The Alabama-Coushatta Indians: An Annotated Bibliography

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Unlike most similar works, this bibliography grew out of a field project, an ethnographic survey of the Alabama-Coushattas by the Institute of Texan Cultures in 1990. Relevant works were examined prior to the fieldwork and annotated as the fieldwork progressed. The resulting document, which covers published sources, theses, and dissertations through 1991, serves as a basic reference and highlights gaps in the scholarship of the tribes. It also promotes a critical reading of the works collectively; the entire corpus can be considered as a reflection of Indian-white relations.\(^1\)

Tate's guide to Texas Indians was the logical foundation for this bibliography, though many items quite practically omitted from his comprehensive work are included here. For example, more magazine articles have been included in the belief that a dynamic view of tribal culture must take into account external perceptions fostered by these writings (they are best treated as artifacts rather than references). Also, greater attention is paid here to the linguistics literature. And while our evaluations of items are often consistent with those in Tate, a few are markedly different, and in general we strove to give more specific descriptions than were possible in the longer work. One item Tate lists (his No. 1178) was found not to pertain to the Alabama-Coushattas.\(^2\)

The two closely-related tribes, members of the Creek Confederacy, left their historic homelands in North Alabama, migrating westward through Louisiana before entering Texas around 1790. A reservation was established in the Big Thicket forest land of Polk County in 1854-55, which now houses most Alabamas and a smaller proportion of Coushattas in one political entity, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe. More Coushattas, and a minority of Alabamas, remain in Louisiana, tied to the Texas community through continued migration and intermarriage. Some from each tribe also settled in the Creek Nation, now eastern Oklahoma.\(^3\)

Following advice from their supporter Sam Houston, the Texas Indians have allowed few non-Indians to reside among them. Indian experience with the larger society was confined mostly to trading trips to nearby towns until the 1920s, when some began attending high school or working as domestics in Livingston. Though today a modern highway links Livingston and Woodville with Indian Village, contact between reservation residents and non-Indians is still of a limited nature, occurring at school, the workplace (including the tribal tourist complex), and

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sporting events.

Isolation insured preservation of Indian languages and lines of descent, but also fostered scholarly neglect. The great surges of anthropological study in the early 1900s bypassed the Texas Alabama-Coushattas. John Swanton, the preeminent Southeast Indian scholar, managed only two brief visits to Indian Village [cf. items 158-168 below] and the pioneering ethnomusicologist Frances Densmore was able to record only one singer [36]. Though the first literate generation was educated about 1910, and literacy rapidly became a mark of accomplishment in the tribal prestige system, writings by Alabama-Coushatta people on their own culture are extremely scarce [169, 170]. Members of local historical organizations only rarely consider the Indians [e.g. 131], and there is but one pertinent work on historical archaeology [76].

Fortunately, there have always been a few observers to record aspects of tribal life. Many of these writers visited the reservation while involved in goodwill efforts, so that valuable information is contained in documents prepared for legislative campaigns to secure relief or augment the reservation [27, 45, 147, 177-180], and also in writings on the history of the Presbyterian mission at Indian Village [108]. Area teachers have also written on the tribes, though the level of insight they offer is usually disappointing [11, 21, 55, 111, 149, 150, 151]. A number of master's theses on Alabama-Coushatta history and education have been written at regional colleges, usually by people with some prior church or school connection to the tribes [96, 115, 117, 127, 140, 152, 172].

Howard Martin, a trained avocational researcher, is the leading ethnohistorian of the Texas tribes and official Tribal Historian. He has conducted scrupulous research on early trails and village sites [123], Alabama and Coushatta service to the Confederacy [124], and folktales [119-122, 125]. Advances have also been made by specialists in areas such as Texas colonial and republican history [18, 32, 51, 53, 62, 109, 126, 132. 156]. In recent years the related but distinct Alabama and Koasati languages have been well documented; most important is the study of Alabama conducted since 1980 by Heather Hardy, which has produced several technical articles [34, 35, 64-66, 129, 130], and will soon yield a dictionary, written in collaboration with the late tribe member Cora Sylestine. Geoffrey Kimball has made a similar concerted effort for Koasati [89-95], and others have made contributions [24, 61, 84, 106, 154].

Overall, however, the sound scholarship is outweighed by derivative writings and journalism. The demand for pedestrian literature on Texas Indians has resulted in a highly incestuous corpus, with the reiteration of many false or doubtful points and, in one instance, what appears to be a
clear case of plagiarism {114}. If researchers have first-hand experience on the reservation, it tends to be very limited, often with access gained through acculturative institutions. No extended ethnohistoric study has been published, and no long-term ethnographic study has been undertaken.


their pacivity and assimilated appearance; concise footnotes by the editor amplify these descriptions. Coushatta capital punishment and first fruits ceremony are discussed; Alabama cotton cloth weaving is noted. Population figures provided by the author and editor. A watercolor of two Coushatta men by Luis Sanchez y Tapia shows period dress. Serious and chronic translation errors affect the ethnographic information; careful researchers will consult the original manuscripts, locations of which are given in the book’s introduction. Cf. Sanchez 1926 {153}.


Migration history and account of reservation development between 1854 and 1970, emphasizing the shift from foraging to logging and farming, then tourism. Demographic and economic details drawn from technical reports and interviews with local officials.


32. Cox, Isaac Joslin. "The Louisiana-Texas Frontier, II." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 17 (July) 1913, 1-42. Mentions Spanish efforts to use the tribes as buffer populations.


35. -----, "Nominal-Sentential Morphology in Alabama." *Southwest
Journal of Linguistics. 7 (Fall 1984), 87-101. Investigates the meaning of suffixes -I, -k, and -n as they appear in nouns and verbs.


38. Duff, Gerald. Indian Giver. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983. 244 pp. Novel about a Texas Coushatta youth named Sam Houston Leaping Deer, and his encounter with the dominant society when he attends college on a basketball scholarship. Shows familiarity with reservation life and tribal mythology as recorded by Martin; Leaping Deer’s mystic world view, however, must be regarded as exaggerated and stereotypic.


40. Eilers, William, Jr. “Indians of Polk County.” Frontier Times, 2 (February 1925), 14-15. Brief profile of the Alabamas reprinted from the Houston Chronicle, December 7, 1924. States erroneously that the Alabamas were lumbermen early on and became farmers only after deforestation. Gives the earliest published version of a common anecdote illustrating the Alabamas’ unwillingness to engage in disputes.

and "How the Snake Got Its Rattlers."


44. -----. *Texas Indians – The Story of Indian Village and the Alabama Indians of Polk County, Texas.* Livingston, Texas: n.p., 1960. 21 pp. Booklet presenting a paternalistic history of the tribes by the mother of Clem Fain, Jr., a lawyer and legislator who worked on behalf of the Indians. Focuses on local white personalities involved in bettering the reservation; most useful as a record of these advocates and as an artifact of Indian-white interaction. Good photos of tribal leaders John Scott, Charles M. Thompson, and Bronson Cooper Sylestine, the "white chief" Clem Fain, Jr., and Dr. and Mrs. Chambers, missionaries. It is incorrectly implied that John Blount, a Pakana Muskogee from Polk County, was an Alabama. Patchwork revisions in the later edition include an updated list of reservation medical staff, new data on education, and a photo of Winifred Battise.


University of Texas based on four months of participant observation in 1940. Son of a part Chocktaw mother and Presbyterian minister father, the author entered the community through the church before living with his principal informant, Speaker Chief McConico Battise. His aim of producing an acculturation study a la Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits is not met, since the process he outlines is oversimplified and not supported with his data. The explanation of relations between the Alabamas and Coushattas is particularly simplistic. There is valuable information, however: Alabama and Coushatta names and uses for 196 plant species (the author's English glosses of native plant names are inexact); a linguistic sketch; data on social organization and log cabin building.


55. Garner, Patsy. "The Alabama Indians." *Texas History Teachers's Bulletin*, 12 (October 1924), 100-105. Historical sketch by a Livingston resident; depends on oral reports and manuscripts from local whites, and newspaper items. Contains false report that the Coushattas became extinct as a tribe, and conflicting statements about tribal agriculture.


62. Haggard, J. Villasana. "The Neutral Ground Between Louisiana and
Texas, 1806-1821.” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 28 (October 1945), 1001-1128. Excellent history of the buffer zone between New Spain and the United States showing the role of the Alabamas and Coushattas as barrier populations.

63. Hamilton, Peter J. Colonial Mobile. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897. 446 pp. Based mainly on original sources, this history of the Alabama-Tombigbee Basin from 1519 to 1821 provides numerous references to the Alabamas (Alibamons) and Coushattas (Coosadas). A 1732 map locating the Alabamas is reproduced.


Battise as Mikko Choba or principal chief.


73. Holley, Mary Austin. *The Texas Diary, 1835-1838*. Edited by J.P. Bryan. Austin: The University of Texas Humanities Research Center, 1965. 120 pp. Diary by Stephen F. Austin’s cousin containing a reference to Coushattas protecting her brother’s plantation in Fort Bend County, Texas, circa 1838.


77. *The Indian Papers of Texas and the Southwest, 1825-1916*. Edited by
Dorman H. Winfrey and James M. Day. 5 Vols. Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1966. Comprehensive edition of Indian materials from the Texas State Archives; includes important correspondence on Alabama-Coushatta tribal affairs and living conditions in each volume (volumes indexed separately).


80. ------. "The Origin of the Koasati Community of Louisiana." Ethnohistory, 7 (Spring 1960), 97-120. Ambitious history tracing Coushatta migration and townsites from the Tennessee River drainage in 1540 to Bayou Blue near Elton in 1910. Remarks on Indian relations with colonial powers and the white settlers of Louisiana. The early history is not entirely dependable; disregard of Smither 1932 {156} weakens account of the Texas Coushattas. Good descriptions of the settlement pattern at Bayou Blue (with map, dated 1935) and the advent of the cash economy.


narrative by Johnson, based on Leeds's diary entries; the second half is a series of memoirs written by Leeds in 1941 and edited by Johnson. Little information about Indians; valuable as a look into the motives of a missionary. Thirteen photos and a facsimile of the constitution of St. Peter's Congregational Church near Kinder.


85. Journal of the Fourth Congress of the Republic of Texas, 1839-1840. 3 vols. Edited by Harriet Smither. Austin: Von Boeckmann Jones, 1931. Volumes 1 and 2, the Senate and House journals respectively, offer numerous references to an unsuccessful act to survey lands to be provided to the Alabamas and Coushattas. Volume 1 reproduces Lamar's presidential message of 1839 stating his friendly disposition toward the tribes.


89. Kimball, Geoffrey. "A Descriptive Grammar of Koasati." Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1985. 539 pp. The only extended work on Koasati; a sophisticated description of phonology, verbs, nouns, pronouns, syntax, and semantics. Much attention is given to the complicated system of verb prefixes and suffixes. Speech styles appropriate to different oral genres, such as conversation or didactic narrative, are exemplified. Also includes a historical sketch based on primary sources (which notes the etymology of Coushatta surnames), a summary on previous Coushatta linguistic work, six photos of informants, and a musical transcription of a Horse Dance song. Several mistakes occur in bibliographic citation. Principal consultants were Bel Abbey, Nora Abbey, Martha John, Ed John,


94. -----. "Men's and Women's Speech in Koasati: A Reappraisal." *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 53 (1987), 30-38. Report that the "male" suffix described by Haas 1944 {61} is in fact a phrase terminal marker indicating the status, not sex, of the speaker. Usage was not restricted to men, and was decreasing, contrary to Haas. Data from Louisiana.

95. -----. "Peregrine Falcon and Great Horned Owl: Ego and Shadow in a Koasati Tale." *Southwest Journal of Linguistics*, 9 (1989), 45-74. Swanton's typescript of the myth he called "The Pigeon Hawk's Gift" (Swanton 1929 {166}) is retranscribed for greater linguistic accuracy; the characters are interpreted as Jungian archetypes. Shows deficiencies in Swanton's publication.


references and notes are an outstanding guide to the literature on Southeast Indians.


101. Lamar, Mirabeau Bounaparte. *The Papers of Mirabeau Bounaparte Lamar.* Edited by Charles A. Gulick, Jr. et al. 6 vols. Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones, 1921-1927; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1973. References to the Coushattas (Cushatta), indexed under “Koasati,” in volumes 2 and 3; the index mistakenly lists a reference in volume 6 also. Lamar, Texas Republic president, was known for his intolerant Indian policy but looked kindly on the Alabamas and Coushattas. An 1839 letter from John Ross relates Chief Coleta’s address on the killing of five Coushattas by whites; a letter from Lamar to Liberty County citizens instructs them to avoid further violence.


103. *Laws of the Republic of Texas Houston Passed at the Session of the Fourth Congress.* Houston: Telegraph Power Press, 1840. 280 pp. Includes an act which authorizes and requires the president of the Republic to have lands surveyed to establish separate reservations for the Alabamas and Coushattas, authorizes him to appoint an agent to the tribes, and gives the government jurisdiction over them. Reproduced in *The Indian Papers of Texas, Vol. I* [77], with historical annotation.


Alabama-Coushatta occupation of seventeen counties in East Texas, based on primary sources.

119. -----, Folktales of the Alabama-Coushatta Indians. Livingston, Texas: Howard N. Martin, 1946. 75 pp. Thirty-nine texts presented in straightforward English, collected by the author in the 1930s from aged informants, with Matthew Bullock as translator. Most of the narrators were Alabama-speakers; they could not assign specific tribal origin to the tales. Along with Martin 1977 {122} and Swanton 1929 {166}, a principal reference on Alabama-Coushatta oral tradition.


122. -----, Myths and Folktales of the Alabama-Coushatta Indians of Texas. Austin: Encino Press, 1977. 141 pp. Forty-six translated tales, “consensus versions” forged from variants collected mostly between 1931 and 1941. Most of these tales appear in Martin 1946, but the present versions are much livelier. Prefaced by a historical outline and concise analysis of narrative structure; tales classified by type and motif.

123. -----, “Polk County Indians: Alabamas, Coushattas, Pakana Muskogees.” East Texas Historical Journal, 17:1 (1979), 3-23. Authoritative history to 1928, based on extensive research in primary documents. Sections on the origin and arrival of the tribes, their Confederate service, post-bellum decline, and twentieth-century improvements. Four photos of chiefs and maps of Indian village sites and trails are provided. This information was originally offered in Martin 1966 {125}.


128. A *Message from the President Relative to Indian Affairs, with Accompanying Documents.* Houston: n.p., 1838. This pamphlet includes a copy of a talk sent by Sam Houston to the Alabamas and Coushattas entreating them not to join the Cordova Rebellion, reproduced in Houston 1970, vol. 2 (74).


131. Moore, Luther C. *Cemeteries in Polk County, Texas.* Livingston, Texas: Polk County Memorial Museum and Polk County Historical Commission, 1986. 18 pp. Guide by a local historian containing directions to two Alabama-Coushatta graveyards with traditional burials: Indian Baptist and Indian Village.


144. "New Indian Theater in Texas." *Wassaja,* 3 (January-February 1975),
23. Announces plans to construct $2.2 million theater at the reservation tourist complex.


143. -----. "Fulton Battise- Mikko Choba." *Texas Highways*, 33 (June
1986), 40-41. Profile of the chief with standard tribal history. Includes a rare photo of the 1936 installation of chiefs Bronson Cooper Sylestine and Fulton Battise.

144. -----. "A Stitch from Time." *Texas Highways*, 27 (June 1980), 26-29. Introduction to Alabama-Coushatta headwork techniques; well-written but lacks information on the development of the craft among the tribe specifically. Photos of Leona Sylestine, Comanche George "Woogie" Watchetaker, beaded items.


148. Richardson, W. "Friendly Indians of the Trinity River." *Frontier Times*, 2 (June 1925), 4-7. Richardson was the publisher, not author, of this anonymous tribal sketch that originally appeared in the 1861 (not 1860) *Texas Almanac* (see "Friendly Indians of the Trinity River [52]"). The present version is abridged by omission of three paragraphs.

149. Rothe, Aline Thompson. How and Why Stories: Tales Collected for the Alabama-Coushatta Indians. Livingston, Texas: Century II Printing Company, n.d. n.p. Fifteen stories for children, compiled by a Polk County educator and journalist. "Most ... were told ... by Indians": e.g. Bettie Battise and Charley Boatman, with Dorothy Chambers (Shill) as translator. The tales are not provenienced. Each is illustrated by Charles Schmidt.

151. ------. "From Tamath-le-Mingo to Tu-ca-iche." The Texas Outlook, (July 1940), 19-20. Describes use of Alabama-Coushatta data in a local history project at Corrigan (Texas) High School.

152. Rushing, Dorothy M. "The Promised Land of the Alabama-Coushatta." M.A. thesis, East Texas State University, 1974. 138 pp. Well-written examination of circumstances behind the establishment and survival of the Texas reservation. Some conclusions about tribal culture are not well supported, but the history is grounded in the sophisticated use of primary sources, seldom-cited secondary works, and newspapers. Three maps.


159. ------. "Animal Stories from the Indians of the Muskhoogan Stock."


163. -----, “The Kaskinampo Indians and their Neighbors.” American Anthropologist, 32 (1930), 405-418. Assessment of early maps and narratives to determine that the Kaskinampos merged with the Coushattas circa 1700.


166. -----, “Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians.” Bureau of


171. Taylor, Lyda Averill. Plants Used as Curatives by Certain Southeastern Tribes. Cambridge: Botanical Museum of Harvard University, 1940. 88 pp. Rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1978. Analysis of herbal remedies in light of Western medicinal knowledge. Of 185 species studied, seventeen were used by the Alabamas and thirty-two by the Coushattas. Alabama data is from Swanton 1928 (pp. 473-672) [167]; Coushatta data was gathered by the author in Louisiana (reported in manuscript Item No. 1891, Library of the American Philosophical Society.) Concludes, with important stipulations, that 80% of the Alabama and 50% of the Coushatta remedies have actual therapeutic value.


179. -----. -----. *Advisability of Purchasing Lands for Alabama and Coushatta Indians, Polk County, Texas*. H. Doc. 1579, 65th Cong., 3rd sess., 1918. 4 pp. Letter from Secretary Franklin K. Lane, concurring with a report filed by Inspector James McLaughlin, that the Indians could not grow enough crops owing to inadequate soil conservation and were deserving of more land.

181. -----. -----. Purchase of Land, Livestock and Agricultural Equipment for Alabama and Coushatta Indians. H. Report 824 to accompany H.R. 5479, submitted by Mr. Blanton. 70th Cong., 1st sess., 1928. 3 pp. Recommendation that HR 5479 pass, with the stipulation that new purchases for the Indians be held in Federal trust. Includes testimony of Polk County's Judge Briggs to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

182. -----. -----. Purchase of Land for Alabama and Coushatta Indians of Texas. H. Report 2318 to accompany H.R. 16527, submitted by Mr. Leavitt. 70th Cong., 2nd sess., 1929. Committee on Indian Affairs recommendation that the bill calling for a land purchase for the tribes pass without amendment. Explains mineral rights and lumber company rights of way.


185. -----. -----. Indian Affairs Committee. Purchase of Land for Alabama and Coushatta Indians of Texas. S. Report 1629 to accompany S. 5519, submitted by Mr. Frazier. 70th Cong., 2nd sess., 1929. 2 pp. Report recommending that the bill for relief pass without amendment. Includes a copy of a letter from the Secretary of the Interior requesting the land purchase; also a notice explaining mineral rights.


188. Villiers du Terrage, M. de “Documents concernant L'histoire des Indiens de la region orientale de le Louisiane.” Journal de la Societe des
Americanistes de Paris. 16 (1922), 127-140. Review (in French) of letters of French colonials in the early 1700s discusses Alabamas along the Mobile River; includes an illustration of an Alabama council house.

189. Wade, Mary Donaldson. The Alabama Indians of East Texas. Livingston, Texas: Polk County Enterprise, 1936. 24 pp. Often-cited pamphlet by a local non-Indian which lends insight into the dynamics of reservation life by describing missionary efforts and government aid programs. Lacks citations, but many points are traceable to prior publications.


NOTES

1 An earlier version of this work appeared as *Recent Research* 2:2 (March, 1992), an internal publication of the Institute of Texan Cultures, University of Texas at San Antonio.

Michael L. Tate, *The Indians of Texas: An Annotated Research Bibliography* (Metuchen, New Jersey, 1986). Also invaluable was a manuscript bibliography of Muskogean linguistics by Heather Hardy and Janine Scancarelli, kindly provided by the authors.

This bibliography focuses on the Texas population and also covers the literature on the Louisiana group. Those interested in the Oklahoma Alabamas and Coushattas must review the Oklahoma Creek literature, described in *A Creek Sourcebook*, edited by William C. Sturtevant (New York, 1987), pp. xv-xxi.

"Alabama-Coushatta" designates the modern political entity in Texas and is used here also to refer to the two peoples as they constitute a general research topic. The spellings "Alabama" and "Coushatta," preferred by both the Texas and Louisiana tribal governments, are used in the annotations, even while variant spellings have been preserved in the titles. The one departure from this practice is the use of "Koasati" for the Coushatta language, which has become a convention among linguists.