

JOURNEY OF THE CHEROKEES

As told by Hastings Shade

One of the old stories tells how the Cherokees may have originated from South America or an island in that area.

It tells of a land that was surrounded by water that was undrinkable; how they sacrificed from temples; how the earth shook and the mountain tops opened up and fire issued forth - how the land began to sink into the water that surrounded them.

Then the journey toward the cold began (meaning north). They had formed seven traveling groups, thus insuring survival.

A warrior group, called "a-ni-wa-ya" - the Earth People, were in charge of things of the Earth. They were potters, pipe makers, etc.

A group called "a-ni-ki-lo-i" - meaning Stranger (today, we call them "a-ni-gi-lo-hi" meaning Long Hair) were the teachers, priests, and keepers of the ancient lore. They taught the aliens and adopted ones how to be true Cherokees.

The group called "a-ni-tsi-squa" (bird group) were the messengers. A group called the "a-ni-ka-wi" (deer group) were the makers of clothing.

The group called "a-ni-sa-ho-ni" (blue group) were the builders.

The group called "a-ni-wo-di" (Paint Clan) were the medicine men and keepers of the ancient secrets.

A group called "a-ni-go-da-ge-wi" were keepers of the village ball players and game keepers.

These were how the seven groups were named as they began their journey. They told of crossing fertile land where many stayed and built cities and spoke the ancient language - and hot sand where there was little water -- and of crossing four great rivers.

The first one they crossed (may be Rio Grande) ran from towards where the sun went down and towards where the sun came up. Great beasts with humps on their backs were seen - some were killed for food, clothing, and shelter.

Yet another river (may be Red River) ran from west to east. Here there were small mountains that were covered with green.

Another river (may be Arkansas) ran from between where the cold came and where the sun went down - northwest - to between where the sun came up and where they had come from - southeast. Here the rain turned white and covered the ground. Here they camped so the seers could look to the future. But after only one day, they were told by the ones who could look into the future that they were to leave because the land had signs that told of a time that there was to be much suffering for the Cherokee people.

After leaving this land, they crossed the fourth and final big river (Mississippi). This river ran from the spirit of the supreme cold from the north -- to the warm direction from which they had come (south). They also tell of passing people who built mounds and who also sacrificed captives. These were called Fierce people.

This journey that had lasted many centuries finally ended - in the direction from where the sun comes up -- east - to the mountains that were high, with plenty of water and game and materials that were similar from where they had come. There was material for baskets and blow guns, large soft

trees for canoes, clay for pottery, pipes, and material for houses. Here the remaining ones from the original groups stayed until the people from across the water that was undrinkable found them. Over their journey they had built cities and raised crops, and had lost at some point in time -- the ancient language.

The place they had come to inhabit is now called the Great Smoky Mountains. Some of the Cherokees did end up in the "Land of Great Suffering"!

Shade, Hastings. Myths, Legends, and Old Sayings. Tahlequah, OK: Shade, 1994.