

Cherokee belief and practice with regard to Childbirth¹.

By Dr. FRANS M. OLBRECHTS.

Summary.

Introduction.

1. Sexual Life.
2. Conception.
3. Abortus. Contraceptives.
4. During Pregnancy.
5. Tabu's.
- a) Pregnant Woman's.

b) Husband's Tabu's.

6. Partus.
7. After Birth.
8. Care for Child. Child-life.
9. Raising the Child to become a Witch.
- Twins.

Introduction.

Some of the Cherokee Indians of Western North Carolina, where the following observations were made, still cling to their aboriginal beliefs and customs with a tenacity which is unequalled by any of the other Indians living on reservations East of the Mississippi.

This is soon accounted for, when we know how secluded the Cherokee live in their Great Smoky Mountains' settlements, how difficult of access some of these are, and how primitive the "mountaineers", the white population of the region, the only whites with whom the Cherokee come into sparing contact.

The credit for most of the work done on the Cherokee is due to the late JAMES MOONEY, of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, some of whose publications on the subject are cited in the course of this paper. The subject on which MOONEY was working when his untimely death put an end to his activities, viz. the Cherokee sacred and medicinal formulas: prayers, conjurations and incantations, was again taken up by the present author at the request of the B. A. E.; a study was made of more than 500 medical prescriptions and formulas, written in the Sequoya syllabary (a syllabary of Cherokee invention), and the results will be made known in a forthcoming publication of the B. A. E.: MOONEY-OLBRECHTS: "The Swimmer-Manuscript of Cherokee Sacred Formulas and Medicinal Prescriptions". In the following pages the beliefs and customs pertaining to Childbirth and the practices connected with these beliefs are described.

1. Sexual Life.

Since the manuscript, to which this discussion is partly an introduction, does not contain any formulas dealing with love-matters, as e. g.:

¹ With the permission of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, for which the data were collected. For the scientific identification of the "medicinal" plants collected by the Cherokee medicine-men for me, I am obliged to Mr. PAUL C. STANDLEY, of the United States National Museum, Washington, D. C.