

The Beginning of Tobacco

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I'm telling you the story of the first person to use tobacco. This is how tobacco came to be used in Butemine.

It started like this: a man had a small plot of sweet potatoes. He went there to hoe his sweet potatoes and saw that a porcupine had been rooting in his field. So he decided to sit and guard his field himself. He sat and sat, but the porcupine kept sneaking in. Finally, he thought he'd go to his best friend's house to borrow his spear. So he took the spear and returned to his field to guard it.

There it came, the porcupine lumbering into his field. He ran after it, threw the spear, and pierced it through. The porcupine, with the spear still stuck in its back, ducked into a tunnel, where it disappeared, spear and all.

The young man went to tell his friend, 'I've lost your spear.' The friend answered energetically, 'What! You've lost my spear? But this is the very spear I like, and I want you to get it back for me!'

'But where should I look for it, since it's nowhere to be seen?'

'Look for the place where you hit the porcupine, and when you find the tunnel it slipped into, go in there yourself.'

So the young man left. He had no choice but to do as his friend had demanded. Now the porcupine has slipped into a tunnel, and at that very place the young man ducked down. In he went. As soon as he had gone just a little ways, he saw a gate. When he reached the gate, he saw a person there from his clan. The man was wounded, as if he'd been pierced by a spear.

'Have you come here?' he asked the young man.

'Yes, I'm looking for my friend's spear because he demanded it of me. He had said, "Look for it until you find my spear!"'

The wounded man asked, 'Is that what he told you?'

'Yes.'

'Well come on, it's time to return. This is his spear. And take this tobacco to him. Tell him to sniff it. Take what I'm giving you. If I give this to you, afterwards tell him to follow you to find this place where the tobacco comes from. I'm telling you, when you see this tunnel, enter in.'

The young man left. The tobacco he'd been given was already ground to powder. When he arrived he said, 'Friend! Take your little spear.' He returned it to him, his little spear. Then he gave him the tobacco, the tobacco which had come from the world of the spirits. This was because the people who had gone there had changed into spirits, the people of our clan.

So he gave him the tobacco. When his friend had finished it, he said to the young man, 'Now then, my friend. Come let's do this one thing. Did you notice how you sneeze, and your whole head is filled with satisfaction? What I want is my own tobacco, and only you know where it comes from.'

The young man found that he didn't have a choice. He had to follow the tracks back to get the tobacco for his friend. He had, after all, been the one who first demanded the spear of him. The young man entered the tunnel, and as he did so, he saw the people of his clan who'd become spirits. He was told, 'Come here. Did you try the tobacco?'

'Yes.'

'Here, bring this to your friend. And now, we have added something. We're even going to give you tobacco seeds. This will conclude the matter; sow the seeds, sow the seeds.' That's how it happened; he brought his friend the tobacco as well as the seeds.

'Friend, listen. I've been given the seeds, so let's plant them.' They planted the seeds, and they grew. That's how tobacco came to be on the earth. It now belongs to all people. Up to this very day it is sniffed. There's also the chewing tobacco. And nowadays there's the kind you twist up. People roll a cigarette and smoke comes out. They inhale it. That was the beginning of tobacco coming to earth. And this tobacco cannot be refused to any person because it comes from the world of spirits. How could you refuse to share tobacco with your friend?

This is how it began and now I'm done.