

Some Possible Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Locations of the Shawnee

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Due to the indefinite character of the term *šaawanwa*, which the Shawnee¹ apply to themselves as a tribe, it is extremely difficult to locate the Shawnee with any degree of certainty during the early colonial period. In many Algonquian dialects the Shawnee tribal name *šaawanwa* has cognates meaning "south" or "southerners"; therefore, when Algonquian-speaking peoples refer to a group by a term approximating *šaawanwa*, it is an open question as to whether the Shawnee are meant, specifically, or whether the reference is merely a generic one, applicable to any Algonquian group or groups located to the south of the main body of this stock. In our estimation, however, it seems likely that the name *šaawanwa* or approximations thereto specifically relate to the Shawnee in the majority of our early references. Not only do the Shawnee recognize *šaawanwa* as their tribal name, but various Algonquian and non-Algonquian groups, as well as the English, French, and Spanish, use terms approximating *šaawanwa* in reference to the Shawnee.

Since Mooney sounded his warning note as to the uselessness of theorizing on the location of the Shawnee prior to 1669-70,² a certain amount of new data has appeared which merits discussion as possibly indicating some locations of the Shawnee during the period 1540-1670. These data I wish to review as briefly as possible.

1540.—Evidence for one possible location of that part of the Shawnee tribe known as the *čalakaatha* division is contained in the accounts of De Soto's expedition of 1539-44. While still east of the Blue Ridge, and probably near the headwaters of the Savannah river in what is now western North Carolina, De Soto and his party visited the province of Chalaque. The province was poor and lacking in corn; the inhabitants gathered roots and herbs and shot game with bows and arrows. The people were naked, lean, and unwarlike, and one town in the province gave De Soto's party 700 wild turkeys, with which the country abounded. A chief gave De Soto two deerskins. Garcilaso states that all the "Chalaques" save the old and the blind left their towns when De Soto's party approached and fled to the mountains.³ Mooney and other historians have identified the "Chalaques," "Chelaques," or Achalaques as the Cherokee.⁴ Concerning the identification

¹ The Shawnee are an Algonquian-speaking group prominent during the 18th century in the Ohio Valley region. The tribe comprises five non-totemic, named divisions, to-wit: *calakaaba*, *šawikila*, *mekoc*, *pekowi*, and *kispoko*. Linguistically the Shawnee are most closely related to Kickapoo, Fox, and Sauk. The Shawnee now number about 1,500 souls, including mixed bloods; they live in three groups in central and northeastern Oklahoma.

² 12, p. 531.

³ 10, p. 24.

⁴ 10, p. 194; 22, p. 204.

of Chalaque, however, Swanton has recently offered an interesting commentary. He says, "It has been usual, and natural, to identify the Chelaque or Xalaque of the De Soto chroniclers with the Cherokee, but if the word Cherokee has the origin I suspect, from Muskogee *chilokee* (there is no *r* in Muskogee), signifying 'people of a different speech', it may not have been applied solely to the Cherokee but as well to other non-Muskogee tribes, such as the Catawba and their allies. If that is the case, the use of the term in the De Soto chronicles does not prove that the Cherokee were then in their historic seats."⁵

This statement by Swanton suggests, of course, an interesting possibility concerning the derivation of the name for the *čalakaaθa* division of the Shawnee. Part of this term, *čalakaa*, is unanalyzable in Shawnee and may represent, in borrowed form, the Muskogean term *Chilokee*; the *θa* formative ending of the term is a formal Shawnee suffix designating "an individual or collective individuals."⁶

Swanton's remarks also make worth consideration the possibility that it may have been the *čalakaaθa* division of the Shawnee which De Soto encountered in western North Carolina in 1540. This supposition is admittedly based on slender evidence, but it receives some measure of support from Shawnee traditions, certain of which assign a definite southeastern origin for the *čalakaaθa* division. The description of the people in the province of Chalaque would fit the Shawnee, who lived a part of the year in villages and raised small crops of corn but were essentially hunters and gatherers; however, the description is too general and might be attached with equal plausibility to too many other groups to be of any great aid.

1584.—In 1584 the chronicler for Raleigh's first colony mentions a "greate towne called Chawanock"⁷ northwest of Roanoke on the Chowan river in northeastern North Carolina. The location of Chawanock was, it might be noted, a scant 400 miles northeast of De Soto's province of Chalaque. In 1585 some of the men from Raleigh's second colony at Roanoke visited "Chawonock" and reported it as "the greatest province upon the [Chowan] river, and the town itself can put 700 men into the field, besides the forces of the rest [i.e., of the towns subject to Chawonock]. The King is lame, but hath more understanding than all the rest."⁸ In 1606 and 1608 Capt. John Smith and some of his colonists also visited Chawonock⁹ and in 1608 Smith writes, "Master Sicklemore well returned from Chawwonoke. . . . The river he saw was not great, the people few, the country most overgrown with pynes. . . . But by the river the ground was good and exceedingly furtill."¹⁰ In 1621 Sir Frances Wyat, Governor, also "travelled to the South River Chawonock, some 60 miles overland from Jamestown, which he

⁵ 22, p. 204-205.

⁶ The same suffix is added to the names of two other Shawnee divisions, *pekowi* and *kispoko*, to denote "person(s) of pekowi," "person(s) of kispoko." I never heard it added to the names of the *mekose* or *θakiwila* divisions, however.

⁷ 18, p. 3.

⁸ 18, pp. 5-6.

⁹ 18, pp. 25, 87.

¹⁰ 18, p. 87.

found to be a very fruitful and pleasant country, yielding two harvests in a year . . . was kindly used by the people and so returned."¹¹

There seems little reason to doubt that the term *Chawanoek* or its equivalent is used in the above reference to designate an Algonquian tribe or confederacy, the name for the group being taken from the main village settlement. In the brief sketch of the Chowanoc in the Handbook it is recorded that the tribe "gradually dwindled away before the whites, and in 1701 were reduced to a single village. . . . They joined in the Tuscarora war against the whites in 1711-12. . . . In 1820 they were supposed to be extinct."¹² Our entire information concerning the Chowanoc is limited to some twenty historical references. No mention is made to a part of the group moving from their seat on Chowan river; yet, when we consider the differences in population noted for the Chowanoc in 1585 and 1608, the withdrawal of a part of the tribe becomes an interesting possibility. As to the connection of the North Carolina Chowan with the Shawnee, we were until recently inclined to minimize the possibility of any such linkage, because the names of several Chowanoc villages bear no resemblance to any names one might expect for Shawnee villages, which were customarily designated by the same name as the division occupying them. However, in C. C. Trowbridge's manuscript account of the Shawnee (1824), the Shawnee Prophet states that the tribe formerly comprised six divisions, that the proper name for the sixth was Shawano, and that it was formerly a leading division of the Shawnee but had been extinct for some time. The Prophet supposed that the tribal name was derived from the name for this extinct but once powerful division.¹³ If this division had any connection with the now extinct Chowanoc, we have here a valuable link in the chain between various southern and northern groups of Shawnee. I have at this time no other evidence to offer on the question. Before discussing the next possibility, which is concerned with one of these dubious northerly groups, I should like to point out that the Chowanoc of North Carolina may be the tribe referred to in the Delaware record of the Walum Olum as departing to the south lands together with the Nentegos (Nanticoke).¹⁴ The withdrawal of the Nentegos and "Shawanis" is generally interpreted as having occurred before the Algonquians reached the eastern seashore; granting this interpretation to be correct, it is of interest to find, in the historic period, a group known by a term approximating *Shawanis* at no great distance south of the Maryland Nanticoke.

1614.—We now come to an extremely interesting problem—that of the possible identity of a group referred to on the Dutch Carte Figurative for 1614 as "Sauwanew", located on the east bank of the Delaware river near its mouth, in New Jersey.¹⁵ In 1634 De Laet mentions the "Sawanoos" as living in the vicinity of the Delaware river,¹⁶ and a few

¹¹ 18, p. 143.

¹² Mooney (11).

¹³ Trowbridge (21).

¹⁴ 3, p. 204, song V, line 10.

¹⁵ 14, vol. 1, pp. 11, 13, and maps.

¹⁶ 8, p. 82.

years later the "Sauwanoos" and "Sauwan" are mapped as being located west of the Delaware, between that river and the Susquehanna in eastern Pennsylvania.¹⁷ Mooney sees no reason for considering any of the above terms as applying to the Shawnee proper; he gives as evidence (1) that, in 1646, the Shawnee do not appear either in Ruttenger's or Evelin's lists of northern and southern New Jersey tribes, and (2) that the term *Sauwanoo* was used by the Dutch as a generic term for "southerners", in the same way that *Wappanoo* was used for easterners.¹⁸

Mooney's interpretation of the New Jersey data is not convincing. The terms *Sauwanoo* and *Wappanoo*, or their equivalents, are not only used as generic terms by Algonquian groups but are also, as we have seen, applied to specific groups as well. We have noted the use of Chowanock for a specific North Carolina group, and at the present time the Shawnee themselves refer to the Delaware group now located near Anadarko, Oklahoma, as *wapana'ki* or "easterners", meaning by this term one specific Delaware division.

In regard to Mooney's other objection, the lack of mention of the Shawnee in New Jersey lists of 1646 is not surprising. By this date the Shawnee had, in all likelihood, moved considerably west or south of the New Jersey location. Troubles with the Dutch colonists, who attempted to settle on the lower Delaware river before the arrival of the Swedes in 1638, or with the Seneca and related groups who were beginning to obtain guns from the English and Dutch traders, may explain the removal; if the New Jersey-Eastern Pennsylvania Shawnee were a part of the North Carolina group, they may have removed directly southward to rejoin this group.

An additional bit of corroborative evidence for the presence of a Shawnee group in the north early in the 17th century is contained in the Narrative of Hendrick Aupaumut, an educated Mohican, writing in 1791. Aupaumut states, "The Shawannese, who we called Weshauwonnoow, are our [Mohican] younger brothers according to ancient covenant between our forefathers—for our ancestors, near 200 years ago rescued them from the mouth of many nations, as well as of the Five Nations who were ready to swallow my younger brother Shawany, for which kind deliverance they ever have felt themselves under the greatest obligation to obey our voice—and many nations had knowledge of this."¹⁹ Whether Aupaumut's dating is reliable is open to question; that the Mohican befriended the Shawnee as he states is well authenticated,^{19a} and in 1694 some Shawnee joined the Mohican tribe.²⁰

An indication that the French had been informed of the presence of a Shawnee group in the northeast is found in a remark in Ragueneau's relation for 1651-52, "Another [Father] set out [from Quebec] with five or six neophytes in little bark Canoes, to go to the shores of Acadia and, by that route, find an easier approach to the tribes called Eteche-

¹⁷ 13, p. 170; 6, vol. 1, p. 119; 19, pp. 42-3, 46-7, maps.

¹⁸ 12, p. 531.

¹⁹ 1, p. 77.

^{19a} 17, pt. 6:277-8.

²⁰ 12, p. 532.

mins [Malecite], Abnaquiois [Abnaki], Sokoquiois [Sokoki], Sourikois [Micmac], Chaouanaquiois [Shawnee] . . . and numerous other savage nations, which are sedentary, and have villages of a thousand or two thousand fighting men."²¹

Certain indirect evidence should also be considered. When part of the Shawnee moved north to the Susquehanna and Delaware river region at the close of the seventeenth century, they seated themselves in the same location that the Dutch maps for the early part of the century accord the Sawanoos.²² The aid rendered by some of the Shawnee to the Andaste (Susquehannocks or Conestoga of the Susquehanna river) against the Iroquois prior to 1672²³ also indicates a probable early intimacy between certain Shawnee groups and tribes of the Delaware-Susquehanna region.

1625-1670.—For the period 1625-1670 no records have come to light of actual encounters by white traders, explorers, or missionaries with any group the name for which we can, with some degree of plausibility, associate with the Shawnee. Hearsay reports for this period concerning various Shawnee groups are fairly numerous and often contain conflicting statements; an attempt to evaluate their reliability would necessitate extended discussion. One point emerges with increasing clarity as the period 1625-1670 draws toward a close; this is the fact that by 1660 Shawnee groups were carrying on what appears to have been a lively trade with the Spanish in Florida. Father Lalemant, in 1662, mentions Shawnee captives' accounts of trading with persons whom the French judged were Spaniards.²⁴ In 1671 Marquette also refers to Shawnee-Spanish trade.²⁵ In 1674 Henry Woodward, interpreter for the South Carolina colony, met two Savana Indians who "brought Spanish beads and other trade as presents making signes yt they had commerce wth white people like unto me, whom are not good."²⁶ Nine years later we have La Salle's statement that he has invited a Shawnee group to discontinue commerce with the Spaniards and establish residence on the Illinois river.²⁷

From this brief review of the early literature, we have found evidence indicating the possibility of the Shawnee having been located in western North Carolina, northeastern North Carolina, southern New Jersey, and eastern Pennsylvania, during early historic times. The totality of the evidence suggests a more easterly location for the Shawnee during the early period of white contact than has generally been assigned this tribe.

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²¹ 7, vol. 37, p. 261.

²² 16, p. 180.

²³ 2, vol. 1, p. 226; 15, p. 129; 4, vol. 3, p. 174; 5, p. 65.

²⁴ 7, vol. 47, p. 144.

²⁵ 7, vol. 54, p. 189.

²⁶ 20, pp. 306-7.

²⁷ 9, pt. 2, p. 314.

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