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DISTRIBUTION OF SMOKING METHODS, ADAPTED FROM WISSLER,
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AMERICAN INDIAN TOBACCO
VARIETIES, CULTIVATION, METHODS OF USE

TOBACCO (*Nicotiana*) is a plant native of the Americas. The early explorers found the Indians using it wherever they went. The sub-arctic regions of Canada were the only parts of our continent where no tobacco grew. There are about 70 species of *Nicotiana*, of which fourteen grew in North America. Only nine of these were used to any great extent by the Indians.

1. **NICOTIANA RUSTICA**, a hardy variety with a yellow flower, was used in all of the eastern half of the United States and Canada, the eastern edge of the plains being the western limit of the area and the southern section of Canada the northern limit.

2. **NICOTIANA ATTENUATA** occupied the largest extent of territory. It grew wild all over the southwest and the southern part of the plains area and was cultivated in the northern section of the plains up into western Canada and on the Northwest coast.

3. **NICOTIANA MULTIVALVIS** was the variety found in the Oregon-Washington area and in Idaho and western Montana. It was the plant raised by the Crow.

4. **NICOTIANA QUADRIVALVIS** was grown by the earth lodge people along the Missouri in North Dakota. It was used by other tribes further south on the Missouri, who also probably used the varieties raised east and west of them, 1 and 2.

5, 6, 7. **NICOTIANA BIGLOVII**. Three varieties of this species grew in three different parts of California and provided tobacco for most of the California tribes. The Hupa, in the northwest part of the state, cultivated one variety.

8. **NICOTIANA TRYGONOPHYLLA** was used only by the Havasupai, living in a canyon tributary to the Grand Canyon of Arizona.

9. **NICOTIANA TABACUM**, the species now used throughout the world, was a native of Mexico, the West Indies and northern and eastern South America. It was introduced into Virginia by the early English colonists, and spread from there all over the country.

CULTIVATION

The very large majority of these plants were cultivated for ceremonial use only, so that production was small. The Tobacco Nation, an Iroquoian tribe living in western New York, alone raised the crop for sale. Tribes who raised no tobacco and who were unable to pick it wild, got as much as they could by trading with more fortunate nations, or else depended on substitutes, the smoke rather than the tobacco being the essential part of the ceremonial usage.

Information on the methods used by the Indians in cultivating tobacco is very limited. Notes on the practices of widely scattered tribes show a wide range of agricultural methods. The plant was usually grown in small patches, apart from other crops. The amount of labor expended before and after planting depended on the climatic conditions. In favorable localities very little was done, the seeds being merely thrown on the ground to take care of themselves. Where the climate was more severe greater care was taken. The ground was dug before planting, the seed was arranged in rows and time was given to cultivating and thinning the plants. In some cases brush or grass were burned on the ground

to be planted before the seed was sowed, apparently to keep down the growth of weeds. Tobacco cultivation was usually the work of the men.

PREPARATION. There was as much variation in the preparation of the plant for smoking as there was in its cultivation. The general practise was to dry the plants in the sun or over the fire and then to crush or chop them into very small bits. There was much tribal variation in the use of the plant, some burning the whole and other preferring only the leaves or some other part. In some cases each part of the plant was used for a different purpose.

MIXING of other plants with tobacco was very common. All tribes did not grow it and many were only able to obtain a very small amount by trade. In the eastern half of the continent the tribes smoked a preparation called "kinnikinnick", an Algonkin word meaning "that which is mixed." The common ingredients were tobacco, sumac leaves and the inner bark of the dogwood. There were many variations to this formula. In the plains area gum, sumac, bearberry and the bark, leaves and roots of two kinds of willow were used. The Pueblo people added various herbs, while on the Pacific coast manzanita leaves and the Jimson weed were preferred. In addition to these more common materials almost every kind of leaf and bark was used. Sometimes even insects were added.

METHODS OF USE

PIPE SMOKING was the predominating method of consuming tobacco in the United States and Canada.

PIPES are of two types, called tubular and elbow. The former has the bowl and the mouthpiece on the same plane and resembles a modern cigar holder; the latter has the bowl set more or less at right angles to the stem, like any pipe of white manufacture. The tubular pipe was used throughout the southwest, on the Pacific coast, and in the plateau area between the plains and the west coast. The elbow pipe was found everywhere east of the plains area. To a limited extent it was used in the southwest and in southern California. In historic times it has come into use in Alaska and British Columbia, where smoking was not originally practised, by way of Asia. As a makeshift, and according to some native traditions before pipes were invented, smoking was done through a reed thrust, from one side, into a small hole in the ground, in which tobacco or some substitute had been placed.

CIGARETTES were confined to the Pueblo tribes of the Southwest. Nowadays the smoking of machine made cigarettes has spread everywhere among the Indians. The native cigarette had two forms. One had a corn husk wrapper containing a much smaller quantity of tobacco than is found in a modern cigarette, and the other was made of a section of hollow reed stuffed with tobacco. Hundreds of reed cigarette butts have been found in southwestern ruins.

The Peyote religious cult, which originated in the southwest, and which involves the ceremonial smoking of cigarettes, has carried this form of smoking among many tribes who were once exclusively pipe smokers.

CIGARS were confined to the West Indies and northern and central South America.

CHEWING was the specialty of the Northwest coast Indians, but was also practised to some extent by the tribes farther south on the Pacific. Before chewing the tobacco was mixed with shell lime.

INFLUENCE ON EUROPE. The smoking customs of the Indians have had a lasting effect on those of Europe. The English explorers learned smoking from the pipe users of the eastern United States and have since been a race of pipe smokers. The Spanish, Portuguese and other Mediterranean races, having learned of tobacco from the cigar and cigarette smoking tribes of the West Indies, Mexico and South America, still prefer these methods of using the plant.

CEREMONIAL USE. Tobacco was very intimately connected with the complicated religious systems of the Indians. Relatively few tribes smoked for pleasure only. Almost no ceremony or undertaking, either public or private, was conducted without the accompaniment of the offering of smoke from a pipe. With a good many tribes this connection with ceremony began with the planting of the tobacco seed. This phase reached its highest development among the Crow.

The two most common uses of smoke in connection with either religious, political or social ceremonies were the blowing of the smoke by the priest to the world quarters, and the passing of the pipe, usually from left to right, around the council circle. The decoration of the pipe bowl and stem, and even the grip used in holding the pipe, were of great ceremonial importance.

PRESENT CONDITION. It is not exactly known how many tribes are still growing their own tobacco, but it is probable that the industry is still carried on by a few of the northern plains tribes, by certain of the central Algonkin groups and by the tribes on the upper Missouri. Commercial tobacco grown by the whites was introduced among the Indians at a very early date and has largely supplanted the native varieties.

Compiled from the following sources by F. H. Douglas :

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