

## Tentative Speculations on the Chronology of the Walam Olum and the Migration Route of the Lenape

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There is reason to believe that four dates mentioned in the Walam Olum may be closely approximated:

First: The following statement occurs on pages 36 and 37 of the *History of the State of New York*, by Yates and Moulton, Vol. I, Part 1, published in New York in 1824:

"The Rev. Mr. Beatty, in his mission from New York in 1776, "to the western Indians, received from a person whom he credited, the following tradition, which he heard from some old men of the Delaware tribe. That of old time their people were divided by a river, and one part remained behind; that they knew not for certainty how they came first to this continent, but gave this account, viz., that a king of their nation when they formerly lived far to the west, left his kingdom to his two sons; that one son making war upon the other (p. 37) the latter thereupon determined to depart, and seek some new habitation; that accordingly he set out, accompanied by a number of his people, and after wandering to and fro for the space of forty years, they at length came to the Delaware River where they settled three hundred and seventy years ago. The way they kept an account of this was by putting a black bead of wampum every year since on a belt of wampum used for this purpose."

We may believe with pretty good reason that reaching the Delaware River is recorded in lines 27 and 28 of Song V.

V, 27 When Red Arrow was chief, they were so far downstream that tides could be felt.

V, 28 When Red Paint Soul was chief, they were at the Mighty Water.

If our premises are correct, that date would be about 1406.

Second: Lines 39 and 40 of the same song record that: "Whites came floating from the east." Cabot coasted along those shores in 1498 and Verazano in 1524, so we may fix that date at about 1500.

Third: Song V ends: "When the Whites came from north and south," i.e., about 1622-1634.

Fourth: The "Fragment" begins where Song V ends, and the dates of the consecutively mentioned chiefs may be identified by history. In this "Fragment" the year 1800 can be approximated.

The period recorded from the year 1634 to 1800 by the "Fragment" thus presumably covered 166 years with twelve chiefs mentioned, or 13.82 years per chief. From Cabot until the coming of the Whites was 134 years with thirteen chiefs, or 10.03 years per chief. From the arrival of the Lenape at the Delaware until the coming of Cabot was 104 years, with seven chiefs during that period, or 14.85 years per chief. For the total of 404 years there were 32 chiefs mentioned, an average of 12.6 years per chief. The fact that the average of these three periods is not

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<sup>1</sup> See his Journal of two months' tour with a view to promoting religion, etc. By Ch. Beatty, A.M., London, 1768.

very different from each of the three tends to substantiate the correctness of both the datings and the length of the period of each chief's rule.

In calculating the elapse of time by this 12.6 year chief average, there is always the question as to whether or not the chiefs were always successive, or in some cases contemporary—some war and some village chiefs. There are a few instances where this is possible but almost invariably the wording clearly indicates that the chiefs are listed in chronological order, even in the several cases where two chiefs are represented in the same pictograph. Neither does a study of the names clearly indicate the identity of war chiefs and village chiefs.

It also seems that even if an occasional contemporary chief's name did slip in, the number of these occurring in the 404 datable years would approximate the same proportion as in the years previous to them.

Of course it may be that the farther the list runs back into the past, the more omissions occur, but all in all the 12.6 year interval per listed chief appears to be as close an estimate as can be made to form a basis for the chronology of the Walam Olum.

Adopting this average of 12.6 years per chief and extending the dates back at this rate, we have the Lenape crossing Bering Strait about 550 A.D., at Snow Mountain between 800 and 900, crossing the Mississippi (?) near 1050, spending the years between 1200 and 1300 on "the middle reaches of White River," and crossing the Alleghenies about 1350.

### Speculations on the Route of Migration

Basing our speculations upon a new and better translation of the Walam Olum made by Dr. C. F. Voegelin, of Indiana University, it seems quite certain that Turtle Island in Song III, "Where the land slopes north," (III, 3) must have been northeastern Asia. Lines 16, 17, 18 in Song III pretty closely describe the passage of the Lenape across Bering Strait in both text and pictographs. Further, III-18 tells of their ascent of what must have been the Yukon River, of which Hrdlicka says on page 81 of the 46th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, "The great and easily navigable river, extending for many hundreds of miles from west to east, could not but have played a material part in the peopling of Alaska, and quite probably in that of the continent. . . ."

Since many of our modern roads and railroads followed the trails and passes first used by the Indians, it is reasonable to suppose that in the southern migration of the Lenape from the head of navigation on the Yukon to the warmer portions of "Snake Island," their pathway might have approximated the route of the modern and celebrated Alaskan Highway, and, as a matter of fact, some of the verses fit into this picture. If this theory is correct, they helped develop the Great Northern Trail, swinging down through the provinces of Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta, through the sites of Edmonton and Calgary, continuing diagonally across Montana, bearing to the southeast. The old trail bore south again after crossing the extreme northeast corner of Wyoming, passing along the western edge of South Dakota and Nebraska to join the Santa Fe Trail.

As we proceed, we hope to develop some sound reasons for believing that the Lenape followed a more western path in their migrations than has hitherto been thought.

IV, 1 reads, "Long ago, people like the Lenape were in a forest by a lake." The map reveals several large lakes on the border between Yukon and British Columbia and elsewhere in the neighborhood of the Alaskan Highway.

IV, 8 ". . . White Owl was chief at the forest land." Great forests cover British Columbia and southwestern Alberta.

IV, 12 ". . . narrates a split in the company—some going east under Chief Beaver and some going south with Chief Bird." This very well may be the point where the eastern Algonquins separated from the central tribes, the former passing eastward north of the Great Lakes and proceeding "far from the buffalo country" (IV, 14).

There are some lines that are difficult to fit into any theory regarding the route followed, such as IV, 13. "In the Snake Land, in the southern land, the great land which extends along the shore." Is the west coast of North America being referred to, or is the shore of the Great Lakes meant? Since the pictographs show the water glyph to the west, we take it to indicate the west coast.

IV, 16. "The Shamans, the Snakes, the Blacks, and the Stonies." Previously these tribes have been identified with several supposed to be in the Lake Superior region, but in reaching this conclusion, consideration has not been given to the fact that this meeting took place about 650 A.D., and at that period these tribes were probably far from their historic habitat.

IV, 23. If our theory of the route of the Lenape is correct for the location where Red Paint Person invented drawing (on the north edge of the berry country), should we not find petroglyphs, possibly resembling the Walam Olum figures in southern Alberta, southeastern British Columbia, Montana and Wyoming? It would be well to have this investigated.

IV, 24. "One Who is Cold went south to the berry country." Former translations speak of corn which is incorrect. While blueberries, bilberries, and Juneberries grow in the coast ranges from northern California to Alaska, the main "berry belt" extends across lower Canada and extreme upper United States, between latitudes 45° and 55°. Here the Lenape were, in, say, 750.

IV, 28. "It was not raining and there were no berries, so they went over to the east where it was wet." The Great Northern Trail leads to the east here too. In our chronology, based upon 12.6 years per chief mentioned, this would have been about 825 A.D. Unfortunately there are no tree ring records for Montana and the land to the north to check against this drought of approximately 825, but the tree ring record in the American Museum of Natural Science in New York in the form of Douglas photographs shows extremely little rainfall among the big trees of California from 650 to 770, the lowest years being 650, 720, and 770. The latter date is not too far away from our tentative chronology to give food for thought. Tree ring records from the Southwest show drought periods from 738 to 744, from 791 to 797, and from 823 to 825.

Both of these areas are too far away from Montana to draw accurate conclusions, but it is thought that the long range rainfall of that region would more closely resemble that of California than the Southwest.

IV, 29. "By the good hills and along the plains, bison were beginning to graze." Mention of plains and bison would point to central or southeast Alberta, southern Saskatchewan and northern Montana.

At this point there is frequent mention of an enemy tribe, "the Snakes." It may always or only occasionally simply mean enemy. That the pictographs always show a special head ornament for Snakes in the same manner as for other tribes makes it likely that some special tribe or stock is meant. The Shoshone were known as Snakes and they might very well have been in the localities we have been discussing. Also the Sioux were called Snakes and they might have been in that region.

IV, 33. "Those at Snow Mountain were happy and made One Who is Beloved chief." There is a Snow Mountain in Park County in southern Montana just north of the Yellowstone National Park. The Big Horn Mountains in north central Wyoming are known as the White Mountains by the Indians.<sup>1</sup> The Medicine Bow range in southeastern Wyoming has been known as the Snowy Range and the highest peak of these has been called Snow Peak.<sup>2</sup> It is very probable that these names have come down to us from the Indians as so many of the place names of our country have. It is quite possible that this is the region referred to in the Walam Olum. Our time schedule would place them here in 800 or 900. The archaeological culture known as Signal Butte II is Woodland and rather close both in time and space. Possibly a relationship may be discovered here.

One strong reason for preferring the more western route for the Lenape migration is a statement on page 533 of Heckewelder's *Narrative* which reads: "The Lenape (the Delaware) resided many hundred years ago in a far distant country in the western part of the American continent. For some distant reason they determined to migrate eastward, and accordingly set out in a body. After a very long journey and many nights encampment by the way, they at length arrived at the Namesi Sipu (i.e. the "River of Fish," the Mississippi) where they fell in with the Mengwe (the Iroquois)."

IV, 34. "Once *again* they were in a settlement by the Yellow River, where berries were abundant among the rocks and stones." The word "again" is significant, for the Yellow River is the Missouri or the Yellowstone and to get from the north into central or eastern Wyoming, the tribe would have had to cross these rivers once, and now on their long trek to the eastward they reach the Yellow River "again." From southeastern Wyoming to the Missouri their route may have approximated the eastern portion of the Oregon Trail. Surely it is more than a coincidence that our theoretical route of migration passes through regions so aptly described in the text and in the same sequence.

IV, 49. "They separated at ? River; and the ones who were lazy returned to Snow Mountain." Due to an erasure and a rewriting of the name of this river in Rafinesque's notebook, this is the most confusing line in all the Songs. Through the kindness of Dr. Mason of the University of

Pennsylvania, photographic and handwriting experts were called upon to help solve this problem, all to no avail. As it stands today, the name is illegible and the problem must be solved, if solved it ever be, from some other angle of attack.

With all due respect to theorizing, it seems advisable to give weight to the tradition given us by Heckewelder and to conclude that the river was the Mississippi.

Another indication that the Lenape had once lived in the region just west of the Mississippi is found in line 18 of the "Fragment" of the *Walam Olum*. Here, after speaking of the plan for returning to Missouri, beyond the Mississippi, it reads: "Near to our ancient seat."

The pictograph for V, 49 also showed a wider stream than in other river symbols, and that it flowed north and south.

The next problem is: Who were the Talligewi? Some light may be thrown upon this question by recalling the territory claimed by this tribe.

Heckewelder<sup>3</sup> and Loskiel<sup>4</sup> state that the whole Ohio Valley at least as far down as the mouth of the Wabash was and still in their time was called Alligewinengk by the Lenape. Their statements have been accepted by Brinton<sup>5</sup> and Mooney.<sup>6</sup>

In Dr. Voegelin's new translation, the Talligewi have been called the Yuchi, but complete proof of the correctness of this theory is lacking now. A projected summer's field work should help settle this question. In this connection it should be noted that Speck says (in "Ethnology of the *Yuchi Indian*," University of Pennsylvania, Anthropological Publications of University Museum, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 13) that the Yuchi sign is the right hand raised level with the head, with the index finger pointing upward, a demonstration indicating affiliation with the sun. This is pretty close to the Talligewi glyph of the *Walam Olum*—a line from the top of the head extending to the right—eastward—the sunrise.

Schoolcraft,<sup>7</sup> Thomas,<sup>8</sup> Mooney,<sup>9</sup> and Brinton<sup>10</sup> came to the conclusion that Lenape and Wyandotte traditions could be believed; namely, that the Talligewi were the ancestors of the modern Cherokee and that many of the typical earthworks of Ohio and West Virginia owe their origin to these latter people.

Another method of arriving at the proper conclusions of this question would be to learn what tribes were occupying the Ohio Valley at the time of the Lenape invasion. If our chronology is at all correct, the Lenape came into the Ohio Valley around 1100 A.D., and at that time, according to the best archaeological beliefs, the Hopewellian period was just beginning. Who were they? While several tribes may have taken part in the "Hopewell Movement," some signs point to the Cherokee as being one of the participants.

Haywood<sup>11</sup> states that the Cherokees had a tradition relating that "they came from the upper part of the Ohio where they erected the mounds on Grave Creek," etc. Brinton,<sup>12</sup> Cyrus Thomas,<sup>13</sup> and Charles E. Royce<sup>14</sup> repeat this legend and Brinton says further that: "Professor Thomas has shown beyond reasonable doubt that the Cherokees were mound builders within the historic period."<sup>15</sup>

Adair,<sup>16</sup> Brinton,<sup>17</sup> and Loskiel<sup>18</sup> report Cherokee traditions that they once lived on the upper Ohio and its tributaries. The great objection to this Talligewi-Cherokee theory is that as yet no archaeological tie-up has been established. If Adena is early Cherokee, then that tribe must have changed cultural concepts to a large extent in a short time, for the historic Cherokee archaeological traces, including the Peachtree Mound reported on by Setzler, are entirely different from Adena.<sup>19</sup>

On page 60 of his, *A Life of Travels*, Rafinesque says, "At Marietta I went to survey the ruins of the ancient town and monuments of the *Talegawis*," thus with or without sound reason identifying this tribe with the Hopewellians.

V, 2. "Road Man was chief there along the middle reaches of White River." There is a note reading "Wabash" in Rafinesque's own handwriting on this line in his notebook, so the Wabash is one candidate for the honor of being the river in question. The glyph would indicate that the road or river extended north and south.

On De l'Isle's map of Mexico and the United States of 1783 and on an anonymous map published in Amsterdam between 1705 and 1720, and probably other maps, the Ohio River is labeled "Ouabache, in other times called the Ohio or the Beautiful River." This confusion of river names puts forward the Ohio itself as another possibility.

White River in Indiana is the third contender and the Little Miami in Ohio, formerly known as the "R. Blanche," is fourth.

Mr. Paul Weer called attention to an observation by Speck which may permit us to fix the location of the Lenape on the middle reaches of the Ohio; namely, that stone masks are diagnostic of Lenape occupation.<sup>20</sup> Mr. Glenn A. Black, with his usual thoroughness, has made a search of the literature for reports of stone masks in the Mississippi Valley, with the following results: one at Portsmouth, Ohio, one near Lawrenceburg, Indiana, two from Gallatin County, Kentucky just across the Ohio from Lawrenceburg, one in Ross County, Ohio, another from an unknown location in that state, and one in Belmont County, Ohio, just across the river from Wheeling, West Virginia. Lately another mask has been discovered in the Cincinnati Art Museum that probably came from Ohio, Indiana or Kentucky.

Here is a possibility of proving the "middle reaches of White River" to be the middle reaches of the Ohio by archaeological deductions. Unfortunately the problem is not simple, for the stone heads found on eastern Lenape territory are in the round instead of being true masks. While it is reasonable to suppose they are closely related, there is no real proof aside from the fact that the stone masks have exactly the same cast of features as the wooden images of heads illustrated in Dr. Speck's monograph on the Delaware Indians' Big House Ceremony.

Mr. Black thinks there is a possibility that these masks were left by the "Intrusive Mound Culture" and calls attention to the seeming relationship of like traces in the mounds of Greene County, Indiana, Montgomery County, Michigan, several Ohio locations, and in Jefferson and Tomkins Counties, New York.

V, 9, 10. "When Little Frog was chief, many of them went away with

the Nanticoke and the Shawnee to land in the South." The date here would presumably be about 1265 and not inconsistent with the known historic movements of the Shawnee.<sup>21</sup>

V, 14. ". . . was chief at the river of the Talligewi." This location is not very definite for on some old maps<sup>2</sup> the entire Ohio river is marked with this name—not just the Allegheny. The date is about 1300.

Here, too, the Snakes are mentioned again, which almost certainly puts the Shoshone out of the picture and points to the Sioux or some Algonquin tribe.

V, 19, 20, 21. About 1350, they cross the Talligewi Mountains. Why did the Lenape move east? Is it reasonable to suppose any tribe living in the fertile Ohio valley would move over the rough mountains and into a less fertile region unless they were driven out? There is a little indication in the legend that this was the case but the Lenape would naturally not emphasize their defeat.

They probably crossed the mountains through the Juniata-Susquehanna pass where the Pennsylvania railroad runs, or through the valley of the Potomac (B. & O.), or the Kanawha Valley (C & O).

V, 23, 24. About 1380 they go north to live along the Susquehanna. It should be possible to discover some archaeological linkage in this territory.

They then lived in the Sassafras Country, eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and reached tidewater—the Delaware (?)—in 1396 (?).

V, 40. Here they were, too, when the Whites came floating from the east, 1500.

V, 47. At a long, landlocked lake.

V, 50. At the rushing waters.

These two lines have been taken to mean one of the long lakes in New York and Niagara Falls. At this point it is reasonable to believe that we may sooner or later develop the fact that the Owasco sites coincide with the legend of the Walam Olum, both in time (about 1545) and place. William A. Ritchie says,<sup>22</sup> "If we are correct in our chronological surmises (see Plate 4) and in regarding the Castle Creek Focus as the most recent stage of Owasco development, Lenape or Delaware connections are suspect on grounds of territorial overlapping."

This brings us up to historic times and it should be noted again that the order of succession of the chiefs mentioned in the "Fragment" covering the time after 1600 may be verified by history.

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<sup>21</sup>The Lewis Evans map, 1755, shows the Ohio River as the "Ohio or Allegny R." It is so labeled at the mouth of the Wabash. In the "Analysis" which Evans prepared to go with the map, he gives maps, journals, and "narratives of traders" as the sources of his data.

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