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CREIGHTON - ITS ORIGINS AS A SURNAME

A MONOGRAPH

by

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New Haven, Connecticut

1960

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## FOREWORD

This monograph upon the name of Creighton and its origins as a surname is the more immediate result of some genealogical research, already in microfilm form, but still to be completed for publishing.

In brief, it shows the name to be indigenous to Ireland and Scotland and one commonly found in the British Isles.

The name is pronounced as "Cray-ton" and as "Cry-ton". What can be deduced from this is not certain. It is sometimes thought that the former is an Irish and the latter, a Scotch pronunciation. Some Scotch spellings, however, show that "Cray-ton" was a Scotch, as well as an Irish, pronunciation.

The use of the letters "-eigh-" is common to Gaelic and would, in itself, show Gaelic origin.

Irish sources from Creighton through O'Criochan and Hy Fiachrach would bring ancestry of the name back to the legendary origins of Clan Colla in 332 A.D.

Scotch sources bring the name to the signing of the foundation charter of Holyrood Abbey in Edinburgh at which time the name appears among those of the signers in 1128 A.D.

It is conceivable, though by this writer not able to be proved, that the Scotch "Crichton" of the period before 1128 has been derived from the Gaelic O'Crichan of Ulster origin. This would mean that Creighton and Crichton have Orghialla origins stemming from O'Crichan (O'Criochain) roots.

Such an interpretation would, at any rate, explain the interesting fact that coats of arms, from both Irish and Scotch sources, bear the same crest, viz., a dragon, couped, vert, emitting fire, and exactly the same motto, "God send Grace". (See Sir Bernard Burke and Captain Patrick Kelly.)

That passage back and forth between Ireland and Scotland has always been a common fact, and that Clan Colla, particularly, planted deep roots in Scotland make it easy to believe that Clan Colla is the source, not only of the same coats of arms for Irish and Scotch sources, and of the same family motto of "God send Grace!", but also of the same family name appearing under slightly altered spellings.

## Part One: ORIGINS OF THE NAME OF CREIGHTON

The name of Creighton has Irish and Scotch origins and has long been known as a family name in England, Scotland and Ireland.

Irish records show the name of Creighton to be derived from O'Criochan, pronounced O'Cree-han and O'Cray-han, a family of the Hy Fiachrach Ardsratha sept of the ancient kingdom of Oriel, or Airghialla, the seat of which sept was in Ardstraw, or Ardsratha, County Tyrone, Ulster, Ireland. The sept, known variously as Hy Fiachrach Ardsratha and Hy Fiachrach of the Finn, was governed by the O'Criochans.

The name of Hy Fiachrach shows descent from Fiachrach, son of Erc, the son of Colla Uais, one of the three founders, viz., the Three Collas, of the kingdom of Oriel in 332 A.D.

O'Criochan, as a name, shows descent from Criochan, a king of Hy Fiachrach Ardsratha, a king of Oriel, and a descendant of Fiachrach.

Various spellings in early times were: O'Cridain, O'Criochan and O'Crichan; also, O'Criochain, O'Criocain and O'Criocan. Later spellings: O'Criaghan, O'Cregghan, Creaghan, Creaton, Creighan, Green, Crean and (according to O'Donovan) Crudden. The name of Creighton is derived from these sources.

Scotch records show that the name of Creighton is derived from that of Crichton, pronounced as Cry-ton. Various spellings: Crichton, Creichtoun, Creichton and Creighton. Bearers of the name, spelled variously as shown, arrived in the Cavan and Fermanagh regions of Ireland during the Plantations of the Seventeenth Century from Scotland. Some of these Crichtons, Creichtons and Creightons came from the Brunston area, the Midlothians and the Dumfriesshire parts of Scotland.

## Part Two: IRISH ORIGINS OF THE NAME

Woulfe, "Irish Names and Surnames": "From the Irish name of O'Criaghan and O'Cregghan come the names of Cregghan, Creaghan, Creehan, Creighan, Creighton, Creaton, Green and Crean. O'Criochain was the name of an Oriel (Ulster) family who were lords of Ui Fiachrach of Ardsratha, now Ardstraw, County Tyrone. In the Sixteenth Century, it was found in all the counties of Munster, and in Kilkenny, Carlow and Dublin."

Kelly, Patrick, "Irish Family Names": "The records indicate that this surname (Creighton) originated with a Tenth Century Oriel family seated in Tyrone. The name was scattered through Eire before the Seventeenth Century. The name is from the diminutive form of the Gaelic 'Creach', meaning a raider, spoiler or plunderer."

Reeves, Rev. William, "Notes from Acts of Archbishop Colton in his Metropolitan Visitation of the Diocese of Derry", remarks that Ardsratha in County Tyrone was the principal seat of a tribe called the Ui Fiachrach Ardsratha who gave the territorial name to it and the neighboring district, and of which the family of Ua Criochain were chiefs prior to the English invasion." (By "English invasion" is here meant the Norman invasion of Ireland in the Twelfth Century.)

O'Hart, John, "Irish Pedigrees", Vol. 1, pp. 817-818: "The following were the chiefs and clans of Fermanagh and the territories they possessed in the Twelfth Century---. The following clans, not given in O'Dugan, are collected in Connellan's 'Four Masters' from other sources: - 12. O'Criochain, anglicized O'Greighan, Cregan, Crehan, Creighton, Creehan, Grehan and Graham, were a numerous clan in Fermanagh."

Fee, Rev. Thomas, "Kingdom of Airghialla and its Subkingdoms", Chap. VII (unpub. thesis, University College, Dublin) lists the various O'Criochans who served as kings of Hy Fiachrach Ardsratha and as overkings of Airghialla and offers a compilation of their genealogical descent from Colla Uais, one of the founders of the Kingdom of Oriel in 332 A.D.

Connellan, Owen, "Annals of Ireland of the Four Masters", lists among the chiefs and clans of Tir Eoghain, viz., Tyrone, "land of Owen", i.e., son of Neil of the Nine Hostages, and territories possessed in the Twelfth Century, "O'Criochain, Chief of Hy Fiachrach, a territory which comprised the parish of Ardstraw and some adjoining districts in Tyrone and is mentioned in 'Annals of the Four Masters' at 1200 A.D." Connellan speaks of the O'Criochains as being "a numerous clan in Fermanagh" and says that "many of them changed the name to Creighton."

O'Donovan, John, "Topographical Poems of O'Dubhagain and O'Huidhrin", p. 17, 1862 ed., speaks of "O'Cridain, Lord of the Machaire", i.e., of the flat level plains of the Ardstraw area, good for cattle raising and agriculture, and of "O'hEirc", at that time, over the Fiachrach Finn; and, in a footnote, p. xxi, remarks, "O'Criodain, now Cregan, without the prefix O'. The level territory of this family still retains its ancient name, now being called Magheracreegan. It is situated south of the River Derg, in Tyrone, in the territory anciently called Ui Fiachrach of Ardstraw."

O'Donovan, John, "Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of the County of Fermanagh Collected during the Progress of the Ordinance Survey in 1834-35", reproduced under the direction of the Rev. Michael O'Flanagan, Bray, Ireland, 1928, quoted, p. 77 (104): "The aboriginal families of Clones (Parish in County Fermanagh) and its vicinities are the following, according to Con O'Neill who is intimately acquainted with the country: - '4. O'Creighans, anglicized Creightons. Con tells a curious anecdote of Colonel Creighton (Earl of Erne) and one of these'."

### Part Three: SCOTCH ORIGINS OF THE NAME

"Patronymica Britannica": "The name 'Creighton' is a variant of the Scotch 'Crichton' which was an ancient castle and estate in Edinburghshire, well known in history and long the seat of the family."

Bardsley, Charles W., "Dictionary of English and Scotch Surnames with Special American Instances": "Crichton, Creighton, Craighton, Crighton, Local, 'of Crichton', an old estate and castle in County Edinburgh. See 'Marmion'.----- It is thus clear that, although there is a Creighton, a township in the parish of Uttoxeter, County Stafford, England, all the various forms represent one surname, and that is the Scotch Crichton."

One of the earliest records of the name Creighton in Scotch annals is that of "Alisaundre de Creightoun del counte de Edneburk", or Alexander of Creighton, or Crichton, Count of Edinburgh, as recorded in the Ragman Roll (1291-1296).

Ulster Journal of Archaeology, Third Series, 10-11, 1947-48, p. 107 (see also Carew, 1603-23, p. 79; "Analecta Hibernica", VIII, p. 201): "Clankee Barony (Cavan County, Ireland), Kinnea and Cashel Manors were assigned to Lord Aubignie in 1611. He and other Scottish planters in Clankee sent Thomas Creighton to take possession of their grants and to settle tenants and craftsmen." The Thomas Creighton referred to was a Scotsman descended from the Brunston Crichtons. He settled in Ulster in the Fermanagh region.

Fairbairn, James, "Crests of Great Britain and Ireland": "Erne, Earl of, Viscount and Baron, Irish (Creighton), a dragon's head, couped, vert, fire issuing from the mouth and ears, pps. 'God send Grace'." The family name of the Earl of Erne, whose seat is at Crom Castle, County Fermanagh, has been



spelled as Crichton, Creichton and Creighton. His ancestry is of Scotch Brunston, Edinburghshire, Dumfriesshire and Fren-draught sources.

The name of Crichton with its various spellings (Crichton, Crichtoun, Creichton, Creichtoun, Creighton, Creaton, Creichtowne, Crighton) has been associated with these places in Scotch annals:

1. Crichtons of Brunston, Edinburghshire, Scotland. Crichton Castle associated with this family is described in Sir Walter Scott's "Marmion". Sir William Crichton was Chancellor of Scotland and Governor of Edinburgh Castle about 1450.

2. Crichtons of Sanquhar and Dumfriesshire in South-west Scotland. Of this family, Wilson, in his "Annals of Sanquhar", says, "William Crichton of Sanquhar was the progenitor of a family that ruled upper Nithsdale for over 300 years, during which period practically all that is known of the town and parish is gathered from the sparse records of Crichton achievements and alliances."

3. Crichtons of Fren-draught Barony, near Forgue, Aberdeenshire. The burning of the Castle of the Fren-draught Crichtons in 1630 was the source of well known story and ballad.

4. Crichtons of Ryehill, Scotland.

Scotch records show the migration of Creightons to the County Fermanagh area of Ireland during the Plantations of the Seventeenth Century, Thomas Creighton, agent of Lord Aubignie in 1611 to Clankee Barony in County Cavan being one of these. Others of his family migrated about this time. Descendants of this family and of the family of Dumfriesshire became the Earls of Erne, seat of which family is at Crom Castle, NewtownButler, County Fermanagh.

Scotch records indicate these interesting developments in the histories of the families of Crichton: a) The hanging of the Galliard by the Crichtons in 1593 with resulting feud between the Johnstones and Crichtons. See Ballad, "The Lads of Wamphray"; also, the Battle of Dryfe Sands; also, Dean Swift's "Captain Creichton" telling of Scotch origins of this Irish family. b) The Burning of Fren-draught Castle of the Crichtons, the break-up of the Fren-draught holdings in Banffshire in 1630. c) The Crichton sympathy with Mary, Queen of Scots; the Dumfriesshire force of Mary meeting defeat at Landside, near Glasgow, in 1568; and Mary's fatal decision to seek protection of Queen Elizabeth. d) The outlawing in 1603 and

subsequent hanging of Robert Crichton for the murder of a fencing master. e) William Crichton, heir of Robert, and his expensive "torch" of indebtedness notes with which he lighted, in 1617, the ungrateful guest, James VI, to bed and thereby ruined himself. f) The use of Crichton castle in Brunston by Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1561-62, during wedding at which Mary and Bothwell were present. g) The parts of Crichton and Livingstone in the murder of the young Earl of Douglas and his brother at Edinburgh Castle in 1440 after mock trials. h) The efforts of the Scotch Jesuit, Father Crichton, in the Counter-Reformation. i) The exploits of the "Admirable Crichton", 1560-1585.

#### Part Four: ENGLISH ORIGINS OF THE NAME

Eilert Ekwall's "Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names" places the following sources of the name of Creighton:

Crectone, Straffordshire near Uttoxeter, 1166  
 Creiton, 1222, Assize Rolls  
 Cracton, 1242, Book of Fees  
 Creighton Street near Uttoxeter (Crectone, 1166, Royal Book of Exchequer; Creiton, 1222, Assize Rolls; Cracton, 1242, Book of Fees) identical with Creaton, Northamptonshire.

The same authority adduces the following sources:  
 "Creaton, Northamptonshire (Cre-Crep-Craptone), Domesday Book; Creton, 1197, Pipe Rolls. Old Welsh, Creic; in old Welsh, Creic means 'craig', a place on a ridge."

Charles W. Bardsley's "Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames with Special American Instances" makes reference to the many distinguished bearers of the name of Crichton of Scotch origin and sums up thus: "It is thus clear that although there is a Creighton, a township in the parish of Uttoxeter, County Stafford, England, all the various forms represent one surname, and that is the Scotch Crichton."

His study indicated that the most common spelling in London was that of Crichton, followed by Creighton. In Boston, Creighton was overwhelmingly the most common spelling and this was so to an even greater extent in Philadelphia. Curiously, Crichton was the only form of the name he produced for New York.

## Part Five: ORIGINS OF O'CRICHAN OF HY FIACHRACH ARDSRATHA

Conn of the Hundred Battles became monarch of Ireland in 177 A.D. His grandson was Cormac Mac Art and Carberry Liffeychar was a descendant of Cormac Mac Art.

Eochy Dubhlen was a son of Carberry Liffeychar. Eochy Dubhlen had three sons known as the Three Collas. These three Collas were Colla Meann, Colla Uais and Colla fo Crich, otherwise known as Colla da Crioich.

All Ulster was united in 240 A.D. under Fiacha Araidhe and remained, under the so-called Red Branch Knights, so united until, in 332 A.D., the Three Collas defeated Clán Rudhraidne near Farney, in County Monaghan, and destroyed Armagh, the ancient capital of the Ultonian Red Branch Knights. The Clan Rudhraidne were of the Red Branch Knights. These Ultonians were forced to the east, beyond the earth mounds now referred to as the "Danes' Cast" and also as the "Black Pig's Dike". They were pushed eastward into the counties of Down and Antrim. The earth mounds still to be seen are thought to have been built by the Three Collas after this great victory.

This great battle of 332 A.D. is called the Battle of Achadh Leith-dheirg near the present site of Farney in County Monaghan. Farney at that time was known as Fearn-mhagh. This battle took seven days, and resulted in the pushing to the east of the so-called Red Branch Knights who are known to history as the Cruithne, or Picts, and the destruction of their city known as Emmania, or Armagh, Emain-macha.

It was at this time of the great conquest of the Three Collas that the Kingdom of Arghialla, Orghialla, or Oriel, was set up. The Orghialla are referred to as the descendants of "fair Carberry" in the Book of Rights.

Descendants of the Three Collas have been listed thus. The descendants of Colla Meann were the inhabitants of Crioich Mughdhorn, or Cremourne, in County Monaghan. Among the descendants of Colla Uais, the eldest of the three brothers, were the MacDonnells, MacDougalds and MacAllisters of Scotland with their correlatives; also the O'Crichans of the Hy Fiachrach Finn, known also as the Hy Fiachra Ardstraw, of County Tyrone. From Colla da Crioich came the McMahons, the Maguires, the O'Hanlons, the Mac Canns, etc.

The Book of Rights speaks of the Orghialla as "descendants of the 'fair Carberry'", i.e., Carberry Liffeychar who was monarch of Ireland in 277 A.D., and lists the "privileges of the kings of Aileach, Orghialla and of Uladh." The King of

Orghialla received nine hostages, according to the Book of Rights, because the Kingdom of Orghialla consisted of Nine cantreds, or areas, known as Trioich Ceads (according to the Battle of Magrath).

In the time of St. Patrick, 389-463, the Orghialla had possession of the present county of Tyrone, but later, parts of this northern Orghialla were gradually displaced by the families of the race of Eoghan, the son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, himself a descendant of Carberry Liffeychar.

The thesis of Rev. Thomas J. Fee, "The Kingdom of Airghialla and Its Sub-kingdoms" (chap. VI), relates how the Hy Mac Cairthinn in this northern area of the Orghialla gave place to the Cinel Eoghan expansion; and how the Ui Fiachra Ards-ratha, or Hy Fiachra Finn, as it was otherwise known, immediately to the south of the Hy Mac Cairthinn "not only preserved the identity of their lands as a separate entity in the face of Cinel Eoghain expansion, but also succeeded in retaining the kingship of this territory within local ruling families of Airghialla stock."

The Three Collas, viz., Colla da Chríoch, Colla Meann and Colla Uais, and their descendants governed the Kingdom of Orghialla, or Oriel, from before the coming of St. Patrick in the Fourth Century down to the Twelfth Century when the last King of Oriel at the time, O'Carroll, was put to death by the Normans under De Courcy and De Lacy. This was in 1194.

According to MacFirbis, Colla Uais "had two goodly sons, namely: 1. Earc, or Erc, on the north of the mountain, probably the Munterlony Range, from whom descended the Mac Cairthainns of Lough Foyle; and 2. Fiachra Tort, on the south of the mountain, from whom descended, the Ui Tuirtre, the Fir Li, the Fir Luirc and Hy-mac-Uais."

Father Fee's invaluable study (Chapter Four) becomes most helpful at this point: -

"The most northerly of the baronies east of the Erne still bears the historic name of Lurg (County Fermanagh). This was, of course, the territory of Fir Luirc, which appears as a sub-kingdom of Ailech in the Book of Rights.

"The genealogies make it quite clear, however, that the Fir Luirc were by descent a branch of the Airghialla, and, in addition, that they belonged to the northern group, Sil Colla Uais. The latter statement is at first very surprising, but when it is accepted as a genuine tradition, it helps to explain a few remarkable peculiarities about the sept.

"Lurg is the most northerly of the baronies of Fermanagh, and as Loch Erne lay immediately to the south and west, most of its political associations must have been with the territory further north and east.

"This territory comprised the kingdom of Hy Fiachrach Ard Sratha (Ardstraw) who belonged to the northern group, Sil Colla Uais.

"As a result of this proximity, the two kingdoms are found during the Eleventh Century under the rule of a common king.

"This distinction between the Fir Luirg and the other septs who formed the kingdom of Fir Manach must have made a lasting impression as O'Donovan records that, even at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, the local people still looked on the inhabitants of Lurg as different in manners, customs and even in the dialect which they spoke from the remainder of the county of Fermanagh. ---"

Father Fee goes on (Chapter VI) to treat further of Hy Fiachrach Ard Sratha: -

"The mountain range of North Tyrone and Derry cuts right across the northern part of Airghialla, dividing it into two widely separated valleys. ---- West of the dividing line were the lands of Ui Mac Cairthainn and Ui Fiachrach. ----

"South of Ui Mac Cairthainn was situated the territory of the Ui Fiachrach Ard Sratha (Ardstraw, County Tyrone).

"Their eponymous ancestor, Fiachrach Mac Erc, is placed in the genealogies as a brother of Cairthenn, ancestor of the Ui Mac Cairthainn farther north. They are occasionally called the Ui Fiachrach Finn, although the name is more usually applied to the Ui Fiachrach of North Connaught. The common appellation of the Airghialla sept - Ui Fiachrach Ard Sratha - emphasizes their close associations with this ancient ecclesiastical center.

"It must not be supposed, however, that their rule was confined to the immediate neighborhood of Ard Sratha. That their territory stretched right into the heart of modern Tyrone County may be deduced from a phrase used by the genealogists with reference to a Cinel Eogain sept which later settled there - 'Ui Echach na camabann in Uib Fiachrach'.

"Indeed, Hogan would allow their kingdom to include all this region as far east as Pomeroy, where the modern border between the baronies of Omagh and Dungannon may roughly approximate the ancient Ui Fiachrach - Ui Tuirtre boundary.

"Unlike the Airghialla sept on their northern confines, the Ui Fiachrach not only preserved the identity of their lands as a separate entity in the face of Cinel Eogain expansion, but also succeeded in retaining the kingship of this territory within local ruling families of Airghialla stock.

"That Cinel Eogain achieved a certain suzerainty over them is proved by their inclusion among the sub-kingdoms of Ailech in Leabhar na gCeart. The death of their king, Aed Mac Maelpatraic, at the hands of Niall Glundub in 910 may well have been the occasion when this suzerainty was first imposed. That a Cinel Eogain sept sought to annex their territory for itself may be inferred from the phrase quoted from the genealogies in the preceding passage.

"Notwithstanding this constant pressure from without and within, there is hardly a single century from the eighth to the thirteenth, during which at least one king of the native Hy Fiachrach line does not appear in the annals as ruler of his ancestral lands, and during the tenth and eleventh centuries such kings occur quite frequently.

A.U. 791 Maelbresail mac Aedhe filii Crichain  
 A.U. 909 Aed Mac Maelpatraic  
 A.U. 948 Crichain Mac Maelmuire  
 A.F.M. 1033 Fogartach Ua hAedha  
 A.U. 1039 Aedh H. Flannacan  
 A.F.M. 1044 hUa hAedha  
 A.U. 1069 hUa hAedha  
 A.U. 1076 Domnall hUa Crichain  
 A.U. 1102 Flaithbertach Mac Fothaigh  
 A.U. 1129 Niall Ua Crichan  
 A.U. 1201 Murchadh hUa Crichan

"At least one king of all Airghialla, Maelpatraic mac Mael Caurarda (ob. 885) belonged to this dynasty, while there is a possibility that an earlier overking, Fogartach Mac Maelbresail (ob. 852) may have been his uncle.

"Maelpatraic's nephew, Maelmuire, whose floruit ought to be placed about 900, was the common ancestor of the two most distinguished lines of kings who later ruled Ui Fiachrach.

"From one of his sons, Aed (ob. 910) the later family of Ua hAedha took their name. Members of this family appear in the annals as kings of Ui Fiachrach in 1033, 1044 and 1069.

"Maelmuire's other son, Crican, was progenitor of the well known regal family of Ua Crichain. It is of interest to note that a local townland still bears the name of Maghera-creegan, thus supporting the correctness of the spelling of

the name with the second C unlenited. Domnall Ua Crichain appears as king of Ui Fiachrach in 1075, Niall Ui Crichain in 1129 and Murchad Ua Crichain in 1201. O'Dubhagain lists these two surnames as representing the princely families of Ui Fiachrach, together with that of Ua hEirc, for which no suitable eponymous ancestor occurs in the genealogies.

"The existence of some sort of union between Ui Fiachrach and Fir Luirg has already been commented on when dealing with the latter sept."

Father Fee's excellent thesis "Airghialla and Its Subkingdoms", beside its usefulness to an understanding of Hy Fiachrach Ardsratha, bears several genealogical charts dealing with the family of O'Crichan and its Orghialla descent.

In closing this study of Hy Fiachrach Ardsratha, one should make reference to an article appearing in the "County Louth Archaeological Journal, 1912-15", p. 32:

"The mention of Ardstraw raises another interesting question. As Orghialla is not a family name, or the name of any district in the kingdom, but apparently a title of honor, it is not easy in this vast territory to point out the country that was pre-eminently the land of the Collas. O'Donovan gives the honor to Ardstraw, County Tyrone.

"The Ui Fiachrach 'were the people called the Orghialla and descended from Fiachrach, son of Erc, the eldest son of Colla Uais, monarch of Ireland in the Fourth Century' (O'Donovan, Rights, p. 121). He refers to O'Flaherty, so we better follow his lead. 'His son, Achy, had for Colla Uais, monarch of Ireland, three grandsons, --- Erc ---, the oldest of Colla Uais's grandsons. --- The Hy Fiachrach of Ardsratha are the descendants of Erc. --- Hy Fiachrach is a country of Tyrone in which Ardsratha lies, formerly an episcopal See near Derg, afterwards annexed to the See of Clogher (in Tyrone, first the residence of the princes of Orghialla, afterwards converted into a cathedral), but about the year 1266, it was taken from the See of Clogher with many other churches of Hy Fiachrach, and was incorporated with the See of Londonderry'" (Ogygia, part 3, c 76. O'Flaherty).

Colla Uais was the eldest of the famed brothers and had been Ard Righ for four years; so the senior line of his descendants were justly regarded as heads of the race and called "The Orghialla" emphatically as against the other tribes of the great Colla family.

Father Fee in closing his comments about the Hy Fiachrach Ard Sratha remarks: "They held to their land with a tenacity characteristic of their race."

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