Passamaquoddy and Quapaw Mnemonic Records

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The records of the preliterate American Indians were transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth by a group of elder record keepers who, at the same time, instructed certain qualified young men of the new generation to carry on after them. This was accomplished by committing to memory the national or tribal chronicles: history, legend, and folklore; but, to assist the memory, systems of mnemonic devices were often invented. The Walam Olum of the Lenape represents this practice carried to the highest point of accomplishment. The two cognate examples cited here do not have the historical depth nor the breath-taking sweep of historical continuity found in the Walam Olum. Nevertheless they do add to our present accumulation of knowledge some additional information concerning this Indian method of continuing through the present and into the future the history of the past.

The Walam Olum, or Painted Record, of the Lenape is the most outstanding attempt of preliterate Indian tribes of the United States to document their past, so far known to have been preserved. In addition, the record has a most interesting history, since its discovery. The mnemonic sticks are reported to have been found among the Lenape (Delaware) Indians living along White river, in Indiana, in the year 1820. The words relating to them, written in mixed modern and ancient Lenape probably by an (European) educated Lenape chief or a keeper of the records, were obtained in Kentucky in 1822. Both sets of material were acquired by Constantine Samuel Rafinesque during his Kentucky residence (1819-1826); and, fortunately, were included in the small portion of his collections he was able to take with him when he left Kentucky in the latter year and returned to Philadelphia to spend the rest of his days. With the aid of dictionaries prepared by David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder, famous Moravian missionaries to the Lenape, Rafinesque finished his translations in the year 1833, and published his texts in 1836, "*American Nations*" (Philadelphia).

Fifty years later, Daniel G. Brinton, in his "*Lenape and Their Legends*" (Philadelphia, 1885), brought to light the Rafinesque treatise, and after a long thorough reexamination, under the advantages of his own scholarly qualifications for such a task, confirmed the elder scholar's conclusion that the Walam Olum was a genuine Indian creation of great value.

Brinton deposited the original Rafinesque manuscript, carrying drawings of the pictographs and the written words, in the University Museum, at Philadelphia; and left to future generations this suggestion: The Walam Olum "will repay more study in the future." Now, sixty years after Brinton, this obligation is being undertaken by the Indiana Historical Society, because, first, the Lenape "Painted Record" is part of

Indiana's heritage from her native inhabitants of the long ago; and, second, the establishment of the authenticity of the record and its detailed collation with present known data will throw a flood of new light upon the prehistory of America. The Walam Olum is in fact a great chronicle of the Lenape nation from its earliest ancestral Algonquian days. Beginning before the Lenape themselves had become differentiated from the parent body, the five songs recite the story of creation, give the flood legend, report the crossing of Bering Strait from Asia to America, and continue through two lengthy songs to recite the story of their conquests and cultural growth as they travel, for generation after generation, across the American continent until the Lenape proper establish themselves in "Sassafras Land" on the banks of the river Delaware where they were found by William Penn in 1682, and by the Swedes and the Dutch and the Virginian John Smith earlier in the same century, and probably by Verrazano in 1524.

The Passamaquoddy mnemonic records (1) were created by the combinations of various colored wampum beads arranged in long strings thereof. These strings were obtained by Dr. J. Dyneley Prince, at Bar Harbor, Maine, in the year 1887, from a Passamaquoddy Indian, Louis Mitchell, who was at that time an Indian member of the Maine legislature.* With the strings Mitchell gave Prince the Passamaquoddy text written syllabically without arranged divisions into words, sentences or paragraphs, and a translation of the text into English. The records deal first with the formation of a league of peace; and then continue not as history, but as the prescribed ceremonials to be instituted at the death of a chief; the ceremonies of electing and installing a new chief; the ancient rites of the marriage ceremony; and, lastly, the marriage ceremony in later days. There is apparent continuity in the records, for they begin with the peace treaty and continue thereafter with the "Wampum Laws" which, at least theoretically, were written as part of the treaty. Without doubt there were many more Passamaquoddy "Wampum Laws" than the few obtained by Prince in 1887. The story of the peace treaty is divided into two "Wigwams." When the delegations are finally assembled, for the first seven days a great silence is observed by all the participants, that they may meditate on their speeches. This is called the "Wigwam of Silence." The period of speech making is the "Wigwam of Oratory."

The Passamaquoddy belonged to the northeastern group of Algonquian tribes known collectively as the Wabanaki. When first found by the whites the Passamaquoddy lived on Passamaquoddy bay and along the St. Croix river on the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick. The Wabanaki included, to the west of the Passamaquoddy in order, the Malecite, the Penobscot, the Wawenock, and the St. Francis Abenaki (formerly the Norridgewock, Aroosaguntacook, Sokiki, and other remnants). To the east of them, marginal but still belonging to the Waba-

* The Passamaquoddy and Penobscot tribes were permitted to send a representative to the Maine legislature to speak only on affairs connected with the Indian reservations in that State.

naki group, were the Micmacs (2). All of these tribes possessed a similar simple hunter-fisher Northern Algonquian culture, diminishing in complexity from west to east (3). The Wabanaki lived, literally speaking, in perpetual war with the Iroquois to their west. The Wabanaki were more than the fighting equals of their enemies, and were more annoyed than frightened by them. Consequently, after generations of indicisive wars with the Wabanaki, the Iroquois tried to bring them into their league. The Wabanaki had a loose federation among themselves, and therefore were not altogether unprepared to consider a proposition of larger scope. Finally, about 1700, the Wabanaki tribes, more through good judgment than fear of their enemies, ceased hostilities; and the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Malecite, and Micmac sent delegations to the Iroquois and entered into a more or less permanent league relationship with them (4). This was consummated at the great peace treaty at Caughnawaga. As the translated wampum text reads: "The father ruling the wigwam was the Great Chief who lived at Caughnawaga." (5) Therefore, the wampum mnemonic records reciting the preliminary steps of calling the delegates, their assembly, and on through the "Wigwam of Oratory" with which the league covenant is concluded, can be dated about 1700. Moorehead found wampum in Indian graves in Maine. Dating the other "strings" which relate to ceremonial practices would, conceivably, suggest a linguistic problem. The "string" describing "The marriage in later days" obviously is of late historic origin.

The Quapaw record is less authentic, one may well say apocryphal. On the authority of a Dr. J. L. LaRue (6), Belva, Arkansas, Mr. Higgins, an English mining engineer, "found secreted in a cleft of the rocks on the northwest angle of the Pilot Mountain, located in Scott County, Arkansas, 212 slate tablets, with three pictures on each side. There were 1,272 pictures in all. . . . The pictures portray a history of the Quapaw Indians during the reign of Queen Singing Bird the First, or the good queen, as she was called by the Indians." (7) Concerning the slate pieces it seems that Mr. Higgins shipped them to England and received in return for them the sum of two thousand dollars. Shortly thereafter Higgins was found dead, and was buried near Sugar Grove, Logan County, Arkansas. But before this tragic exit Dr. LaRue was permitted to copy the pictures.

We will now quote the good doctor, for no one else could possibly give the subject equal glamor: (8)

> "I cannot give you the dates; but it was before the introduction of fire arms. It tells of the massacre of the Spanish miners, and gives a graphic account of the bloody battle fought between the Quapaws and Chickasaws, near where the city of Little Rock now stands. The Chickasaws were defeated and driven back east of the Father of Waters. Also the appointment of the gifted young chieftain, Silent Tongue, to the office of ambassador to frame a treaty of peace with the Chickasaws. Gives an account of his journey, his friendly reception, the ceremony of burying the tomahawks, and the speeches made on the occasion. It gives the manners and customs of the Quapaws, their religion, and form of marriage. There were two tribes of Indians incorporated in one nation, and ruled over by the Sun Chiefs. Their government was constitutional monarchy. The legislative body was composed of a house of warriors,

and a house of chiefs. . . . There is history, religion, romance, manners, customs, ceremonies, speeches, and an account of a trial before the queen."

The Quapaw were a tribe of the Siouan language family, and according to their own traditions once lived in southwestern Indiana along the Ohio river near the mouth of the Wabash. There is no reason to believe that they could not have developed a mnemonic system for the keeping of records. So far as the fanciful tale reported here is concerned, the writer of this paper wrote to the Society in whose early volume it was published with other Indian items under the title "Aboriginal and Indian Remains." The present officers of the Society know nothing about the facts published in the aricle on the subject of the Quapaw record. If the record was genuine in any respect whatsoever, it was, of course, of modern origin as the subject matter clearly indicates. It might be the modern survival of an ancient Quapaw mnemonic system now long since lost and forgotten.

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