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## Medical History

# Seminole Indian Medicine

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Today the Indians of Florida number approximately 1,400, having increased nearly tenfold since the close of the Seminole Wars in 1858.

In 1957 most of the Seminoles organized as The Seminole Tribe of Florida, Incorporated: this group now numbers over 1,000. In 1961 the Indians living along the Tamiami Trail, approximately 225, organized as The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. In addition there are slightly over 100 unaffiliated Indians. They are rapidly adopting white man's culture in order to survive in the competitive society of south Florida. Today's Seminole works alongside the white man in jobs off the reservation or tends the store, farm, or cattle of Seminole owned enterprises, sends his children to public schools and consults the white doctor when he gets sick. However, it was not always thus and the following pages present the medicine of the Seminole in the days when the white doctor was taboo. It will be presented in the present tense as to a small degree some of these customs are still in use, and to give the narrative more interest.

### ... THERE ARE DOCTORS AND THERE ARE MEDICINE MEN

Among the Seminoles of Florida there are doctors and there are medicine men. The former are known in Miccosukee as *ayikcomi:* which is translated by Sturtevant as "medicine maker," and the latter are known as *ayikomifö:si:* ("medicine's owner") or *ayikahica:ci:* ("medicine keeper").<sup>1</sup>

The Seminole doctor may be either a man or woman. Most old people know some medicine so in a sense qualify as doctors but the term is usual-

ly reserved for those with a somewhat sophisticated knowledge of healing herbs and treatments. The female doctors, known as herb women or midwives, learn medicine informally from other midwives and sometimes from male doctors. In contrast to the male doctors they are not required to undergo fasting and rituals. Their practice is largely limited to the care of women, particularly as relates to menstrual disorders and childbirth, and occasionally to care for the male who is passing blood from the bowels or kidneys. The male doctors have no knowledge of bleeding diseases but the female is endowed by nature with a firsthand knowledge of these conditions.

Males who would be doctors must undergo formal training, "Doctor's School," including instruction and rituals of purification and dedication. Boys apply to one of the tribe doctors, most often a medicine man but not necessarily, and ask him to teach them. Josie Billie, medicine man of the Miccosukee Tribe, says only "good men" are accepted for training and only those the medicine man feels are capable of learning the art. One other requirement is that they not be married for as Josie says, "marriage ruin-em body." Details of the "Doctor's School" may be found in the article, "Josie Billie, Seminole Doctor, Medicine Man and Baptist Preacher," also appearing in this issue of the Journal. The teacher of this school receives no money but is customarily given presents by his students when the school session ends. As long as the student remains unmarried and the teacher will accept him, he can return year after year to "Doctor's School" for further instruction.

After "Doctor's School" the more serious students usually apprentice themselves to an older

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doctor, collect herbs for him, follow him on his rounds, and learn about the use of herbs. The identification, collection, preparation and use of herbs is not taught in "Doctor's School." Curing songs are taught in "Doctor's School," apprenticeship or from relatives. A doctor may refuse to reveal more powerful curing songs for his reputation often depends upon possession of these. Thus the doctors of the Seminoles have varying amounts of training, knowledge, ability and, perhaps most important, personal power.

#### ... THE KEEPER OF THE BUNDLE

Being a medicine man is a different matter altogether for the medicine man is a politico-religious figure. Usually he is a doctor also, but there is no formal requirement that he be a doctor. The requisite intelligence, intellectual bent, emotional maturity, ability to take care of the sick members of the tribe and, above all, the personal force that he develops, all make a doctor the logical choice for medicine man. The medicine man occupies the highest ceremonial status in the Seminole Tribe. To attain this rank he must go through most, if not all, the lower ceremonial offices and must be recognized as the leader of his tribe. In his political role the medicine man was until recently the representative of the tribe in dealing with the other groups of Seminoles and with the white man. He attends the Green Corn Dance of the other Seminole groups and generally looks to the good of the tribe. It is he who selects the site for the annual Green Corn Dance of his tribe and supervises the arrangements and staging of it.

In his religious role the medicine man is the keeper of the medicine bundle. Greenlee<sup>2</sup> has defined the medicine man as one who possesses "a fragment of the old war medicine." According to tradition, the Supreme Being (Sa-kee tom-mas-see in Cow Creek; Fee-sa-kee-kee o-meek-chiee in Miccosukee) sent the original medicine, perhaps eight or nine hundred different kinds<sup>3</sup> by his messenger, Es-te fas-ta. This original medicine bundle was given to the care of two medicine men and remained one bundle until the beginning of the Seminole War (1835-1842). Then "Little Chiefs" came to the medicine men according to Josie Billie and said, "Going on long trip, got to have some of that medicine."<sup>3</sup> The medicine men divided the single bundle, making up a number of little bundles, each containing a small amount of each of the medicines in the original bundle, for the chiefs to take with their war parties. Some of

these were lost, some were taken west with the Seminoles who went to Oklahoma, and some were combined with other bundles. About 75 years ago Sturtevant<sup>4</sup> says there were nine medicine bundles of various sizes in Florida. Three of these were destroyed by fire and of the six remaining, one belonged to the Cow Creek and five were held by three Miccosukee medicine men at the time Sturtevant did his studies (1953). Although theoretically each medicine man holding a medicine bundle could hold his own Green Corn Dance, in actual practice the medicine men combine their efforts so that only three dances are staged each year—one at Brighton, one at Big Cypress, and one along the Tamiami Trail. Usually the medicine man will train an assistant from his own clan, and when he feels the assistant is sufficiently trained, he will pass his medicine bundle to him and retire to private life. Occasionally a medicine man dies in office, then the medicine bundle is placed in the hands of another medicine man for keeping until a man can be properly trained to take over its care. Customarily it takes seven years of training to properly qualify as a medicine man. The young Seminoles take little interest in the tradition of the medicine bundle and Frank Shore, medicine man of the Cow Creek Seminoles, says there are only four men with proper training and no one "coming up." He says, "I try to teach some people, but everybody too busy."<sup>5</sup>

The medicine in the medicine bundle is no longer used for its curative powers as it was in former years. Its value is chiefly symbolic and the significance of the medicine bundle to the Seminole has been compared to the significance of the Ark of the Covenant to the Jew. It is believed that if the bundle is properly cared for, the tribe will prosper but if it is neglected the tribe will suffer. Sickness may emanate from the neglected medicine bundle itself. The chief reason for the annual Green Corn Dance is to maintain life in the medicine bundle for it is believed that the power will die if several years are allowed to pass without a Green Corn Dance. On the contrary, if the bundle is properly cared for, during the night following Court Day (the fourth day of the Green Corn Dance) when the medicine "is out," Es-te fas-ta will from time to time add medicines to the bundle to assist the tribe in dangers that lie ahead.

The medicine bundle consists of many separate items; the number may vary from one bundle to another. Most but not all the items are separately wrapped in specially prepared buckskin and wound around with a thong. This buckskin must

be taken from a young buck, incompletely tanned by a man (most tanning is done by women) who has fasted during the procedure and the hair removed. A few items are left unwrapped or are wrapped in cloth. If the medicine man dies, new buckskin is prepared with proper ceremony and each item is transferred to the new wrappings. The skin that encompasses the bundle at the annual Green Corn Dance is considered a temporary cover and is a borrowed deerskin with the hair intact and apparently not prepared with any particular ceremony.

The medicine bundle is displayed for only one period of 24 hours each year, on Court Day of the Green Corn Dance. During the rest of the year it is in the keeping of the medicine man. Capron<sup>3</sup> believes the medicine man keeps it at his camp, but Sturtevant<sup>1</sup> emphatically states that between busks it is kept in a specially built wooden structure often covered with a tarpaulin in a secret spot in the woods. A few days before the Green Corn Dance, the medicine man moves the medicine bundle to a well-hidden spot in the woods east of the cleared area where the dance is to be held.

Before sunrise on Court Day the medicine man and his assistants cross the dance ground walking east into a marsh. There they bathe and the medicine man rubs water all over his body while singing a song asking God (Fee-sa kee-kee o-meek-chee in Miccosukee; Sa-kee tom-mas-see in Cow Creek) to keep the medicine from harming him and to let him use it for the good of the tribe. They reclathe and the medicine man's assistant continues east out of sight into the woods carrying with him an empty deerskin. After a period of time he returns with the bundle wrapped in the deerskin, the legs of which have been tied loosely to make a basket with a handle. The bundle is placed on the ground just off the dance circle and the medicine man or his assistant squats facing east, unwraps the bundle then carefully unwraps and examines each individual item, rewraps the items one by one winding the thong about them and transferring each to fresh deerskin. When this is completed the new deerskin is folded over to encompass the medicine, the legs are tied to make a handle and the bundle is hung on a forked stick, the medicine pole, where it will remain until evening of that day. About twilight the medicine man and his assistant clear, level and sweep a place east of the dance circle where they will sit all night. The assistant then goes to within three feet of the medicine pole and with proper incantations and gestures addresses the medicine.

From the bundle he removes the "fire flint" which he takes to a newly laid fire nearby and with which he ignites the medicine fire. The flint is rewrapped in its buckskin and left near the fire. The assistant returns to the medicine pole, again addresses the bundle with prayers, songs, and gestures, removes it from the pole and brings it near the medicine fire, the "fire flint" is replaced in the bundle and the bundle closed.

The assistant now makes the rounds of the clan camps to collect "private medicines" whose owners want them placed with the medicine bundle to enhance their potency. (In one instance Capron saw a rifle placed with the medicine bundle to give it "supernatural accuracy"). Also certain herbs may be placed near the medicine bundle to improve their efficacy: Button snakeroot, ginseng, Red Bay, Southern Red Cedar, and sassafras. These items are not wrapped in the deerskin with the medicine but set against it. The whole is then covered with a tarp. During the ensuing hours the medicine man and his assistant anoint their bodies with the black drinks. Throughout the night they sit by the medicine bundle and fire keeping track of the dances. At midnight they swallow the boiled black drink four times.

With the coming of the dawn, the women leave the dance ground and the medicine man presides over the final purification rites, the scratching and the sweat bath. While these are in progress, he takes from the medicine bundle a small pipe and tobacco wrapped in a red cloth, smokes it for a few minutes sitting facing west, then returns it to the bundle. He then unwraps the bundle completely and each item individually to determine if Es-te fas-ta has added any new medicines. Indians drift by to watch the procedure and to reclaim any "private medicines" they may have left to be put with the medicine bundle. Having carefully studied and rewrapped each item, the medicine man transfers them to another fresh deerskin, closes the deerskin around them and carries the bundle east until he disappears in the woods. Later the medicine man returns empty handed, his assistant gives a signal and the feast begins; the Green Corn Dance is over.

#### BUNDLES DIFFER

There is disagreement as to the number of items in each medicine bundle. Sturtevant's informant, Josie Billie, says "about forty."<sup>4</sup> but Capron says there may be 600 or 700 different items.<sup>3</sup> No one has been able to get a complete catalogue of all the items in any one bundle.

Sturtevant<sup>1</sup> discusses some two dozen items which are known to Capron and himself, but here we will mention and illustrate only the different types of medicines known to be in either the Miccosukee or Cow Creek bundles. Initially the objects in the bundles had to do with warfare and Sturtevant divides these into those used for offensive magic, those for defensive purposes, and those used to cure wounds incurred in warfare.

In the category of offensive magic is the "Thunder Missile," a spherical, transparent, crystal-like object three-quarters of an inch in diameter which was reputed to make the enemy become excited, as one feels during a thunderstorm. According to Capron, this item was to make the Indians invisible to the enemy. Another such item is the "Living Medicine," a reddish or white powder which the medicine man could use to capture the souls of sleeping enemy and thus make them vulnerable when they awakened.

Of the defensive medicines perhaps the most dramatic is the "Small Stone" which was used to ward off bullets. The medicine man could place it between his people and the enemy, sing appropriate songs, walk around it four times shaking a rattle, and it magically increased in size forming a shield so that the enemy bullets glanced off and his people were protected.

Of the therapeutic items used in war there was the "Shot Medicine," a silvery powder which reputedly could revive someone killed by a bullet. Another medicine is labelled by Capron's informant as the "shot-in-the-heart medicine" and this seems to have been ginseng. Although this is not found in south Florida, it used to grow in north Florida and is now imported from Oklahoma. In the medicine bundle ginseng is kept wrapped in white cloth in contrast to the usual buckskin wrappings. Still another therapeutic item is a buzzard feather quill with a soft wooden stopper which contains fine bits of feathery material called "Buzzard's Down," that stops bleeding when minute amounts are placed in a gunshot wound.

In addition to items used in warfare there are hunting charms such as the "left-hand horn of the Snake King." This was, according to tradition, broken off the king snake by an Indian who charmed the snake from under a rock, aimed a stone at the more powerful right-hand blue horn and missed, breaking off the less powerful left-hand horn. The possession of this charm and the singing of its song attracts deer. Some are ceremonial items such as the "fire flint" about which we have spoken and the "Little Tube," a small

whistle made of cane or bone which is used to signal the sweat bath ritual.

Some of the medicines in the bundle are thought to be so powerful they cannot be touched and bone implements are provided for handling them. Thus one of the bits of horn in the bundle that is known as ee-ah-pee was said to be so powerful that the medicine man, Sam Jones, was afraid of it. Sam Tommie speaking of this says, "Every time he (Sam Jones) touch it his hand swell up and get sore. At's the worst horn Sam got. He think he just take care of it. Keep it in bag. Bring it out every four years. He doan know what it's good for. He doan touch it. He pick it up with sticks—like this."<sup>3</sup> So powerful are some of the powders that a goose quill is provided to scoop them up if they should be spilled. Finally, women are not allowed to come near the medicine bundle for they would surely be knocked down by it.

As noted previously, one of the major responsibilities of the Seminole medicine man is to stage the annual Green Corn Dance. He must set the date, select the site, make all the arrangements, and personally see that everything goes off properly. The Green Corn Dance has two purposes: first, to preserve the life of the medicine bundle and, second, to insure health to the individuals of the tribe; more immediately it is to prepare the males to eat the green corn. In former years this was the sacrosanct religious observance of the Seminoles and it was always held in a very secluded spot. No white man was allowed to witness this ceremonial until the 1930's. More recently both white men and women have been allowed to attend and Smiley<sup>6</sup> says it has largely degenerated into a social occasion with plenty of wyómee (liquor) for all. It is held in the spring of the year and the dates on which it is known to have been held range from late April to mid-July.

#### ... ANNUAL PURIFICATION AND RENEWAL

For those interested in all of the details of the Green Corn Dance the reader is referred to the exhaustive article by Capron.<sup>3</sup> The next several paragraphs will discuss only those aspects of it related directly to health: primarily the black drink ritual and the scratching of the males. There are three "Black Drinks" which are swallowed, rubbed on the body, and poured on the hot stones of the sweat bath. The first two are designed to purify the males and prepare their stomachs to receive the green corn and the third is an attempt at preventive medicine.

The first of the black drinks is a cold water infusion of the chopped up tubers of Button snakeroot (*Eryngium synchaetum*) prepared by the medicine man's helper on the morning of Court Day. This is a very bitter emetic and is used by the medicine man apart from the black drink ritual: as heart medicine, in treatment of a criminal wishing to get back his tribal privileges, and to insure life. If anyone will eat three roots given him by the medicine man with appropriate ceremonies, he will not die within five years according to Capron.<sup>3</sup>

The second black drink is also prepared as a cold infusion by lining the inside of a bowl with vertically placed strips of the inner bark of the willow (*Salix amphibia*) and pouring cold water into the bowl. Although this is done by the medicine man's helpers, the medicine man himself or his assistants then "blow prayers" into this bowl through the medicine pipe. The medicine pipe is fashioned from a cattail; it is about three feet long and has three wrappings of red cloth variously said to symbolize blood and to prevent female diseases in males, i.e., bloody dysentery. Josie Billie told Capron that in preparation of this drink as he blew prayers into it through the medicine pipe, he named over each part of the body so that when the Indian rubbed it on, each part would be protected. Both of these are drunk during the afternoon of Court Day. As they are both powerful emetics, the males down them and quickly head for the bushes to vomit. Somehow they always seem to reach a spot of privacy for they are never seen to vomit in public.

The third black drink or big pot drink is prepared in the late afternoon of Court Day by the medicine man and his assistants and boils on the medicine fire until midnight. Its purpose is to protect the Indians from the diseases the medicine man foresees they will encounter during the coming year. Thus the ingredients vary from year to year and may number 15 or 16 different herbs. Some of the herbs mentioned by Capron<sup>3</sup> are: St. John's wort, Red Bay, Blueberry, Sweet Bay, Rabbit tobacco and ginseng. Still other ingredients are mentioned by Sturtevant<sup>4</sup> including four ears of roasted green corn. Each of the males must take four drinks of this big pot drink at midnight and if he doesn't spontaneously vomit, he must gag himself. The quantity of the drink left over is then poured on the hot stones of the sweat bath the following morning. Sturtevant<sup>4</sup> states, "The medicine prevents the green corn from making the men sick, is sort of a general

tonic, making the body strong and healthy, and also prevents gossiping and 'craziness' and keeps the people 'friendly, rejoicing' during the ensuing year."

The final rituals of the Green Corn Dance which relate to health are the scratching and the sweat bath. The scratching has been said to "purify the blood and prevent blood poison" and to be required because "the blood becomes 'too heavy' and must be 'let out'" to ensure healthiness. It would seem to be a symbolic bloodletting. Only the males are scratched for the women have monthly menstrual cycles that spontaneously purify them. Since the fast must be maintained until after the scratching ceremony, the young boys who are not expected to fast the whole period and men who for some reason cannot stay until the end of the festivities are scratched on the morning of Court Day. Most of the men and older boys are scratched on the morning after Court Day, Feast Day. The scratching consists of two long strokes on the front and two on the back of each upper and lower arm: two on the front and back of each thigh and lower leg: two diagonal strokes on each breast and two diagonal strokes on each side of the back. All men are scratched even if it is necessary to send the medicine man's helpers to drag out the laggards and those that are drunk. The instrument used was at one time a bone set with garfish teeth but more recently it has been sewing needles simply held in the hand, stuck through a block of wood, or through a rectangular frame made of a turkey quill. The skin is wet to keep it from "peeling" and the scratches are just deep enough to draw an ooze of blood. The scratching is done simultaneously by six or eight men, the older scratching the older and the younger scratching the younger. There is much laughter and good natured bantering associated with occasional yips of pain when the needles bite too deep.

During the early morning of Feast Day the sweat bath has been prepared by sinking two saplings in the ground and bending them over to make intersecting semicircular ridge poles over which a tarpaulin is fastened. When 15 or 20 men have finished their scratching, they move into this sweat bath (about eight feet in diameter and four feet high), stones which have been heating on the nearby sweat bath fire are handed in, and the remainder of the big pot drink is thrown on the stones producing billows of steam issuing from the leaks in the sweat lodge. After three or four minutes of this the men burst out glistening with

sweat and dash into the nearby slough for a bath. Others who have finished the scratching but have not taken the sweat bath join them in the slough for bathing. If the timing has been just right, about this time the medicine man will be returning from the woods having hidden the medicine bundle, the first rays of the sunrise will be streaking the sky, and the fast is over. The women will file in with great trays of food and Feast Day has begun.

#### . . . DISEASE, A LOSS OF SOUL

In the remaining pages, we will turn our attention to the Seminole ideas of the cause of disease and therapeutic measures to be undertaken.

The most common answer one gets if he inquires the cause of disease is the "loss of soul." The Seminole believes in a double soul,<sup>1</sup> the parts of which are united in the body when the Indian is healthy and are again united four days after death. One portion of the soul is called *nō:ckī:* and is identified with the breath: this remains in the body until after death. The other portion is located in the heart and is called *solō:pī:* and according to Capron<sup>3</sup> leaves the body via the anus wandering far and wide and experiencing adventures which the Indian perceives as dreams. Characteristically this portion of the soul goes North "where Indians born and raised" and where there are many abandoned towns inhabited by ghosts. These ghosts, usually of the opposite sex, prevail upon the soul to remain. If the soul returns to the Indian's body at daybreak nothing happens and the Indian remains well. However, if the wandering soul becomes enamoured of a pretty ghost and fails to return, the Indian becomes sick. The soul is said to go first North then around to East. If it gets fully to the East, it may then cross the heavens on the Milky Way and when it arrives at the West, the Indian dies. Four days after death the other portion of the soul joins the first portion and the wake is over.

The doctor attempts with his songs to follow the errant soul and lure it back to the Indian's body. If he is successful, the Indian recovers, but if he is not successful, the Indian dies. To be efficacious, roots must be gathered from the North or East sides of the plant, and in the curing songs there is repetition of the points of the compass always in the sequence North, East, South, and West. These are thought to be explained by the theory that the soul goes first North, then East and finally West. Although this theory taught on the second day of "Doctor's School" seems con-

sistent, Sturtevant<sup>1</sup> feels it is not used to explain specific diseases. Soul loss may be brought about by means other than the nocturnal wandering just described. Thus the medicine man can steal the souls of sleeping enemy using medicines in the medicine bundle: sorcery may be used to call the soul of the victim and burn it with an image: and finally, the ghost of a recently dead person may lure away the soul of a relative. Indeed, when an Indian dies in a camp, the clan must move and reestablish their homes at another site lest others of the clan sicken and die. This has also been given as the reason a woman in labor leaves the camp, journeys into the woods accompanied by a midwife, and remains until the baby is born for the baby's death would necessitate the whole camp being moved.

Diseases are also thought to be due to various agents. Thus diseases may be caused by mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, worms, shells, mosquitoes, chameleons, lizards, snakes, bears, monkeys, spiders, and certain plants. Natural phenomena such as fire, thunder and rainbows may cause disease. Some diseases are thought to be caused by supernatural beings and others by social misbehavior such as adultery and too close association with a menstruating woman. Snake bite may be caused by violating the taboos of the Hunting Dance, indeed the major purpose of the Hunting Dance, a ceremonial held in the fall, is to placate the snakes and protect the dancers. Disobedience of, disrespect for, or gossiping about the doctor who has cured you may bring a recurrence of the disease.

When asked how these agents cause disease, the Seminole doctor speaks vaguely about the agent somehow getting inside or on top of the body. With some diseases a "smell" may enter the lungs unknown to the patient and bring about the disease in a magical, not a mechanical way. Sometimes diseases are associated with a given agent because the symptoms in some way resemble some attribute of that agent. Thus digestive upsets are thought caused by cows for they chew their cuds and regurgitate. Diarrhea is associated with birds because bird droppings are liquid.

At least in the past sorcery was a cause of disease, and Seminole medicine men knew malevolent songs and were suspected of sorcery. The usual technique was to treat food, liquor, or cigarettes by singing the appropriate songs over them. The victim then consumes the item, sickens and possibly dies: also the sorcerer might assume the form of an animal that sucked the blood of the

sleeping victim until he sickened and died. Sorcerers could with appropriate ritual cause lightning to strike the victim down or cause the hunting Indian's gun to go off and kill him. Finally, sorcerers might shoot objects, hair, charcoal, needles, or ravellings of cloth, for example, into their victim and cause illness. In such instances the doctor was expected to suck the offending object out, then take an emetic to rid himself of it.

Other diseases caused by intrusive objects were such as the "Little People Sickness." In this, supernatural beings are thought to shoot cobwebs into the sick one. These must be removed by the doctor using the cupping horn. In rheumatism a feather, hair, or pebble may have been shot into the victim and the doctor is expected to suck it out.

Dreams are usually not the cause of disease but are looked upon as omens. However, there are exceptions to this such as the "Fire Sickness"; if one dreams of fire he will develop a fever. Dreaming of many deer may produce the "Deer Sickness" or of a house full of animals, the "Cat Sickness." Dreaming of "a lot of pretty girls, be sweet to you and kiss" according to Josie Billie is a warning you're going to catch a bad cold and fever. Dreaming of hunting animals indicates a desire to learn, i.e., to hunt knowledge.

Finally, there are empirical causes of illness such as knife or bullet wounds or injuries from falls and snakebites. Certain diseases such as colds, coughs, and chronic fevers are not ascribed to specific causes.

Diagnosis is chiefly based on history taking, although the doctor may perform cursory examinations in certain circumstances. He may also examine the stool to determine which animal's stool it resembles. Sometimes a relative or friend goes to the doctor and describes the patient's illness, whereupon the doctor makes his diagnosis and prescribes.

#### ... THE SONG'S THE THING

The Seminole doctor's therapeutic armamentarium consists of curing songs, herbs, bloodletting, sweat baths, and dietary restrictions. Although the doctor uses herbs (Josie Billie is said to have knowledge of more than 225 herbs), it is thought that the herb is incidental and treats the symptoms only while the curing song or spoken spell gets at the cause of the disease and cures it.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Josie Billie told Sturtevant that he could chant a curing song and blow his breath into a cup of plain water and make it efficacious in the cure of disease.

The doctor to be successful in his cures must have "living medicine" within his body. Some doctors possess this to a greater degree than others. It is this power within them that they breathe through the medicine pipe into the pot of medicine or upon the dry herbs held in their hand. It is this power that makes the herbs efficacious, and this power is inhaled by the patient in some magical way. This "living medicine" is given by the teacher to the "worthy" students in Doctor's School. The teacher sends the students to select a plant he designates, they return with it, he prepares it singing over it and blowing into it, the students then swallow it, and it becomes alive within them. However, to keep this "living medicine" alive within him the doctor must undergo one day fasts and take certain medicines every month or two. He must also be alert to avoid situations that might damage his "living medicine." Thus he must avoid contact with menstruating women, treating a woman during mourning, and having coitus with his wife in less than four months after she has borne a child. If the patient he is treating dies, the doctor must purify himself by taking the black drink and waiting two weeks before he resumes practice, or if he does not take the black drink, he must wait four months before resuming practice.<sup>1-2</sup>

A number of the curing songs have been recorded and translated by anthropologists who have worked with the Seminoles. They consist of many words difficult to translate, but often have repetition of the cardinal points of the compass: north, east, south, and west in that order, or the colors yellow, red, black, and white. At times there is reference to the supposed causative agent or the imitation of the cry of the animal or bird that seems related to the illness. Occasionally, as in the "Bear Sickness," the bear is described as moving away, or in the "Sun Sickness," the toad is summoned to swallow the Sun. But for the most part, Sturtevant could find little relationship between the words of the curing song and the illness to be cured. The song is uttered by the doctor in a rapid, barely audible mumble and if he makes a mistake in the recitation, he must stop and begin all over again. Despite this there are variations in the same song from doctor to doctor.

The herbs to be used are usually gathered fresh at the time of the illness; medicines are not kept in stock although the doctor may keep a small stock of herbs that are not available locally. In former times these were kept in specially woven medicine pouches but now bags, tins, and card-

board boxes suffice. Usually the doctor instructs the patient or his relatives what plants he needs and where to find them, then the patient or relative brings them to the doctor. Occasionally, when for one reason or another this will not work, the doctor collects the herbs himself. A few plants such as ginseng and sassafras, which are no longer obtainable in Florida, are brought in from Oklahoma. The only domesticated plants in use are tobacco and the gourd.

Medicine is made from all parts of the plant but most commonly used are the roots and leaves in that order. To be most efficacious the roots and leaves must come from the north or east sides of the plant. Leaves from the south or west sides of the plant are thought to bring bad luck and even death. Some herbs such as cedar leaves are thought to be such strong medicine that the collector must fast the day he collects them lest they harm him.

Sturtevant<sup>1</sup> analyzed the ingredients in 80 different Miccosukee herb remedies and lists the most frequently utilized plants in order of decreasing frequency as follows:

TABLE OF HERBS MOST COMMONLY USED BY THE MICCOSUKEE SEMINOLE<sup>1</sup>

Bay leaves	<i>Persea borbonia</i>	15 times
Cedar	<i>Juniperus cilliecola</i>	11 "
Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>	10 "
Southern willow	<i>Salix amphibia</i>	8 "
Ginseng	<i>Panax quinquefolium</i>	6 "
Lizard's tail	<i>Saururus cernuus</i>	6 "
Button snakeroot	<i>Eryngium synchaetum</i>	5 "
Common buttonbush	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	5 "
Downy milk pea	<i>Galactia volubilis</i>	4 "
Royal fern	<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	4 "
Beard fern	<i>Vittaria lineata</i>	4 "
Serpent fern	<i>Phlebodium aureum</i>	4 "
Frost-weed	<i>Verbesina virginica</i>	4 "
Gopher-apple	<i>Chrysobalanus oblongifolius</i>	4 "
Huckleberry	<i>Vaccinium myrsinites</i>	4 "
Spice-sedge	<i>Eleocharis caribaea</i>	4 "

The first four herbs in this list are all emetics emphasizing the importance the Seminole doctor places on "puking" as a remedy. Josie Billie once remarked that emetics were to the Indian what laxatives are to the white man. Bay leaves and Button snakeroot are the cure-alls of Seminole medicine; Josie remarked that Bay leaves are "good for everything." Among the Cow Creek Seminoles, Button snakeroot and sassafras are the most commonly used herbs and are thought so effective that they need not be sung over. Sturtevant could find very little reason for the employment of a given herb in a given disease except that it was traditional. Medicine made from the herbs may be taken internally, applied externally, used to steam the body (as in the sweat bath), used

as a steam inhalation, or used in a combination of these methods.

During the preparation of the herbs the doctor must abstain from eating meat and fish if the medicine is to be effective. In most instances there are careful instructions about the preparation of the herbs and by what route they are to be given; but often the time of administration, dose to be used and frequency of administration are not noted. Typically, the patient or his relative collects the herbs and brings them to the doctor. The doctor prepares the herbs and at the appropriate time rinses his mouth with water before singing the curing song. The song is sung over the dry herbs held in his hand, or if an infusion, tea or broth is blown through the medicine pipe, the end of which is just under the surface of the liquid. During this procedure the doctor must always face east. "because the moon and the sun arise in the east."<sup>2</sup> After the preparation of the medicine it is given to the patient with instructions for its use and the doctor or patient departs. If the patient doesn't improve, the doctor may take him to another doctor "for a consultation" or the patient may on his own consult another doctor. Indeed, it is not unusual for the patient to consult several doctors and take simultaneously the medicines prepared by each, believing that if one medicine doesn't work another will. During the past 50 years Seminole doctors have become less reluctant to seek the aid of the white doctor when their efforts were not meeting with success. Thus Dr. M. Sewell Pender, the only physician in Collier County during the early 1930's, recalls Josie Billie bringing as many as 20 patients at a time during a malaria epidemic about 1934.

Other less frequently used methods of treatment were bloodletting, the sweat bath, and dietary restrictions. Bloodletting is used in the treatment of five diseases; it is not used in snakebite as one might reasonably expect. The doctor has bull's horns (originally Buffalo's horn) of various sizes with a small hole near the horn's tip. First, he puts a bit of an unidentified root known as "bitter medicine" in his mouth, then spits on the skin at the site chosen for the incision, cuts the skin to sufficient depth with a piece of broken glass and applies the large end of the horn. He puts his mouth to the small hole and sucks vigor-

<sup>1</sup>Mention has been made previously of the soul wandering concept and the theory that if the soul gets due east it will walk the Milky Way to the west and the patient die. For this reason the sick Indian must always lie with his head to the east, for if he lies with his head to the west, he may well die. When the Seminole lies down to sleep at night (but not necessarily during the day), he is careful to lie with his head to the east. Some males are customarily buried with their heads to the west.



ously and when the horn fills with blood, he quickly slips his finger over the small hole and takes the horn with its contents away from the patient's skin. By repeating this procedure several times Josie Billie says a pint of blood can be removed from a satisfactory incision. Sometimes the horn is placed over an accidental cut and suction applied to draw blood into the area rather than from the patient. The sweat bath is primarily a ceremonial procedure, though it is used to treat certain kinds of pain and one type of insanity.

#### ... DON'T EAT DEER BRAINS

Another uncommon therapeutic measure is dietary restriction. For example, the meat of an animal thought to cause a sickness is interdicted for a period of time. Thus Indians suffering from the "Deer Sickness" must not eat venison for four months, and those suffering from the "Hog Sickness" must not eat pork for the same period. Some foods are abstained from because they are thought to be harmful; for example, deer brains must never be eaten by the male for in the words of Josie Billie, "kill-em peter."

Other food taboos relate to potentially polluting individuals. Women during their mense may cook the food but may not eat at the table. The mother may not eat at the common table for four months after the birth of her child, and the widow or widower for four months after the death of their spouse.

Both Greenlee<sup>2</sup> and Sturtevant<sup>1</sup> detail a number of "clinical syndromes" and their treatment. One of these follows to give the reader the idea of the Seminole text of medicine. The "*Bird Sickness*" (fō:sacō:kinokā:cicihci:) is caused by birds in general and specifically such birds as the horned owl, the American egret, the snowy egret, and the white ibis ("curlew"). Babies are particularly susceptible to the bird sickness and have diarrhea with thin greenish stools, vomit after nursing, urinate immediately after taking liquids and grow thin. They may make noises resembling bird calls. The doctor examines the stool for the characteristic appearance. Adults may also be affected and have similar stools, vomiting, anorexia, make bird noises and dream of birds. This is treated with a medicine made from the whole plant of the pinweed (*Lechca minor*) and leaves from the east side of the bay (*Persea borbonia*) boiled in water. With more severe cases in adults the roots of rattlesnake-master (*Liatris laxa*) and queen's-delight

(*Stillingia angustifolia*) are added. The patient drinks the medicine and washes the whole body with it. Adults are also forbidden to eat the meat of migratory birds for a period of time. Sturtevant<sup>1</sup> gives the curing song which the doctor blows into the pot. This refers to the horned owl's eyes running like an open boil, apparently an allusion to the diarrhea. It also contains the cycle of the colors as previously mentioned.

A note about the doctor's fee will close this narrative. We have previously noted that the teacher in "Doctor's School" makes no charge for imparting his knowledge. Furthermore, Josie Billie points out that the Great Being gives man the herbs for nothing, therefore the doctor must not charge for their use. Although the doctor may not take money for his services, it is customary for the patient to give the doctor a gift. It is important that the doctor not seem too eager for this gift and the gift is not usually given immediately, unless the doctor or the patient has come from a considerable distance, making it difficult to transmit the gift at a later date. The gift may be a few yards of colored cloth (all one color), an article of clothing, a pocket-knife, saleable trading goods, or live or dead domestic animals such as a chicken or hog. If the gift is a living animal, the illness is in some fashion transferred to the animal and when the doctor kills it he must eat certain prescribed parts of it; for example, if the doctor receives a live hog, he must eat the "long liver" (spleen). The doctor is at liberty to sell or trade the gift and thus convert it into money. Despite the dictum among the Florida Seminoles that the doctor not accept money, Josie Billie on his annual trips to Oklahoma used to accept four or five dollars for treating an illness and apply this to the expense of making the trip.

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