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**VARIOUS**

**THE WISCONSIN  
ARCHEOLOGIST;  
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No. 1

# THE WISCONSIN ARCHEOLOGIST

USES OF TOBACCO AND THE CALUMET  
BY WISCONSIN INDIANS  
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL BILLS



PUBLISHED BY THE  
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MILWAUKEE

# Wisconsin Archeological Society

## MILWAUKEE, WIS.

Incorporated March 23, 1903, for the purpose of advancing the study and preservation of Wisconsin antiquities.

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Courtesy of Mr. J. T. Lee.

PASSING THE PIPE.

Chippewa Indians



# THE WISCONSIN ARCHEOLOGIST

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No. 1

## USES OF TOBACCO AND THE CALUMET BY WISCONSIN INDIANS

GEORGE A. WEST

### ABORIGINAL TOBACCO

It is now almost universally conceded that the use and knowledge of tobacco reached the rest of the world from America. Of fully fifty species of nicotina all but two originated on the Western continent, but of these the leaves of but few are used as tobacco.

The aborigines of the Great Lakes region, at the time of the discovery, did not use the tobacco of the South, but employed native products instead. Wild tobacco (*Nicotina rustica*) was cultivated to a slight extent by the Wisconsin Indians and still grows about some of the places they frequented. The substance generally employed for smoking was the green portion of the bark of the young red osier, cornel, or dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera* Michx.) which when prepared they called "kinnikinnik". The leaves of the sumach (*Rhus glabra* Wood, and *R. aromatica* Ait.) were sometimes smoked. A third variety of native tobacco consisted of the leaves of a low growing evergreen shrub called bearberry or leaf redwood (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* Spreng), found in Wisconsin as far south as Fox Point, Milwaukee County, in the Lake Superior country and west to the Yellowstone. After the introduction of tobacco into this part of America by white men, the Indian soon became partial to its exhilarating qualities. Because of its scarcity it was usually mixed with kinnikinnick for smoking purposes.

## OFFERINGS OF TOBACCO IN A DRY STATE

A universal belief that a great spirit dwelt in certain bodies of water seemed to have possessed our aborigines from time immemorial. This spirit they call a "manitou", and Father Marquette found this to be a general name given to all spirits whom they thought to be superior to man.

Father Allouez gives a good idea of the religious beliefs and superstitions of the Wisconsin Indians: "There is here a false and abominable religion, resembling in many respects the faiths of some of the ancient Pagans. The savages of these regions recognize no sovereign master of Heaven and Earth, but believe there are many genii—some of which are beneficent, as the Sun, the Moon, the Lake, Rivers, and Woods; others malevolent, as the adder, the dragon, cold, and storms. And in general, whatever seems to them either helpful or hurtful they call a Manitou, and pay it the worship and veneration which we render only to the true God".

"These divinities they invoke" he says, "whenever they go hunting, fishing, to war, or on a journey—offering them sacrifices."<sup>1</sup>

Tobacco was among the most sacred possessions of the American Indians and was used either in a dry state or in fumes, as offerings to their various manitous, and especially to their most revered one, the sun.

Peter Jones, in his "Ojibway Indians" declares that not only the Chippewa, but many other tribes have the custom of offering tobacco to their deities.

Offerings of tobacco were made by the American Indians in religious rites and solemn ceremonies, with the same earnestness and fervor as was myrrh and frankincense by their more enlightened brothers of the East. They regarded it as a sacred gift from the Great Spirit.

Dr. Hoffman writes of the Wisconsin Menomini: "Tobacco

<sup>1</sup>Jesuit Relation, 1666-67.

is frequently used by the Menomini as an offering. It is placed before grave-boxes, sprinkled on stones or rocks of abnormal shape, their form being attributed to the Great Deity, or to Ma'nabush. It is also sent as peace offerings to other persons or tribes; it is given to one from whom a favor is expected, or when an answer is looked for to questions to be submitted or propounded; and likewise it is sent out, together with an invitation, to members of the medicine society when a meeting is contemplated. Nothing of a serious character is undertaken, or ever attempted, before indulging in smoking and contemplation, and perhaps by preliminary fasting, accompanied by prayers and chants. The origin of tobacco is regarded by the Menomini as mystic.<sup>72</sup>

Both the Winnebago and Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin make the same uses of tobacco in a dry state as the Menomini, a result of their having been neighbors for several centuries. The Siouan people of the plains make use of tobacco in all their important ceremonies, but in a manner slightly different from their relatives, the Winnebago.

Father Allouez, in 1666 or 1667, when about to administer to a sick Fox Indian, near the head of Lake Winnebago, was sprinkled completely over with powdered tobacco by the thankful son of the sick man, who said: "Thou are a spirit; come now, restore my sick people to health. I offer thee this tobacco in sacrifice." At Green Bay, in 1672, he reports having been treated by an Outagamie savage as if he were a God. The incense of this country, tobacco reduced to dust, was presented, and his crucifix was covered with it. A woman did almost the same thing, while being instructed and baptized by the Father: "She ceased not to cast tobacco on the crucifix, which I presented to her."<sup>73</sup>

Indian sacrifices, it is believed, are not made as an atonement for sin, but to obtain a temporal advantage or to avert the anger of the spirits.

<sup>72</sup> 14th Rept. Bu. Eth., p. 252.

<sup>73</sup> Smith's History of Wis., p. 98.