

NOTES ON PASSAMAQUODDY LITERATURE

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SOURCE OF INFORMATION HEREIN PUBLISHED

Like the material previously published by the writer, pertaining to the wampum records (PRINCE, '8) and to the *Wabanaki* history (PRINCE '8), the following notes were gathered at Bar Harbor, Maine, from the Passamaquoddy Indians who spend the summer there. They have been arranged chiefly from papers prepared for me in Indian and English by Louis Mitchell, former member of the Maine Legislature for the Passamaquoddy tribe.

RECREATIONS OF THE PASSAMAQUODDY AND PENOBSCOT INDIANS

STORY-TELLING. Recreation was never allowed among the Passamaquoddies and Penobscots except during the winter months when the deep snows made sport and war impossible. Perhaps the favorite amusement of the younger people was story-

telling (*hookautin*), at which many of the old men and women were adepts. A group of young indians would often gather in a wigwam and listen with eager interest for hours to the protracted tales of some professional narrator (*notathooket*). A great number of these stories of love, war, and witchcraft still exist in the memories of older indians, and, as the tribe diminishes year by year, are bound to perish unless collected by those who feel an interest in the history of the aborigines of America.

EXAMPLE OF NARRATIVE. The following narration of constancy in a *Wabanaki* girl, which is, of course, much abridged from the original, is a fair specimen of their style.

Long ago in the village of Lusigantook,¹ there lived a beautiful maiden whose heart many a young man had tried in vain to win. Finally, however, she succumbed to the charms of a brave and successful young hunter, who had long been in love with her, and, in spite of the ill luck of his fellows, ventured to send to her the *nojiquetsettasi* or "old woman who carried proposals of marriage." Greatly to his delight, he received a favorable reply, and he accordingly determined, indian fashion, to win even greater fame as a hunter. He, therefore, told her that he would not marry her until he had gone on a hunt which should last two years. The girl agreed to his proposal and promised to remain true to him at all hazards, adding that even if he never returned she would stay single all her days, a vow which the young man echoed with equal fervor. Not long after his departure, the village of Lusigantook was attacked and destroyed by Mohawks² who carried away all the young girls as prisoners and among them the hunter's promised bride. When the victors reached their own territory, they tried in vain to persuade our heroine to marry one of their braves, even threatening to burn her alive when she obstinately persisted in her refusal. Many of her tribeswomen had yielded to the inevitable and married Mohawk warriors, but she preferred the stake to breaking

¹ *Lusigantook* is the Passamaquoddy form of the *Abenaki* *Aligontegw*, the name of the St. Francis River in the P. Que., Canada, where the *Abenakis*, akin to the Penobscots, now reside (see PRINCE, '98). The name probably means "river where no habitations are." The indians of St. Francis call themselves *Aligontegwiak*.

² Canadian Iroquois, see PRINCE '98, p. 376, note 5.

her vow. The Mohawk chief, however, would not listen to the cruel counsel¹ of his men and gave the girl a longer time in which to make up her mind, intending, as she was of so brave a nature, to marry her to one of his best warriors, in order that their children might become a race of heroes. When the wandering lover returned and found his home in ashes and his bride carried away, after singing his vengeance song,² he gathered together a mighty host of *Wabanaki* and started northward to the Mohawk country, bent on avenging his tribe's defeat and his own loss. After successfully surprising the chief Mohawk village and slaughtering many of the offending tribe, he found and rescued his loved one, who showed her gentle nature by interceding for the Mohawk prisoners whom her lover wished to burn and torture.

BARTER BY CLOWNS (*nolmihigon*) GAMES. On long winter evenings when the Passamaquoddies wished to pass away the time, they frequently used to amuse themselves by engaging in a game of barter which was carried on by clowns in the following manner: Two parties assembled in separate wigwams where each dressed one of their number in an absurd manner as a *nolmihigon* or clown. This person, carrying some article of more or less value, such as a pair of snow-shoes, a garment, etc., proceeded with the entire company to the wigwam where the second party was waiting, and with many absurd gestures and contortions, offered to exchange the article in question for something else, inviting bids like a modern auctioneer. The point of the joke lay in the witty songs sung by the *nolmihigon* in praise of his wares which nearly always induced the listening company in the second wigwam to pay for the article offered with another of much greater value. Thus, a canoe was not uncommonly exchanged for a wooden spoon! As soon as one exchange had been effected, the first *nolmihigon* and party retired to the original wigwam, where they received a similar visit from the second company. This simple amusement was often kept up far into the night, the wittier *nolmihigon* and his company, of course, coming out winners at the end of the game.

¹ For the character of the Iroquois' see PRINCE '98, p. 377, note 10.

² *Gewonjintowagon*.

BALL (*Twiss*). The *Wabanaki* were also very fond of games of ball, one of which called *twiss* was played a great deal by women. They made a large ball of finely picked hemlock twigs which were bound together in the shape of a cocoanut. To this they fastened a light deer-thong some six feet in length, at the end of which was tied a short sharp-pointed stick. The object of the game was to swing the ball or *twiss* and strike it on the rebound with the stick.

LACROSSE (*elni-epesskeuhdin*). A much more active game was that called *elni-epesskeuhdin* which greatly resembled the present lacrosse in principle, practically the only difference being that the Passamaquoddy game could be played by any number of people, so long as both sides had the same number of players. The game was begun by two men standing face to face and endeavoring to drive the ball in opposite directions by means of bats. As soon as the first cast was made, the game became general and each party tried to drive the ball to a goal which their opponents defended. The number of goals necessary to make a game was optional. When the ball-game was over the losing party always had a chance to recover their prestige by choosing one of their number to engage in a foot or canoe-race with a member of the winning side. This form of sport was the inter-tribal game generally played among the *Wabanaki* when one tribe visited another.

PULL-HAIR BALL (*Toohon*). Another very popular ball-game was *toohon* or pull-hair ball, which the Passamaquoddies enjoyed perhaps more than any other sport. Two sides were formed, equal in number, as in *elni-epesskeuhdin*. The ball was then thrown in the air, amid cries of "*toohe! toohe! toohe!*" The man who caught it endeavored to run with it to his side's goal, but unless he was very agile, was pursued by his opponents who tried to pull his long hair in order to make him drop the ball. The players of his own side, of course, defended him as much as possible. When the ball fell, it was immediately caught up again and the sport was resumed.

WITCHCRAFT

The Passamaquoddies, like all North American Indians, are firm believers in witchcraft. A class of wizards and witches (*medolin*)¹ existed among them who were thought to have acquired miraculous powers by means of a special ascetic training. MITCHELL relates in his manuscript Passamaquoddy papers in apparently perfectly good faith that it was no uncommon feat for *medolin* to sink up to their knees in hard ground in the presence of a number of people. He states that the magician always took seven long steps, at each of which he sank up to his knees in the hardest earth. This feat, called *quetkeosag*, is mentioned by Leland in his "Algonquin Legends" (LELAND, p. 341). MITCHELL states also that the *medolin* had the power to change themselves into any sort of animal, adding "This is no superstition, but is a fact witnessed by many members of the tribe." The following witch-song in six sense-stanzas is an illustration of their belief in the power of magic over nature.

Passamaquoddy Witch Song, "The Song of the Drum"

Nil nolbin naga n'tellitemen pekholagon. Nitutle-wiquotahan weyisese . . . pehutenek naga ona pechioo wuchowusenel w'chiksitmagon n'pekholagon.

Nolbin naga n'tellitemen pekholagon. Pechioo mechkiskak petagik n'tasitemagok pekholagon) naga na k'chi applassemwesiti chenisoo w'chiksitmun n'pekholagon.

Nolbin naga n'begholin. Nitte Chelaelague w'pechiyan naga w'chiksitmagon n'pekholagon. Eltaguak pechite k'chi Wuchowusen

I sit down and beat the drum,² and, by the sound of the drum, I call the animals from the mountains. Even the great storms hearken to the sound of my drum.

I sit down and beat the drum, and the storm and thunder answer the sound of my drum. The great whirlwind ceases its raging to listen to the sound of my drum.

I sit down and beat the drum, and the spirit-of-the-night-air³ comes and listens to the sound of my drum. Even the great

¹ Cf. Ojibwe *medewin* "witchcraft."

² Magical drums were generally inscribed with mysterious figures and pictures.

³ The *Chelaelague* was conceived of as a supernatural monster consisting solely of head and legs, without a body. It was always seen sitting in the crotch of a tree.

w'chenekla oneskee naga w'chick-sitmun eltaguak n'pekholagon.

Nolbin naga n'tegtemen n'pekholagon. Pechioo te Lumpeguinwok moskupasuok naga w'chiksitmunia n'pekholagon naga na Atwusknigess chenaque tehiye naga w'chiksitmun n'pekholagon.

Nolbin naga n'tegtemen n'pekholagon naga k'chi Appodumken o'moskatintena negem w'chiksitmun n'pekholagon.

Pesaguetwok, petagiyyik, wuchow-senel, machkiskakil, Atwusknigess, applassemwesitt, Lumpeguinwok, Chebelague; mesioo mame petapowok nachichiksitmunia eltaguak n'pekholagon.

*Wuchowusin*¹ will cease moving his wings to hearken to the sound of my drum.

I sit down and beat the drum, and the spirit-under-the-water² comes to the surface and listens to the sound of my drum, and the wood-spirit³ will cease chopping and hearken to the sound of my drum.

I sit down and beat the drum, and the great *Appodumken*⁴ will come out of the deep and hearken to the sound of my drum.

The lightning, thunder, storms, gales, forest-spirit, whirlwind, water-spirit and spirit-of-the-night-air are gathered together and are listening to the sound of my drum.

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¹ *Wuchowusin* was the storm-bird which sits in the north and makes the gales by the movement of its wings.

² *Lumpeguin* was the ordinary water-spirit.

³ *Atwusknigess* was an invisible being who roams the forest armed with a stone hatchet with which he occasionally fells trees with a single blow. The Indians accounted in this way for the sudden fall of an apparently strong tree.

⁴ The *Appodumken*, like the *Lumpeguin*, dwelt under the water. He had long red hair and was the favorite bugaboo used by Indian mothers to frighten the children away from the water.