

# Cave Inscriptions and Conflicting Histories of the Sequoyah Syllabary



*Yuchi Town Poster, Painting by Martin Pate, Poster produced by the National Park Service and the U.S. Army Infantry Center at Fort Benning*

Y U C H I ~ T O W N

David Hackett (Woktela) [www.yuchi.org](http://www.yuchi.org)



## Cave Inscriptions and Conflicting Histories of the Sequoyah Syllabary

### Abstract

The recent rise of speleo-archaeology and the consequent discovery of syllabary inscriptions in caves throughout the mid-South provides an ideal opportunity to test the conflicting histories of the Sequoyah Syllabary, and possibly to resolve one of the greatest mysteries of American Indian linguistics. The accepted Dominant Cultural History suggests that about two centuries ago, a single individual, George Gist, known also as Sequoyah, a mixed-heritage, handicapped man of limited education, living on the frontier, created the Cherokee orthography spontaneously, as an act of pure invention. Since the meso-American syllabaries were not known at the time of this syllabary's supposed invention, this orthographic technique would have been quite a remarkable solution for George Gist/Sequoyah to have devised in isolation. An alternate and Indigenous version of history written by a descendant of Sequoyah, Traveller Bird, describes that the Syllabary as ancient, and that it was adapted, not created by a very different Sequoyah, a full-blood who was a scribe and priest among the Cherokee. In the 1950s, Yuchi Chief, Sam Brown recounted a long held oral tradition of the Syllabary's ancient use by the Yuchi priests in the Southeast. The author discusses these conflicting histories and presents evidence from Yuchean language etymology for the first time ever. He also provides an overview of how linguistics fit into the Yuchi worldview, as well as the geomorphic setting - where one term *k'u* is the backbone of the concepts of "town," "country," "valley," and "Great Valley" and caves are the literal embodiment of the underworld. This paper concludes with a plea for professional archaeologists to involve Indigenous peoples in the study of such cave art, as well as other Indigenous investigations.

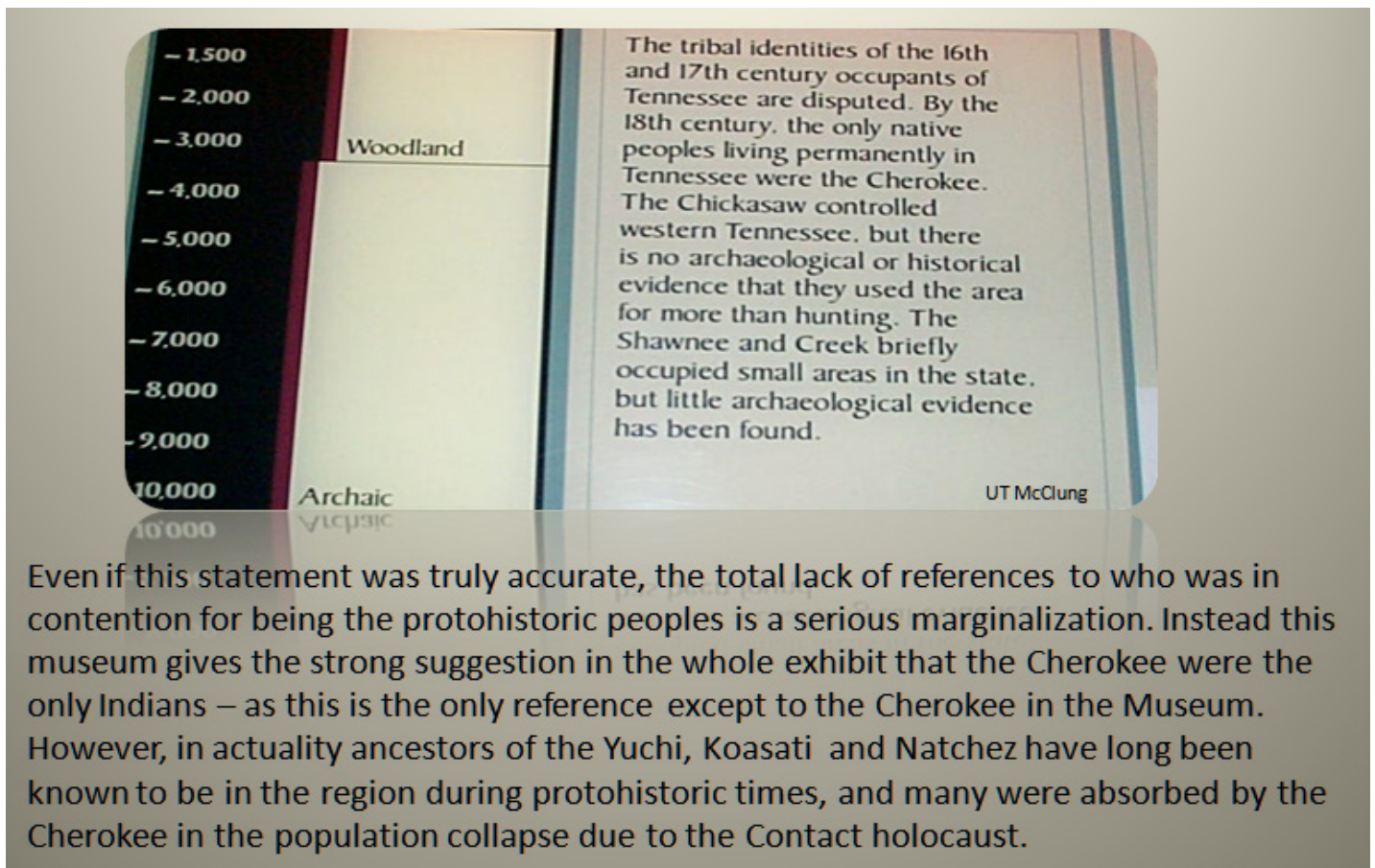
### Backstory

The Yuchi were among the rich mix of peoples who formed the melting pot culture in Eastern North America before the post-Contact holocaust. The Mississippian mound building culture was a group of united states with a common theocracy. The Yuchi were at the heart of this North American civilization. It has become abundantly clear that the Mississippian Mound culture has long been greatly underappreciated. All traces of its history were almost lost to the devastation of the cultural clash, Native population decimation and subjugation, and the Dominant culture's desire to see Indigenous Americans as inferior and incapable of any such civilization.

Unfortunately this bias has continued in East Tennessee archaeology. For two decades the staff of the University of Tennessee has verbally stated that the Yuchi were never residents of Tennessee in direct opposition to the prevailing views of most national experts. However, overwhelming evidence, including historical documents, proves this claim false. <sup>(1)</sup> As any professional knows, one cannot prove a negative, (absence of evidence is not evidence of absence) so this claim was obviously fallacious from the beginning -- and highly suspect for motivation. The official position as stated in the McClung Museum exhibit is that it is uncertain and controversial who was here before the Cherokee (see Figure 1). This, too, falls far short of an honest assessment. The body of evidence shows that the Yuchi were not only here, but that they are still here! -- Here, both as a remnant population and among the coalescent tribes, and as people of mixed and Indigenous heritage in the general population. <sup>(2)</sup> The University of Tennessee's unenlightened position is underscored by being one of the few state universities without a formal American Indian Studies program. I would characterize this institution as being less than Indigenous friendly. It is this hostile position with respect to the Yuchi on the part of the University and the State of Tennessee that has been a central motivator of my research into the role of my ancestors, the Yuchi. While UT has not changed its position in twenty years; it remains out of step with others in the field. (See Figure 2)

While it is not possible to address all the evidence for the central position of the Yuchi in this overarching Mississippian culture in this brief paper, I do hope to touch on some of the rich cultural elements that the Yuchi have brought to the Southeast and East Tennessee as part of the metropolitan mix. I also will address how they interacted with the greater landscape, and in particular the importance of caves and cave inscriptions. Among the unique features of the Yuchean Cultural Footprint is the Yuchi Language. Studies of Yuchean reveal through its nature as a pristine isolate, and its morpheme agglomerative structure that it coevolved with the Greencorn Rite that formed the heart of the Mississippian pan-eastern theocratic culture. <sup>(3)</sup>

This research is founded on the work of anthropologist, Joseph Mahan, in recording many of the basic oral traditions told by Chief Samuel W. Brown Jr., and on the efforts of Addie George to preserve the traditions, culture and language of the Yuchi people, as well as her continued work with Linguists, James Crawford and Lew Ballard in recording and analyzing



Even if this statement was truly accurate, the total lack of references to who was in contention for being the protohistoric peoples is a serious marginalization. Instead this museum gives the strong suggestion in the whole exhibit that the Cherokee were the only Indians – as this is the only reference except to the Cherokee in the Museum. However, in actuality ancestors of the Yuchi, Koasati and Natchez have long been known to be in the region during protohistoric times, and many were absorbed by the Cherokee in the population collapse due to the Contact holocaust.

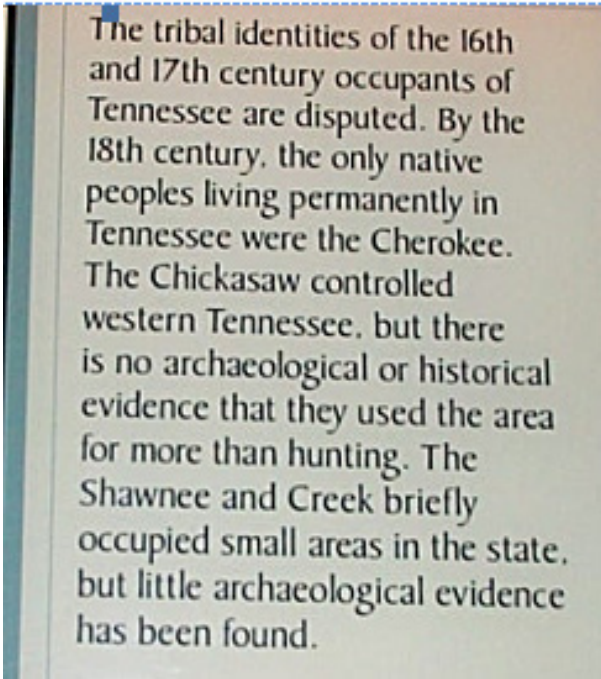
**Figure 1**

This is the only mention of tribes other than Cherokee in the University of Tennessee McClung Museum’s otherwise excellent exhibit. It is sad that they choose to hide behind this wimpy, noninformative statement.

The total avoidance of any real information here is as palpable as if they were clueless. And yet ironically, they continue to market Madeline Kneberg Thomas’s book, **Tribes that Slumber** as it remains a best seller still, after more than fifty years of proclaiming the Yuchi were here.

Surely the patrons of this Museum deserve better than this sort of questionable equivocation about the earliest residents of Tennessee. Indigenous people demand better than such ethnic and racial marginalization.

While the coalescence of the tribes during the Contact period indeed makes this a messy affair -- it does not make it an impossible one. Surely after over seventy years of study they have some clue here -- or perhaps they just do not want to share the information.

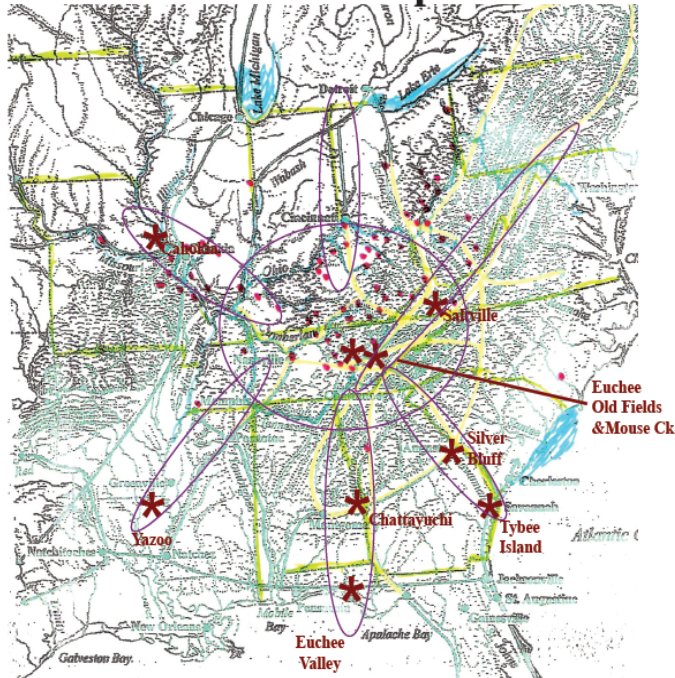




2A Indians of North America Map © 1979  
National Geographic Society  
Focus on Protohistoric



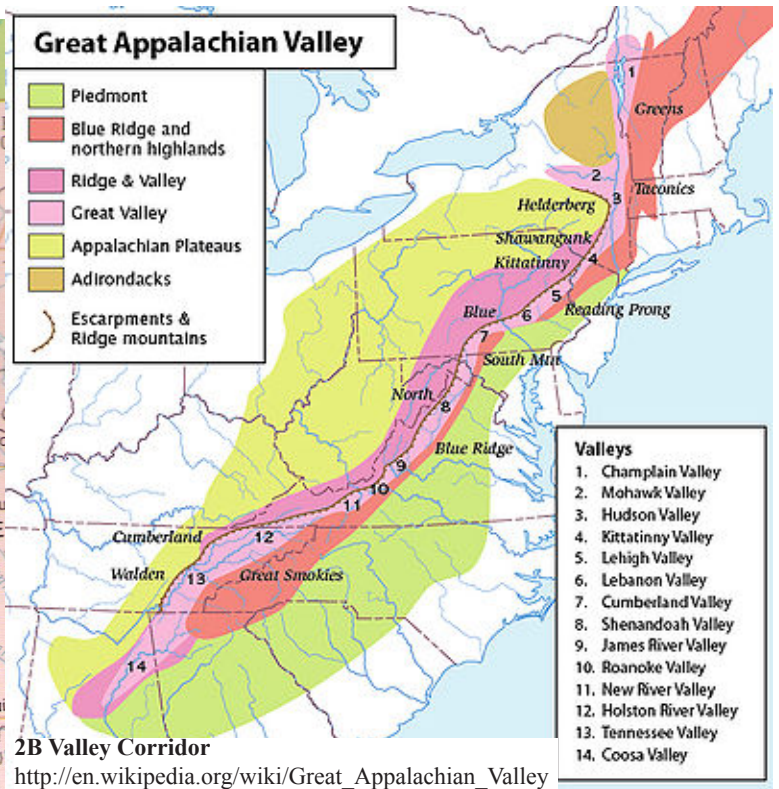
## Yuchi Areas of Principle Influence



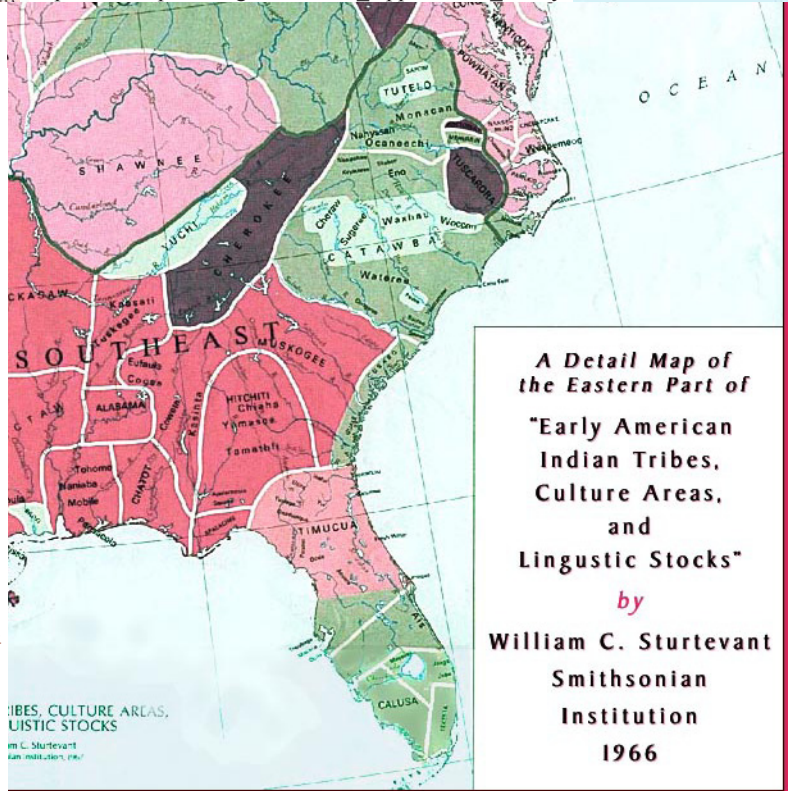
## Salines & Trails & Yuchi Places

Notice how even today these few historically well-preserved Yuchean place names are located directly on the trade trails throughout the Southeast.

Figure 2C Map after Helen Hornbeck Tanner, Map in Powhatan's Mantle, 2006



2B Valley Corridor  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Appalachian\\_Valley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Appalachian_Valley)



A Detail Map of the Eastern Part of "Early American Indian Tribes, Culture Areas, and Linguistic Stocks" by William C. Sturtevant Smithsonian Institution 1966

Figure 2

Both the Smithsonian Institution and the National Geographic Society place the Yuchi in the Tennessee Valley along the natural transportation corridor that this great valley forms from Canada south to the Gulf. It is exactly where you would want to locate in order to control trade in protohistoric times. There is not only some evidence for the Yuchi residing along the Appalachian Corridor, there is a whole lot of evidence, that no scholar of any merit can deny.

the language and culture. Without these founding works there would be little remaining of the deeper past, but Gunter Wagner's excellent text and the crude works of Gatschet, Speck, which are over a century old. Addie George, Lew Ballard and Joe Mahan urged me to pick up their efforts as holding precious cultural secrets, and I am so very thankful to them for this. My work is dedicated to memories of Addie, Lew, James, Joe and Chief Brown <sup>(4)</sup>.

Oral history, combined with language etymology, ethnology, historic documentation and archaeology, paint a picture of the Yuchi as traders, priests and linguists among the many peoples of the Southeast. As the Children of the Sun, they were the nobility that ruled the white towns as Great Suns. As they controlled many of the saltlicks, they controlled the most vital trade commodity. As speakers of a daunting language, they needed to be multilingual, and so became translators and interpreters. As the first immigrant peoples to Woodland America, they were met with the problem of accommodating the waves of immigrants that followed, coming out of the maize fed, over-populated meso-America. While territories and boundaries were not part of Indigenous culture, the Mississippian Yuchi population was shared and centered on East and Central Tennessee. Central Tennessee villages would have been mixed with Algonquin (Shawnee & Lenape) villages, and East Tennessee would have been mixed with Koasati villages -- as these are three people that the Yuchi held as intimates (and still do). This intimate cultural mixing has created a great amount of confusion in the archaeological inquiries, but is still an important element in Yuchi relations today.

Figure 3 Great Valley

The Yuchi culture and the landscape are deeply carved into one another, as it is clear that the people spent some time in this region. The Yuchi culture evolved in a wetland environment. <sup>(5)</sup> Their neighbors included the Koasati and Coosa Creeks, the Shawnee, the Catawba and other Siouian tribes, and the Cherokee. This places them in the Central Southeast – The Tennessee Valley. This is just where the Smithsonian and National Geographic, and most others have long placed them. Despite the University of Tennessee's claims, there seems to be little controversy here. The Yuchi language



further supports the link to the landscape. The morpheme *K'u* in Yuchi has broad meaning that includes valley, tribe, town and village, and a *yuk'u* is the word for the Great Valley. If this were not enough, the Yuchean Cultural Footprint is deeply impressed into the archaeology of the central and eastern portions of Tennessee and up the Great Valley. This central “territory” allowed the Yuchis to control trade throughout the Southeast. In addition to salt from Saltville and other regional saltlicks, sources of copper and mica were nearby. Sea Shells from the Gulf were added to the trade and distributed throughout the Eastern woodlands. Yuchi influence stretched out from this region along the major trails. <sup>(6)</sup>

Oral Traditions are suspect for the prevalence of mythic content they so oft contain, but they may be tested. It is such cross referencing and interdisciplinary studies that are entertained here, in testing how oral tradition and Yuchi culture meet the challenges of language, landscape and logic to form a coherent picture. Location and language studies have already strongly supported oral traditions of the Yuchi central involvement in trade and spread of religious rites and culture in the Mississippian Southeast. Yuchi association with salt licks and salt production has continued well into the Twentieth Century in Oklahoma. <sup>(7)</sup> The presence of Yuchi villages and place names along major trade arteries and at trail nodes throughout the Southeast, also strongly supports the involvement in trade, as does the widespread borrowing of the term, *Yadjiki* into other languages as the term for “translator” or “interpreter.” While it is all circumstantial, the body of circumstantial evidence which hangs together here is substantial enough to bring support to the oral traditions. <sup>(8)</sup> As Thoreau has opined “some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.”

Yuchi oral traditions state that the Syllabary was originally used by the Yuchi Priest/Scribes which were known as *S'akhwa-ya* (woodpecker-talk or earth-singer-fire). Thusly according to Yuchi tradition, the Syllabary was not invented by Sequoyah, but merely adapted for use with Cherokee. Sequoyah was an *ani'Kutani* priest among the Chickamauga coalescent tribe according to the Traveller Bird account. <sup>(9)</sup> While this contradicts the popularly supported history, there would appear to be more documentation to support this alternate view than the often told tale.

On the face of it the popular story lacks for credibility. This tale would have us believe that an illiterate and handicapped mixed heritage man living on the frontier conceived of a syllabary and crafted it single-handedly – a feat never achieved by any other person in history. While syllabaries were relatively unknown even in academic circles at that time, it is now known that the Syllabary is nearly identical to the meso-American syllabaries of Olmec, Mayan and Aztec in syntactical structure and grammatical usage. This cannot be merely accidental or coincidental. It is clear from this basic structural similarity that the Syllabary is based in the meso-American syllabary tradition.

The Yuchi Cultural Footprint is indelibly impressed in the Tennessee region, not only in the wetland environment and valley significance left in the language, nor just the neighbors shared, but also in the culture left in the ground. Certain cultural traits are clearly in the mix of cultural detritus spread among the rich archaeology of the Central Basin and the Tennessee Valley. The Yuchi Cultural Footprint would include extended and lined burial of the dead and other burial practices. It would include semisubterranean trench-wall houses. It would include plain pottery and pipes with a flared rim around the bowl and/or stem. It would include storytelling stones, and most importantly language left on the landscape. And if this were not enough, there are a few historical records and many oral traditions that still link the Yuchi here. All these footprint elements are found in the mix here in Tennessee, and while it may be difficult at times to attribute a particular site, as they were so often shared – the Yuchi presence in the mix is unmistakable. <sup>(10)</sup>

The fact is that tribes and cultures are rather thoroughly mixed. The tribes we know today are associated with a dominant language and culture, but are made up of a long period of agglomeration and coalescence. It is quite clear that during the time of Contact, the population collapsed, this depopulating varied widely according to place and circumstance – with typically ninety percent dying in a very short space of time. The result was that nearby villages agglomerated for survival, and often they were peoples of a different culture and language, but then became the tribes we know today. I would also argue that trade and religious structure had fueled such agglomeration at a lower level for many centuries. As the DNA is sorted out, there will undoubtedly be as much relationship between all these peoples as there are differences—belying the cultural differences themselves. This is to say that the Southeastern states have long been a melting pot, particularly along the main byways. This has left a patchwork appearance of the many cultures and a confusion that confounds those who believe that these peoples held territories and defended boundaries. It is quite clear from all the evidence that Yuchi oral traditions are true – it was many peoples, but one Nation under a common theocracy: the First United States of this Land.

Aside from the Yuchi Language the most important Yuchi cultural item is the Greencorn Rite. It is based in a world view that features a three-tiered universe. The upper world is where the ancestors go after death, and it is an element in why the temple mound and chief's lodge are elevated. It was here that the ancestor statutes and relics were stored. The middle world is where common everyday life unfolds. And, the underworld is where the future takes shape. It is in caves that the priests gathered to influence the future. Cave in Yuchean is *S'akab'a*, or *Teekab'a* where the morphemes literally “earth-snake-birth” and “rock-snake-birth.” “Rattlesnake-birth” is the morpheme pair for a cave or hollow in the earth. Rattlesnake is another important symbol and a “speech” in Yuchean is the morphemes for rattlesnakeman (*gokha*), calling up the wisdom of the underworld. The Yuchi still venerate caves, and still build a symbolic mound on their squareground. The symbols of the Mississippian glyphs are still remembered in the Yuchi oral traditions, but more importantly most are fundamentally linked to the morpheme structure of the language – revealing that the Greencorn Rite and the Yuchi Language coevolved.

What this interdisciplinary investigation has revealed is that the landscape, the Yuchi language and the Greencorn religious traditions formed as an interdependent interaction of mutual influence (coevolved). The need to build mounds on the flood plain to retreat from floods and the use of Solar nobility to bind the peoples in peace, the trade and the Appalachian corridor trails, the wetlands environment, the Yuchi language requiring the people to become multilingual. The abundance of caves, and the waves of immigration all conspire to create a multicultural melting pot and a need for a peace centered theocratic society to bring it all together. The Yuchi were a unique people at the right place to bring this culture together, just when the agricultural wealth created a population influx. The Tennessee Valley became the cradle of a Great Nation of many peoples, living together under a common theocracy, and enjoying a flourishing trade of materials and religious objects.

This halcyon time was undermined first by a series of droughts, perhaps followed by plagues, and then by the disease holocaust of Contact. As disease swept through, the population collapsed catastrophically. Decimated villages agglomerated and the centuries of Contact became a time of coalescence of the peoples and the cultures. It is the drastic

changes and difference of world views that have made it so difficult for the pre-Contact period to be conceived by those considering it now. It is difficult for a people steeped in territorialism, war and ownership to conceive of a people sharing the land intimately with little xenophobia and much peace. It is nearly impossible to conceive of a people living so intimately and sharing a religious culture, and yet not sharing languages and cultural eccentricities – even maintaining a very pristine language isolate such as Yuchean. Yet when the strife of Contact ends, little of the Greencorn Mound culture remains visible. It is preserved only in the hard core traditions of a few elders, and coded into the Yuchean language and the Greencorn Rites. All that remains for the most part is a few coalescent tribes, each claiming the dimly remember past glory as their own.

### Cave Inscriptions and the Syllabary

It is into this context that we now place our inquiry about the rise of the Syllabary. Yuchi oral tradition, Cherokee written history, and more than a couple of historic references call the widely accepted version into question. <sup>(11)</sup> There is also a bit of a creditability factor in the accepted story that has an illiterate, handicapped man, living on the frontier, finding the time and resources to do what no other single human has done before. There is no question that symbols and symbolism were an important part of the Mississippian Culture. Other than the Bat Creek Stone and a few other inscribe stones that remain controversial, there are no accepted inscriptions that predate the circa 1810 timeline for the supposed invention of the Syllabary. The dominant view that Indigenous people were illiterate prevails. However, there are documented references in primary historic papers to the Syllabary being used before its supposed invention. <sup>(12)</sup> While none of these has been thoroughly investigated, they are more substantial than any evidence supporting the accepted legend of Sequoyah. While this paper does not include incontrovertible evidence between these alternatives, it will add substantial circumstantial evidence that the story is more complicated and much more likely that the Syllabary is based in the original meso-American traditions of writing than the popular myth has allowed.

Yuchi oral traditions are largely consistent with the Traveler Bird account of the Syllabary – except they do not lump all the peoples into the coalescent term “Cherokee.” While Traveller Bird mentions the priests (a.k.a. the *AniKutani*), he does not mention their Yuchean heritage. The *AniKutani* remain a controversial subject among the Cherokee, who alternately show active fear of them, and proclaim that they exterminated them all long ago. <sup>(13)</sup> The fact is that the tribes were all much mixed by coalescence, and few were more coalescent than the Chickamaugas. The priests, while of mixed blood as well, still needed the hereditary link to the Sun of a Yuchean ancestry. To firm up this line of thought, just consider the name “Sequoyah.” It has no Cherokee etymology, even though it is often translated into the Cherokee as “horse,” *sogwili*. As mentioned in the backstory, *S’aKhwaYa*, is derived from “woodpecker” and “interpret” in Yuchi, and has the meaning of messenger/ scribe. The sound of pecking a message into stone or wood would sound like a woodpecker. Thus it really is not a name, but a title that was given to the priest-scribes. It is here noted that a common glyph inscribed into cave walls is that of a woodpecker head with an open mouth – this is a *S’aKhwaYa* glyph. The other common glyph which occurs at the point where outside light ceases to penetrate the cave is the sun image of the *Tso* or *TsoYaTee* glyphs.



Figure 4: *S’aKhwaYa* Glyph

While symbols and symbolism were widely understood by Southeastern peoples, writing was reserved for an elite few among the priesthood and not shared with the masses. As such, it would not be widely found in most archaeological contexts today. The secrecy surrounding the writing would make it a rare find, but because caves were a sacred realm of the priests, this is one place one should expect to find writing and inscriptions hidden away from prying eyes, and yet available for teaching the art to acolytes. The more common symbol glyphs have been found in numerous caves throughout the karst region of the central Southeast. One would expect to find a few examples of the Syllabary here as well. This is indeed the case. Caves have been found in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama with syllabary inscriptions. However, only the Alabama inscription seems to conform closely with modern Cherokee Syllabary, as does a log cabin inscription in Georgia – none have yielded entirely to translation. The Tennessee Cave Inscription was not available for study. <sup>(14)</sup> The Alabama Inscription (unnamed Cave #63) is very likely a Cherokee inscription as is the Georgia cabin one and so not further considered here. The Clay County Kentucky cave inscription seems to be of the greatest interest here. (see Figure 5)

While symbols and symbolism were widely understood by Southeastern peoples, writing was reserved for an elite few among the priesthood and not shared with the masses. As such, it would not be widely found in most archaeological contexts today. The secrecy surrounding the writing would make it a rare find, but because caves were a sacred realm of the priests, this is one place one should expect to find writing and inscriptions hidden away from prying eyes, and yet available for teaching the art to acolytes. The more common symbol glyphs have been found in numerous caves throughout the karst region of the central Southeast. One would expect to find a few examples of the Syllabary here as well. This is indeed the case. Caves have been found in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama with syllabary inscriptions. However, only the Alabama inscription seems to conform closely with modern Cherokee Syllabary, as does a log cabin inscription in Georgia – none have yielded entirely to translation. The Tennessee Cave Inscription was not available for study. <sup>(14)</sup> The Alabama Inscription (unnamed Cave #63) is very likely a Cherokee inscription as is the Georgia cabin one and so not further considered here. The Clay County Kentucky cave inscription seems to be of the greatest interest here. (see Figure 5)

The Kentucky Inscription is deeply cut into the cave wall. It contains seventeen letter-like glyphs of which about half seem to correspond with identifiable Syllabary glyphs. The remaining ones are hard to attribute and appear to be more than stylized versions of the known script. Clearly it would be hard to decipher without identifying most of these remaining script characters. Next to the inscription is a date 1808 or 1818, which would place this inscription quite early, if this date was truly intended to be associated. (see Figure 5 top) One theory bandied in the announcement of this find was that it was Sequoyah practicing his alphabet. <sup>(15)</sup> However, no one would carve a practice session so deeply into rock – this is clearly an inscription. Comparing the undecipherable characters to Traveller Bird's original Syllabary shows that they do bear a better resemblance to them than the Cherokee Syllabary, but they still do not match. (see Figures 5 & 6) Clearly, we have a significant element in the unrecorded history of the Syllabary here. The question does this, or will any other inscription shed some real light on the nature of the origin of the Syllabary. It is intriguing that this differs so much and yet seems to be related. It would seem to have intended meaning, but not clearly in Cherokee. Might it be in another language all together?

The Yuchi have been noted as the Cavelanders, while not clearly ascribed perhaps in the record, they are certainly a leading contender for this designation. <sup>(16)</sup> The Yuchi clearly held great sway in this karst region. They clearly revered and still revere caves as natural sacred places. The Yuchi have an oral tradition of coming here by island hopping, and like the mysterious Olmec civilization were deeply involved in trade and spread their religion amongst neighboring tribes, including a reverence for caves. The Yuchi have a tradition that they were at Cahokia with the Siouian Peoples. More than one theory posits that the Olmec may have migrated to rule at Cahokia. <sup>(17)</sup> While mere speculations can only serve as springboards for investigations, it would seem a good place to start is in asking from whence came the Syllabary? It would seem we have an opportunity here to assess these cave inscriptions and use them as support between these competing claims of the alternate histories of the Syllabary's origin.

The syllabary has the same syntactical structure as the other meso-American syllabaries. That is, there is an array of glyphs that represent the vowels, and others that represent the consonant-vowels, ending consonants are represented by using the principal consonant-vowel of that series, and understanding that the vowel is silent. This deployment is not a predetermined or singularly logical construction, but is a choice among many. <sup>(18)</sup> For this feature to be shared between the Cherokee Syllabary and the Olmec, Mayan and Aztec syllabaries strongly suggests a common origin and etymological ancestry. While the glyphs themselves vary greatly between these syllabaries, as do some of the vowel and consonant sounds, the basic syntactical structure of them is identical – this is neither accidental or coincidental, but the result of a common origin. The meso-American syllabaries were not understood in Sequoyah's time, and so could not have been used as a guide to creating the Syllabary, unless it was by a long tradition of use from those earliest of times.

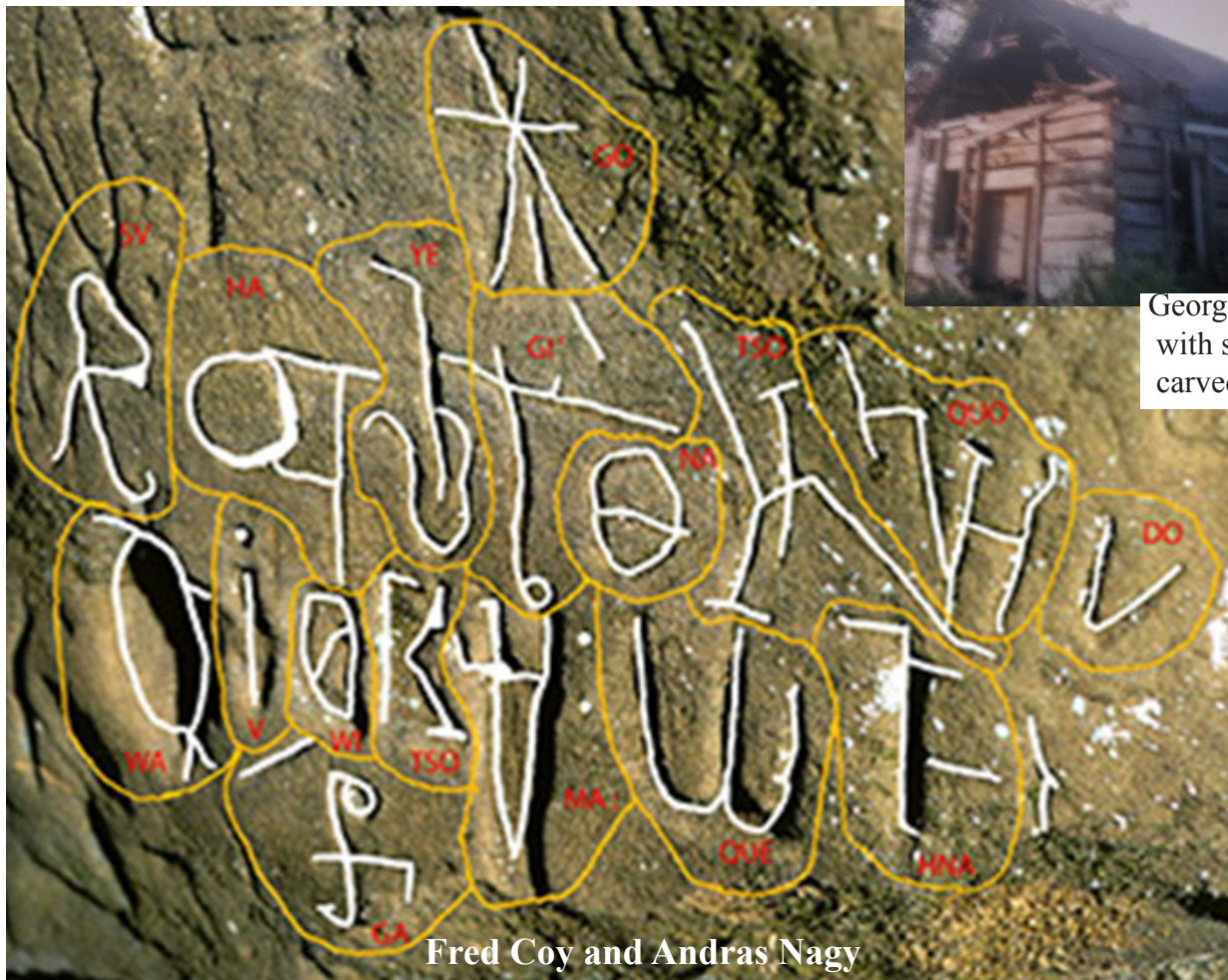
On the one hand, we have an utterly unsubstantiated story of how one man invented the Cherokee Syllabary single-handedly. On the other hand, we have an Indigenous history, oral traditions with substantiating circumstantial evidence, and even a few documents demonstrating a greater age. It should be clear that the whole of the accepted myth has been called severely into question, and we have these wonderful cave inscriptions that are likely to resolve the issue quite nicely – if but only, we bring an interdisciplinary effort to doing so.

### **A Declaration of Yuchi Cultural Sovereignty and Patrimony of History**

While not resolvable with current information, the issue of alternate histories with respect to the Syllabary raises the whole issue of cultural sovereignty and the patrimony of history. The very fact that a mythic story is given precedence over an Indigenous record, is based primarily on the biased belief that the “savages” were illiterate – a fact we now know to be definitely false for the meso-Americans, and one brought into question by the evidence presented herein for the Southeastern region as well. It is at least very likely that writing, like tobacco, corn and pottery diffused in from Meso-America -- and very likely with the Yuchi migration here as they have so claimed. While many questions remain to be answered, and much of the oral traditions need further substantiation, we have an interdisciplinary body of internally consistent information in the Yuchean studies that brings this Mississippian culture into much clearer focus.

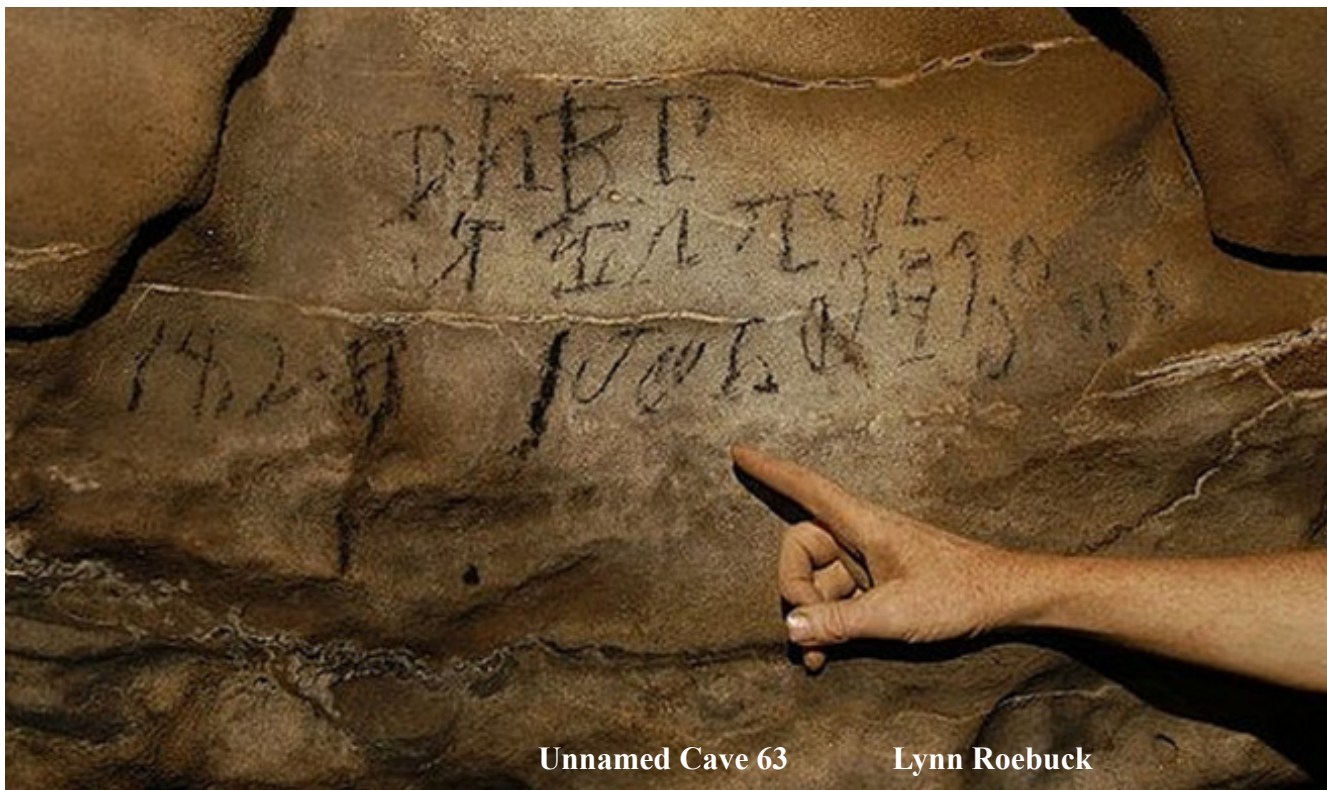
The fact that the Yuchean language and deeper ethnology of the Yuchi have been widely ignored, raises a number of questions. Firstly, that of **whose history is it anyway?** Given that history is often written for propaganda purposes, and the marginalization that the Yuchi have experienced, why should we allow an alien people who are hostile to us write our history to suit their needs? For far too long, most archaeological inquiries have been based in the assumption that nothing Indians have to say is worthy of hearing. Joan Gero has put this issue in a very clear perspective:





Georgia Cabin with syllabary carved into logs.

Figure 5 Above: Syllabary on cave wall in Clay County, Kentucky. About half the glyphs are recognizable. Below: Syllabary on the wall of Alabama cave. Most all the sylloglyphs are easily decipherable.



Handwritten Cherokee syllabary characters, including a handwritten note "count, n" at the top right.

**Figure 6A:**  
The syllabary that Traveller Bird identifies as an earlier version. Some of these glyphs here are a closer match to the sylloglyphs in the Kentucky cave than any in the current Cherokee Syllabary.

G<sup>w</sup>Y<sup>o</sup>v  
Yudgiha

**Figure 6B:**  
Yuchi words rendered into the Syllabary *Tsoyaha Yugiha* & *Tsotanewaeno*. Because Cheokee has fewer phonemes the Syllabary would need more characters to fully render a Yuchean orthography -- just what the one at left has 92 rather than the 86 of the current one.

A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL NINETY-TWO SYMBOL CHEROKEE SYLLABARY

# Whence The Cherokee Syllabary?

	a	e	i	o	u	v [ã]
D a	R e	T i	Ꭰ o	Ꭱ u	i v	
Ꭰ ga Ꭱ ka	Ꭲ ge	Ꭳ gi	Ꭴ go	Ꭵ gu	Ꭶ gv	
Ꭷ ha	Ꭸ he	Ꭹ hi	Ꭺ ho	Ꭻ hu	Ꭼ hv	
Ꭽ la	Ꭾ le	Ꭿ li	Ꮀ lo	Ꮁ lu	Ꮂ lv	
Ꮄ ma	Ꮅ me	Ꮆ mi	Ꮇ mo	Ꮈ mu		
Ꮎ na Ꮏ hna Ꮐ nah	Ꮊ ne	Ꮋ ni	Ꮌ no	Ꮍ nu	Ꮎ nv	
Ꮑ qua	Ꮒ que	Ꮓ qui	Ꮔ quo	Ꮕ quu	Ꮖ quv	
Ꮗ s Ꮈ sa	Ꮉ se	Ꮊ si	Ꮋ so	Ꮌ su	Ꮍ sv	
Ꮏ da Ꮐ ta	Ꮑ de Ꮊ te	Ꮋ di Ꮌ ti	Ꮍ do	Ꮎ du	Ꮏ dv	
Ꮒ dla Ꮓ tla	Ꮔ tle	Ꮕ tli	Ꮖ tlo	Ꮗ tlu	Ꮘ tlv	
Ꮙ tsa	Ꮚ tse	Ꮛ tsi	Ꮜ tso	Ꮝ tsu	Ꮞ tsv	
Ꮟ wa	Ꮠ we	Ꮡ wi	Ꮢ wo	Ꮣ wu	Ꮤ ww	
Ꮦ ya	Ꮧ ye	Ꮨ yi	Ꮩ yo	Ꮪ yu	Ꮫ yv	

G<sup>w</sup>Y<sup>o</sup>v



KᎠᎡᎯ G<sup>w</sup>Y<sup>o</sup>v  
KWᎠᎡᎯZG<sup>w</sup>ᎡᎯ



"The discipline of archaeology is no longer the exclusive province of White, European upper-class men, and there is no going back to a[n earlier] era of exclusionary, hierarchical and scientized knowledge that marginalizes the multivocal archaeology from the peripheries. The question of 'who controls the past?' is no longer a conundrum because it must be generally conceded that there are many pasts and they will be known differently from many views." (19)

No single perspective dominates over all others any longer, but they share the stage, and are entertained each for their own glimpse of the past in our information intensive internet age. Indigenous America has been viewed through Eurocentric glasses for far too long. The stodgy age of a few academic experts presiding over the official view is over. Therefore, it is herein declared that the Yuchi have a cultural patrimony over their own history and a sovereign right to put forth their own historical arguments for popular consumption and as an "official" view. This is precisely the course that UT's absurd denial of the Yuchi as past residents of the Tennessee region has forced upon those of us with Yuchi ancestry – and why the webpages as [www.yuchi.org](http://www.yuchi.org) were created nearly two decades ago. It is an honor much appreciated that the multidisciplinary DIG conference has given me the privilege to present my case for the importance of Yuchi Studies here at the University of Tennessee's facilities. I wish to close with the following pleading:

### **Integral, Inclusive and Interdisciplinary Inquiry**

In addition to reclaiming the marginalized Yuchean culture, and raising doubts about the Sequoyah myth, we are here highlighting the issue of cultural sovereignty with the intent to frame it in a larger context. The nature of the problem of the Indigenous past is far too large, to be viewed from the narrow perspectives of archaeology and history alone, but is of the nature of a transdisciplinary problem. It requires an integral approach that is fully interdisciplinary in its scope. Only interdisciplinary studies can fit the puzzle pieces from a number of scientific approaches into an integrated whole. But even more than this need, there is a need for greater involvement of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous ideas in the efforts to understand the Indigenous past. One cannot understand a past purely from a detached perspective. One must understand the language to understand the culture. One must understand the culture to understand the symbols, and meaning of the past.

Authenticity demands that any research into the Indigenous past that lacks Indigenous input, also lacks for legitimacy, and museums that deal with Indigeneity without some Indigenous staff should be hugely suspect. It is clear that merely guessing at a culture from the remains left as artifacts lacks for scientific sophistication. It is also clear that history has largely ignored the Indigenous people except in so far as they were in the way of "white" expansion. If a really factual understanding is the goal, than an inquiry should include every possible means of comprehending the deeper past – this undoubtedly would include the Indigenous cultures, languages, and points of view as well as the maximum domains of science. Archaeology in the Valley has not only thought too narrowly, but much too small – it has failed to outgrow its relic collecting infancy. Into this void, the Indigenous people will now step to flesh out an understanding -- a more thorough understanding of the Indigenous past.

The Yuchi and other peoples that were here in the *Yuk'u* deserve much better than to be marginalized out of existence by such insufficient efforts, as well as a desire to glorify the few and powerful at the expense of the marginalized many. The past should not be for sale to the highest bidder. However, the Internet provides the level playing field wherein such marginalization may be addressed. Information wants to be free, and facts will win out over propaganda in the end. The Yuchi Story, the Syllabary Story and inclusiveness will have their day.

### **In Summary**

- ⌘ Given that history is so often written for propaganda purposes, why should we allow an alien people to write our history to suit their needs?
- ⌘ Archaeologists need to involve Indigenous peoples in the study of the Indigenous past. (Leaving the Yuchi out of Tennessee protohistory is a repugnant act.)
- ⌘ There are some serious questions to be entertained with respect to the origins of the Indigenous Syllabary. (If Yuchi Oral Traditions are correct, the Syllabary was used by them before the Cherokee appropriated it.)

## Footnotes:

1) After two decades, the history between the University of Tennessee and Yuchi Studies remains deeply contentious. It is a distasteful task, but because all reason has failed here, must now be confronted openly and head on. Beginning in the early 1990s, people began calling me asking why the University of Tennessee was telling them that the Yuchi were never in Tennessee. This information was coming primarily from the McClung Museum, but seemed to be based in some kind of policy statement. I had numerous conversations with Dr. Jefferson Chapman wherein he made the claim that the Yuchi were never residents of the Tennessee region. On one particular occasion when I ask how he could take such a stance amid the historic documentation, he turned to me and said, "I would have to produce DNA evidence before they would release any of the bones." I was stunned by the nonsequitur. It, of course, is quite revealing as to the motivation for the position. NAGPRA Law, of course was passed in November 1990. Over the next decade attempts to reason with them about this issue were all turned away with the declaration that the Yuchi were not a Tennessee tribe. In July of 2003, I formally approached The McClung Museum, after my students questioned why the McClung exhibit mentioned no tribe but the Cherokees, and the Museum guide had told them there never were any Yuchi in Tennessee. Dr. Jefferson Chapman responded by naming a "blue ribbon" committee to determine whether the issue was being properly addressed by the University. The Committee was quite stacked, and included mostly UT staff and former students. This Committee included the following: Dr. Jason Jackson, Dr. William Sturtevant, Dr. Charles Hudson, Dr. Bret Riggs, Dr. Gerald Schroedl, Dr. John Finger, and Dr. Lynne Sullivan. By September of the following year, Dr. Chapman informed me that he had only heard from two of the committee members who were in favor of the status quo. He did not disclose from whom he had heard. I subsequently sent out a query and documentation to the Committee, and received responses from three of them by November 2004. William Sturtevant's office stated that they were on the record with his 1966 map and his 1991 text with Taylor that the Yuchi were indeed here. Jason Jackson also responded with the fact he was on the Record with his 2003 text, and the just being published 2004 Smithsonian Handbook. John Finger responded that he did not feel qualified to register an opinion. None of the other UT staff or former students responded to me. It was clear that there was no intent here but to stonewall. Drs. Sturtevant and Jackson's publications are:

Taylor/Sturtevant—**The Native Americans; the Indigenous People of North America**, p 12, Smithsonian Institution 1991

Jason Baird Jackson --**The Handbook of North American Indians** ed. Wm Sturtevant Vol. 14 (2004) Smithsonian Press pp 415-428

Jackson, Jason Baird —**Yuchi ceremonial life: performance, meaning, and tradition in a contemporary American Indian community**. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.

It was also quite clear that only the University of Tennessee doubted the Yuchi presence, and their main argument was one that Roy Dickens had posited that the Dallas, Mouse Creek, Pisgah, and the rest of the cultural phases of East Tennessee were all variants of Cherokee culture. This extreme hypothesis was their sole defense that the Yuchi were not among the peoples who were here before the Cherokee. All appeals for a greater inclusiveness have fallen on deaf ears.

Roy S. Dickens, Jr. -- **Cherokee Prehistory, the Pisgah phase in the Appalachians**, University of Tennessee Press 1976, -- (Note: The Pisgah bears a strong resemblance to Mouse Creek culture and is not likely Cherokee even.

Fast forward to the current efforts of the **Remnant Yuchi Nation** to obtain Tennessee State recognition: We have several individuals making vitriolic ethnic slurs and fallacious claims based in UT's statements that the Yuchi were never in Tennessee. UT in order to hold on to 10,000 human skeletons that they hold in their Middlebrook warehouse in violation of NAGPRA Law, has continued for two decades to commit an academic dishonesty of claiming the Yuchi were never here. -- in spite of the fact that it is an unscientific position, as it is impossible to prove a negative. Worse though, there is ample evidence that they were here – ample enough for the some of the top experts to stake their reputations on it. UT not only has fueled crazies to attack honest people trying to obtain recognition for their ancestry, but continues to commit the last act of genocide – the writing of a people out of history.

Buchner, Andrew C. "Yuchi Indians." pp. 1093-1094 in Van West, Carroll, editor-in-chief, **The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture**. Nashville, TN: Tennessee Historical Society, Rutledge Hill, 1998.

Evans, E. Raymond. "Koasatis, Napochin, and Yuchis in the Eastern Tennessee Valley." Published by the InterTribal Sacred Land Trust. On line at [http://www.itslt.org/koasati\\_yuchi\\_napochin.doc](http://www.itslt.org/koasati_yuchi_napochin.doc)

All documentation (letters, emails & documents) to support these claims are held in the Yuchi National Archive. I here maintain that the position that the University of Tennessee has taken is unscientific, academically dishonest, and a conflict of interest aimed as has been so stated by other faculty members as a ruse to keep bones from being returned under NAGPRA Law. The University's position here is further underscored by the lack of a formal American Indian Studies Program, as well as an absence of Indigenous staff at the McClung Museum. Recent overtures to the Qualla Cherokee also remain troubling in their nature.

In my experience the University of Tennessee is not Indigenous friendly. If bones are indeed the excuse for denying the Yuchi their rightful place, then it is time to return these bones under NAGPRA Law.

See McClung Research Guide listing Skeletal Collections on page 7: [http://diglib.lib.utk.edu/wpa/collect\\_guide.pdf](http://diglib.lib.utk.edu/wpa/collect_guide.pdf)

NAGPRA --The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), Pub. L. 101-601, 25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq., 104 Stat. 3048, is a United States federal law passed on 16 November 1990 requiring federal agencies and institutions that receive federal funding to return Native American "cultural items" to their respective peoples.

2) The coalescent nature of today's tribes has become very apparent and is widely noted by scholars such as Robbie Ethridge in **Creek Country: The Creek Indians and their World** (2003). Current work by the Yuchi National Archive has established a considerable presence of Yuchi heritage among the Snowbird Cherokee, and Catawba among the Qualla, as well as hints of others in the agglomeration of this tribe. The Chickamauga were less Cherokee, and more Creek, of several branches, Yuchi, Shawnee, Natchez and Siouians as has been noted in bloodlines of Dragging Canoe and other Chickamauga leaders. Yuchi oral traditions give such mixing a very long history, but it certainly is documented for the post-Indigenous holocaust period. Ethridge, Robbie. **Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World**. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Many people with Yuchi heritage and at least one tribe of Yuchi remain in East Tennessee. Swanton mentions Yuchi remaining in Tennessee in the early Twentieth Century and refers to T. Michelson as his source, and this writer has interviewed many with language evidence of a Yuchi heritage and oral traditions in their family. One tribal group has documentation of their Yuchi and coalescent past going back over 150 years. The Remnant Yuchi Nation whose members live in the Tricities area predominantly traces their roots back to, not only the Yuchi, but Monacan, Saponi, Shawnee, Tutelo, and Cherokee. The town of Euchee in Rhea County clearly demonstrates a Yuchi past for the Valley, and takes its name from the Euchee Old Fields that were here nearby to the Yuchi Temple Mounds. Swanton citations of Yuchi remaining in Tennessee may be found at:

J.R. Swanton—**Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors**, Bulletin 73 BAE Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1922) Reprinted by the University Press of Florida 1998 p298 "[A] few are still said to be living in Tennessee..." Communication credited to T. Michelson.

J.R. Swanton—**Indians of the Southeastern United States**, Bulletin 137 BAE Reprint from Smithsonian Press & Scholarly Press (1946/1979), pp111 & 215 "During the very early colonial period, part of the Tuskegee, and part of the Yuchi came to live among the Cherokee." "It should be added that a few Yuchi seem never to have moved out of the Appalachian region, but have remained among the Cherokee and become gradually incorporated with them."

3) Yuchean Language studies by this writer founded on the earlier works of Dr. Lewis Ballard, Dr. James Crawford and Dr. Gunter Wagner have documented that the terms for priest from the many cultures have their etymological roots in the Yuchean. Language. These studies further demonstrate that the important terms in the Greencorn Rite are root morpheme structures that validate the Yuchi claim that the Rite is a Yuchi construct likely crafted for state craft.

It is quite clear that the Yuchean Language coevolved with the Greencorn Rite as delineated in the web publications at [www.yuchi.org](http://www.yuchi.org). In particular:

Hackett, David (Woktela), "Spiritual Yuchi" @ [www.yuchi.org](http://www.yuchi.org): <http://www.yuchi.org/YuchiLang/langadd3.html>, <http://www.yuchi.org/YuchiLanguage.pdf> & <http://www.yuchi.org/Yuchiname.pdf> , and also:

W.L. Ballard—**The Yuchi Green Corn Ceremonial: Form and Meaning** American Indian Studies Center, 80pp, University of California, Los Angeles 1978, Call Number E 75 C128am

W.L. Ballard—unpublished manuscript **Uchean Lexicon** 1985 -- a set of three lexicons assembled by Lew Ballard from his own and Gunter Wagner's linguistic studies.

Crawford, James, **Studies in Southeastern Indian Languages**, page 279 #15, University of Georgia Press, Athens 1975.

Gunter Wagner—**Yuchi Tales**, AES-P, Vol. 13, pp 1-357, 1931 -- Collection of 75 Yuchi stories with translations. Available on the web @ [http://www.archive.org/details/rosettaproject\\_yuc\\_ortho-1](http://www.archive.org/details/rosettaproject_yuc_ortho-1)

Brown, Chief Sam Jr., **Yuchi Tribal Archives** (tapes & letters copied from Mahan Collection, Schwab Archives, Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia) 1957.

4) While Yuchean Studies have been mostly neglected by academic research, several individuals have carried the weight here. Chief Sam W. Brown, Jr., the last hereditary chief of the Yuchi recounted oral traditions recorded by his father, the previous Chief. These were tape recorded by Dr. Joseph Mahan, who had done his doctoral thesis on the Yuchi's role in the mound building culture. Joseph B. Mahan—**Identification of the Tsoyaha Waeno, Builders of the Temple Mounds**, PhD dissertation, UNC 1970, and Joseph Mahan's unpublished papers and tapes in the Yuchi National Archive and at Columbus State University Archives, Simon Schwob Memorial Library 4225 University Avenue, Columbus, GA 31907. James Crawford and Addie George worked extensively on the Yuchi language and made several tapes included in the above collection. Addie George also worked with Lew Ballard and this writer to preserve the Yuchi Language and Oral Traditions. I hope my work is a fitting memorial to these pioneers.

5) Dr. Daniel Wildcat has noted that the Yuchi culture and language are built around a wetlands environment. "In his address, Wildcat addressed the sociological connections that his tribe has to wetlands ecology. A significant component of Yuchi culture is a clan system tied to the natural world. Yuchi clans are identified by plants, animals, and even one of the natural elements, wind. A list of Yuchi clan names (e.g beaver, otter, fish) read like a list of wetlands ecology." *Earth Medicine*, Vol. 5 No. 4 (Fall 1998) <http://www.engg.ksu.edu/CHSR/outreach/tosnac/earthmed/docs/EM1998F.pdf>

Further, evidence of this connection is quite obvious in the structure of the language which revolves around the Eastern Woodlands and wetlands.

6) The location of major Yuchi towns stretch throughout the Southeast with both cultural remains and linguistic remains found along the ancient trails and particularly at nodes and salt licks. From Tybee Island and Silver Bluff on the Savannah River at the Atlantic Coast, to Yazoo on the Natchez Trail; from the Euchee Valley of the Florida Pan Handle up through the Great Valley with Euchee Old Fields in Rhea County, Tennessee, and on to Saltville. The Yuchi influence was spread wide over the Southeast. See main article at: [www.yuchi.org](http://www.yuchi.org)

7) The importance of salt to the Yuchi is recorded in the landscape at the Tybee Island salt pans (The word Tybee is derived from the Yuchean for 'salt.'), and by E. Raymond Evans in Evans, E. Raymond. "Koasatis, Napochin, and Yuchis in the Eastern Tennessee Valley." Published by the InterTribal Sacred Land Trust. On line at [http://www.itslt.org/koasati\\_yuchi\\_napochin.doc](http://www.itslt.org/koasati_yuchi_napochin.doc) p.9. It is also noted that even into the Twentieth Century, the Yuchi were involved in the Salt trade in Oklahoma – see Wright, Muriel, **A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma**, University of Oklahoma Press 1951/1986 p.267.

8) The web pages at [www.yuchi.org](http://www.yuchi.org) establish some body of circumstantial evidence by using the linguistic etymology to verify oral tradition here. There is substantial information and research that remains yet to be published in this regard. However, it is as Thoreau has noted: "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk." Henry David Thoreau US Transcendentalist author (1817 - 1862)

9) The Syllabary has been reframed in history by the Indigenous account of Traveller Bird in **Tell Them They Lie; The Sequoyah Myth**, Los Angeles: Westernlore Publishers, 1971. In addition to the death warrant cited by Travellerbird as documentation, Susan Kalter notes that this account has not been given its due, and that there are some corroborating historical documents (see footnote 11 & 12) Susan Kalter "America's Histories" Revisited: The Case of Tell Them They Lie, *The American Indian Quarterly* - Volume 25, Number 3, Summer 2001, pp. 329-351 University of Nebraska Press. E-ISSN: 1534-1828 Print ISSN: 0095-182X, DOI: 10.1353/aiq.2001.0048. Kalter also note on page 339 of her paper that Helen Hunt Jackson (1881) cites a primary document referring to a buffalo skin on which Cherokee hieroglyphs was put on display in Savannah before being shipped to England.

10) Material documented by Jack and James East have helped me establish the Yuchi Cultural Footprint and its distribution in the Valley based in J. Joseph Bauxar -- **Yuchi Ethnoarchaeology**, Part I-V, *Ethnohistory* Vol:4 # 3 (Sum. 1957) pp279-301 & Vol:4 # 4 (Autumn 1957) pp369-464 <http://www.jstor.org/pss/480806> & <http://www.jstor.org/pss/480328> and M. Kneberg & T. Lewis—Yuchi chapter, **Tribes That Slumber**, Univ of Tenn. Press, pp1-196, Knoxville 1958 as well as, M. Kneberg & T. Lewis—**Hiwassee Island**, U of Tenn. Press pp204, Knoxville 1946 -- Yuchi/Koasati digs. As well as, Lynn P. Sullivan ed. --**The Prehistory of the Chickamauga Basin in Tennessee** (1995) Kneberg & Lewis, Univ of Tenn. Press.

11) See footnote 9 for Oglethorpe Buffalo skin above. There is also the case of the Swiss "Jesuit," Christian Gottlieb Priber. He was captured as a "spy" as he travelled with a party of French Canadians in 1736. He was actually an early Utopian seeking to set up his ideal state. According to the account given by Helen M. Riley when he was captured he was in possession of a Cherokee dictionary. See "South Carolina German-American of the Month" Clemson University Department of Languages, 2000. 12 June 2003. <http://hubcap.clemson.edu/german/PriberMonth.html>

12) Susan Kalter (footnote 9) and Spanish Treaty of 1786 with syllabary signatures, held by Chickamauga Indians in Texas shared by Dr. Christopher Spruell in personal communication.

13) The AniKutani are given some space in James Mooney -- **Myths of The Cherokee** (1950/1982) Cherokee Heritage Books, pp.392-3, 501. The extermination is covered in the last entry. If you ask any Cherokee they will usually tell you that all the priests were exterminated. It is a particularly widely held myth that is often set in different times. The Chickamaugas will tell you that they tried to kill all the priests, but did not succeed, as many remained among the Chickamauga. One who did was Sequoyah, but Dragging Canoe was also a priest as was Raven and Tollenteeskee. The best account of the war with the traditional priests is that of Traveller Bird. The Cherokee say it was over carnal transgressions, but more likely this is propaganda, as the real issues were traditionalism versus accommodation with the colonists.

**S'aKwaYa** is the word for a messenger or scribe. The reduplicative **S'akhwa s'akhwa** means woodpecker. **YaKhwaNe** is song. So **Khwa** it is the morpheme here tied to song and communication. It is likely that messages were often once sung as the human memory works better for sung material than merely memorized spoken material. The reduplicative also calls up the drumming sound of the woodpecker, which is similar to the sound made by pecking an inscription in stone. It is quite clear that the woodpecker is associated with communications, both written and spoken in the Yuchean mind-view.

14) **The Tennessee Cave** is known to this writer only by Jan Simek's abstract: Simek, Jan F. (University of Tennessee, Knoxville), Sarah A. Blankenship (University of Tennessee, Knoxville), Joseph Douglas (Volunteer State Community College), and Alan Cressler (US Geological Survey). 2010. **CHEROKEE SYLLABARY IN CAVES**. Despite James Mooney's assertion to the contrary, it is now clear that Cherokee people in Tennessee and Alabama visited caves and probably used them for ceremonial and perhaps

industrial purposes[sic] [if indeed these were Cherokee and not AniKutani/Yuchi Priests]. We discuss evidence for this from two caves. One is in northern Alabama, and is of certain Cherokee origin as graffiti on the cave wall was clearly produced in the Cherokee syllabary invented by Sequoyah in the early nineteenth century. The second cave, in south-central Tennessee, is more difficult to attribute with certainty as it may date rather early for the syllabary and involves few identifiable words or phrases. This second site is, however, quite intriguing as it associates possible Cherokee writing with representational cave art, produced with a technique not seen before in prehistoric art caves, and with evidence for intriguing historical industrial use of the site.

All efforts to get information and pictures of this inscription were met with claims that he was not allowed to share it because of an agreement with the Cherokee. Since it is not on Cherokee land, and it was apparently federally funded research, this would seem to be merely uncooperativeness from UT staff. The important aspect here is that it is not translatable as Cherokee, and it seems to be “rather early” – two eyebrow raising elements with which we are being teased.

**Kentucky Cave:** <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/23/science/23cherokee.html?pagewanted=all>

**Georgia Log Cabin:** <http://trailofthetrail.blogspot.com/2011/02/syllabary-cabin.html>

**Alabama Cave:** <http://www.flickr.com/photos/caving/2312432695/>

15) Kentucky Cave Syllabary in NY Times article by John Noble Wilford with quotes from William Welge, “Carvings From Cherokee Script’s Dawn” <http://www.researchhistory.org/2011/03/11/carvings-from-cherokee-script%e2%80%99s-dawn/>

16) Speck (1909), Rickohockans, signifying "cavelanders" (after Hewitt, in Hodge, 1907), perhaps an early name for a branch of the Yuchi. This attribution is not without controversy.

17) Chief Sam Brown relates an oral tradition that the Yuchi were the Great Suns ruling at Cahokia, and that the Siouian peoples were taught the Greencorn Rites there. While we are some ways from establishing this oral tradition as more than a myth, it is consistent with all we know. Francis Jennings in **The Founders of America; How Indians discovered the land, pioneered in it, and created great classical civilizations; how they were plunged into the Dark Age by invasion and conquest; and how they are now reviving**, W.W. Norton, New York, NY (1991) has posited like this writer and many others that the Olmec were the nobility at Cahokia. While this is just a good speculation, there are many similarities between the Olmec and the Yuchi in trade and salt, and in the use of religion for state craft. Most of all the timing and logistics are right. Jennings at least recognizes that the Moundbuilder Civilization is among the great civilizations, instead of continuing the denigration of this culture that archaeology has for so long pursued.

18) Ample sources of information for learning about meso-American syllabaries exist on the web:

<http://www.famsi.org/research/pitts/MayaGlyphsBook1Sect1.pdf>

<http://www.evertype.com/gram/olmec.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesoamerican\\_writing\\_systems](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesoamerican_writing_systems)

<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/olmec/olmec-writing.htm>

[http://www.ancientscripts.com/ma\\_ws.html](http://www.ancientscripts.com/ma_ws.html)

[www.ancientscripts.com/ma\\_ws.html](http://www.ancientscripts.com/ma_ws.html)

“Olmec Origins of Mesoamerican Writing,” Mary E. D. Pohl<sup>1</sup>\*, Kevin O. Pope<sup>2</sup>, Christopher von Nagy<sup>3</sup>

19) Gero, Joan. "The History of the World Archaeological Congress." Published on line at [http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/site/about\\_hist.php/.](http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/site/about_hist.php/))

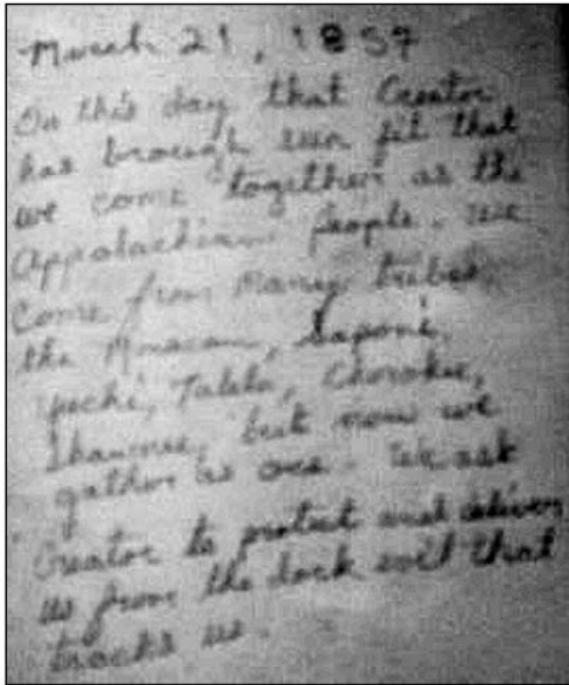
20) Maps FigureTanner, Helen Hornbeck, Map in **Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast**, Revised & Expanded Edition, Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood and M. Thomas Hatley page, 29, 2006.

Sturtevant, William, “Southeastern Languages Map,” Smithsonian Institution 1966.

Indians of North America Map © 1979 National Geographic Society

Great Valley Corridor: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Appalachian\\_Valley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Appalachian_Valley)





March 21, 1857

On this day that [the] Creator has brough[t] [and] seen fit that we come together as the Appalachian people. We come from many tribes, the Monacan, Saponi, Yuchi, Tuleto, Cherokee, Shawnee, but now we gather as one. We ask [you] Creator to protect and deliver us from the dark evil that tracks us.

Figure 7: Opening Page of the Remnant Yuchi Nations Tribal Roll.

## A Statement of Indigenous Concern

One of the aspects of inappropriately denying the Yuchi as protohistoric residents of Tennessee is that the University of Tennessee staff, as recognized experts, have fueled people with a radical agenda to attack people of Yuchi heritage. They have conflated the University's agenda into one of their own, and seek to deny people of other than Cherokee heritage any place in Tennessee's past, present or future. It is unworthy of an educational institution to intentionally misguide and mislead the public.

It is the right of the Yuchi, Koasati, Natchez, Shawnee, and other Indigenous peoples to claim their rightful place in Tennessee -- which includes the seeking of State recognition of their heritage. It is objectionable for a State institution to favor one group at the expense of others. The Cherokee-ization of Indigenous Tennessee is an affront to all the other Indigenous cultures that had and have a share in the Tennessee experience.

The University recently dedicated a mound on the Agriculture Campus to the Cherokee. Only Cherokee were invited. However, this mound is most likely not Cherokee, as the Administration well knows. The University of Tennessee has also extended in-state status to the Qualla Cherokee. While we applaud the belated Indigenous support, we question both its motivation, and the exclusion of other deserving Indigenous cultures from this Cherokee privilege.