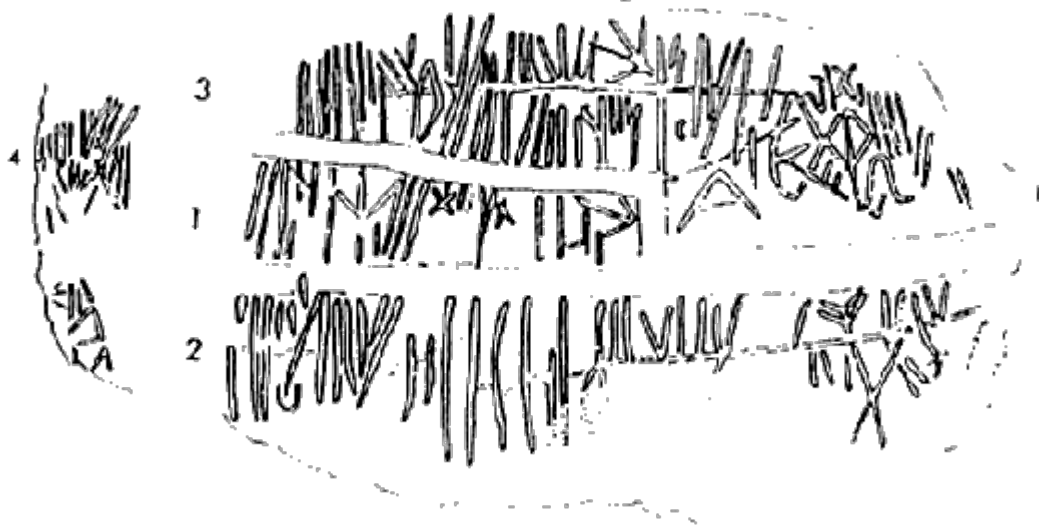


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[<Home>](#)[Next▶](#)[<Migrations Index>](#)[Bronze Index](#)[<Archeology Index>](#)

## THE HORSE CREEK PETROGLYPH OF WEST VIRGINIA

**[Contacts]**



An ancient language form that originated in the African area among the most ancient civilizations has been studied by [Nyland](#) (2001). He found that Ogam inscriptions found in North America seem to be closely related to the ancient language, which he called *Saharan*, but more appropriately might be *Igbo West African*. It appears that these languages have very ancient origins. Following is a discussion of the translation of the Horse Creek Petroglyph of West Virginia, depicting a bison hunt where the animals were killed by driving them off a cliff:

*Translated by Edo Nyland: \*

**Top line:** RGHMKUIHNMKSBDLKSTUIGNMOIDIAAIOSAMFLL

The migration passed by like a powerful mirage, quietly undulating and moving unsuspectingly a short distance, peacefully. To bring about a disturbance we advanced rattling branches and shouting. I remember that a whole wave happened to pass by and we fell back in fear (to avoid) the bad-tempered stampede of the frightened herd of bison (moving into) the entrance of the narrow wooden-fenced passage and into the abyss in flight. Come and help! The clan mother was pleased with our co-operative effort.

**Middle line:** MGNTLGMIATGEANBT

Club blows in abundant measure (were needed) because many which had fallen into the ravine resisted with obviously broken legs. Brothers, come and help the slaughterer to finish them off.

**Bottom line:** BHGTOIRGLGGBMOITKDIAHFKIOND

Having prevented escape by running away, we made the usual preparations by the edge of the stream and happily rejoiced in dividing the welcome riches into three parts by plentiful butchering. At first unaccustomed (to the task) we undeniably had to pay attention. We were as busy as possible and so happily exhausted that (we didn't notice) the noise of the thunder coming in our direction.

**The eye:** TLMDSDIADIONL

In spite of (being) some distance away, the clan mother, just in time, reached the cattle shelter during a period of silence to sensibly wait out the approaching thunder.

Your dear Friend

The Horse Creek Ogam inscription was first published in the March 1983 issue of *Wonderful West Virginia*. The transliteration from the Ogam script to our characters was done by Dr. Barry Fell, professor emeritus from Harvard University, a difficult job well done. He also made an attempt at translation, assuming that the writing was in the Gaelic language, which it was not. The result of this effort was published in the same article but was severely criticized by a number of academics.

The letter sequence as transliterated by Dr. Fell is as follows (his c's are shown here as k's):

**Top line:** RGHMKUIHMNMKSBDLKSTUIGNMOIDIAA IOSAMFLL

**Middle line:** MGNTLGMIATGEANBT

**Bottom line:** BHGTOIRGLGGBMOITKDIAHFKIOND

**The eye:** TLMDSDIADIONL

This Petroglyph may well be the longest known Ogam inscription in the world. Ogam writing is always done in a severely abbreviated manner, in which each consonant of the inscription represents a full word. If possible, the author of the inscription used words which began with vowel-consonant-vowel (VCV, occasionally VCCV). The drafting of an Ogam inscription is an exacting task; first the words are selected and abbreviated to their first three letters and arranged as: VCV1-V1CV2-V2CV3-V3CV4-V4 etc. The words are so chosen that the vowels on either side of the hyphens are identical. I called this the "VCV interlocking formula" and is used in almost all Ogam inscriptions. It is this vowel-interlocking feature of the formula that allows the restoration of the missing vowels. When the design was completed, all but a few of the vowels and h's were eliminated, creating an apparently unintelligible jumble of consonants with a few vowels sprinkled here and there. The main body of the Horse Creek Petroglyph has only two breaks in the interlocking, which were used by the author to create three lines, top, middle and bottom. Carefully designed Ogam inscriptions contain a "translation key", a place to begin deciphering, often in the form of a complete VCV which expresses a key word in the inscription. This is the case here in the VCV: idi, located in the top line, which means "ox or bison". It was not until a full year after having translated the inscription that I noticed the entire Petroglyph was also arranged in the shape of a bison, complete with the characteristic hump formed by the top line, with the eyes and mouth outlined by smaller characters, all artistically arranged. See the issue of *Wonderful West Virginia*.

In the following translation, the letters provided in the inscription have been inserted in the VCV vowel interlocking formula. In most cases the consonants stand alone, but flanked by dots which represent the missing vowels. As the key word idi suggested, the language of the inscription is Basque. Working systematically with a good quality Basque dictionary such as Aulestia's, the words can be restored and translated with considerable confidence. . All Basque words are shown in italics. Basque has no "c" and our "sh" is written as "x".

**Top Line:** RGHMKUIHMNMKSBDLKSTUIGNMOIDIAA IOSAMFLL

All the Ogam letters analyzed up to and including IDI to provide an example of the process used:

**Fell's reading:** RGHMKUIHMNMKSBDLKSTUIGNMOIDIAA IOSAMFLL

**Nyland's reading:** RGHMKUIHMNMKSBDLKSTUIGNMOIDIAOOSIEAMFLL

.r. eri	<i>errialdaketa</i>	migration
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.g. iga	<i>igaro</i>	to pass by
.h. aha	<i>ahaldun</i>	powerful
.m. ame	<i>ameslilura</i>	mirage
.ku eku	<i>ekuru</i>	quietly
u.i uhi	<i>uhindu</i>	undulating
ih. iha	<i>iharrosi</i>	to move
.m. amu	<i>amultsuki</i>	unsuspectingly
.n. une	<i>unetxo</i>	short distance
.m. eme	<i>emeki</i>	peacefully
.k. eka	<i>ekarraraki</i>	to bring about
.s. asa	<i>asaldu</i>	disturbance
.b. aba	<i>abantailatu</i>	to advance
.d. ada	<i>adarrots</i>	rattling branches
.l. ala	<i>alarao</i>	shouting
.k. ako	<i>akorduaneuki</i>	to remember
.s. oso	<i>oso</i>	whole
.tu otu	<i>otu</i>	to happen
u.i uhi	<i>uhin</i>	wave
ig. iga	<i>igaro</i>	to pass by
.n. anu	<i>anu-egin</i>	fall back in fear
.mo umo	<i>umoretzar</i>	bad tempered
o.i ohi	<i>ohildu</i>	stampede
idi idi	<i>iditalde</i>	herd of bison
i.a iha	<i>ihabali</i>	frightened
aho aho	<i>ahoketa</i>	entrance to narrow
----	----	passage
oho oho	<i>oholesi</i>	wooden fence
osi osi	<i>osintsu</i>	abyss
i.e ihe	<i>ihesean</i>	in flight
e.a eha	<i>ea</i>	come and help!
am. ama	<i>ama</i>	clan-mother
.f. afa	<i>afa</i>	pleased
.l. ale	<i>alegin</i>	effort
.l. el	<i>elkarrune</i>	co-operative

The migration passed by like a powerful mirage, quietly undulating and moving unsuspectingly a short distance, peacefully. To bring about a disturbance we advanced rattling branches and shouting. I remember that a whole wave happened to pass by and we fell back in fear (to avoid) the bad-tempered stampede of the frightened herd of bison (moving into) the entrance of the narrow wooden-fenced passage and into the abyss in flight. Come and help! The clan-mother was pleased with our co-operative effort.

### Middle Line: MGNTLGMIATGEANBT

.m. ma	<i>makila</i>	club
.g. aga	<i>agakada</i>	blows
.n. ane	<i>anega</i>	measure
.t. eta	<i>-eta</i>	abundant
.l. ala	<i>alako</i>	because
.g. aga	<i>-aga</i>	many
.mi ami	<i>amildu</i>	to fall into ravine
i.a iha	<i>ihardukitze</i>	to resist
at. ata	<i>atalkatu</i>	broken legs
.ge age	<i>ageriz</i>	obviously
e.a eha	<i>ea</i>	come and help
an. ana	<i>anaiak</i>	brothers
.b. abe	<i>aberehiltzaile</i>	slaughterer
.t. ete	<i>etentze</i>	finished off

Club blows in abundant measure (were needed) because many which had fallen into the ravine resisted with obviously broken legs. Brothers, come and help the slaughterer to finish them off.

**Bottom Line: (BHGTOIRGLGGBMOITKDIAHFKIOND)**

.b. ibi	<i>ibilgetu</i>	to hold still, to prevent
.h. ihe	<i>ihespide</i>	escape
.g. ega	<i>egan egin</i>	to run away
.to ato	<i>atonketa</i>	preparations
o.i ohi	<i>ohituzko</i>	usual
ir. iru	<i>irunakatu</i>	to divide in three parts
.g. uga	<i>ugalde</i>	edge of the stream
.l. ale	<i>alegeratu</i>	to rejoice
.g. ego	<i>egoki</i>	convenient, welcome
.g. oga	<i>ogasun</i>	riches
.b. abe	<i>aberehiltze</i>	to butcher
.mo emo	<i>emonkor</i>	plentiful
o.i ohi	<i>ohigabe</i>	unaccustomed
it. itu	<i>iturri</i>	origin, at first
.k. uka	<i>ukagaitz</i>	undeniably
.di adi	<i>adi-egon</i>	to pay attention
i.a iha	<i>iharduki</i>	to be busy with
ah. aha	<i>ahalik</i>	as ..... as possible
.f. afa	<i>afa</i>	happy
.ki aki	<i>akipen</i>	exhausted
i.o iho	<i>ihortziri</i>	thunder
on. ona	<i>ona</i>	in this direction
.d. ada	<i>-ada</i>	noise of the action

Having prevented escape by running away, we made the usual preparations by the edge of the stream and happily rejoiced in dividing the welcome riches into three parts by plentiful butchering. At first unaccustomed (to the task) we undeniably had to pay attention. We were as busy as possible and so happily exhausted that (we didn't notice) the noise of the thunder coming in our direction.

The next line of the inscription (TLMDSADIADIONL), in smaller Ogam characters, is located just left of the top line and forms the eye and forehead of the bison. The translation indicates that it belongs after the three lines of the main inscription. Another small Petroglyph, identified by Dr. Fell as written in Libyan Ogam, forms the nostrils and mouth, but these have not yet been transliterated, to my knowledge.

**TLMDSADIADIONL**

.t. eta	<i>etapa</i>	some distance away
.l. ala	<i>alabe</i>	in spite of
.m. ama	<i>ama</i>	clan mother
.d. adi	<i>adionez</i>	just in time
.s. isi	<i>isilaldi</i>	period of silence
.di idi	<i>idikorta</i>	cattle shelter
i.a iha	<i>ihardun</i>	to wait out
adi adi	<i>adindun</i>	sensibly
i.o iho	<i>ihortziri</i>	thunder
on. on	<i>ondo</i>	approaching
.l. l?	<i>laguntxo?</i>	Your dear friend

In spite of (being) some distance away, the clan mother, just in time, reached the cattle shelter during a period of silence, to sensibly wait out the approaching thunder. Your dear Friend.

This long inscription was signed with "L" which could be an abbreviation for laguntxo (your dear friend), lagun (comrade), lagunarte (group of friends) etc. and was used to end a letter. The word "ama" is mentioned twice in the text, which may mean: mother, priestess or clan mother. It is suggested that the author of this inscription was a Gnostic Christian monk, who was trained in Ogam writing in Irish tradition, and that the ama mentioned referred to the head of the matrilineally organized clan. The symbol that Dr. Fell interprets as the Greek letter "omega" is probably a sketch of the ground plan of the wooden fence, while his "alpha" character may illustrate

the A-frame type of construction used to build the bison fence.

Concrete evidence of these people has been found in ancient graves which contained crucifixes and pendants with crosses, discussed by archaeologist R.L.Pyle in his book: *All That Remains* (p53-57). Based on archaeological information and the type of Ogam used, I estimate the date of the inscription to be between 600 and 700 A.D.

It appears from the description of St. Brendan's travels in the Navigatio that the early Irish evangelists, who were Gnostic Christians (centered in Alexandria), were experienced ocean sailors and had no problems maintaining contact with their brethern across the Atlantic. This changed when Roman Catholic Christians (based in Rome), being the landlubber variety, took control in Ireland and left the colonies in America to fend for themselves. Judging by the many megalithic stone structures left by these people in New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Virginia etc. (Boland and Fell) it is well possible that this colonization effort started centuries earlier. Robert Pyle mentions that in the Saga of Eric the Red the Norsemen saw men dressed in white robes in what appeared to be an Irish ecclesiastical procession. Several centuries later, early American settlers were astonished to see many native Indians with fair skin and blue eyes (Pyle p66). These people were quickly absorbed by the new wave of immigrants and are even today proudly remembered as ancestors of some of the "earliest" American families.

The name "Brendan" is of interest. It derives from "brenda-an": barrenda (to spy, to explore) and anai (religious brother, monk) i.e. exploring monk. It is now desirable that the other East Coast Ogam inscriptions are deciphered. I have no doubt that they are all written in the same language. Some will be difficult because too many vowels were removed from them, which makes accurate translation a challenge but none are impossible. The Basque language is very logically, almost mathematically, arranged. These problematical Ogam inscriptions may lend themselves to computer decoding. A completely new chapter in the history of North America waits to be written.

## Bibliography