

ROSS, S. W.

MAGIC STONE

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Interviewer, Elizabeth Ross.  
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A Magic Stone.

When a large party composed of warriors of the eastern and western Cherokee Nations advanced against the Osages in May, 1818, there came a day when it seemed that a battle would soon ensue. The Osages were known to be but a short distance away but eventually they (the Osages) retired and several days elapsed before the battle was waged. But on the occasion when the battle was not fought a number of the Cherokees hurried to the medicine man or conjurer who accompanied the warriors and requested that their fortunes be forecast. In the event they were going to be killed or wounded the warriors wished to be informed in advance.

The medicine man complied with the request of the warriors and called upon each to present himself in turn. As each man came forward, the medicine man pressed his thumb nail against a small white and almost transparent stone. In case the surface of the stone remained clear under pressure from the thumb of the medicine man, the meaning was that the warrior in whose behalf the conjuring was done would

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not be injured during the progress of battle. But in the event a small, blood-red streak of thread-like size appeared upon the white surface the meaning was that the warrior would be badly wounded or fall in action. Those for whom the stone remained clear naturally felt more cheerful than did those for whom the red streak appeared.

The hotly contested battle in which the Osages and Cherokees engaged several days after the fortunes of the warriors were told, was often spoken of by those who had been participants in after years. But as the Cherokee alphabet was not yet in existence no written account of the contest was made. Consequently no one knows whether all those warriors for whom a streak appeared in the conjure stone were slain in the progress of the battle or whether some or all of them escaped.

In ancient times the priests of the Cherokee religion are said to have possessed "white stones" in which leaping flames were sometimes visible, but after extinction of the priesthood the white stones seem to have disappeared altogether. But that similar stones were known to the Cherokee of nearly one hundred and twenty years ago would seem

to indicate that some of the original stones may have been in existence.

The spot upon which the medicine man stood when he indicated to the group of Cherokee warriors the fate of each in battle is in a rugged section of the present Cookson township, Cherokee County.

In seeking relics among the Cherokees in recent years no one, so far as is known, has ever found one of the conure stones. What disposition was made of those once the property of the medicine men is not known.

Note:

This article is based upon an account given by Archibald Campbell, Park Hill, once speaker of the Cherokee Council, to the Reverend J. A. Durcan, when the latter was a young man in the early forties of the last century.

Authority: S. M. Ross, Park Hill, Oklahoma.