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Author(s): Anthony F. C. Wallace

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THE TUSCARORAS: SIXTH NATION OF THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY

ANTHONY F. C. WALLACE

Instructor in Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania

I. PRELIMINARY REPORT OF FIELD WORK IN 1948

DURING the months of July and August 1948 I lived on the Tuscarora Indian Reservation, five miles northeast of the city of Niagara Falls, N. Y.

The field investigations which I undertook there were jointly supported by grants from the Phillips Fund of the American Philosophical Society and from the Fund for Field Research of the Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania. Through the kindness of Mr. Clinton Rickard, I was able to find board and lodging with an Indian family, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Smith. To the generosity of these institutions, these persons and their families, and many other men and women who helped me throughout the summer, is largely owing the success of the work.

The Tuscarora research was the result of a fusion of several lines of interest. I learned from the Society's Librarian, Dr. William E. Lingelbach, that the administrators of the Phillips Fund, desirous of acquiring records and transcribed texts of American Indian languages for the Library of the Philosophical Society, wanted recordings of Tuscarora, a northern Iroquoian language which hitherto had not been accorded great attention in comparative linguistic studies. Dr. Frank G. Speck, of the Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, encouraged me to look into Tuscarora with an eye to working out some of the unsolved problems of the ethnographic position of the Tuscaroras, particularly their cultural relationship to the southeastern tribes. Dr. A. I. Hallowell, also of the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Anthropology, and Dr. William N. Fenton, of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, were interested in the possibilities of learning how far certain generalizations proposed by Dr. Hallowell about the psychological characteristics of the Algonkians of the northeastern North American culture area might be valid for various Iroquoian communities. Uniting all these special lines of interest was the general need for the extension of ethnographic knowledge of the several contem-

porary Iroquoian communities. As a student in anthropology, and being already interested in the northeast, I felt that necessary experience in the field might most profitably be gained in research at Tuscarora.

During the summer, with the sympathetic cooperation of the Tuscarora community, I was able to assemble a variety of data, the main areas of which can be roughly classified as follows:

- (a) approximately seven hours of wire recordings of Tuscarora linguistic materials, with translations;
- (b) fifty Rorschach protocols;
- (c) an informal map and census of the reservation;
- (d) notes on clans and kinship (including several abbreviated kinship schedules and a few genealogies);
- (e) notes on psycho-cultural interactions and behavior;
- (f) general ethnographic data, filed in the field more or less according to Murdock's *Outline of Cultural Materials*.

The main function of this report will be to describe more fully the recordings and associated materials; but before doing this, it will be useful to give a brief sketch of Tuscarora history and general ethnic position.

II. THE TUSCARORA INDIANS, 1584-1948

The Tuscarora Indians, when Raleigh's colonists first settled in the new-found land of Virginia, were discovered inhabiting a large part of the piedmont and coastal plain of what is now the state of North Carolina. Their towns, said to number as many as twenty-four, sheltering perhaps six thousand souls, were scattered along the Neuse, Tar, and Roanoke rivers, and were united in a loose military league. Their subsistence base was agriculture, eked out by hunting. Like their Iroquoian kinsmen to the north, the matrilineal Tuscaroras in Carolina were famous warriors, their raiding parties being the scourge of surrounding Algonkian and Siouan tribes; and, like the Five Nations, the Tuscaroras too evidently had

leanings toward confederacy, their "nation" being welded out of several tribal groups.

The Tuscaroras—once again like the northern Iroquois—early entered into commercial relations with the white settlers on the coast and became ruthless middlemen in the lucrative trade in skins and furs, exchanging rum for peltries with inland tribes many miles from their own towns. This symbiotic relationship of the whites on the coast and the Tuscaroras in the interior was mutually satisfactory during most of the seventeenth century. But toward the end of that period the whites began seriously to press inland. The early Carolina settlers were not careful to arrange formal land cessions with the Indians; and furthermore, they were imprudent enough to kidnap Tuscarora children to sell as slaves—a proceeding well calculated to arouse bitter resentment, and remembered even today as the prime emotional cause of the sanguinary Tuscarora War.

The Tuscarora War (1711–1713) began with an almost-successful surprise assault which aimed at annihilating all the encroaching white settlements. Reinforcements, largely consisting of Indian warriors hostile to the Tuscaroras, were summoned from South Carolina. The relief armies destroyed several of the Tuscaroras' main forts and villages along the Neuse River. These costly defeats, together with the fact that the Tuscaroras themselves were split into pro- and anti-English factions, and a general confusion over the whole situation, shattered the unity of Tuscarora society. Many Tuscaroras trekked northward to join their kinsmen of the Five Nations as early as 1713; others, under the heel of the whites, remained in North Carolina and Virginia, whence straggling bands moved north from time to time during the next ninety years. The last community of Carolina Indians conscious of itself as Tuscarora marched north to New York about 1803; but even today there are legends of Tuscarora tribal remnants, largely assimilated by the negroid population, still lingering in the south.

Meanwhile the Tuscaroras who had moved northward underwent further political disintegration. Some settled along the Juniata in Pennsylvania, others along the Susquehanna at Wyoming and near Oquaga, in the Oneida country, near present Binghamton, N. Y., still others in Onondaga country, between present Syracuse and Oneida Lake, N. Y., and various minor bands were strewn along other rivers and valleys in Pennsylvania and New York. As a group they were "adopted" by the Five Nations—i.e., given

permission to stay in Five Nations Country—about 1722, and henceforth the New York Iroquois were called the Six Nations. This adoption did not extend to the Tuscaroras the right of an equal voice and a tribal vote in the Great Council. During the French and Indian wars, and Pontiac's War, the Tuscaroras, along with the Mohawks and Oneidas, were as a whole hearty in the English interest. But the continuing pressure of European settlements and trade continued to sap the strength of the already disbanded and shattered nation. With the opening of the Revolutionary War, the critical dissolution of the old culture was imminent.

The Tuscarora nation (if the word "nation" can be applied to the members of a number of communities scattered among alien peoples) split into two factions during the Revolution: an actively pro-British faction and a neutral, pro-American one. Both factions were swept aside by the notorious punishment expeditions in 1779 of Van Schaick and Sullivan. Some of the refugees continued northward to the Six Nations Reserve at Grand River, Ontario, where their descendants are now; others in 1781 planted a town on the escarpment overlooking the Niagara River. The present ten-square-mile reserve includes this original tract, although the village is no more, having been burned during the War of 1812.

The close of the Revolutionary War marked the nadir of Tuscarora fortunes. Politically dispersed, landless, decimated in numbers, they had lost many of the customs and traditions of their



FIG. 1. A mythical animal whose magnetic body attracted such a mass of timber in its progress through the woods that it crushed whole villages in its path. Mr. Daniel Smith told a story about this animal which is recorded on wire. The figure, carved out of wood by Mr. Smith some years ago, stands in view of the road near his house on the reserve. Photograph in 1948 by Mr. Leroy Fess; reproduced by courtesy of the *Buffalo Courier-Express*.

forefathers without taking over a functional core of European-American culture. They had almost abandoned their own horticultural economy; even their ancient religious observances seem to have been largely forgotten. The depressed condition of the Iroquois (including the Tuscaroras) in 1796 was described by Thomas Wistar, clerk of the Friends' Committee for the gradual civilization of the Indian natives:

. . . when the committee commenced its labors, scarcely a trace of civilization was discernable among the aborigenes. From the erratic and uncertain pursuits of the chase, they gleaned a scanty and hard-earned subsistence; often pinched with hunger, and miserably clad, while a rude and comfortless cabin formed their only and inadequate shelter against the violence of the elements and the vicissitudes of the seasons.¹

The next two generations of the Tuscaroras on the Niagara Frontier (who henceforth will be our main concern) saw a cultural revolution which tended in some respects to make the Indians live like white people. Presbyterian and Baptist mission-churches were established; a public school was built; the Temperance Society was organized. During the War of 1812 (in which the Tuscaroras fought for the United States) the old village of log cabins on the northwest corner of the reserve was burned; and when the refugees trickled back, they built new homes scattered about the reserve, close to the corn fields. These new homes were, as often as not, frame dwellings in European-American style. Orchards were laid out; horses, cattle, and swine were kept. In the economic sphere, Tuscarora became a "white" rural community within the space of two generations—an achievement in cultural metamorphosis of no mean proportions. In the words of the Friends' Committee, the habitations in caves, flimsy shacks, and bark cabins had by 1865 been replaced with

comfortable frame or log houses, often two storied, with window shutters, and some of them painted, with the yards neatly inclosed; suitable furniture has been introduced where before there was little or none—meals are regularly and decently cooked and served up, . . . while food and clothing are procured by their own industry. Many read and write and understand other elementary branches of [European] learning, and some of both sexes have taught with

credit schools in the neighborhoods where they reside, at which white as well as Indian children are educated.²

The next eighty years—from roughly 1865 to 1948—have seen the consolidation of the economic adjustment so successfully made. Further social integration with the surrounding whites has been necessary. This has accelerated the decline of the native language and its progressive replacement by English; it has also tended to atomize Tuscarora society by breaking down such centripetal interests as the lineage and kinship usages, offering them no function except within the geographical boundaries of the reserve. Few aboriginal institutions have remained, except the clans and the Chiefs' Council; the Tuscarora language is now spoken by preference only by the older people, and scarcely at all by the youngsters; and, with the rise of industry around Niagara Falls, even the agricultural pattern is being broken up by the daily commuting of Indian labor to work for local white industrial concerns.

But these observations should not be taken to imply any more than the fact that the Tuscarora Indians have adapted their subsistence techniques, and relevant social order, to new economic and political circumstances. In areas of culture not immediately affected by changes in the economic and political environment, traits of presumably great antiquity may be found thriving cheerfully in their new soil. The socialization techniques of today corresponds in a number of general features, *not* to surrounding white tradition, but to patterns recorded for Tuscarora and Iroquois in general in the early contact periods. The mythology survives, or parts of it at least, in both Tuscarora and English versions, and the latter are known to the youngest generation, children of three and four years of age being able to repeat in English ghost and witch stories already recorded in Tuscarora from their elders. Herbal remedies, handed down in family tradition from the remote past, are known to professional herbalists (of whom my host, Mr. Daniel Smith, was one) of considerable local distinction. Basic ethical values—attitudes toward sex, marriage, communal responsibility, dissipation, etc.—are suggestive of ancient tradition.

The Tuscaroras today thus present the admirable tableau of a people who have been able to

¹ *Report of the Committee for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Natives, Made to the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, held in Philadelphia, in the fourth month, 1838*, 19, Phila., Joseph & William Kite, 1838.

² *A Brief Sketch of the Efforts of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, to promote the civilization and improvement of the Indians; also, of the present condition of the tribes in the state of New York*, Phila., Friends' Book Store, 1866.

preserve, without undue damage, many of the more intimate aspects of their culture, while actively revamping virtually the entire institutional superstructure so as to conform with the requirements of life in a white economy. Their success is worthy of admiration.

III. MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE TUSCARORA LANGUAGE

The Tuscarora language is one of the northern Iroquoian languages. Owing perhaps to the more sensational reputation of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas, knowledge of northern Iroquoian linguistics has hitherto been based almost entirely on studies of the Five Nations and Huron (Wyandot). An investigation of Tuscarora promises to be of considerable use today, however, in helping to clarify the probable nature of proto-Iroquoian, and in supplementing archaeological and ethnological researches whose aim is to identify those prehistoric cultures out of which Iroquois has stemmed. Since the Tuscaroras were met in Carolina, and the other northern-Iroquoian speaking peoples in New York and Canada, the problem of Iroquoian origins is involved with the question of the date, location, and presumptive occasion of the split between Tuscarora and the now geographically northern Iroquois. A nonlinguistic but pertinent desideratum here is archaeological research in North Carolina to discover, first of all, documented historic and proto-historic Tuscarora sites and secondly, the nature of their material culture and its relationship to New York Iroquois. These various lines of research and points of emphasis are mutually supporting and focus on the little-known subject of Tuscarora ethnohistory.

The seven hours of recordings which I secured this summer at Tuscarora were made on wire; the machine used was a Detroit WiRecorder. They include a variety of materials, which may be briefly classified as follows:

- (a) Tuscarora texts (approximately five hours);
- (b) two modern vocabularies of words listed in the Jefferson Vocabulary (see below);
- (c) vocabulary materials (brief word lists on such topics as numbers, color terms, texture terms, etc.);
- (d) kinship terms (two partial protocols from male speakers);
- (e) two song texts in Onondaga (the Turtle Song and the White Corn Story);
- (f) one song text in Seneca (the Rabbit Song).

The text recordings include about one hour of text with written phonetic transcription and inter-linear translation; for the remainder there are free running translations, either written or recorded. The subjects of the texts include:

(a) supernatural phenomena

- (1) a man-eating snake
- (2) a little boy who became sick and died after smashing a false-face
- (3) dream-revelation of an herbal remedy for tuberculosis
- (4) a magnetic amphibian (see fig. 1)
- (5) how the black lizard became small
- (6) a discussion of disease and magic
- (7) the monster bird
- (8) how a man escaped from a skeleton by hiding in a hollow log
- (9) the five gifts of the Europeans to the Indians
- (10) the man who came with the message of peace
- (11) a hunter cured by a man in a silvery canoe
- (12) a ghost story about a hunting party overtaken by nightfall
- (13) a man who died of fright of a ghost
- (14) a story about a giant
- (15) a story about the devil

(b) traditional history

- (1) the burning of the village in 1812
- (2) the last battle of the Tuscaroras in North Carolina
- (3) the Salt War in New York state
- (4) the Tuscaroras release General Porter from the British during the War of 1812
- (5) a party of Tuscaroras migrates to Kansas (about 1836)
- (6) the origin of the White Bear clan in North Carolina
- (7) how the Tuscaroras helped the United States during the War of 1812
- (8) the history of the Indian Defense League of America
- (9) Captain Cusick's escape from an ambush by western Indians
- (10) the migrations of the Tuscaroras
- (11) the migration of the Indians onto the North American continent
- (12) the history of the Temperance Society
- (13) Easter Monday morning celebrations
- (14) biographical sketch of Samuel Jacobs

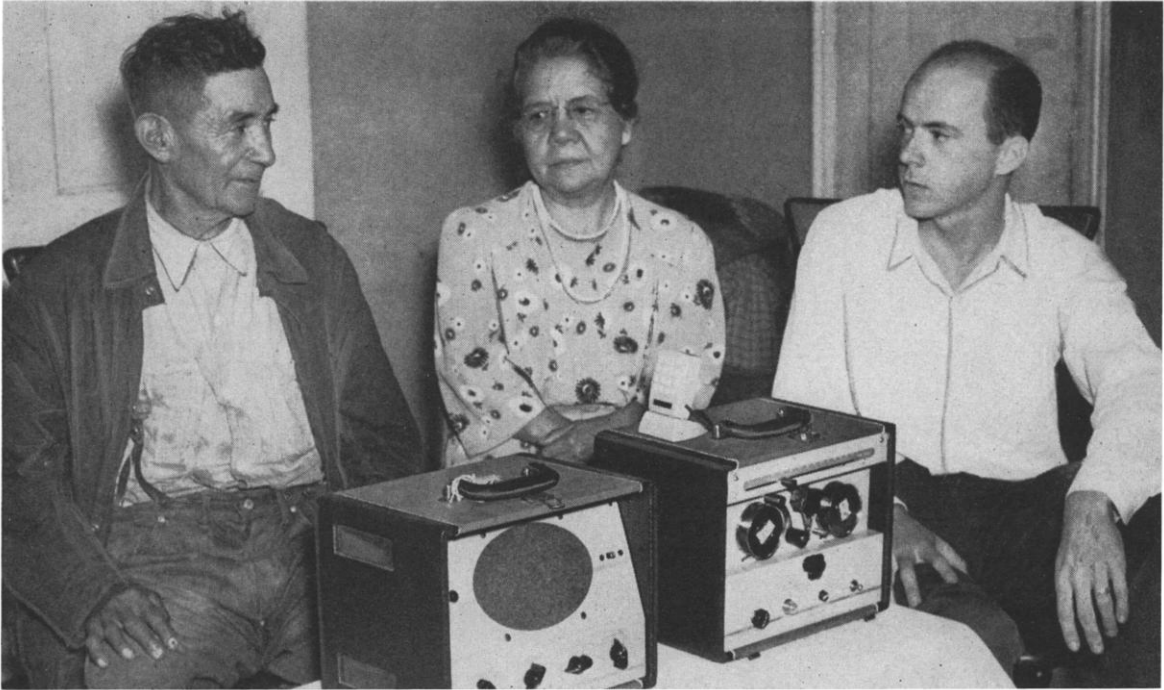


FIG. 2. Tuscarora Indians who assisted in making recordings. Left to right: Mr. Daniel Smith, Indian herbalist and narrator of some of the tales recorded for the American Philosophical Society; Mrs. Nellie Gansworth, who acted as translator and also made some recordings; and the writer. The recording machine is shown in the foreground. The scene is artificially posed and is not intended to illustrate recording techniques. Photograph in 1948 by Mr. Leroy Fess; reproduced by courtesy of the *Buffalo Courier-Express*.

- (15) how an Onondaga lineage came to live at Tuscarora
 - (16) the murder of a witch
 - (17) the massacre at Devil's Hole
 - (18) a battle between the French and the Tuscaroras
 - (19) a history of farming on the Tuscarora reservation
 - (20) contrasts between present-day and traditional methods of child raising
- (c) personal reminiscences
- (1) how an herbalist learned his medicines
 - (2) how a Tuscarora boy learned to use English
 - (3) a brief autobiography
 - (4) how a Tuscarora acquired his formal education

A bound notebook accompanies the recordings, containing an index to the various spools, translations, identification of the native speakers, and the circumstances under which the recordings were

made. Spools and notebook are now in the custody of the Library of the American Philosophical Society.

In the archives of the Bureau of American Ethnology at Washington, D. C., there is a considerable body of Tuscarora linguistic material gathered by the late J. N. B. Hewitt, who was himself a Tuscarora and spoke the language fluently, according to persons who spoke with him. Pilling's *Bibliography of the Iroquoian Languages* contains an itemized list of Hewitt's materials up to 1888, both textual and lexicographical.³ Some of these documents are now on loan to the American Philosophical Society Library. Pilling's bibliography also contains considerable information on other Tuscarora linguistic material, both printed and in manuscript, which was available in 1888.

In the Library of the American Philosophical Society there rests a little-known manuscript

³ Pilling, James Constantine, *Bibliography of the Iroquoian Languages*, Washington, Bureau of Ethnology, Smithsonian Inst., 1888.

esh	air	-nd	shy
h	air	it	ciel
-ase	shääkhän	shääkhän	mushack
nu nu	-----	-----	-----
Monse	-----	-----	-----
Chippewa	-----	notteen	-----
Kristeaux	-----	thoutin	-----
Algonquin	-----	notime	-----
Tawa	-----	-----	-----
Shawnee	-----	-----	-----
	sichcumoh	sich nimneh	-----
Naticke	ayewash	ayo shu	mooseraquit
ticcon	-----	cha	ma-taghquo
Unqu-hog	-----	-----	he-isk
Oneida	yowolont	yowolont	-----
Cayuga	thau-we-om-ta-sa	kau-we-lo-waun	kan-ough-yam-da
Onondaga	tiorate	jaote, tgarächta	-----
Miami	-----	alamsewé éaamsewé	késhéwé kéjchui
Cherokee	-----	ooholek catoose	can, la, lo, ie, shulick
Chickasaw	-----	caugh, nolish, cao, noobapah, caon, lionshae fiupah, mautleh, tratabee	cultie, ch'ia, call, li, tee soo, tick, bushala.
Choctaw	-----	mahaleek mauleh	soo'tick shulick
Creek	-----	o, talle	soo, tá
Tuscarora	hsh-nauts	:vach-hoh-naut	o-rah-sa-rah
Chelumacha	poko	po o	kahieketa
Atacapa	patpats	hang	tagy

FIG. 3. Page from Thomas Jefferson's manuscript Comparative Vocabulary of Indian Languages.

vocabulary prepared by Thomas Jefferson.⁴ This Jefferson Vocabulary is a notebook in which the terms used in a number of American Indian languages as equivalent (in Jefferson's opinion) with certain English-French synonyms are listed in tabular form. Among the tribes represented is Tuscarora. Which local group supplied the informant, who he was, and the precise date when the Tuscarora terms were collected, do not appear on the manuscript. The number of Tuscarora-English (French) terms is only about twenty-five: the manuscript was damaged by salt-water in a shipwreck which involved some of Jefferson's effects (see fig. 3).

I made a copy of the Tuscarora-English portion of the Jefferson Vocabulary and took it to the Tuscarora Reserve with me. Working separately with two informants, Mr. William Mountpleasant

⁴ A Manuscript Comparative Vocabulary of Several Indian Languages by Thomas Jefferson. It was presented to the Society by Jefferson on 30 December 1817.

and Mr. Clinton Rickard, I recorded the present-day Tuscarora equivalents of the English (French) terms listed by Jefferson. When there was evidence of more than slight phonetic disparity, or when the English (French) portion of the vocabulary was illegible, I attempted to pronounce Jefferson's Tuscarora term and secure an English translation for it. In several instances this was possible.

Accordingly there now exist manuscript and recorded materials on the Tuscarora language for three main dates: *ca.* 1800 (the Jefferson Vocabulary); *ca.* 1888 (Hewitt's manuscripts); and 1948 (recordings made for the American Philosophical Society). Fragmentary items—largely casually mentioned Tuscarora words—are listed by Pilling for other dates, some of them earlier than the Jefferson Vocabulary. Not being linguistically trained, I cannot evaluate these data further from the linguist's standpoint; this essay, therefore, is concerned merely with drawing them to the attention of the ethnological and linguistic public.