

T-154

Stoke Smith, Cherokee

Crosslin Smith, Translator

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Transcribed by: Linda Butler

THE CHEROKEE VERSION OF THE THUNDERBIRD

Today's date is September the 7th., 1967. I am visiting my father Stoke Smith. He has just finished telling me the Cherokee version of the Thunderbird. But to his speaking difficulty, mainly from his paralysis, and strokes, he is unable to speak very plainly. So therefore, I thought that it would be best if I would listen first to the story and then I would record it in my own voice. The story of the Thunderbird, according to other tribes is a bird with great pride who has the ability to create lightning and thunder and rain. To the Cherokees, this is an abstract thinking. And abstract thinking from the main corner of the Indian culture. This means that back in history some time ago, that there was only one group of Indians, one set of rules for all the people. The abstract thinking comes in when you think back where there might have been misunderstanding. And one leader took his own band and created a name and begin to do deviation from the original stories to his own liking and to his own understanding. And as a result, today you have many many versions of the great thunderbird.

THE GREAT SPECKLED BIRD, A RELIGIOUS STORY

But to the Cherokees, the Thunderbird, I have to use the name Thunderbird. but the Cherokees call their bird, which we think is the same thing as the Apache Thunderbird or the Shoshones or the Sioux Indians or whom ever might be talking about the great Thunderbird. To the Cherokees it's the great speckled bird. They believe that one time he was a person. This person was for some reason or another, God, asking to be one of the items in the great universe. He would be turned into a bird's body with all of the imaginable colors, on the feathers. And God told him that he would be the Good Will Ambassador to earth. The teller of the great commandments. To every man, to every woman, to every child. The colors that the speckled bird carried