



Navaho Legends by Washington Matthews

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL MISCELLANEA AND NEW BOOKS.

Readers of the Journal are invited to communicate any new facts of especial interest which come under their notice. Short abstracts of, or extracts from letters, will be published at the discretion of the Editor. Letters should be marked "Miscellanea" and addressed to The Secretary, 3, Hanover Square, W.

"Navaho Legends." Collected and translated by Washington Matthews, M.D., LL.D. With introduction, notes, illustrations, texts, interlinear translations, and melodies. (Boston and New York. Published for the American Folklore Society by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1897.)

The American Folklore Society has rendered good service to anthropological studies by the publication of this interesting and important contribution to the study of aboriginal traditions. The Navaho (formerly written in Spanish fashion *Navajo*) tribe is a branch of the Athabascan stock, though not unmixed, occupying a tract of arid upland, chiefly in the territories of Arizona and New Mexico. The people rudely cultivate the soil, and tend large herds of sheep and goats, obtaining from the latter their principal food-supply and wealth. During recent years they have formed a subject of study by American ethnologists, and valuable collections illustrating their arts and customs are to be found in the National Museum at Washington. Dr. Matthews has been initiated into their ceremonies. To him we owe numerous papers which throw considerable light on their culture, such as that on "Navajo Weavers," in the third, and "The Mountain Chant, a Navajo Ceremony," in the fifth "Report of the Bureau of Ethnology."

The legends published in the present volume are three in number: a lengthy origin legend and two rite-myths. "By a rite-myth is meant a myth which accounts for the work of a ceremony, for its origin, for its introduction among the Navahoes, or for all these things combined. The Navahoes celebrate long and costly ceremonies, many of which are of nine days' duration. Each ceremony has connected with it one or more myths or legends which may not be altogether mythical." Rite-myths consist of two parts: the exoteric and the esoteric. The latter are known in their complete form only to the priests of the rite, and comprise "minute and often tedious particulars concerning the rite, its work, symbolism, and sacrifices." As here given, these particulars are omitted, the exoteric, or narrative, parts being

alone set forth, though the rest is occasionally referred to in the notes. The origin legend is one of great interest, especially what relates to the adventures of the coyote, which include many incidents common to the Old and New Worlds.

A point in the organization of the Navahoes to which attention should be directed is the small trace of totemism to be found among them. The names of the gentes are almost entirely local; nor is any evidence of clan totems known to exist at the present time. Having regard to the theory of Miss Alice Fletcher and Dr. Boas put forward at the Toronto meeting of the British Association and to recent controversies as to the place of totemism in religious evolution, it is desirable that all the Navaho traditions be searched for indications of its existence and influence.

The volumes published by the American Folklore Society are of high ethnological value. The Society is by no means so well known in this country as it should be; and there are only two subscribers on this side of the Atlantic to the *Memoirs*, of which the volume before us is the fifth. This is not very encouraging as an index of scientific interest in the subjects dealt with. A work like the present is a substantial addition to our knowledge, and its value will be recognized by every student of civilization. The plates, map, and figures in the text are all excellent, and form real illustrations, real aids to understanding the letterpress.

"The American Anthropologist," in Nos. 9, 10, 11, and 12 of vol. x, contains amongst other articles:—"The Significance of John Eliot's Natick," by William Wallace Tooker; "The Verification of a Tradition," by Frederick W. Hodge; "Bandelier's Researches in Peru and Bolivia," by Frederick W. Hodge; "Anthropology at Detroit and Toronto," by W. J. McGee; "Archæological Map of the State of Ohio"; "The Aborigines of Formosa and the Liu-Kiu Islands," by Albrecht Wirth; "Northern Elements in the Mythology of the Navaho," by Franz Boas; "On certain Stone Images," by Cyrus Thomas; "Geographical Distribution of the Musical Bow," by Otis T. Mason; "Trephining in Mexico," by Carl Lumholtz and Ales Hydlicka (illustrated); "Analysis of the Deities of Mayan Inscriptions," by Lewis W. Gunckel (illustrated); "A Copper Mask from Chimbote, Peru," by George A. Dorsey (illustrated).

"Revue Mensuelle de l'École d'Anthropologie de Paris," in Nos. I and II for 1898, contains amongst other articles:—"Nécessité de l'Assistance des Dégénérés Inférieurs," by H. Thulie; "Grottes Ornées de Gravures et de Peintures," by G. de Mortillet.

"Journal of the Anthropological Society of Tōkyō," in Nos. 140 and 141 of vol. xiii, contains:—"Anthropological Study about Eta," by R. Torii; "Criticism on the Anthropological Views in Several Text Books, recently published in Japan," by D. Satō; "On the Ancient Pottery from Carea," by K. Nonaka.