf's hair, or a small coal, or a pebble, or any little thing (Edwards 1932:415).

Collin illustrates the "successful" removal of a witchball in the following story.

> One young Choctaw woman, paralyzed from the hip down, was taken by her husband to a woman practitioner. After conducting a special ceremony for four consecutive days, the doctor removed from an iron pot, which had been part of the ceremony, a red flannel string tied in many knots. The doctor explained that the string had been between the woman's hips and had kept her from walking. She instructed the woman to move from the neighborhood in which the couple lived to prevent being bewitched again. The young wife, believing herself to be cured walked away (Allen 1970:64).

This theory of disease caused by an intrusive object is widespread. Peoples with the disease-object concept believe it is the spiritual essence represented by the object which actually causes the illness. Therefore, the real problem is the presence of a foreign spirit in the body not merely the object itself (Clements 1932:188).

In the past, Choctaw doctors were frequently prevailed upon to diagnose symptoms of bewitchment. Two contemporary Choctaw doctors, "John" and "Bill" say that many of their patients seek their help believing they have been hexed by a witch (Sepulvado 1983:109-110).

Cushman says when the Indian doctor unlike his white counterpart:

> . . . who attributes the cause of his failure to innumerable "whereases and ifs," did not effect a cure, . . .openly acknowledged and emphatically declared the interposition of a <u>hattak holth-kun-na</u> (witch), . . . who consequently was immediately slain by the relatives of the deceased" (Cushman 1899:260).

Debo (1972:7) takes this skeptical view of doctors even further by saying, as the doctor: ". . . was liable to punishment for failure, he usually found it safer to discover evidence of witchcraft, which made death inevitable. If necessary he took measures to insure the fatal outcome which he had predicted . . . ." McCurtain claims: ". . .there were some doctors who were only quacks, and these caused the death of many innocent people by falsely accusing them of witchcraft" (Swanton 1928c:272).

An alternative view maintains that the doctors are in a dangerous position when their cures fail. An anonymous eighteenth century Jesuit describes the Choctaw:

> They recognize only the devil, and those among them who invoke him are called jugglers. These are usually doctors. These persons have much to fear when they undertake the case of a sick person who is a chief, for if he dies after they have conjured, his relatives say that he has bewitched him, and if he escapes after he has been condemned to death, they say that he had bewitched him and that fate has erred; so in all ways he runs risk of being killed. (Swanton 1918:61).

According to Bossu:

> When a Choctaw is sick, he gives all that he owns to be cured. If, however, the patient dies, his relatives blame it on the medicine and not the sick man's condition. They can kill the medicine man if they want to, but this rarely happens since he usually has a good excuse ready (Feiler 1962:167).

Blanchard (1981:151) notes that doctors are often accused of misusing their powers though they are generally viewed as valuable members of the community. When the doctor causes the death of a community member or is repeatedly associated with misfortune, the functional contrast between witch and doctor disappears.

The Little People

At times, both doctors and witches are said to obtain the assistance of supernatural dwarves. This is a widespread belief in the Southeast and has been documented for the Chickasaw (Speck 1907:56), Creek (Gatchet 1888:237), Seminole (Howard 1984:210), Natchez (Swanton 1928b:497), Tunica (H.F. Gregory, personal communication, 1985), Cherokee (Witthoff and Hadlock 1956:413), and Catawba (Speck 1934:27) as well as the Choctaw. Several common themes emerge from these tales of pygmy beings. The earlier accounts indicate that there were two or more different types of little people. Though not particularly evil, they are mischievious. They dwell in the woods. Doctors and witches receive their aid or can control them. Small children can also see them. They are about two to three feet tall. They may be solitary but occasionally there are several in a group. They often purposely lose people in the woods as a "test" and can cause confusion and temporary insanity as a result. Also, they look and dress like Indians and speak the native language, though they may be difficult to understand. They have superhuman strength and other supernatural abilities.

Halbert calls these little rascals the Choctaw equivalents of Robin Goodfellow. He asserts the following:

> The Choctaws in Mississippi say that there is a little man, about two feet high, that dwells in the thick woods and is solitary in his habits. This little sprite or hobgoblin is called by the Choctaws Bohpoli, or Kowi anukasha, both names being used indifferently or synonymously. The translation of Bohpoli is the "Thrower." The translation of Kowi anukasha is "The one who stays in the woods," or, to give a more concise translation, "Forest-dweller." Bohpoli is represented as being somewhat sportive and mischievious but not malicious in his nature. The Choctaws say that he often playfully throws sticks and stones at the people. Every mysterious noise heard in the woods, whether by day or night, they ascribe to Bohpoli. He takes special pleasure, they say, in striking the pine trees. A young Indian once told me that one night, whilst camped in the woods, he was awakened out of a deep sleep by a loud noise made on a pine tree by Bohpoli. Bohpoli or Kowi anukasha, is never seen by the common Choctaws. The Choctaw prophets and doctors, however, claim the power of seeing him and of holding communication with him. The Indian doctors say that Bohpoli assists them in the manufacture of their medicines. Most Choctaws say or think that there is but one Bohpoli. In the opinion of others there may be more than one (Halbert 1895:157).

Bushnell describes little people helping witches:

> Accompanying them [witches] always were several spirits, otherwise resembling men, but no larger than a man's thumb. On reaching the person against whom the spell was to be directed the witch would stop and point toward him, whereupon one of the little spirits would go noiselessly and touch him, afterward remaining and doing a great deal of mischief about the place. The spirit was able to pass with ease through cracks, and thus to reach places not accessible to a larger being. After directing the little spirit, which was left to continue its work, the wizard would fly back to his village or house and again assume his natural condition. Such is the belief of the Choctaw even at the present day (Bushnell 1909: 29).

Bushnell's informant, Ahojeobe (Emil John) tells about Kwanokåsha, a little spirit who is a man no larger than a child two or three years old. Kwanokåsha lures small children into the woods where he and several comrades give the child a test by offering him a knife, poison herbs, and good herbs. If the child chooses the good herbs, the little people will teach him to be a great doctor (Bushnell 1909:31).

Little people taught Choctaw doctors the method of removing witchballs from a patient. Edwards says:

> The art of extracting this [the witchball] is learned from the kowi-anu^{n}kasha. The word means something that "is in the woods." He is a fabulous little nondescript, with which the doctor has held communication, and learned from him the magic art. The art itself is somewhat of the nature of dry cupping. The process is none other

than sucking. The lips are repeatedly applied to the diseased part, and by dint of powerful exertion of the muscles employed, in connection with the mysterious power given by the kowi-anu^{n}k-asha, the dread witchball is at last removed (Edwards 1932:415-416).

Contemporary accounts of the Choctaw little people have been recorded by Blanchard and Sepulvado. Blanchard says the advice of these tiny, forest dwelling people is especially pertinent to Choctaw ball players because they reputedly hurl large rocks at trees with great velocity and hence have a superior knowledge of throwing skills (Blanchard 1980:86). He records several reports of little men.

Sepulvado interviewed two present day Choctaw medicine men. According to these doctors, when the belief in little people is acknowledged, the contemporary practice of traditional Indian medicine is legitimatized (Sepulvado 1983:78, 108).

Dr. "Bill", a conservative Mississippi Choctaw, gives the little people credit for having given him the knowledge of medicine. He has a single little person helper. Dr. "Bill" first learned of this little person when he was a child (Sepulvado 1983:76).

Dr. "John", a more modernized Choctaw doctor, also acknowledges the help of the little people. He obtains his herbs from the little people when he is too busy to gather them himself. He says little people are invisible and only the Indian who has been called to be a doctor can see them.

H. F. Gregory (personal communication, 1985) says contemporary Louisiana Choctaw have a belief in little people that parallels that of the Mississippi Choctaw.

An earlier Chickasaw description of the little people figure them directly in the process of becoming a doctor. Speck says:

> The real shamanistic power, however, can be obtained only from a class of spirits called I^{n}yaqanaca^{e}, "people of his clan," meaning, in the broadest sense, his ancestors, who are known to dwell as spirits abroad in the woods. They are invisible to all but those having a shaman's power. The candidate, after paying for his instructions from the seller, goes into the woods, alone and entirely naked, for three days. He paints his body red, with cross bars below the knees, face red, and breast with red and blue bars, sometimes only on one side. During the three days he eats nothing, as the little people of his clan are supposed to care for him and teach him all that he should know in detail. He must keep his knowledge in strict secrecy. When he returns to his village he is a shaman (aliktce) (Speck 1907:56).

Becoming a Witch

Since a close relationship exists between the powers of a doctor and those of a witch, the process by which one becomes a doctor may be similar for the witch. Doctors are said to receive a "calling" to their profession. A

Choctaw from the Pearl River community in Mississippi explains: "They say you have to have a sign. It can be a snake, an owl, maybe the little men. Something that pulls you away . . ." (Blanchard 1981:150).

Swanton (1931:227) believes the Choctaw may have had schools of training for doctors like the Creeks. Israel Folsom, speaking of all classes of Choctaw doctors including the medicine man, or prophet, and the rainmaker, says some learned their methods: ". . . by special revelation communicated to them in some retired and unfrequented forest" (Cushman 1899:367).

It is not certain that the little people are involved, but Cushman says, before one can be a great medicine man he must:

> . . . have enlisted in his service one or more lesser spirits, servants to the Great and Good Spirit, as his allies or mediators, and to secure these important and indispensable auxiliaries, he must subject himself to a severe and testing ordeal. He now retires alone into the deep solitudes of his native forest and there engages in meditation, self examination, fasting and prayer during the coming and going of many long and weary days, and even weeks (Cushman 1899:38-39).

Both these narratives sound similar to that given for the Chickasaw above.

Creek doctors also went through ordeals to attain their station. Jackson Lewis, a Hitchiti Creek:

> . . . said that the same learned men who acted as instructors in medicine and the lore of the tribe generally could teach witchcraft, but he added that they advised against it, saying that it was only for mischief and that anyone who practised it would eventually come to a dog's death, because witches were killed. But since such knowledge was known to reside in the great doctors and graduates and it was never certain that it would not be employed, these people were constantly open to suspicion . . .. (Swanton 1928b:631).

When a would-be Creek wizard finished his training, his teacher required him to begin killing one of his own family. He was given medicine and told to do this at once (Swanton 1928b:635). Blanchard (1980:87, 1981:154-155) says Choctaw witches also begin their career by working on and exploiting members of their immediate family. They might even put a curse on, or suck the blood of their wives or children. This is viewed as the paramount expression of the witch's greed.

After practicing witchcraft techniques on his family, the witch expands his group of victims to include other members of his community. Increasing his range to the broader tribal context, he accumulates power through continued success (Blanchard 1981:133).

Blanchard's informants told him both the witch's and the doctor's power was supernatural. Accordingly, they claimed all religious personnel ". . . go in the woods, pray to God, and ask for power." This puzzles Blanchard and at least one of his informants since a Christian God should not be willing to help witches. Underhill, author of Red Man's Religion offers an explanation:

With Indians all power was one, the distinction was in the way it was used. The same man calling on the same power could work evil or good according to his desire. Perhaps, from an Indian point of view, a white who calls on his God to harm those he hates would be practicing witchcraft (Underhill 1965: 5-6).

A method of becoming a witch which may be unique to the Louisiana Choctaw was recorded by Bushnell. An evil being the Nalusa Falaya, or long black one, lives in the woods recruiting unsuspecting hunters and compelling them to commit evil deeds. The manner in which he operates is as follows:

> Often when hunters are in the woods, far from their homes, late in the day when the shadows have grown long beneath the pine trees, a Nalusa Falaya will come forth. Getting quite near a hunter it will call in a voice resembling that of a man. And some hunters, when they turn and see the Nalusa Falaya, are so affected that they fall to the ground and even become unconscious.
>
> And while the hunter is thus prostrated on the ground, it approaches and sticks a small thorn[4] into his hand or foot, and by so doing bewitches the hunter and transmits to him the power of doing evil to others; but a person never knows when he has been so bewitched by the Nalusa Falaya until his actions make it evident (Bushnell 1910:532).

There does not seem to be any indication that witchcraft was derived through some form of biological inheritance. Rather it seems that some training or ordeal is necessary to become a witch. There is no evidence that infant isolation and special diets will produce a witch such as has been described for the Cherokee (Mooney and Olbrechts 1932: 30, 129-130).

Activities of Witches

During the night witches shapeshift and fly in order to suck blood, kill people, or commit other diabolical acts. They might use poison or shoot witchballs into their victims. The use of love magic and "fixing" ball games for less than ethical purposes is also the handiwork of the witch. Witches often take credit for inexplicable occurrences and boast about their exploits (Blanchard 1981:155).

Basic to the witch's power is the symbol of blood. He sucks blood from his family and neighbors, especially healthy babies. As he flys through the sky he drips this blood (Blanchard 1981:154-155).

Witches fly at night as an owl, other animal, or as a light which often has a blue glow. Some Choctaws contend July and August is the best time to see them. They frequently come out of the woods after flashing across the sky. Jim Garner, an informant of Blanchard's, claims:

> Around dusk you can see them. They go through the air like a star or a Roman candle. I've seen it.
>
> One time I asked my grandfather, "What's that?"
>
> "It's a witch doctor."

> "There's a man flying around? A man can fly?"
>
> "Yes, a witch man can fly. He fixes up himself and flies, and the blood drips off and sparkles [with a whirring sound][5] (Blanchard 1981:152-153).

Generally witches take the form of an animal while on their nefarious deeds. This is usually an owl, other night bird, rabbit, bear, or dog. The way in which they achieve these transformations is by going into the woods and removing their viscera. Blanchard's (1981:153) informants told him that witches literally cut open the abdomen to effect this removal.

Howard (1984:97) describes Seminole versions of this story where witches vomit up the entrails. In both cases the witch must replace the organs when he returns from his activities.

An early record of this belief was published in the Niles Weekly Register of 1829. It reports that witches and wizards were very numerous in Choctaw country. They were believed to project their intestines from their bodies and hang them over branches of trees while practicing their unholy rites (Debo 1972:7).

Bushnell describes this behavior for the Louisiana Choctaw witches:

> The manner of exerting this evil influence against others was believed to be after this fashion: Those having proper knowledge could remove at night their viscera, thus reducing their weight to so great an extent that they could fly through the air to the individual they wished to harm (Bushnell 1909: 29).

Bushnell also assigns this ability to Nalusa Falaya, the supernatural beings who stick magic thorns in wayward hunters.

One of Blanchard's informants tells a story about his great grandfather:

> He used to go into the woods, way in the woods where nobody could see him, and cut open his stomach and take his insides out and stuff them in a can and hide that can where nobody could find it. Then he'd fly. One time he came back, and somebody had found it [the can] and poked holes all in it. . . . He died right after that (Blanchard 1981:153).

In these accounts, and in those of the Seminole (Howard 1984:99), destruction of the entrails brings about the death of the witch. Injuring the animal that a witch transforms into also brings about the witch's demise. This is apparently difficult to do. Attempting to harm or kill a witch animal frequently results in guns jamming, bullets ricocheting, and rocks missing the target (Blanchard 1981: 153-154). If the attack succeeds the witch invariably returns home in human form before dying.

One of Blanchard's informants recounts the following incident:

> Once we lived in the old log cabin . . . we lived across the road from the old _____ woman who was a witch.

> My father said every night when they'd be sitting on the porch, this rabbit would come across the road and sit on the other side of the ditch and just laugh, like an old woman.
>
> Finally, my dad got tired of this, so one night he got his shotgun and sat on the porch and waited. This time when the rabbit came and started laughing he took the gun and shot at it, but he missed. The rabbit just turned around and ran off. . . .
>
> He told me this, and I've heard other people say this too, that if you don't aim right at a witch, just to the side of them or something, you can hurt them. . . .
>
> So, the next time he shot at the rabbit he aimed just to the side of its head. It hit the rabbit this time, but didn't kill it. It just ran across the road and disappeared.
>
> About one week later the old woman died (Blanchard 1981:154).

In another reported case the victim was less successful. As he tells it:

> I walked out into the yard and there was this big white dog standing in the yard, barking. He was almost glowing in the dark; a bright white. I'd never seen that dog before. I walked up to him. I was only about five feet away. I looked down and saw this round smooth rock lying there, so I picked it up, and threw it at the dog. I missed him, and at the same time, something snapped in my arm. It really hurt. I had thrown it out.
>
> I missed the dog, but he took off. He ran a few feet and disappeared right in front of me.
>
> The next day I looked for the rock, but couldn't find it.
>
> My arm was never the same after that. . . . (Blanchard 1981: 159).

At this point the question of whether the shapeshifting witch and the witch doctor are equivalent asserts itself. These are separate roles in some societies. Saler (1964:320), who worked with the Quiché in Guatemala, found that Quiché witch doctors were rarely shapeshifting witches. His informants did not think such an association was likely or even necessary. Nor were shapeshifting witches specialized witch doctors. In the Southeastern Indian case, however, shapeshifting does seem to be a specialty of the witch doctor.

Perhaps not all Choctaw witches have enough power to be capable of metamorphosis. This ability may be limited to the levels of occult training recorded for the Cherokee. Through fasting and drinking a special infusion, Cherokee witches attain the ability to shapeshift. If the fast is maintained for four days, one can assume the form of ground surface animals such as humans of the opposite sex, dogs, deer, etc. If the witch continues for seven days he can take the shape of any animal including those that fly and those that live in the ground as well as being able to travel as a flame, spark, or light (Mooney and Olbrechts 1932:30).

The idea of certain animals representing evil omens may be related to the shapeshifting properties of witches. It is conjectural that these omens are interpreted as witches in disguise. Blanchard notes that the unusual presence in one's yard of a whippoorwill, owl, white dog, or rabbit is a bad sign. One of his informants said, "If an owl returns to the same spot near your place two or three times in a row, it means something bad is going to happen to you

or your family. I've seen it happen . . . ." (Blanchard 1981:153, 163). Sepulvado's informant, Dr. "John" says "if a Choctaw sees a cat coming down the road, he believes someone is witching him or is witching someone nearby" (Sepulvado 1983:108).

In some of their evil activities witches need to contact their victim directly. This might necessitate shapeshifting. In others, more indirect methods prove sufficient. Shooting magic objects into a victim has already been mentioned. This is apparently managed through psychic means. Cushman says a witchball is shot from an invisible rifle (Cushman 1899:260). Hitchcock, while among the Creek, noted the belief that witches ". . . can cripple people by shooting rags or blood into their legs through a reed or out of their mouths" (Foreman 1930:140).

Killing by spell was also possible. Standardized spells or formulas to kill people have been recorded for the Cherokee (Mooney 1886:391, Mooney and Olbrechts 1932: 154), Seminole (Greenlee 1944:324), and Timucua (Swanton 1911:387). There probably were Choctaw formulas of this sort.

One of Sepulvado's contemporary Mississippi Choctaw informants told him that headaches were commonly the result of witchcraft. Frequently, when Choctaws, particularly the elderly, have a headache they believe someone is casting a spell on them to confuse their thoughts (Sepulvado 1983:113).

Blanchard (1981:153) says contemporary Choctaw witches create car accidents, cause all types of illness including mental disorders, determine the outcome of chance events, and kill people in a variety of ways. They also use love magic to destroy relationships and marriages (Blanchard 1981:153).

Love magic can have positive associations. Inspiring love in a person of the opposite sex may not be necessarily evil. Nor would seeking the return of a spouse who has strayed. However, when the doctor uses love magic to gratify his own sexual desires or when he creates marital problems his position enters that of the witch.

Among the Seminole, Howard (1984:85) notes that love magic in moderation is considered good, but use of love magic to excess will rebound on the user. This boomerang effect of magic improperly used is found throughout the Southeast (Swanton 1911:387, Capron 1953:163, Mooney 1886:395). Blanchard documents this idea among contemporary Choctaws, illustrating why they rarely seek retaliation against witch attacks. His informant told him:

> You can get another witch doctor to do something, but he may not have enough power. Really, its best to leave it alone. . . . Usually, if you just forget it, it will finally go away, but if you try and get it back it can cause more problems (Blanchard 1981:158).

Divination is a technique employed by certain Choctaw ritual specialists. The prophet (<u>hopaii</u>) could locate lost or stolen objects, predict the future and do other miraculous things. Although not a healer, he could diagnose the cause of disease. In addition he could detect the activity of witches. Presumably, witches and doctors had some degree of divinatory ability though the diviner clearly had a separate role from either. Likewise, weather controllers were a discrete category of religious personnel. To what extent witches could control weather is unknown.