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Old World Roots of the Cherokee: How DNA, Ancient Alphabets, and Religion Explain the Origins of America's Largest Indian Nation. By Donald N. Yates.

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satirical play “*Winnetou’s Snake Oil Show from Wigwam City*,” as well as Deloria’s protest of mainstream America’s stereotype of “the granite-faced grunting redskin” (69).

Another common thread in this book is Native environmental thought and what it has to offer a world overwhelmed by pollution. Jeanette Armstrong makes a case that indigenous knowledge has something to offer western economics as well as science. Indeed, in a time when the pollution of capitalist enterprise overwhelms Earth’s capacity to cleanse and cope, “re-indigenization” is essential to framing a sustainable future. She quotes John Mohawk: “I think that when we talk about re-indigenization, we need a much larger, bigger umbrella to understand. It’s not necessarily about the Indigenous Peoples of a specific place; it’s about re-indigenizing the peoples of the planet” (115). To which Daryl Posey has added: “To reverse the devastating cycle which industrialized society has imposed on the planet, we have to re-learn ecological knowledge and earnestly deal with the question: Can sustainable practices harmonize with trade and increased consumption?” Posey calls upon indigenous environmental knowledge as a guide, “the re-indigenization of the world” (115).

Jerry Mander, in “Paradigm Wars,” also calls upon indigenous ecological models to guide non-Native activists who “remain hesitant to mention that that such prevailing paradigms as economic growth, corporatism, capitalism, and the ideologies of the global market are all by varying degrees the root causes of the grave environmental and social crises of our time” (115).

One problem with this book has nothing to do with the quality of scholarship. The text type is so small that anyone without perfect vision will find reading more than a few pages at a time a challenge. With help from a magnifying glass, however, this book can be a rewarding read on a number of subjects.

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**Old World Roots of the Cherokee: How DNA, Ancient Alphabets, and Religion Explain the Origins of America’s Largest Indian Nation.** By Donald N. Yates. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012. 217 pages. \$45 paper.

In this work Donald N. Yates offers a history of the Cherokee people by drawing similarities between linguistic, religious, and cultural practices, as well as incorporating genetic testing. This last component, for Yates, provides the definitive evidence of relations between Jews, Greeks, Egyptians, and the Cherokee, or in other words the “old world roots” of the people. All of these kinds of evidence

have been and continue to be used to tell stories of the Cherokee and other American Indians, such as recent genetic studies that demonstrate a European settlement of Native America prior to Columbus. Yates' set of evidence includes the perceptions of the Cherokees' neighbors that Cherokee were foreign, the link between both Cherokee and Greek architecture and fashion, and parts of the Cherokee language that are untranslatable or hard to define within the language itself. Yates attempts to show that the adaptation of the Cherokee through migrations, resettlements, blending of peoples and traditions, and even the spread of genetic material, has made the Cherokee an enduring people who, thanks to these adaptive methods, are prepared to continue. While this conclusion has merit, his method of arriving at it is questionable.

Through historical writings, genealogical records, genetic testing, writing systems, and religious inferences about individuals, as well as information about Cherokee religion, Judaism, and Islam, Yates weaves a history of the Cherokee people that traces different clans of the tribe to different geographical origins. Succinctly, Yates states that "clans represent biogeographical or genetic moieties in a political confederation" (19), a key point in his argument and analysis of what the genetic information can offer to historical research and understanding of community formation. Yates has other publications drawing on this point that advance similar arguments of Old World influences on New World cultures, with particular focus on the genetic data.

A major focus of the text is on the Eshelokee and Kutans (Ani-Kutani). Yates presents the Eshelokee as the warrior society, the original Cherokee, and argues that their name derives from a Greek word for "colonizers". He traces the Kutans, or the Cherokee priestly class, to the early nineteenth-century writings of Constantine Rafinesque, whom Yates presents as founder and publisher of the *Walam Olum*. Yates goes on to argue for more linguistic crossing from Greek to Cherokee, as well as pulling together evidence for his arguments about Jewish origins of the Cherokee from Rafinesque's *Ancient History of the Indians* and James Adair's own connections between the Cherokee and the lost tribes of Israel in his late eighteenth-century writings. He posits that the Indians depicted in *An Audience Given by the Trustees of Georgia to a Delegation of Creek Indians*, a piece of early eighteenth-century art, are actually the portraits of seven Cherokee Indians. These sources all undergird Yates' larger argument about Cherokees' roots in the Old World. Chapter 7, which discusses this painting, ends with a statement that such leaders as those captured in the portraits would be Jews (or crypto-Jews, depending on interpretation of their awareness and openness of their own identities). Yates notes in chapter 9, "Yom Kippur with the Cherokee," that the Jews of the Cherokee would be First Temple or earlier, thereby guiding migrations together in new ways, seemingly to make sense of DNA results that indicate Middle Eastern origins. He draws an interesting

parallel between the Cherokee practices of ritual bathing and the Jewish *mikve* and then ties these connections to the Bird Clan. Similarly, Yates claims that Wolf, Paint, and other Cherokee clans derive from different human migrations.

In chapter 10, Yates argues that Sequoyah did not invent the Cherokee syllabary. Some readers may find it controversial that Yates further asserts that Sequoyah is a fictionalized character, removing not only his agency but his existence. Yates claims here that the writing system had been around for many generations, a conclusion generated by connecting the Sequoyan script to similar alphabets from the East Mediterranean region. For Yates, this claim contributes to the Greek origins of the Cherokee. Many of the new conclusions or extensions of claims made about archaeological and historical, as well as genetic, evidence will appear remarkable to the reader of this text: the white man who founded the Eastern Band of Cherokee, the similarities between Greek and Cherokee warrior dress, the corollaries among Cherokee traditional practices and Jewish religious traditions. In chapter 11, "Phoenix Rising," Yates posits not only a collective Greek and South American/Mexican migration of the Cherokee people, but also describes the nation-building following the removal of the priestly class, which he refers to as an "ethnic cleansing" of the Kutans from the tribe (136). He extends his argument by incorporating Muslim influence within the Southeast and particularly within the tribes, alongside Jewish influences in that nation-building that other historians connect to New England Christians. He criticizes this move by American historians to deny Indians agency in their own development, but then proceeds to make the same move in regard to the Jewish influence. While such an understanding of Muslim and Jewish influences could undergird a contemporary realization of the similarities between peoples at a time when societies are becoming more divisive, the many layers of the argument make any one strand hard to follow throughout the whole manuscript, undermining the argument and its possible further implications.

Throughout, Yates questions his own connections between language, history, and DNA, with the latter providing the strongest evidence in his opinion. Yates conducts and incorporates DNA haplogroup (Y-chromosome and mitochondrial) studies and results, but those studies involve very small sample sizes. When citing the work of other geneticists, such as Ripan Malhi and Deborah Bolnick, the approach and scope of the studies are not clearly defined. Instead, the results are abstracted from other information, such as self-identification of participants or tribal enrollment, that would augment the understanding of the data. While Yates grasps the point that geneticists attempting to reconstruct population history must also engage with the existing genealogical and humanistic understandings of identity, the methods of questioning and research in the humanities would also benefit the science itself here, not as additive methods but as methodologies that inform and alter one another.

Overall, Yates' text presents a wealth of detailed information along with new genetic evidence and extends connections that have been previously imagined but which may only be tenuous at best. While the historical research, including the roles of the clans and their members, demonstrates much background information, there exists a disconnect between this argument and its impacts on modern relations. Yates' title highlights the size of the Cherokee Indian Nation, but he does not return to this modern reference except in the limited genetic testing of current members of various Cherokee groups and the federally recognized tribes. One might infer that he is arguing that the size is related to these many ways of expanding who is included in the tribe, an Indian nation capable of containing multitudes, but that inference loses traction in relation to the ongoing dispute between the Cherokee Nation and their Freedmen. Again, Yates does not engage the modern parts of the society except through genetic testing, and while Freedmen have engaged in genetic testing, they and that debate of inclusion or exclusion make no appearance here. Importantly, here the genetic tests are used along with deep genealogical information of the members as well, which makes for more reliable composite information.

This text brings together multiple sources of evidence from different disciplines and fields to offer an argument for the origins of parts of the Cherokee people in the Old World, including Ancient Greece and the Middle East. The argument itself has origins in the historical writings of James Adair, but also in scholarship from the last generation by William McLoughlin and Walter Conser. Although more comprehensive than Yates' or others' previous versions of this argument, the resulting text is no more compelling. This text enters into an area where more writing is needed in the interstices of science and the humanities, the histories written by genetics and social understandings of relations. Increasingly, the stories of origin and current identity will involve these various narrative threads. More rigorous analyses are available from scholars, such as Kimberly TallBear and Jenny Reardon, who question how these narratives work together without one presupposing the narrations of another, as well as from the National Congress of American Indians, Rosalina James, and Jennifer Wagner, who work with American Indian peoples on the possibilities and limits of genetics. Many readers throughout American Indian studies, ethnic studies, and interdisciplinary studies in general will find writing in this intersection of science, history, language, and religion engaging and useful for the future of the fields; however, while interdisciplinary approaches such as those that Yates presents here deserve further exploration, this text ultimately fails to contribute a coherent or reliable analysis to the discussion.

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