

CERTIFICATE.

WE, whose names are subscribed, take pleasure in certifying that we have carefully examined the Creek Grammar, and Translation of the Gospel according to John, by H. F. BUCKNER and G. HERROD; and that, in our opinion, they are more correct than any thing that ever has been published in the Creek language, and that they are as nearly correct, in every particular, as it is possible to make them at this stage of the language. Moreover, the changes which Mr. BUCKNER has made in the Creek Alphabet are important, and a decided improvement upon the old one.

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Superintendent of Public Instruction,

MEMBERS OF THE CREEK
NATIONAL COUNCIL.

CREEK NATION,
March 26, 1860.

A
G R A M M A R
OF THE
MASKOKE, OR CREEK LANGUAGE.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

LESSONS IN SPELLING, READING, AND DEFINING.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE are several considerations, apart from the necessity of correct translations, of sufficient importance, in my esteem, to justify a careful analysis of the Creek language. Every true philanthropist loves man because he *is man*; and though a people may have been "scattered and peeled," "meted out and trodden down," he will not love them the less on account of their misfortunes; and when he finds such, far from the society and blessings of their more fortunate brethren, with brotherly salutations he will inquire, "*whence came you, and whither are you bound?*"

May not an acquaintance with the language of some Indian tribe, and an investigation of the comparative philology of it with others, and of all those with some of the old world, lead to a satisfactory solution of the historic problem, "who first peopled this vast continent?"

Whence came they? and to *whom* are they related? The Indians are fading like the Autumn leaves. All over our western plains they are being encircled by the shadow of death. They are our brethren. I admit that our first great care should be to give them the consolations of Christianity, and grant them a Christian burial when they die; but should we not also take their ambrotypes and place them in our picture-gallery, that their recollection may never fade from our memories? I know of no more correct picture of the Creeks than their language; and, though the following may not be true to the original in every

particular, yet it is better than no picture at all, and is as good as my *instrument* and *chemicals* could take in the time allowed me. Look at it while the original still lives, and you will see the resemblance.

1. *The Creeks are not idolators.*—So far as we can learn, an idol of wood or stone has never disgraced the temples of their religious worship; but they have ever believed in One Great Spirit, the Maker of all things: hence, in their language we can discover no traces of idolatry, but we find the name *Hesakitymisse* for God, whom they regard as the Author of life.

2. *They are not profane;* and hence we find no oaths nor words for bitter curses in their language, for they never speak the name *Hesakitymisse* except with that reverence which is due from the creature to the Creator. Neither are they ever known to quarrel and fight with their fists, like low-bred people, for they are far above such mean pursuits; hence, where such words as are used in quarreling occur in our language, we find blanks in theirs. "I am a man!" ("hōvnvvy tōyīis cha!") is all a Creek man says when he finds it necessary to vindicate his bravery: and when he says this, and follows it with the war-whoop, woe betide the one who dares to be his adversary; for he will then spill his blood sooner than acknowledge that he is not "a man."

3. *The Creeks are brave;* and that they have been emphatically a warlike people, their history bears ample testimony. Accordingly we find that their language is majestic and warlike in its tone, with barely enough of vowel sounds to dissolve its consonants with ease. There are no traces of effeminacy or affectation discoverable, but whoever understands a Creek in his own language, will conclude that he is saying all he means, and meaning all he says. A thousand sentinels keep the door of their mouths to make them speak the truth without ambiguity. Indeed, the

very construction of their language is such as to forbid ambiguity. An ambiguous sentence can not be translated into their language; it must first be stripped of all words of doubtful import. For example: in the sentence, "*Lovest thou me more than these?*" the question with us is, "*these*" what?—more than these disciples love me? more than you love these disciples? or more than you love these fish? It is often difficult with us to determine what is the antecedent of a pronoun; but the Creeks would never use the pronoun unless the antecedent were visible, and then it would be so *demonstrative* that they could point toward it; in all other cases they would repeat the noun, and omit the relative. The very lack of any article, either definite or indefinite, forces them to employ words of more definite import than *a*, *an*, or *the*; for even our definite article is often a very *indefinite* part of speech.

In keeping with the martial spirit and habits of the Creek people, we find the name of almost every man in the nation capable of bearing arms the very same as the name of some brave or cunning animal: as, *Wolf-fierce*, *Panther-brave*, *Tiger-no-heart*, *Bear-crazy*, etc., etc.; while the entire nation is at the same time divided into *clans*, with the names of ferocious beasts and birds to distinguish them.

4. *The Creeks are remarkably attached to every thing that is (or has been) peculiar to them;* and slow to admit changes or innovations upon their established usages or customs.

Never, until a very few years ago, could civilization, or even Christianity, make any perceivable changes in their laws, customs, or language. Their character and habits seem to have been crystallized, and their language stereotyped. I doubt not, but that their customs half a century ago were their customs many centuries before the discovery of this continent by Columbus. I say this from my knowledge of their character, and from their

reluctance in omitting any thing that their fathers used to love, or to do.

This trait in their character is also exemplified in their language. Though they are a confederacy of several different tribes; though there are still as many as six different languages spoken by these confederate tribes in their territorial midst; though they are, and long have been, surrounded by neighboring tribes of other tongues; and though French, Spaniards, Americans, and persons of other nations, have long been accustomed to trade with them; yet, *but five or six foreign words have ever been adopted by them*, and the pure Maskoke language remains, to a great degree, unchanged. I consider this a very remarkable fact, and one which may greatly facilitate our acquaintance with the analogy between their language, and some language of the old world; seeing they have kept it pure so long and under such unfavorable circumstances. They are now, however, on the eve of a mighty and rapid change. They can hold out no longer. Many and powerful agencies have been employed to change their character and habits. War has done its work. Their national spirit has been subdued, if not broken. Vice, death, avarice, and the influence of a more powerful race, have all combined to make inroads upon their long-established usages. More than all, Christianity has at length caused greater changes for good than the most sanguine could have anticipated a few years ago. Their old customs are giving way. Husbandry and agriculture have supplanted the chase and the war-dance; and prayers and hymns of praise to God have taken the place of revelings and war-whoops.

Their language will soon undergo great and rapid changes, if it is not entirely superseded by the English. Now is the only favorable time to save their language from utter oblivion, and this is the only way. We owe it to them, to ourselves, to the scientific

world, to catch the shadow of their language before it is clean gone forever. We are not able now to imagine the important results that may be realized.

5. The Creeks, in common with all nations not under Christian influence, have been accustomed to *oppress their females*; and I think I discover unmistakable evidences of this, even in their language. I allude to the old custom of having one dialect for the men, and another for the women; traces of which will be found in my remarks on the 2d declension of Creek nouns. If this had been peculiar to the Creeks alone, I would have concluded that they, like the founders of Rome, had obtained their wives from another nation; but I have learned that it is not peculiar to the Creeks, but is common with many other tribes; such as the Natchez, Osages, Quappas, Dekotas, etc.; and hence I infer that the common fact must be traced to a common cause—the oppression of the females. Among wild Indians, the women have to perform most of the drudgery, and are not regarded as on a social equality with the men. According to their old customs the women were not allowed to appear in public, but had to live very secluded; and once a moon they were forced to pitch their tents at a distance from the men, and were not allowed to come near them for a week. A warrior or a hunter, in order to be successful, had to keep away from the company of the women a given time. A doctor could not be successful in practice, neither could a patient hope to recover, unless each alike kept aloof from the company of women.

A woman was not allowed to bathe above a man, nor to pass him in traveling in such a way as that the wind might blow from her to him. If a husband died, his surviving relatives placed the wife in “her widowhood,” by plunging her in the water, and requiring her to live secluded a certain number of years. If she had not been a good wife, in their opinion, they required her to

live secluded from the society of men for four years. She must not talk to any body but women and children, unless by the special grace of her husband's relatives. She was not allowed to shake hands with a man, appear in any public assembly, or dress in any way that would appear becoming; and she had to wear her hair disheveled, and was not allowed even to comb it, but had to send for her husband's relatives to perform that kind office in case of absolute necessity. All their laws concerning crime between the sexes discriminated in favor of the men. These restrictions, and others too numerous to mention, led, in my opinion, to the formation of a dialect peculiar to the women; so that it was regarded indelicate and unwomanly for a female to speak to men in the language of men. Christianity, however, has in a great measure elevated the Creek women to their proper sphere, so that there are now only faint traces left of any of these customs which I have mentioned; and there are now, also, but few traces of their peculiar dialect, and it is no longer considered a reproach for a woman to speak the same kind of language that is used by the men. There are a few words, however, that are still peculiar to the women; some of which I have pointed out in the following pages.

One thing which entitles the Creek language to our respect and consideration, is the fact that they were once the most numerous, and are yet among the most respectable, of all our southern tribes. Physically, morally, and intellectually, they are not behind any Indians on this continent; and it is an undisputed fact, that they have been more successful in resisting our military forces than any other nation of the same population. The Seminoles,* who are

* The word Seminole in Creek signifies *wild*, and was given to the Florida Creeks because they left the main tribe. *Maskoke* is their own name for themselves.

really the same people, and speak the same language, are entitled to as much respect for their bravery and for their patriotism as any nation renowned in history or in song; and magnanimity and philanthropy, as well as the interests of history and science, require that we should endeavor to analyze their language, and translate as much of God's Word as we can, so that they may be able to read, in their own language, the wonderful works of God.

MANNER OF COMPILING THIS WORK.

It was far from my intention, at first, to make a Grammar of the Creek language. Impelled from a conviction of duty, I began a translation of a portion of the Gospel; but I soon found that, as there was no Grammar, no Definer, no sort of standard except the *usus loquendi*, it was absolutely essential to the accuracy and uniformity of my translations, that I should learn its laws, and study closely its idiom. Accordingly, I applied myself to the task, and to aid my memory I made notes; and, as I progressed in my translations, I continued to write down such observations as were suggested to my mind by the peculiarities of the language. These I showed to such intelligent half-breeds as were educated, and they were so well pleased with my manuscript, that they urged me to have it published. This will account for that want of proper method which may be detected in parts of the work. Had I set out with the view of preparing a manuscript Grammar for publication, I would have had an arrangement somewhat different. This will be seen particularly in the conjugation of the verbs. In my manuscript I had them in the form of a Compendium, with the 1st and 2d singulars, and the 1st and 2d plurals, and the dual (where there was one) all in parallel columns, so that I could see all the inflections of the same verb at one view, like looking on a pendent map. I did not have time to

transcribe the whole, and hence the present form of the verbs. I do not think, however, that this will in any way impede the progress of any one who may wish to study the conjugation of the Creek verbs. That portion of this work which relates to orthography and definitions was composed at intervals far apart, and during moments that I could not well be employed in missionary labors. Some was written on scraps of paper and the fly-leaves of books while riding or walking to and from my appointments. It was impossible for me, at such times, to be very precise as to method. I think, however, that so far as I have gone, I have been *accurate*, and that my observations on the various parts of speech are *reliable*. Whatever critics may say (and I court friendly criticisms), I have this to console me—*more competent critics can not be found than those honest and intelligent Indians, whose names may be found to a certificate at the first of this volume, highly approving and recommending it.*

I have already been amused at the suggestions of some who know no more of Creek than a mule knows of Algebra! The Creeks were always too brave and independent to work in the traces of other men, and their language is like those who speak it. If the Creek verb is varied sometimes to suit the objective as well as the nominative case, it is useless to try to make it conform to the variations of the English verb; and if the Creek has nine vowel sounds, while the Dakota has not; and if the former has some consonant sounds that are wanting in the latter, it would be folly to think of spelling all the Creek words with the Dakota alphabet.

In conclusion: if the perusal of this work should afford as much pleasure to the reader, as the study of the Creek language has to the author, he will thank me for my pains; and that is all the reward I covet, aside from the hope and satisfaction of doing good.

I commenced this work upon the same principle that I would sink a shaft into an artificial mound of antiquity—not for the love of labor *per se*, nor for the prospect of finding concealed treasures—but because I am fond of antiquarian curiosities, and because I hoped thereby to add my mite to the promotion of human happiness, as well as to the advancement of science. I have gone as far into the mound as I could in the time allowed me, and have marked and exhibited whatever I have found that was either useful or curious. I offer to the religious and scientific world the result of my researches. Gentlemen, you can place these *specimens* in your several cabinets. I have given them plain English names, and have classified them to suit myself. If you wish them to be classified differently, or if you wish to give them *technical* names that none can understand but yourselves, be assured that you will not by that offend

Your obedient servant,

H. F. BUCKNER.

NEW YORK, June 25, 1860.

MASKŌKE ALPHABET.

1. A a aha, yaha, alakiis, ayō.
2. E e eme, cheme, efv.
3. II ii iiyetv, iiyiis, mōmiis.
4. I i irō, irki, ichki.
5. Ō ω ωfv, ωpv, ωwalv, ωsakiwv.
6. Ō o hokte. nokke, tottōlōse.
7. O o okhvssi, sokchowkv, rokkō.
8. U u chula, sumkepis, suletawv.
9. V v vni, vnhissi, vmōpōnvkv.
10. Ch ch cheme, Chehōfv, Chesvs.
11. F f fō, fō-lani, finnv.
12. H h hvssi, hvрпи, hōfōne.
13. R r re, rekachkv, rvrō, rvfō.
14. K k ke, ke-hvssi, kapv, kafi.
15. L l letkiis, lomhe, lvste.
16. M m mekōsvnkv, meṁwōf, Mēsij.
17. N n nerkv, nitta, nvny, nelti.
18. P p pōme, pirrō, perki.
19. S s svmpv, svty-rokkō.
20. T t tōmes, tōpv.
21. W w wōtkō-sti.
22. Y y yaha.

DIPHTHONGS.

23. Ae ae Acha!
24. Ōe oe ōēwv, ōekiiwv.
25. Ie ie iielah!
26. Ow ow ahowki.
27. Oe oe hōpōewv, hōpōetaki.

THE

WHITE MAN'S CREEK ALPHABET.

CAP. SMALL. SOUND.

| | | | |
|----|----|------|--|
| A | a | äh | always has the open sound, as in pä, mä, fäther. |
| E | o | ëë | always has the long sound, as in me, she, he. |
| II | ii | ī | always has the long sound, as in pine, mine, fine. |
| I | i | ı | always has the short sound, as in it, bit, hit. |
| Ō | ω | ō | always has the long sound, as in no, go, so. |
| C | o | ōh | always has the sound of oo in took, hook, or oo in foot. |
| O | o | ōh | always has the short sound of o in not, spot, shot. |
| U | u | yū | always has the sound of u in rule, or o in fool, tool. |
| V | v | ū | always has the short sound of u in smut, shut, hut. |
| Ch | ch | chëë | always has the sound of ch in cheese, chimney. |
| F | f | fëë | always has the sound of f in English, as female. |
| II | h | hëë | always has the sound of h in English, as he, hero. |

| | | | |
|---|---|------|---|
| R | r | hlëë | has the sound of <i>l</i> aspirated, as in <i>hla</i> f, Sax. a loaf. |
| K | k | këë | as in English, like <i>k</i> in keep. It is univocal. |
| L | l | lëë | as in English, like <i>l</i> in leap. It is univocal. |
| M | m | mëë | as in English, like <i>m</i> in me. It is univocal. |
| N | n | nëë | as in English, when written <i>n̄</i> it is like <i>ng</i> in among. |
| P | p | pëë | as in English, like <i>p</i> in Peter. |
| S | s | sëë | as in English (hissing dental), as <i>s</i> in seo and sea. |
| T | t | tëë | as in English, like <i>t</i> in tea-pot. |
| W | w | wëë | as in English, like <i>w</i> in weevil, weep. |
| Y | y | yëë | as in English, like <i>y</i> in ye, yeoman. |

NOTE.—By observing this alphabet closely you may learn to read Creek in a few hours, though you may not understand what you read, yet an Indian can. For particulars please refer to the Creek Grammar.

MYSKŌKE SIMAHAYVTE.

I.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| fa | fe | fii | fi | fō | fo | fo | fu | fv |
| ha | he | hii | hi | hō | ho | ho | hu | hv |
| ra | re | rii | ri | rō | ro | ro | ru | rv |
| ka | ke | kii | ki | kō | ko | ko | ku | kv |
| la | le | lii | li | lō | lo | lo | lu | lv |
| ma | me | mii | mi | mō | mo | mo | mu | mv |
| na | ne | nii | ni | nō | no | no | nu | nv |
| pa | pe | pii | pi | pō | po | po | pu | pv |
| sa | se | sii | si | sō | so | so | su | sv |
| ta | te | tii | ti | tō | to | to | tu | tv |
| wa | we | wii | wi | wō | wo | wo | wu | wv |
| fah | feh | fiih | fih | fōh | foh | foh | fuh | fvh |
| hah | heh | hiih | hih | hōh | hoh | hoh | huh | hvh |
| rah | reh | riih | rih | rōh | roh | &c. | | |
| kah | keh | kiih | kih | kōh | &c. | | | |
| lah | leh | liih | &c. | | | | | |
| | mah | | meh | | miih | | &c. | |
| | nah | | neh | | niih | | &c. | |
| | pah | | peh | | piih | | &c. | |
| | sah | | seh | | siih | | &c. | |
| | tah | | teh | | tiih | | &c. | |
| | wah | | weh | | wiih | | &c. | |

II.

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| rak | rek | riik | rōk | rok | rok | rvk | |
| fan | fen | fiin | fin | fōn | fon | fon | fvn |
| lam | lem | liim | lim | lōm | lom | lom | lvn |
| was | wes | wiis | wis | wōs | wos | wos | wvs |
| chas | ches | chiis | chis | chōs | chos | chos | chvs |
| chach | chech | chiich | chiich | chōch | choch | choch | chvch |
| chats | chets | chiits | chits | chōts | chots | chots | chvts |

A a has the open or Italian sound of *a*, as in father.

Ache, corn.

Aha, sweet potatoe.

Ahakwa, wild goose, or brant.

Ahahwa, a walnut.

Ahaky, law.

Achōfv, in mo

Atekat, all round, in the bounds,

Achulvko, old people.

Afastv, one who attends to.

Arahkvn, on account of.

Apake, with.

Ayepvtes, he went.

Apōkat, where they live.

Arin, is about.

Aliikvtes, got up.

Achako, valuable.

Atarkv, weight.

Akasvmkv, belief.

Alakis, he is come.

Araheche, meaning, or referring to.

Apvlwōset, a part.

Achatōtaten, he that sent me.

Achalnit, pour into.

Apisvrv, meat.

Achōpvr, a nail.

Anakvn, near by.

Atetot, coming.

Aōssen, out of.

Apakōsin, immediately.

Achinrv, cedar.

Achvnraps, is opposing me.

Ayayati, where I am going.

Achelwōsekon, very soon.

Apvlwvt, apart.

Achōlifvknket, is greater.

Acha ! alas !

Atvphv, dogwood.

Arvnwv, small hawk.

E e has the long sound of *e*, as in he, or ee in glee.

Efv, a dog.

Eñki, his hand.

Eñc, him or it.

Ehoti, his home.

Efeki, his heart.

Eñki clev, his hands and feet.

Ekvrv, the earth.

Eñete, its fruit.

Echōfv, in you.

Efvteche, its limb or branch

Eñin, some other place.

Eñōñkin, continuing.

Eñapōmōsin, the same.

Eñiivv, his wife.

Eñawvt, himself.

Eñepvtes, he died.

Eñotitakin, their home.

Eñkv, his head.

Eñmōhyupv, after.

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Etinrawvn, between. | Emétawv, himself. |
| Eemehichkoechvtes, showed himself. | Emahakv, his law. Emeōfvn, in him. |

II ii has the long sound of *i*, as in *slice*, *spice*, *mice*.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Iiepa, a locust. | Chekiichakiis, I say to you (plural). |
| Iyetv,* to go. | Helchiiis, I saw. |
| Ilyiis, I am going. | Vpiikin, inside. |
| Ilyepiis, I am going. | Ehiiwv, his wife. |
| Mōmiis, but. | Liikares, I will be there. |
| Istōmiis, any. | Alakiis, I have come. |
| Liikvs, sit down. | Hiiyōme, in this way. |
| Wiikvs, quit. | Miitvlōfv miin, there in that country. |
| Yvhiikvs, sing. | Miin apōkes, they are there. |
| Istōfiis, at any time. | Liikii emōñkvres, I shall be there always. |
| Ōniiyvs, tell it. | |
| Yiichvtes, they came. | |
| Hiiyayvke, light. | |
| Chekiichiis, I say to you (sing). | |

I i has the shortest sound of *i*, as in *bit*, *hit*, *pit*, *little*.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Irw, a squirrel. | Isti chati, red person. |
| Iehō, a deer. | It chv, a gun. |
| Ielhaswv, a beaver. | Istii mvt, who. |
| Isti papv, a lion (people eater). | Inistviki, his people. |
| Iehki, his or her mother. | Inihichkv, his appearance. |
| Irki, his or her father. | Illin, his foot. |
| Ippoehi, his son. | Issit, he took. |
| Istochi, baby or child. | Inhisse, his friend. |
| Isti hvtki, white person. | Inhesakitv, his life. |
| Isti lvsti, black person. | Ittitayes, it is sufficient. |

* I have made a diligent inquiry, and *iiepa* is the only Creek noun that begins with *i* long, unless *iyetv* is a noun.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Itō, wood. | Ittikiiichakvtes, they said to each other. Iskirkv, to know by. |
| Imnittvlōfv, his town or country. | |

Ō ω has the long sound of *o*, as in *go*; or *ow* in *show*.

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Ōsvnv, an otter. | Ōmikv, because. |
| Ōckatchv, leopard. | Ōkhiyit, to go to. |
| Ōkchōtkō, a musk-rat. | Ōsiiyit, went out. |
| Ōpv, an owl. | Ōlimichkvs, do not that. |
| Ōfvn, in. | Ōmvtes, he did that. |
| Ōnvpv, on top. | Ōches, we have. |
| Ōkiliiketv, a seat. | Ōchiit, from ōchiis, I have. |
| Ōsvnnv, a beaver. | Ōmvres, he will have. |
| Ōsahwa, a crow. | Ōmati, if. |
| Ōlifikitv, to sprinkle on. | Ōmin, have. |
| Ōlikvkv, to pour on. | Ōkyvnavv, blue cat-fish. |
| Ōmvlkv, all. | |
| Ōmvs, have or possess it (imperative). | |

Ō o has the sound of *oo* in *book*, *took*, *look*; and sometimes a little obtuse, as *oo* in *foot*, *tōt-tōlōse*, *chicken*, *ote*, an island.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Ōche, a hickory-nut. | Hōchke, pounded. |
| Ōchivppi, hickory-tree. | Cheffi, a rabbit |
| Ōchi chvkō, a pecan. | Noksōkchv, a pellican. |
| Ōktaha, sand. | Sōkhvhatkv, opossum. |
| Ōktahvtchi, sand creek. | Fōschatv, a redbird. |
| Ōkkitv, time. | Fōsahayv, a mocking-bird. |
| Oske, rain. | Svkehō, a craw-fish. |
| Oske intachv, a rainbow. | Hōerekō, an oyster (can't stand). |
| Hōkte, a woman. | Fōlahpv, a mussel. |
| Fōchō, a duck. | Cheffi tōrwv, the red-haw (rabbit eyes). |
| Sōkhv, a hog. | |
| Fōswv, a bird. | |
| Tōt-tōlōse, a chicken. | |
| Hōkpi, the breast. | |