

MUSKOGEAN CHARM
SONGS AMONG THE
OKLAHOMA CHEROKEES

*By Jack Frederick Kilpatrick
Anna Gritts Kilpatrick*

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to Anthropology



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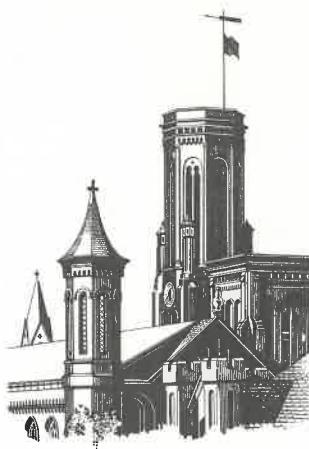
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Muskogean Charm Songs Among the Oklahoma Cherokees

Jack Frederick Kilpatrick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick

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By Jack Frederick Kilpatrick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick

Introduction

Manuscript works on medicine and magic among the Oklahoma Cherokees sometimes contain idi:ga.wé:sdi (*be said, them, by one*) or the texts of charm songs at, although written or partially written in the Sequoyah syllabary, are not in the Cherokee language. Cherokee din(a)da:h.nvwi:sg(i) (*those who cure them=medicine men*), who as a rule know no Indian language other than their own, are aware that such writings, in some instances handed down to them through several generations, are in either Creek or Natchez. It only rarely does one encounter a medicine man who thinks that he knows the meaning of a specific word here or there. More commonly he will not know even the general drift of what is written, and is not quite sure which particular grouping of syllables constitutes a word. But he does know that a saying or song is powerful—'alive,' as he expresses it—and there the matter rests.

Since some of the phonemes of Muskogean languages are not found in Cherokee, a certain amount of ingenuity had to be exerted in representing them

in the Sequoyah syllabary. The Sequoyan symbol for gwa, for example, may have been chosen to stand for pa. We have seen examples wherein new symbols had been created, or standard symbols reversed or inverted. We have also seen examples in which recourse to the English alphabet had been made in order to compensate for specific deficiencies in the Sequoyah syllabary.

In addition to these Muskogean materials in the possession of din(a)da:h.nvwi:sg(i), there is a corpus of charms, chiefly pertaining to hunting, that was once, and perhaps to a certain extent still is, employed by the laity. As pointed out in Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick (1967) for some reason as yet undetermined the aboriginal Cherokee hunting charms were largely supplanted by those of Muskogean origin.

As one might expect, Muskogean medicomagic is most commonly encountered in the southern part of the territory of the Oklahoma Cherokees, a region containing several clearly defined and long-established Muskogean enclaves.

The Muskogean Enclaves

There exists a tradition to the effect that during a period of the Removal from the Southeast, a band of Creeks, traveling up the Arkansas River, did not continue on to the territory assigned to them, but instead debarked in the vicinity of Webbers Falls (Muskogee County). Fearful of the possibility of high water in the lowlands along the river, they decided to settle a few miles farther north, up in the hill country. Very probably they divided, one segment going northwest and uniting with their Muskogean relatives, the band of Natchez that had removed

with the Cherokee and had settled between what is now Braggs (Muskogee County) and the Illinois River (Sequoyah County). The other segment went northeast, on the opposite side of the Illinois River, and eventually established its residence in the valley of Vian Creek (Sequoyah County).

These Muskogean enclaves were accepted as Cherokees, both by the Cherokees themselves and the United States Government, and at the dissolution of tribal government were enrolled and allotted as Cherokees. They took an active part in Cherokee political and cultural

♩ = 112 circa

Sa - ma - ni hets(i) - ga mo - mo - ses ga - gi - hli

ga - gi - hli ga - gi - hli sa - mi - ni* hets(i) - ga

mo - mo - ses si - ho - gi - hli si - ho - gi - hli

si - ho - gi - hli sa - ma - ni hets(i) - ga mo - mo - ses

in(i) - do - ba - ya - hi sa - ya - ma - si sa - ya - ma - si

sa - ya - ma - si sa - mi - ni hets(i) - ga mo - mo - ses

ga - gi - hli ga - gi - hli ga - gi - hli.

* The alternation of sa-mi-ni with sa-ma-ni may be the result of careless spelling.

there, they)/sa'nyama'si (it has just become gentle). His exegesis was to the effect that the curer is fully cognizant of the agencies that caused the malady; beings that, gaily bedecked as if upon some festive occasion, sit about and stand about in the body of the patient. He overpowers them and alleviates the patient's pain. Many Cherokee curing conjurations terminate in a stereotype that is somewhat analogous to the Creek assurance of the restoration of calm: utsi:hnawa/(relief) nigvdí:sge:sdí (then I will be saying) (Kilpatrick

and Kilpatrick, 1964 a).

The ritual that accompanies this song appears to be basically Cherokee, not Creek. The patient reclines with his head toward the east. The doctor warms his hands over coals (preferably from lightning-struck wood). He then applies warm ashes from the fireplace or stove to the patient's abdomen, and standing to the patient's right, kneads the ashes with a counter-clockwise circling motion as he sings the song. This procedure is followed the regulation four times.

3. FOR DIVINING THE OUTCOME OF A LOVE AFFAIR

♩=120 circa

Tsi-hi - wa-tso - lo - tsi wag(a)-ho - gats(a)-sge som(a)-ho - gi - ya-hli

no - hi - ya - ni no - hi - ya - ni no - hi - ya - ni

no - hi - ya - ni no - hi - ya - ni no - hi - ya - ni.

CHEROKEE CAPTION: Age:hyv (*woman*)/ama (*water*)/ayv:dla (*cold*)/agh(a)dho?di (*to examine, one*)/agh(a)-iv:do?di (*to do it with, one*). "For examining with cold water concerning a woman."

COMMENTARY: The text of this song would appear to be Creek. Our Creek informant identified it as: cih'iwa (*our wife*)/cu'laci (*little, old*)/wakhu'gatski (*you [2] were going*)/sum'huki'ya'li (*we [2] will be gone*). He felt that no-hi-ya-ni is a mere vocalization, and not a word.

A part of the above tune bears some slight motivial resemblance to a Stomp Dance song with a Cherokee text obtained from a nonagenarian in the Beaver community in the summer of 1961 (Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick, 1964 b, pp. 155-157, 194). Both tunes are probably Muskogean.

The purpose of the above song is to ascertain if a love suit is destined to prosper. The medicine man and his client, the lover, go at daybreak to the brink of running water ("new water" or "cold water" are Cherokee synonyms for it) that they can face and at the same time face east. The shaman puts down a silver dollar at the edge of the water, steps back from about 8 feet, and sings the song four times. After

each delivery of it he blows his breath toward the coin. He then inspects the dollar. If the coin has turned over, the client will gain the affections of the woman of his choice; if the coin is found to be remaining just as it was placed, the ceremony is repeated the next morning. If after the completion of a series of ceremonies upon four successive mornings no turning over of the coin has been observed, the client's suit is deemed to be hopeless.

There are two motifs in this ceremony that are quite foreign to Cherokee magic: divination to learn the outcome of a love affair and prognostication by means of a coin turning over. We have yet to encounter in Cherokee erotic magic any recognition of the role of chance. Love magic is universally held to be essentially infallible. If a specific measure should prove to be inadequate, then the use of a more powerful one is indicated. Large numbers of them, of varying degrees of potency, are available. The possibility of acquiring magic of a power superior to that of any rival always exists; failure is never predestined. Silver coins are used in Cherokee divining, but not in this manner—they are suspended upon a thong, or string.

4. TO MAKE A WOMAN LOVESICK

CHEROKEE CAPTION: Age:hyv (*woman*)/dige'hlayó:-isdo?d'i (*to make them suffer with, one*). "To make a woman suffer."

ENGLISH EXPLANATION: make a woman Blues—.

COMMENTARY: The text of this song as written in the manuscript differs significantly enough from the text as sung as to warrant a statement of it as written:

Tsa-no-tsi [7 times]/u-la-yes/tsa-no-tsi [3 times]/a-la-yes/tsa-no-tsi [2 times]/a-ya-yes/tsa-no-tsi

One observes that in singing, u-la-yes was amended to hu-la-yes; that a-la-yes (probably an erroneous spelling of a-ya-yes) was omitted, and that the pattern of repetition of the tsa-no-tsi was altered. It is obvious

♩=96 circa

Tsa - no - tsi - hi tsa - no - tsi tsa - no - tsi

tsa - no - tsi tsa - no - tsi tsa - no - tsi tsa - no - tsi

tsa - no - tsi hu - hla - yes tsa - no - tsi tsa - no - tsi

tsa - no - tsi tsa - no - tsi tsa - no - tsi

tsa - no - tsi a - ya - yes tsa - no - tsi.

that when the Cherokee shaman wrote down the text, his recollection of the song was not clear, but that in singing it, he was able to match correctly the text with the tune. The initially sung word, tsa-no-tsi-hi, contains the interpolated syllable hi, doubtlessly meaningless, that the singer remembered having heard his father (perhaps idiosyncratically) employ. The singer was of the opinion that one was at liberty to make a choice between singing the word as written or thusly:

Tsa - no - tsi

The singer's father had stated that the song was Natchez, and that the word tsa-no-tsi was a term (ritualistic ?) for a honeybee, the word a-ya-yes a synonym for the Cherokee uhí:so'dhí (a supernaturally

induced melancholia). The singer was of the opinion that these words were those that a woman who had fallen victim to love magic would sing in expression of her emotional state, although he did not care to speculate upon the possible significance of the honeybee.

Although he was not familiar with the song, our Creek informant was of the opinion that the text made acceptable Creek, and that the drift of its meaning was in conformity with Creek magical concepts. He made of it this: canu'ci (*I drowse* [ritual.])/hu'layis ([even] if standing, I)/a'yayis ([even] if going, I). He stated that the verb of which "I drowse" is a form, is used in Creek magic in a context very similar to that in which the Cherokee employ uhí:so'dhí.

In Cherokee magic the above song was formerly used to accompany the application of awo:di (*paint*) to the body. Most commonly this was done in preparation for a dance (there is a North Carolina Cherokee ritual of the same genre in Mooney, 1891, pp. 379-380). While singing the song, the singer dipped a cardinal feather in paint which itself had to be prepared ritualistically and applied it as follows: to the forehead; to

the tip of the nose; to the chin; to the right cheek; to the left cheek; diagonally downward across the chest, from right to left; diagonally downward across the chest, from left to right. One will observe that the applications totaled seven—the supremely sacrosanct Cherokee number. The song was sung and the ritual

performed a total of four times.

Inasmuch as there is no lacuna in either the song or the ritual for a statement of the name and clan affiliation of a particular desired woman, one assumes that the purpose of this magic was to create in its user an attractiveness to women in general.

5. TO PREVENT FEVER FROM EATING GREEN CORN

♩=144 circa



CHEROKEE CAPTION: Udi:hlehv:sgi (*fever*)/nv:wo:dhi (*medicine*)/ama (*water*)/godhlvhi:so'di (*to remake, one*)/hanogí:sdi (*to sing, one*)/se:lu (*corn*)/i'tsé:i (*new*)/nenu:da (*cornsilk*)/asu:ye:di (*to mix, one*)/i'tsé:i (*new*)/ma (*water*)/ama:yi (*water-place*)/aye:hli (*middle*)/ge:sv (*being, it*)/wigá'luhi:sdí (*there to go, one*)/nahná:hno: (*here, and*)/godhlvhi:so'di (*to remake, one*). "To remake' fever medicine water. One sings. One mixes new cornsilk with fresh water in the middle of the stream, and there it is 'remade.'"

ENGLISH EXPLANATION: Natche [Natchez] Song—ever med; [medicine] fixed cold water and drink Before you Eat the Rosnear [roasting ear] corn; in Earley in spring time. that Keep away from fever; [.]

COMMENTARY: The ritual accompanying this song is this: The medicine man cuts off the sharp ends of a number of newly ripe roasting ears and puts them, together with a quantity of cornsilk from the young corn, into a container the size of a gallon or more. At dawn he wades out into the middle of a stream, faces east, and permits water to flow into the container until the cob ends and cornsilk almost fill the vessel. With a section of newly cut cornstalk, 18 inches or so long, he stirs the contents of the container with a

counterclockwise motion as he stands in the middle of the stream. As he stirs, he sings the song four times. The liquid from the container is subsequently drunk, used to wash the hands or face, or employed as bath water, by an individual or a family group.

This ritual does not appear to be an aspect of the Creek busk (cf. Swanton, 1928, pp. 546-614), but whether it be vestigial of the Cherokee Preliminary Green Corn Feast (cf. Gilbert, 1943, p. 327) or of a Natchez festival, we are not prepared to say. The song, however, is Creek, and the Creek informant of the writers with no difficulty identified it as a corruption of the first part of a quadrifid song used in treating a febrile patient. In its entirety, the text of this Creek song makes reference to four wild ducks, each of a species different from the others, scratching in the snow and throwing up into the air behind them snow sprays. The fragment above refers to but one species of duck, the English name for which the informant did not know: fucu'ski (*a species of wild duck*)/hidu'ti (*snow*)/la'kku (*big*)/a'ka'si (*he is scratching*)/futapi'ci (*it forms a spray*).

One notes that the resources of the Sequoyah syllabary were somewhat strained in writing down this song: fo (fu), for example, was represented by the symbol for ho; bi (pi) by the symbol for wi.

6. TO "REMAKE" TOBACCO FOR USE IN ATTRACTING A WOMAN

♩=144 circa

San(i)-da-lagh(i)-tsa - di a - hi - tsa - di ma-ya - ho

ma - ya - ho san(i)-da-lagh(i)-tsa - di a - hi - tsa -

di ma-ya - ma - ho ma-ya - ma-ho agh(a)-ma - ya - tsa -

di a - hi - tsa - di ma-ya - ho ma-ya - ho tsa -

lo-hadh(i)-gi a - hi - tsa - di ma-ya - ma-ho ma-ya - ma - ho.

CHEROKEE CAPTION: Age:hyv (*woman*)/gan(i)sane:-sdo?di (*to draw one with, one*)/tso:la (*tobacco*)/godhlyhi:-so?di (*to remake, one*)/asu:ye:di (*to mix one*)/udhelv:-l(a)dvnv:hi (*grapevine*). "To attract a woman with. One mixes grapevine with tobacco."

ENGLISH EXPLANATION: Creek. Song. How to make a pretty girl want you; Song.

COMMENTARY: The use of "remade" tobacco in Cherokee erotic magic is popularly held to be a bit sinister; the addition of grapevine or cedarberries to the tobacco is a definite deepening of the hue of the magic. The substitution of tso:lagayv:li (*tobacco, ancient*=*Nicotiana rustica*) for ordinary commercial tobacco is quite reprehensible inasmuch as the life of the woman upon whom it is used is endangered.

The song and its attendant ritual would more than likely be known by a medicine man or a dida:hnesé:sgi (*putter-in and drawer-out of them*=*a sorcerer, witch*), who would use them to prepare tobacco for a client, but magic known to a layman can be used by a layman.

The customary ritual is this: While stating the name and clan of the woman toward whom magic is to be

directed, the conjurer cuts off a section of wild grapevine, about one-half of an inch in length, out of which a tendril has grown and wrapped itself about the segment of vine that is cut off. He goes to the brink of running water at sunrise, faces east, and states the name and clan of his client (or of himself, if he be the lover) as he shreds the vine and its tendril and mixes the fragments of them with a handful of cut plug tobacco. He holds the mixture between the palms of both hands, extends his arms and hands (thumbs upward) on a direct line with the upper rim of the newly risen sun, and then slowly lowers his arms and hands until they have traversed the space occupied in the sky by the disk of the sun. The tobacco is then placed in the palm of the left hand and, as the magician sings the above song four times, he rolls the tobacco and its additive in a counterclockwise motion with the four extended fingers of the right hand. After each statement of the song he blows his breath upon the mixture and then bestows upon it a small sharp expectoration.

If the tobacco is being "remade" for a client, and the client is present upon the occasion of its preparation,

client himself states the name and clan of the woman desires, and it is the client who blows and expecto-
es upon the mixture. The magical tobacco is gener-
7 used in one of two fashions: If circumstances
mit, its smoke is blown directly upon the target
ividual, for a total of four times if possible; if this
mpracticable, the smoke is blown toward where the
tim of the moment is, or is likely to be—at dawn,
lmorning, midafternoon, and dusk, for 4 days.

The text of the song created no little uncertainty
the mind of our Creek informant. With rather
ght conviction he hypothesized that the following
rds might be incorporated in it: ca'ti (*red*)/a'hi'cati
e is looking continually/ma'yahu (*she is signalling*
ual.))/ma'yamahu (*she is signalling more and more*
ual.))/a'k'maya'cati (*down there she is signalling*
ual.))/hat'ki (*white*).

While on the surface this reading is quite plausible,
reservations of the Creek shaman—whether they
mmed from word forms or repetition patterns of

words, or from some subtle clash with what he knew
to be the true ethos of Creek magic—may have been
well grounded. The text originally may have been a
Cherokee one that was borrowed by the Creeks or the
Natchez perhaps as long as a century ago, thoroughly
corrupted, and then returned to the Cherokee, who
had long forgotten it.

It may have run something like this: Tsa:n(a)da:leg(i)
(*they just pulled themselves out*)/a:di:h(a) (*he says*)/
a:t'sa'di (*fish*)/ama:yi (*water-place*) ho:? (*ho!*)/tsalo:?
di[a] (*he pushes you off a high place*)/a:di:h(a) (*he says*)/
a:t'sa'di (*fish*)/ama:yi (*water-place*)/ho:? (*ho!*).

"They just pulled themselves out," he says, "the
fish [the quarry=women] in the stream. Ho!
He pushes you [a rival?] off a high place, he says.
The fish in the stream! Ho!"

In offering this as a possible reading, we nurture
fully as many doubts as did the Creek medicine man
while advancing his hypothesis. This song, of ex-
ceptional musical worth, may be Natchez.

7. FOR HUNTING

♩=100 circa

I - tsa - na - da - i - ha - swa ha - tsa - gi - ma - da

ha - tsa - gi - ma - da ha - tsa - gi - ma - da ha - tsa - gi - ma - da

i - tso - na da-gats(a)-go ha - dha - gi - ma - da ha - dha - gi - ma - da

na - dha - gi - ma - da ha - dha - gi - ma - da ha - tsa - gi - ma - da

ha - tsa - gi - ma - da ha - tsa - gi - ma - da ha - tsa - gi - ma - da.

CHEROKEE CAPTION: A:h(a)wi⁷ (*deer*)/dohyohv:i (*if seeking them, one*)/gano:hilv:dv (*hunt*)/ghanogí:sdi (*to sing, one*)/o:lu:ha (*silt*)/ama:yi (*water-place*)/hawí:ni (*deep*)/tsinu:sdó:i (*which present* [hab.])/adanv:li:ye:di (*to apply to oneself, one*). "Song if one is looking for deer when hunting. One applies to oneself silt from the bottom of a stream."

ENGLISH EXPLANATION: wild Turkey Hunting Song. [in Cherokee: gv:na, *turkey*].

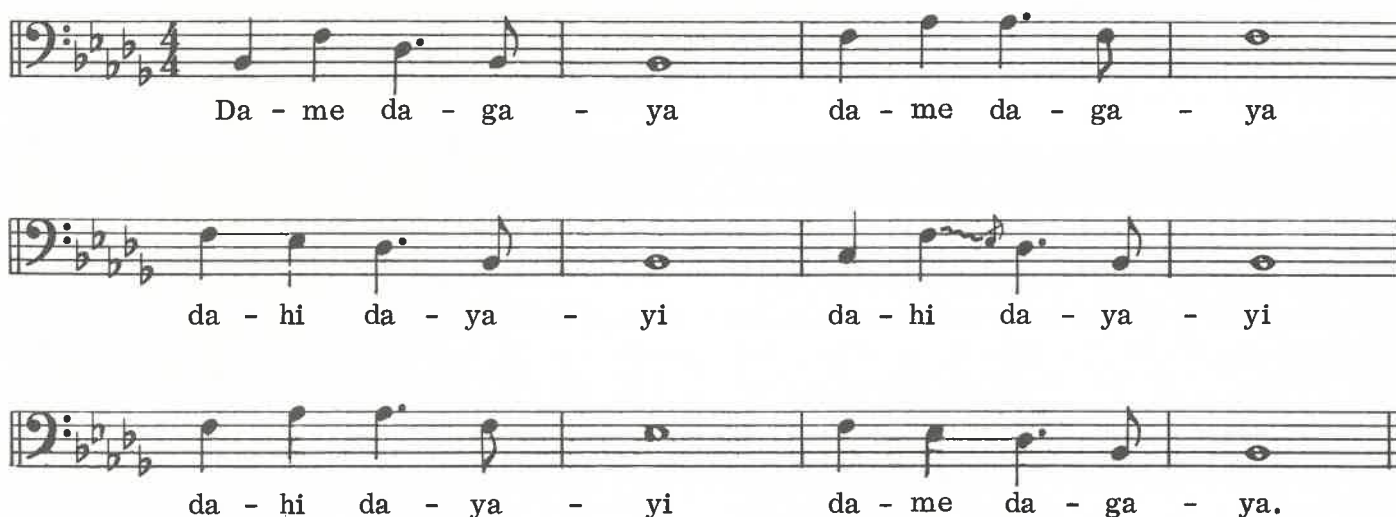
COMMENTARY: The contradiction between the Cherokee caption, which states that this is a song for hunting deer, and the English explanation, which identifies the charm as turkey-hunting magic, is illusory. In actuality, it is serviceable in hunting any kind of game. The hunter who employs it first decides upon what game he wants, then as he hunts he very softly sings the song four times. If he flushes any game other than that which he is resolved to kill, squirrels excepted, he must ignore it, or he will not be able to bag that which he set out to get.

The application of silt to the body (face, chest ?) of the hunter almost certainly serves some purpose other than that of mere disguise. One suspects that silt is applied for chiefly magical reasons, and that there is, or perhaps once was, a ceremony used in obtaining and applying the silt. While the magical powers of running water and of objects floating in running water are fundamental motifs in Cherokee medicomagic, we are unaware of the use of silt having been previously reported and have never before encountered it either in the published literature or in manuscript sources. One suspects it is Muskogean, probably Natchez, not Cherokeean.

The Cherokee shaman was of the opinion that the words of the song were Natchez, and that the thought, if not the exact wording, "I am asking you to come to me" was embedded somewhere in the text. The Creek medicine man, on the other hand, inclined toward the view that the text was corrupted Creek, and while some of it remained obscure to him, he was able to discover in it these words: i'cu (*deer*)/na (*body, his*)/ihuswa (*penis, his*)/ha'ca'kima'ta (*they were intoxicated*).

8. FOR HUNTING DEER

♩ = 96 circa



CHEROKEE CAPTION: [in reference to part 1] Adi:sgo?i (*he says* [hab.])/a?hwi (*deer*)/galagi:na (*buck*)/[in reference to part 2] Ada:hnesesgo?i (*he conjures* [hab.])/adudale:sdo?di (*to free oneself with, one*)/hi?a?gwu (*this, just*)/igawé:sdi (*to be said it, by one*)/geso:i (*being, it* [hab.])/aganohile:gí:i (*if hunting, one*). [in reference to part 1] "What the buck says." [in reference to part 2] "To

free oneself when he conjures, this is to say when hunting."

ENGLISH EXPLANATION: Creek Song [.] Hunting Song—

[Spoken]: Wayuhe?

COMMENTARY: The Cherokee shaman stated that the first part of this song is what a buck sings in his attempt to conjure the hunter, and that the second

⁷ This is a dialectal pronunciation that is reflected in the Sequoyan spelling. One notes that in the caption to No. 8 the conventional a?hwi is employed.

♩=84 circa

Ho-wa - ya hi - ne ho-wa - ya hi - ne ho-wa - ya - a - hu*

ho - wa - ya hi - ne ho - wa - ya hi - ne ho - wa - ya - a - hu

tsa-tsi - la ga - si - go tsa-tsi - la yats(i) - sga do - na - ya - li

i - sdi - hi - o - yi - wa - ha hi - la - di - hi ha - gi - la - di - hi

tsa-tsi - la ga - si - go tsa-tsi - la yats(i) - sga do - na - ya - li.

*This word is written ho-wa-ya-hu in the book and repeated.

art is what the hunter sings (four times, as he walks) order to overcome the magic of the deer. A buck, the medicine man said, has a channel from his root ot up to his right ear, and through it he is able to ck up the sound of a hunter as far as 4 miles away. he medicine man did not know the purpose of the

spoken Wayuhe?

Although he did not have the song in his repertoire, our Creek informant conceded that it was Creek, and was able to form from the text these words: ta'yi (*I am great*) ta'yayi (*I am very great*)/ca'cila (*you touch me*)/yickati'siku (*never*)/yi'cka (*do you?*).

9. FOR HUNTING DEER (Incomplete)

CHEROKEE CAPTION: A'hwi (*deer*)/ané:hya:dhahí (*wild, they*)/dighel(a)yó:hisdo?dí (*to catch up with em, with, one*)/yiganó:hilé:na (*when one goes hunting*)/agéi (*woods*). "To catch up with wild deer with when one goes hunting in the woods."

ENGLISH EXPLANATION: Creek Song [.] Deer Hunter song.

COMMENTARY: The Cherokee medicine man wrote down the complete text of this song, a charm that presumably one employs in the same manner as No. but he could not remember all of the tune.

The complete written text is: Sa-tsa/wa-na/ha-gi-no-ma-di/sa-tsa/wa-na/ha-gi-no-ma/sa-tsa/wa-na/ha-gi-no-ma-di/sa-tsa/wa-na/ha-gi-no-ma / wa-li-go-tsi / i-ha-tsi / sa-tsa/wa-na/ha-gi-no-ma-di/sa-tsa/wa-na/ha-gi-no-ma / sa-tsa/wa-na/ha-gi-no-ma-di/sa-tsa/wa-na/ha-gi-no-ma.

One observes that this is slightly at variance with the text as sung.

With little conviction the Creek shaman offered as a possible, but highly improbable, reading: aca'winayi'cska (*are you smelling me ?*). He was of the opinion that the text was almost certainly Natchez.

♩=96 circa

Sa - tsa wa - na ha - gi - no - ma - di

sa - tsa wa - na ha - gi - no - ma - di

sa - tsa wa - na ha - gi - no - ma.

10. FOR STOPPING BLEEDING (Text only)

CHEROKEE CAPTION.

ENGLISH EXPLANATION: Notche [Natchez]. Song; Bad Cut Bleeding Stop with this Song.

COMMENTARY: The Cherokee shaman could not remember any of the tune of this song. Inasmuch as we therefore could not be certain as to the proper

grouping of the syllables, the text was not brought to the attention of the Creek informant.

The text is: Hi-ga-gi-la-go-da-di/hi-o-gi-ha-[di ?]-gi-da-di/na-hi-yu [8 times] /hi-ya-ha-la-sgo-da-di/hi-ni-da-ha-di-gi-da-di/na-hi-yu [8 times] /hi-o-gi-ha-di-gi-da-di/hi-ni-da-ha-di-ga-da-di/na-hi-yu [2 times].

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