

The Mythology of the Diegueños

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THE Diegueños have been classified as belonging to the Yuman family of Turner and Brinton. They make part of the Mission Indians of San Diego County, California, in which are also included fragments of Shoshonean tribes, akin to the Nahuatlan peoples of Southern Mexico. It would not be surprising to find in the folklore of the Shoshonean tribes traces of Aztec influence; but if the Diegueños belong to another family, a rather curious problem is presented by the following relics of tribal mythology related to me by old Cinon Duro, the last chief of the Diegueños, since they seem to suggest by internal evidence relations with primitive Aztec tradition.

THE STORY OF THE CREATION.

When Tu-chai-pai made the world, the earth is the woman, the sky is the man. The sky came down upon the earth. The world in the beginning was pure lake covered with tules. Tu-chai-pai and Yo-ko-mat-is, the brother, sat together, stooping far over, bowed down under the weight of the sky. The Maker said to the brother, "What am I going to do?"

"I do not know," said Yo-ko-mat-is.

"Let us go a little farther," said the Maker.

Then they went a little farther and sat down again. "Now, what am I going to do?" said Tu-chai-pai.

"I do not know."

All this time Tu-chai-pai knew what he would do, but he was asking the brother.

Then he said, "We-hicht, we-hicht, we-hicht," three times; and he took tobacco in his hand, and rubbed it fine, and blew upon it three times, and every time he blew the heavens rose higher above their heads. Then the boy did the very same thing, because the Maker told him to do it. The heavens went high, and there was the sky. Then they did it both together, "We-hicht, we-hicht, we-hicht;" and both took the tobacco, and rubbed it, and puffed upon it, and sent the sky up, so-- (into a concave arch).

Then they placed the North, South, East and West. Tu-chai-pai made a line upon the ground.

"Why do you make that line?"

"I am making the line from East to West, and I name them thus, Y-nak, East; A-uk, West. Now you may make it from North to South."

Then Yo-ko-mat-is was thinking very much.

"Why are you thinking?"

"Oh, I must think; but now I have arranged it. I draw a line thus (a crossline), and I name it Ya-wak, South; Ka-tulk, 1 North."

"Why have we done this?"

"I do not know."

"Then I will tell you. Three or four men are coming from the East, and from the West three or four Indians are coming."

The boy asked, "And do four men come from the North, and two or three men come also from the South?"

Then Tu-chai-pai said, "Now I am going to make hills and valleys, and little hollows of water."

"Why are you making all these things?"

The Maker said, "After a while, when men come and are walking back and forth in the world, they will need to drink water, or they will die." He had already put the ocean down in its bed, but he made these little waters for the people.

Then he made the forests, and said, "After a while men will die of cold unless I make wood for them to use. What are we going to do now?"

"I do not know."

"We are going to dig in the ground, and take mud, and make the Indians first." And he dug in the ground, and took mud, and made of it first the men, and after that the women. He made the men very well, but he did not make the women very well. It was much trouble to make them, and it took a longtime. He made a beard for the men and boys, but not for the women. After the Indians he made the Mexicans, and he finished all his making. Then he called out very loud, "You can never die, and you can never be tired, but you shall walk all the time." After that he made them so that they could sleep at night, and need not walk around all the time in the darkness. At last he told them that they must travel towards the East, towards the light.

The people walked in darkness till he made the light. Then they came out and searched for the light, and when they found it they were glad. Then he called out to make the moon, and he said to the other, "You may make the moon as I have made the sun. Some time it is going to die. When it grows very small, men may know that it is going to die, and at that time all men, young and old, must run races."

All the pueblos talked about the matter, and they understood that they must run these races, and that Tu-chai-pai was looking at them to see that they did this. After the Maker did all this he did nothing more, but he was thinking many days.

Footnotes

182:1 Or Ka-tulch; it has a guttural sound.

THE FLY AT THE COUNCIL.

Tu-chai-pai thought to himself, "If all my sons do not have enough food and drink, what will become of them?" After he thought of that a long time he said, "Then they would die." Then he said, "What do my men want to do? I will give them three choices, to die now forever, or to live for a time and return, or to live forever."

When he had finished thinking, he called all the men together, but not the women; and he said to them, "I was thinking; there is not much food and water now. I want to know what you wish to do, and I will give you three choices; to die forever, to live for a time and return, or to live forever." Some of the people said, "We want to die now forever." Others said, "We want to live for a time and return." Others said, "We want to live forever." So they talked and they talked, and they did not know what to do.

Then the fly came and said, "Oh, you men, what are you talking so much about? Tell him you want to die forever." So they talked and they talked very much, and they made this choice, to die and to be done with life, and to die forever. This is the reason the fly rubs his hands together. He is begging forgiveness of the people for these words.

THE IMPIETY OF THE FROG.

When the moon had grown very little all the people were over there running races; and after all had finished running, the rabbit and the frog ran together; and all the people stood around looking on and laughing at the frog, because he had the shape of a man, but wore no clothes. Then the frog was very angry at the Maker, and the thought entered his head, "Because you did not make me well, you shall pay for it."

Tu-chai-pai had gone away to a very high place, and he was asleep up there, and the frog was down in a deep place holding up his hands in defiance of the Maker. Then came the sunshine, and Tu-chai-pai with it. He had a long stick, pointed at both ends, and he held it up over his head. And he took the stick and felt in the deep place with it, and it touched the back of the frog, where it made a long white mark. By that time the frog had planned a wrong deed. He meant to exude poison, swallow it, and die. When thoughts of this evil entered the heart of Tu-chai-pai, he said to himself, "I shall die." Then some boys came and told him what the frog had done.

Tu-chai-pai said, "I shall die with the moon. Go, look at the moon, Ach-hulch-lai-tai. Look again, Hup-lach-sen. Look at it a third time, Hucht-la-kutl. 1 Then I will die."

"Oh, it is a bad time." They looked at the moon, and they watched it to see when Tu-chai-pai would die. It was very little, and they watched it grow smaller, and in six months he finished his life. And all the things on this earth are the children of Tu-chai-pai, and they will die, too.

Footnotes

183:1 Are these the phases of the moon?

THE FIESTA OF THE DEATH OF TU-CHAI-PAI.

As soon as they found that Tu-chai-pai was dead, all living things came together from the mountains and the valleys, all men and all animals to mourn for him. The dove that lives here went away to seek her mate upon a high white mountain, and when she came back there was blood on her wings, the blood of her father. Then they went on a high mountain, and set up two tablets, one to the East, and another to the West, and on these tablets were written the number of the days of the fiesta of the death of Tu-chai-pai.

So the men wanted to bury him, and they made a great funeral pyre, and were going to set fire to it, but the coyote would not agree to this, and the men were afraid of him. So the men sent him very far to the East; and when he was far away he saw the plume of smoke rising up, and came hurrying back.

"What are you burning?"

"We are burning nothing."

Then they sent him away again, far towards the sunset; but when he looked back again he saw the smoke. By that time the body was burned, all but the heart. And now the coyote came back.

So the men stood close together, shoulder to shoulder, about the heart of Tu-chai-pai. The coyote said, "I see what you are burning;" and he sprang over the heads of the men, seized the heart, fled to the mountain, and devoured it. For this reason men hate the coyote.

Then Yo-ko-mat-is, the brother, went far away to the West, but when men pray to him for rain, he comes back and answers their prayers.

Since the Mission Indians were long ago converted and civilized by the early Spanish friars, one is tempted at first to emphasize in this mythology certain resemblances to Christian teachings; but if the reader is sufficiently interested in the subject to give it further study, he will find that such resemblances are for the most part misleading. Let him consult, in this connection, Brinton's "Myths of the New World," pp. 67, 132, 171, 194, 226, and 255; and "American Hero Myths," by the same author, pp. 55, 75, 103, and 125. The latter references will convince him that the correlated ideas of the death of the Maker, the frog, the moon, the coyote, the funeral

pyre, and the unconsumed heart are genuine fragments of Aztec folk-lore. To compare this story in its resemblances and differences with the folk-lore of the Indians of Northern California, he should refer to Powers's monograph in the "U. S. Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region," vol. iii.

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