

A NEW SIOUAN DIALECT

BY

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THE great Siouan linguistic stock has been recognized from the earliest period of ethnological investigation in North America, and indeed its existence was known to French missionaries before the beginning of the eighteenth century, but until comparatively recent times it was supposed to be confined to a section of country lying for the most part westward of the Mississippi and embracing the Dakota (including the Assiniboin), Crow, Hidatsa, Mandan, Omaha, Ponca, Kansa, Osage, Quapaw, Iowa, Oto, and Missouri tribes, and, somewhat more easterly, the Winnebago. In 1881, however, the late Dr Gatschet astonished American ethnologists by demonstrating that the Catawba of South Carolina belonged to this stock also, and in 1883 Horatio Hale showed that the Tutelo, anciently on the headwaters of the Dan, were also Siouan. As a result of their labors and those of Mr Mooney it was subsequently shown that a large number of tribes in the same section were of Siouan connection, though there are some whose position is still in doubt, owing to the early and rapid extinction of the Indians in that area. In 1886 Gatschet, during an examination of the Indian tribes of Louisiana, made a further surprising discovery to the effect that a dialect of the same group was spoken by the Biloxi, the first tribe to greet Iberville on his expedition of 1699, which

resulted in the founding of Louisiana, and that which gave its name to Louisiana's first capitals, old and new Biloxi. This had been the only Siouan tribe discovered in Louisiana or Mississippi until November of last year, when the writer had the good fortune to find and make partial record of still another, a dialect spoken by a tribe of Indians formerly living on the lower Yazoo, and so small in the very earliest times of which we have any record, that the survival of the language in any form whatever is little short of marvelous.

The first mention of this tribe, so far as the writer is aware, is in Iberville's journal of his first expedition to Louisiana, in 1699. In that year he himself did not go higher up the Mississippi than the mouth of Red river, but he interviewed a Taënsa Indian whom he met in the Houma village, regarding the tribes beyond, and was told that "on the river of the Chicachas" (i. e., the Yazoo) were "seven villages, which are the Tonicas, Ouispe, Opocoulas, Taposa, Chaquesauma, Outapa, Thysia."¹ The first three of these are the only ones located on the lower Yazoo; the others, except the Thysia, the position of which is uncertain, being a considerable distance higher up, in the neighborhood of the Chickasaw. The Tunica language has been known to us since Gatschet recorded it in 1885-86, and we are here concerned only with the "Ouispe" and "Opocoulas." Pénicaut, in chronicling Le Sueur's ascent of the Mississippi in 1700, says, "Ascending this river four leagues one finds on the right the villages where six nations of savages live called the Yasoux, the Offogoulas, the Tonicas, the Coroas, the Ouitoupas and the Oussipés."² Later in the same year the Jesuit Gravier visited the lower Yazoo

¹ Margry, *Découvertes*, IV, p. 180.

² *Ibid.*, v, p. 401.

tribes in order to see Davion, who had established himself as missionary among the Tunica, and was reported to be dangerously ill. He says, "There are three different languages in his mission, the Jakou (i. e., Yazoo) of 30 cabins, the Ounspik of 10 or 12 cabins, and the Toumika (Tunica) who are in seven hamlets, and who comprise in all 50 or 60 small cabins."¹ In December, 1721, Father Charlevoix learned of "a village of Yasous mixed with Curoas and Ofogoulas, which may have been at most two hundred men fit to bear arms."² La Harpe entered the Yazoo, January 26, 1722, and describes the situation of the nearer tribes thus: "The river of the Yasous runs from its mouth north-northeast to Fort St. Peter, then north-a-quarter-northwest half a league, and turning back by the north until it is east-a-quarter-northeast another half league, as far as the low stone bluffs on which are situated settlements of the Yasons, Courois, Offogoula and Onspée nations; their cabins are dispersed by cantons, the greater part situated on artificial mounds between the valleys, which leads one to suppose that anciently these nations were numerous. Now they are reduced to about two hundred and fifty persons."³ Father Poisson, ascending to the Quapaw in 1727, mentions "three villages in which three different languages are spoken,"⁴ but professes no further knowledge regarding them. Du Pratz, in his general survey of Louisiana tribes founded on information obtained between the years 1718 and 1794, assigns about a hundred cabins to the Yazoo, about forty to the Koroa, and about sixty to the "Oufé Ogoulas, or the Nation

¹ Shea, *Early Voyages on the Mississippi*, p. 133. Also *Jesuit Relations*, Thwaites ed., LXV, p. 129.

² French, *Hist. Coll. La.*, part 3, pp. 138-139, 1851.

³ La Harpe, *Établissement des Français à la Louisiane*, pp. 310-311, 1831.

⁴ *Jesuit Relations*, Thwaites ed., LXVII, p. 317.

of the Dog,"¹ which would appear to be a very considerable overestimate.

In 1729, on the outbreak of the Natchez war, the Yazoo and Koroa slew their missionary, and destroyed the French post which had been established among them. "The Offogoulas," says Charlevoix, "were then on a hunt; on their return they were strongly urged to enter the plot; but they steadily refused, and withdrew to the Tonicas, whom they knew to be of all the Indians the most inviolably attached to the French."² The earlier association which we know to have existed between these two tribes may also be assigned as a probable cause of their association with them at that period. During the subsequent hostilities this tribe continued as firm friends and efficient allies of the French. De Kerlérec in 1758 reported that "for some years Indian families of the *Offogoula* nation, the remains of a fairly numerous nation which the *Chikachas* have not ceased to persecute, have established themselves [at Natchez]; they are housed under the cannon of the fort, and in war expeditions they join our troops in order to pursue our enemies."³ The number of their warriors was at that time reduced to fifteen. In 1784 according to Hutchins, they had a small village of about a dozen warriors on the west bank of the Mississippi, eight miles above Point Coupée; but it is evident that Baudry des Lozières is only recalling earlier conditions when at about the same period he places them in their old situation along with the Koroa and Yazoo.⁴

¹ Du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, II, pp. 225-226, 1758.

² Shea, *Charlevoix's History of New France*, VI, p. 86, 1872.

³ *Report of the Fifteenth Session of the International Congress of Americanists*, I, p. 74.

⁴ *Voyage à la Louisiane*, p. 251, 1802.

Hutchins's notice appears to be the last record of this tribe in print, and when one considers that they then numbered only "about a dozen warriors," and that a hundred and twenty-five years have elapsed since the time when he wrote, any likelihood of discovering a survivor would appear to be of the slenderest.

During his visit to the remnant of Tunica Indians living near Marksville, La., in May, 1907, the writer inquired carefully for the tribes known to have been associated with them at various periods of their history, and especially for the Ofogoula, but without success. Finally, rather as a matter of completeness than with the slightest expectation of any practical results, he inquired for the tribe mentioned but four times in early narratives in the places already cited, as Ouispe, Oussipés, Ounspik, and Onspés. To his surprise the Tunica chief answered, "U'shpi, yes. There used to be numbers of them around here about forty years ago, but they are all gone." To the further inquiry whether he could recall any words of the language, he at first replied in the negative, but afterward remembered one, *fesk Atca'ki*, which he stated was the word for "opossum."

On the strength of this information the writer at once came to two conclusions, first, that U'shpi was the Tunica term for the Ofogoula, and, second, that the language spoken by them was a dialect of Muskogean. His first determination was founded on the early disappearance of the term U'shpi from print, the ignorance of his informant regarding any tribe known as Ofogoula, and the closer and later association of the Tunica with that tribe than with any other not otherwise accounted for. His second conclusion was based, first, on Du Pratz's statement that the true name of the tribe was "Oufé Ogoulas" and that it signi-

fied "Dog people" in Mobilian, as in fact the form that he gives does, from Du Pratz's further statement that the language of these people lacked an *r*, from which Du Pratz himself assumed that it was affiliated with Chickasaw, and from the presence of an initial *f* in the word given him by his Tunica informant, *f* being absent or uncommon in any non-Muskogean languages of the lower Mississippi hitherto discovered, and unknown as an initial sound in any of them.

In November of the year just past, the writer was again in Marksville for the purpose of correcting and amplifying the Tunica linguistic material collected by Dr Gatschet more than twenty years ago. On his first visit to the village he found the Tunica chief in the company of another old Indian, neither of whom could speak English; and, as the writer is not possessed of a conversational knowledge of French, an Indian woman named Rosa Pierrette was called in from a neighboring house as interpreter. In the course of the conversation which followed, this woman stated that the Tunica are forgetting their language, because the young people all learn French or English, and there are few older ones to converse together. Incidentally she remarked that she and her husband did not use it, because, though both are Indian, their languages differ. On being questioned as to the name of her language, she answered, with a little hesitation, "Ofo." Immediately afterward, however, her husband, who had accompanied her, said, "Osage." Although the writer did not remember to have heard of any Osage so far south as middle Louisiana, he accepted this latter statement as probably correct, but having a few minutes' leisure, obtained several words from her which she gave readily. These showed that the lan-

guage was indeed Siouan; but the presence of an *f* was puzzling. Nevertheless, this circumstance was accepted as an individual peculiarity in speech, and the writer proceeded to make his arrangements for studying Tunica. A day or two later, however, when going over tribal names with the old chief, "U'shpi" was encountered, and the latter remarked that the woman who had acted as interpreter a day or two before was of that tribe. His suspicions being now reawakened, the writer waited until his Tunica work was completed, and interviewed her once more. He then learned that all of her people had died, or rather had killed each other off, when she was seventeen years old, but that she had tried to remember as much of their language as she could and had often, she said, spent some time studying out how they used to call various objects. She added that her grandmother had always said that the proper name of their tribe was Ofo, which is of course the same as Ofogoula with the omission of the Mobilian ending *-ogoula* (or *-okla*) meaning "people." That these were the Indians called in Tunica *U'shpi* is shown both by the testimony of the living Tunica themselves, and by the fact that the term as it occurs in early records is always applied to a tribe on Yazoo river, and never, so far as appears, to any other. It is true that three of the four references to *U'shpi* enumerate the Ofogoula also as if the two were distinct tribes; but the three writers who do this are precisely those who had the most superficial knowledge of the Yazoo river tribes, while the fourth had the best facilities for knowing whereof he spoke. Thus the first reference is from Iberville on the authority of a Taensa Indian whose home was some distance from the river in question, and who may have been misunderstood. The second

is in an enumeration by Pénicaut, himself none too accurate an authority, whose expedition merely stopped at the Yazoo villages in passing. The third is by La Harpe, whose visit extended over nine or ten days. During that time, however, he set out and turned back once, while his entire stay was evidently a busy one. The fourth reference, in which their name appears under the distorted form Onspik, is by Gravier, whose special object, as stated above, was to see the missionary Davion, then reported to be dangerously ill; and it is plain that most of what he learned of the Tunica came through that prelate. Now Davion, as appears from the same report, was devoting all of his time to the study of Tunica, Tunica being the language spoken by the largest number of people there. It is quite natural therefore that he should have learned the Tunica name for this tribe, and have communicated it to Gravier. Finally, we have the evidence of the language which is totally different from Osage, and seems to approach Biloxi and the languages of the eastern Siouan tribes nearer than any others, nearer even than the tongue of the not distant Quapaw.

The use of the term *Ofo* by my informant, and the fact that nearly all early writers except Du Pratz refer to this tribe as the Ofogoula or Offogoula, lead the writer to think that Du Pratz has made a mistake, although a natural and a pardonable one, in calling them Oufé Ogoula and interpreting the name "Nation of the Dog." *Ufe* or *Ofe* is the Choctaw and Mobilian word for "dog," and it would be easy and natural to assume that the *e* of *Ofe* has been absorbed by the initial *o* of *-ogoula* or *-okla*. But if *Ofo* was the name recognized within the tribe, it was almost certainly of native origin, and drawn neither from Choc-

taw nor Mobilian. Pending further information I shall therefore refer to this tribe as the Ofo and reject *-ogula* as a foreign addition.

Following are the first ten numerals and a few other specimens of the new dialect:

ENGLISH	OFO	ENGLISH	OFO
1	nû'fha	boy	astî'kî
2	nû'p-ha	baby	añk-hõ'shka
3	tā'ni	father	at-hi'
4	tõ'pa	mother	oni'
5	kifa ^{n'}	sister	it-ho ^{n'} fka
6	akapê'	water	ani'
7	fa'kumî	fire	ape'ti
8	pa'tanî	tree, stick	itco ^{n'} or itca ^{n'}
9	kî'shtashga	earth	ā'ma ⁿ
10	îftapta ^{n'}	dog	atc-hû'ñki
I	mi ^{n'} ti	deer	ī'ya
you	tcī ^{n'} ti	bird	deska' or teska'
we	o ^{n'} ti	fish	xo
a person	a'ñkwa	head	ap-ha'
man	ito'	mouth	î'hi
woman	iya ^{n'}	to kill	kte

The first person singular is formed by prefixing *b-*, *ba-*, or *bi-*; the second person singular, by prefixing *tc-*, *tca-*, or *tci-*, or sometimes *sh-* which is regularly used in the imperative; the third person singular seems to take no prefix; the first person dual takes *o^{n'}-* as in Dakota, and, as in Dakota, there are no other persons of the dual represented; the plural persons are formed by prefixing *o^{n'}-* and *tc-* or *tca-* in the first two persons and suffixing *-tu* in all. A curious divergence from all other Siouan dialects is to be found in the presence of an *f* which often seems to replace Biloxi or Tutelo *s*. *Tc* also appears to replace *y*.

While very little connected material could be obtained, a fairly large vocabulary was recorded, which shows that, excepting the features just noted, the dialect conforms in all essentials to what we are accustomed to find in Siouan dialects elsewhere.

Before the discovery chronicled in this paper, the writer had often asked himself why a Muskogean tribe, such as the Ofo appeared to be, should have chosen to separate itself from other branches of that family and associate with non-Muskogean peoples — the Yazoo, Koroa, and Tunica. The mystery has now been cleared up. At the same time this discovery does not cast suspicion on the affiliations of any other bodies of Indians, since it is practically certain that the Yazoo and Koroa were altogether different, and probably connected with Tunica. On the upper Yazoo were two small tribes whose speech is not known with certainty, but they were always closely associated with the Chickasaw and Chakchiuma, from which it may be assumed with greater probability that they were Muskogean tribes as well.

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