

## **Jiwere (and Winnebago) Folk-lore, including Iowa “Cults”**

Transcribed by James Owen Dorsey from the letters of the late Reverend William Hamilton

Edited by David Weaver (ITKN)

## FOREWORD

James Owen Dorsey, renowned ethnographer and one of the most prolific colonizers of the 1800s recorded a great deal of detail about Jiwere, Báxoje, and Ho-Chunk cultures. In this text, transcribed from the colonizer Reverend William Hamilton, missionary to the Baxoje alongside Samuel Irvin, you will find short details about the implements used in Baxoje religious ceremonies when we still honored the ways of the Sacred Bundle, or waruxawe [wah-ROO-khah-way]. Readers should consider reading this transcription alongside Lance Foster's *Sacred Bundles of the Ioway* and Skinner's *Ethnography of the Iowa Indians*. These two works cover the contents discussed in this transcription in much greater detail, with Lance Foster correcting the mistakes made by colonizer Alanson Skinner and providing a much-needed indigenous perspective to the study of waruxawe h̥tawe, Our Sacred Bundles.

While the original photocopies of this text were well-preserved and easy to read, typing them anew in the modern formats of word documents and PDFs allows for the opportunity for tribal members such as myself to reclaim our heritage. Whereas Dorsey's work is owned by the Smithsonian, and the Smithsonian itself holds vast records on the study of our people, this document is owned by the Tribe, curated by tribal members and managed by tribal members.

While the text of this document is largely left untouched by the editor, there are a few important changes that have been made. First, the pages have been slightly reformatted to better organize the document's contents. Headings have been added to each section. Additionally, the Ioway language has been used in place of English, where applicable. Each instance in which an Ioway word is used, a phonetic pronunciation is provided the first time it appears to ensure its proper pronunciation. Including our own language in these documents is an essential part of the reclamation of woshka h̥tawe, "our culture." Additionally, grammar errors have been corrected.

One important thing to note is the inclusion of the Ho-Chunk story at the beginning of this document. This does not fit with the larger themes of Ioway religious implements, but the Ho-Chunk are our grandfathers after all, and it is with this lens of respect the story remains despite it not being related to the main focus of the document. Additionally, footnotes have been added with commentary from the editor.

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- *David Weaver, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska*

## Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Story<sup>1</sup>

Two Ho-chunk men while walking together saw a raccoon run up a tree; but when they approached, it was a fish. One of the men ate part of it, but the other declined, for a long time. Finally, he consented and ate some which made him very thirsty. The latter man turned into a fish and directed that offerings should be made to him prophesying success in war to his former comrade. Whenever thereafter the friend visited the place and made offerings to the man-fish, he was told what success he would have.

## Sacred implements of the Báxoje

The Báxoje believe that a feast is an essential part of their devotions. Implements used in religious acts by the Báxoje are listed as follows:

1. Rex'urushj [rehkh'-OO-roo-shee<sup>n</sup>], "drum"<sup>2</sup>
  - a. A drum is made by stretching ta ha [TAH HAH], deerskin over some end of a keg and tightening it with cords and sticks. A drum is needed at almost every dance.
2. Pipes or Whistles
  - a. Whistles are generally made of cane, and are from 15 inches to two feet long, with the reed hollow at the end. The whistle makes a sound resembling that of a fife. These whistles are kept in the mystery sack and are used only on occasions when they profess to worship Wakanda, treat the sick, dance, or go to war.
3. Deer rattle
  - a. This is a stick of about the same length mentioned above, to which are attached a number of deer or antelope hooves, perhaps eight or ten, strung around the stick

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<sup>1</sup> The original document provided "Winnebago" only. The editor has chosen to emphasize Ho-Chunk

<sup>2</sup> This is also the term for a Native American Church drum. Additionally, some ceremonies may involve a na urushj, "wooden drum." Ceremonies for healing involved mankanye [MAH<sup>n</sup>-kay-nyay] urushj, the Medicine Drum

for about half of its length, the other end of the stick being held in the hand and shaken, producing rattling sounds. These deer hoof rattles are used by none but the washwehi (doctors).

- b. Withox'e [wee-THOHKH'-ay],<sup>3</sup> Gourd Rattles, too, are used. These gourds are partly filled with some small hard objects

#### 4. Waruxawe

- a. Waruxawe consists of ta ha, deerskin, and contains various small sacks, open at both ends, in which are the skins of animals and sacred birds which possess great virtue. The whistle, with the skins, etc., are wrapped in ta ha. The withox'e hangs outside and the scalps of their enemies are also attached to the outside of the waruxawe.<sup>4</sup> The waruxawe is hung upon a tree or a stick set for the purpose in the ground, beside or within a few feet of their lodge or skin tent and covered with some other skin to protect it from the weather. When living in their bark lodges during the summer they frequently place the waruxawe on the top of the lodge. Rahnuwe [RAH-noo-way], the Sacred Pipe, is sometimes kept in the lodge in a separate corner wrapped up with the sacred stone or iron by which they decide doubtful points and compel disputing people to speak the truth.

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<sup>3</sup> Otoe would use withax'e [wee-THAHKH'ay]

<sup>4</sup> Lance Foster provides much greater context to the details of these bundles, correcting the colonizer assumptions that these were almost always war bundles