

THREE INSCRIBED STONES:
KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING GREEK CIVILIZATION
IN NATIVE AMERICA AND THE EASTERN-MEDITERRANEAN ORIGINS
OF THE CHEROKEE SYLLABARY¹

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Three undated but ancient examples of North American rock art suggest a connection with classical Greek and Hebrew civilizations.

THURSTON OR RED BIRD PETROGLYPHS

A cave entrance overlooking the Red Bird River, a tributary of the South Fork of the Kentucky River in Clay County, Kentucky, in the Daniel Boone National Forest, displays inscriptions that, according to Kenneth B. Tankersley of the University of Cincinnati, are nineteenth-century examples of writing in the Cherokee syllabary (Powell 2009).² A local resident (Burchell n.d.) recognized Greek writing in one inscription (which he called Christian Monogram #2), but his reading is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. Evaluation by experts in Greek and Semitic epigraphy identified two distinct inscriptions, one in Greek and one in Hebrew. They appear to be contemporaneous with the Hebrew-inscribed Bat Creek Stone, which was unearthed in 1889 during excavation of a burial mound in East Tennessee by John Emmert, an employee of the Smithsonian Institution's Cyrus Thomas (see McCulloch 2011-2014; also, Buchanan 2015-2017a, 2015-2017b, in this issue). Greek and Hebrew coins have also been found in the region, especially in the Ohio River drainage (e.g., Epstein 1980).

The Thurston Stone is interpreted as a record of the blending of Greek, Cherokee, Native American, Egyptian, and Hebrew cultural traits. Further, Keetoowah Society traditions, as captured in *The Vision of Eloh'*, confirm a general outline of the origins of the Cherokee people in a transpacific Ptolemaic-Greek expedition joining earlier-arrived Greeks, Jews, and Phoenicians in the Ohio Valley around A.D. 100 (Yates 2012).

THE POSSUM CREEK STONE

Another record of Greek-speaking people in ancient America is the Possum Creek Stone, which Gloria Farley discovered in Oklahoma in the 1970s and discusses in Volume 2 (never published) of her *In Plain Sight* as proof that the man whom history knows as Sequoyah did not invent the Cherokee syllabary. The inscription can be read as Greek, HO-NI-KA-SA or 'O NIKΑΣΑ, 'This is the one who takes the prize of victory', a common inscription for the pedestal upon which victors were crowned at athletic games. The use is Homeric, and the spelling Doric.

THE ROCKY CREEK STONE

A third piece of evidence helps fill in the background of the arrival of Greeks and their intermarriage with Asia-derived and other Indians in North America. In 1870, an engraved 48-x-38-centimeter (19-x-15-in.) limestone tablet was uncovered during excavation of a mound on Rocky Creek near Castalian Springs in Sumner County, Tennessee (Yates 2012:80-82; Yates 2008). Dating to an earlier time than its Mississippian Period context, it commemorates a peace treaty between the Cherokee and the Shawnee. The Cherokee chief wears a Greek-looking, seeming horsehair-crested helmet and carries the spear and shield of a Greek hoplite (citizen soldier). His Shawnee adversary clasps hands in a wedding ceremony with a Cherokee woman who bears wampum belts as a pledge of peace, has her hair in a maidenly bun, wears a Middle Eastern-style plaid kilt, and displays a large star of David. In the *Walam Olum* or *Red Record*, we are told that before crossing the Mississippi, somewhere along the south bank of the Missouri the Algonquian

Lenni Lenape (Delaware Indians)—who were later allied with the Cherokee—encountered a foreign tribe that they call the Stonies. Cherokee legends about the sorcerer Stone-coat indicate that the original Cherokee had metal armor and weapons. Mitochondrial-DNA studies confirm a mixture of “anomalous” East Mediterranean mitochondrial lineages such as Egyptian T, Greek U, and Levantine X with “standard” American Indian haplogroups A, B, C, and D in the Cherokee and certain other Eastern Woodlands Indians (Yates 2010a, 2010b, 2012:42-57; Yates and Yates 2014:56-72, 97-129).

FINAL THOUGHTS

To sum up, the Red Bird Petroglyph is a Greek inscription from the 2nd to 3rd century A.D., not a crude Cherokee scratching of around 1800 as recently announced by the Archaeological Institute of America and the *New York Times*. The petroglyph occurs above what is, in all likelihood, an inscription in Maccabean-era Hebrew. The Sequoyan syllabary for which these Greek and Hebrew inscriptions were mistaken seems to have originated in the Bronze Age Greek world along with other syllabaries such as Linear A, Linear B, and Cypro-Minoan. The Cherokee language, which today is Iroquoian, is the result of a relexification process that took place in the distant past. It contains many relict words of Greek origin, especially in the area of government, military terminology, mythology, athletics, and ritual (see Table 1). Cherokee music also appears to reflect Greek roots. I conclude that the Cherokee Indians are, quite literally, the Greeks of Native America.

Greek	Meaning	Cherokee	Meaning
<i>alomenoi</i>	wanderers (in a hopeless sense)	<i>eloh'</i> ; <i>elohi</i>	migrants, wanderers; earth
<i>dakos</i>	noxious, devouring beast, whale	<i>dakwa</i>	mythic great fish
<i>dasis</i>	hairy, shaggy like a beast	<i>dachi</i>	hairy water monster
<i>tynchana</i>	things that befall	<i>tikano</i>	history
<i>etheloikeoi*</i>	volunteer settlers	<i>eshelokee</i>	Cherokee; original people
<i>gennadas</i>	noble	<i>kanat(i)</i>	doctor, hunter
Huios Dios	Son of Zeus (title of Herakles)	Su-too Jee	name of a mythic strong man
<i>illo, illas*</i>	wrap, twist; rope	<i>kilohi</i>	twisted-hair clan (cf. Hawaiian <i>hilo</i>)
<i>kakotechneō</i>	base arts, perjury, fraud	<i>kaktunta</i>	taboo regulation
<i>kanon</i>	straight-edge used by athletes	<i>kanuga</i>	scraper used by ballplayers
<i>karanos</i>	a chief	<i>koranu**</i>	war-chief title
<i>kateis*</i>	assembly	<i>cahtiyis</i>	assembly house
<i>kerux</i>	herald	<i>skarirosken**</i>	speaker, herald
<i>mona*</i>	stopping place, way-station	Mona	land where the Elohi tarried
<i>neika*</i>	contest	<i>anetcha</i>	ball-play
Ogyges	titan of Greek mythology	Ootschaye	rival of Sutoo Jee (Herakles)
<i>ouktenna</i>	one not killed	Uktena	name of a dragon or serpent
<i>oulountata</i>	declared healthy	<i>oolungtsata</i>	divining crystal for health
<i>skia</i>	ghost, shade	<i>atchina</i>	ghost; cedar
<i>stix</i>	abominable	<i>stichi</i>	name of a dangerous serpent
<i>tanawa*</i>	astronomical instrument	Tchlanua	Great Hawk
(<i>hoi en</i>) <i>telei</i>	those in authority	<i>tilihi</i>	brave, warrior
<i>theatas*</i>	spectator in a play	<i>tetchata</i>	playful Cherokee fairy
theatron	theater, assembly	<i>tetchanun</i>	ceremonial enclosure
Thrax	Thracian	Tchaskiri**	sorcerer Stoneclad
typho	raise a smoke, make sacrifice	Tathtowe;	ceremonial title; firecracker-
		<i>tistoe</i>	(smoke-) bringer (Santa Claus)

Table 1. Seeming Greek words and names found in Cherokee.

NOTE

¹This article is dedicated to the memory of Gloria Farley.

²In 1994, the stone fell and was relocated to Rawlings/Stinson Park, Manchester, KY.

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