

# A SABOBA ORIGIN-MYTH.

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WHEN Powers was studying the tribes of California, he found the aboriginal peoples south of the Tehachipi so mixed up and "unsortable" that he gave up the task in despair. Consequently practically little of value is known of the mythology, history, or tribal legends of these South Tehachipi peoples.

On Christmas Day, 1899, an earthquake was felt in southern California, especially in the town of San Jacinto and Hemet. The centre of the earthquake was undoubtedly Mount San Jacinto, and Saboba also suffered. Indeed, it was in this Indian village that the only loss of life was experienced. Here, six Indian women were sleeping in an adobe house when the shock occurred. One of the heavy walls fell upon them, and thus, in their sleep, they were made "good Indians." In the same shock another house fell in, and in so doing, seriously wounded the aged husband of one of the women. José Pedro Losero, the oldest male Saboba, as his wife was the oldest female, was the sufferer. As soon as he learned that his wife was dead he told the doctor who had set his broken leg and collarbone that he did not desire to live. For over seventy years he and his wife had lived happily together, and now she was gone, he had no wish to live. Resolutely he set his face towards the setting sun, blind though he was, as if he would penetrate the mysteries of the beyond, and in a few days he had passed into that region--mysterious alike to the cultured white man as to the untutored Indian.

It was from José Pedro that I learned the following legend of the advent of his tribe and people upon American shores.

"Before my people came here they lived far, far away in the land that is in the heart of the Setting Sun. But Siwash, our great God, told Uuyot, the warrior captain of my people, that we must come away from this land and sail away and away in a direction that he would give us. Under Uuyot's orders my people built big boats and then with Siwash himself leading them, and with Uuyot as captain, they launched these into the ocean and rowed away from the shore. There was no light on the ocean, Everything was covered with a dark fog, and it was only by singing as they rowed that the boats were enabled to keep together.

"It was still dark and foggy when the boats landed on the shores of this land, and my ancestors groped about in the darkness, wondering why they had been brought hither. Then, suddenly, the heavens opened, and lightnings flashed and thunders roared and rains fell, and a great earthquake shook all the earth. Indeed, all the elements of the earth, ocean, and heaven, seemed to be mixed up together, and,

with terror in their hearts and silence on their tongues, my people stood still awaiting what would happen further. Though no voice had spoken they knew something was going to happen, and they were breathless in their anxiety to know what it was.

"Then they turned to Uuyot and asked him what the raging of the elements meant. Gently he calmed their fears and bade them be silent and wait. As they waited, a terrible clap of thunder rent the very heavens, and the vivid lightnings revealed the frightened people huddling together as a pack of sheep. But Uuyot stood alone, brave and fearless, facing the storm and daring the anger of Those Above. With a loud voice he cried out 'Wit-i-a-ko!' which signified 'Who's there? What do you want?'

"But there was no response. The heavens were silent! the earth was silent! The ocean was silent! All nature was silent!

"Then with a voice full of tremulous sadness and loving yearning for his people Uuyot said: 'My children, my own sons and daughters, something is wanted of us by Those Above. What it is I know not. Let us gather together and bring "pivot," and with it make the big smoke and then dance and dance until we are told what is wanted.'" So the people brought pivot--a native tobacco that grows in Southern California--and Uuyot brought the big ceremonial pipe which he had made out of rock, and he soon made the big smoke and blew the smoke up into the heavens while he urged the people to dance. They danced hour after hour until they grew tired, and Uuyot smoked all the time, but still he urged them to dance.

"Then he called out again to Those Above, 'Wit-i-a-ko!' but still could obtain no response. This made him sad and disconsolate, and when the people saw Uuyot despondent and downhearted they became panic-stricken, and ceased to dance, and began to cling around him for comfort and protection. But poor Uuyot had none to give. He himself was saddest and most forsaken. of all, and he got up and bade the people leave him alone, as he wished to walk to and fro by himself. Then he made the people smoke and dance, and when they rested they knelt in a circle and prayed. But he walked away by himself, feeling keenly the refusal of Those Above to speak to him. His heart was deeply wounded.

"But as the people prayed and danced and sang, a gentle light came stealing into the sky from the far, far east. Little by little the darkness was driven away. First the light was gray, then yellow, then white, and at last the glistening brilliancy of the sun filled all the land and covered the sky with glory. The sun had arisen for the first time, and in its light and warmth my people knew they had the favor of Those Above, and they were contented.

"But when Siwash, the God of Earth looked round, and saw every

thing revealed by the sun, he was discontented, for the earth was bare and level and monotonous, and there was nothing to cheer the sight. So he took some of the people and of them he made high mountains, and of some, smaller mountains. Of some he made rivers and creeks, and lakes and waterfalls, and of others, coyotes, foxes, deer, antelopes, bears, squirrels, porcupines, and all the other animals. Then he made out of the other people all the different kinds of snakes and reptiles and insects and birds and fishes. Then he wanted trees and plants and flowers and he turned some of the people into these things. Of every man or woman that he seized he made something according to its value.

"When he was done he had used up so many people he was scared. So he set to work and made a new lot of people, some to live here, some to live there, and some to live everywhere. And he gave to each family its own language and tongue and its own place to live, and he told them where to live and the sad distress that would come upon them if they mixed up their tongues by intermarriage. Each family was to live in its own place, and while all the different families were to be friendly and live as brothers, tied together by kinship, amity, and concord, there was to be no mixing of bloods.

"Thus were settled the original inhabitants on the coast of southern California by Siwash, the God of the Earth, and under the captaincy of Uuyot.

"But at length the time came when Uuyot must die. His work on the earth was ended and Those Above told him he must prepare to leave his earthly friends and children. He was told to go up into the San Bernardino Mountains, into a small valley there, and lie down in a certain spot to await his end. He died peacefully and calmly, as one who went to sleep. He was beloved of the Gods above and Siwash, the God of Earth, so that no pain came to him to make his death distressful.

"As soon as he was dead the ants came and ate all the flesh from his bones. But the spirit messengers of Those Above looked after him and they buried him so that the mark of his burying place could never be wiped out. The powers of evil might strive, but this place would always remain clearly shown. A lake of water soon covered the place of his burial, and it assumed the shape of a colossal human being. It was the shape of Uuyot, and from that day to this it has remained there. It has been seen by all the people of all the ages, and will never be wiped out of existence. The legs and outstretched arms, as well as the great body, are distinctly to be seen, and even now, in the Great Bear Valley Lake, which is the site of Uuyot's burial, the eyes of the clear-seeing man may witness the interesting sight.

"But it was not all at once that the people could see that Uuyot was buried in this spot. Before they knew it as a fact they sat in a great circle around the place. They sat and wept and wailed and mourned for Uuyot. They made their faces black and then they cut off their hair to show their deep sorrow, and they sat and waited, and wept and wailed, until Those Above showed them the buried body of their great leader and captain.

"And to this day the places where that great circle of people sat may be seen. The marks of their bodies are left in the ground and they will remain there forever, or so long as the body of Uuyot is to be seen.

"Ah! my people were strong and powerful then. There were many of them. Uuyot had led them to be a great people. They made a solid ring around the whole earth. Alas! that ring is broken now.

George Wharton James.

NOTE OF EDITOR. In this story Siwash is apparently the same as the Siwash "Indian," of the Chinook jargon, which has travelled down the coast.