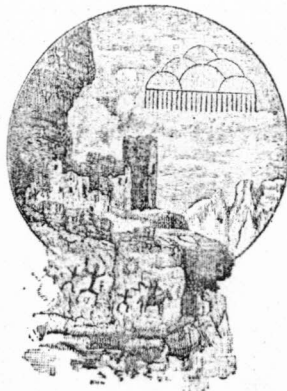


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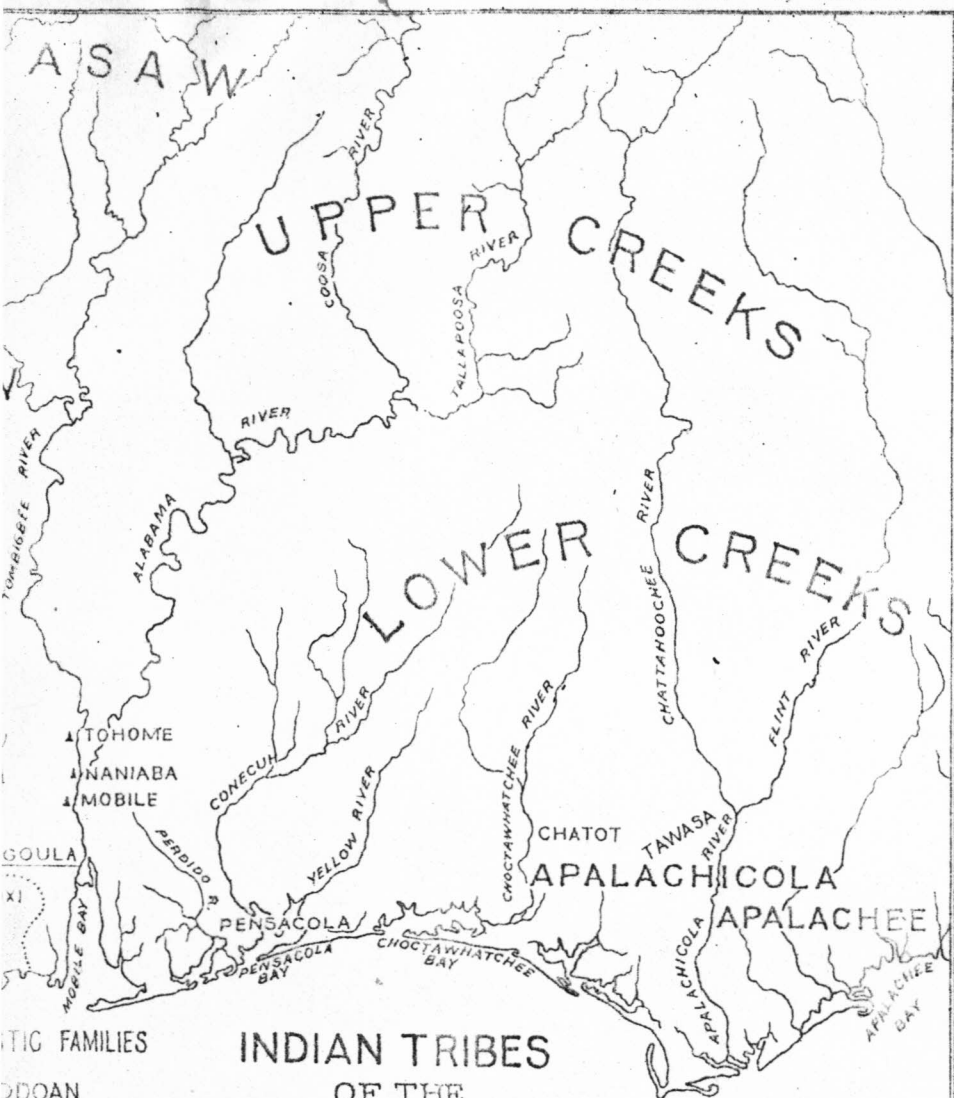
INDIAN TRIBES
OF THE
LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY
AND
ADJACENT COAST OF
THE GULF OF MEXICO

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But, after all, the final moral estimate of a tribe or nation is a thing that no other tribe or nation is competent to undertake. It will be made by different individuals differently, depending on the standards, environment, and prejudices, or, on the other hand, the sympathetic appreciation of the person acting as judge.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

On the Indian mode of wearing the hair Dumont says, speaking generally:

They * * * never have any beard nor even the least hair on any part of the body, which comes from the fact that from their youth they take great pains to pluck it out. With regard to the hair of the head the men wear it differently, according to difference in nationality. Some cut it entirely, leaving only a tuft on the top of the head in the Turkish fashion. Others cut it on one side only, on the right or the left, and keep the other side very long. Many also have the head completely shaved and have only a braided tress which hangs on each side, and others are clipped like our monks, having only a crown of short hairs. The women and girls, on the other hand, wear their hair very thick and very long; moreover, they have no other headdress. They have very black and beautiful locks and wear them either braided in tresses or bound into a cue with a belt of that bison hair which I have said to be as fine and soft as wool, instead of a ribbon. These tresses are ordinarily interlaced by way of ornament with strings of blue, white, green, or black beads [made of glass], according to their taste, sometimes also with quills of the porcupine, a kind of hedgehog larger than that which we know and which is more common in Canada than in Louisiana, where I have never seen any.^a

Du Pratz, evidently confining himself to the Natchez, remarks as follows:

The natives cut their hair around, leaving a crown like the Capuchins, and leave only enough long hair to make a twisted tress no larger than the little finger, and which hangs over the left ear. This crown is in the same place and almost as large as that of a monk. In the middle of this crown they leave about two dozen long hairs for the attachment of feathers.

Although the natives all wear this crown, yet the hair is not removed or pulled from this place, but it is cut or burned with burning coals. It is not the same with the hair of the armpits and the beard, which they take great care to pull out, so that they never come back, not being able to suffer any hair to appear on their bodies, although naturally they do not have more of it than we.^b

They (the women) wear nothing on their heads; their hair is at full length, except that in front, which is shorter. The hair behind is fastened in a cue by means of a netting of mulberry threads, with tassels at the ends. They take great pains to pull out the hair and leave none on the body except the hair of the head.^c

^a Dumont, *Mém. Hist. sur La Louisiane*, i, 136, 137. 1753

^b Du Pratz, *Hist. de La Louisiane*, ii, 198.

^c *Ibid.*, 195.

and under the head a mass of clay which she binds with all her strength between two little boards. The infant cries, turns completely black, and the strain which it is made to suffer is such that a white, slimy fluid is seen to come out of its nose and ears at the time when the mother presses on its forehead. It sleeps thus every night until its skull has taken on the shape which custom wishes it to receive. Some savages near Mobile begin to disabuse themselves, through our example, of a gratification which costs so dear.^a

Du Pratz says of the ornaments of men generally: (1758)

The ornaments for festivals are in themselves as simple as the garments. The youths are as vain as elsewhere, and are charmed to vie with one another in seeing who shall be most dressed up, so much so that they put vermilion on themselves very often. They also put on bracelets made of the ribs of deer which they have worked down very thin and bent in boiling water. These bracelets are as white and as smooth as polished ivory outside. They wear glass beads in necklaces like the women, and one sometimes sees them with a fan in the hand. They put white down around the head, which is shaved. From the little forelock or skein of hair which they leave in the middle of the fontanel of the head they attach the whitest straight feathers they can find. They do, in short, everything that a young head is capable of inventing to adorn themselves.^b

The warriors may also have the lower parts of the ears slit, in order to pass through them iron or brass wire in the form of worm screws, a full inch in diameter.^c

The women ornament themselves with earrings made of the core of a great shell called "burgo," of which I have spoken. This ear pendant is as large as the little finger and at least as long. They have a hole in the lower part of each ear large enough to insert this ornament. It has a head a little larger than the rest to prevent it from falling out.^d

Of the use of this shell Dumont speaks more at length, as follows:

There are found besides on the shores of the sea beautiful shells of a spiral shape called "burgau." They are very suitable for making pretty tobacco boxes, for they carry their mother-of-pearl with them. It is of these burgau that the savage women make their earrings. For this purpose they take the ends of them and rub them a long time on hard stones and thus give them the shape of a nail provided with a head, in order that when they put them in their ears they will be stopped by this kind of pivot, for these savage women have their ears laid open very much more than our French women. One might pass the thumb, however large, through [the slit]. The savages also wear on their necks plates about 3 or 4 inches in diameter, made of pieces of this shell, which they shape in the same manner on stones and to which they give a round or oval shape. They then pierce them near the edge by means of fire and use them as ornaments.^e

The Luxembourg memoir thus confirms the above seemingly exaggerated statements regarding the size of the apertures made for earrings: (1752)

Their greatest ornament consists of head necklaces of different colors, with which they load the neck and the ears, where they have holes, as well as the

^a Mémoire sur La Louisiane, 135-136.

^b Du Pratz, Hist. de La Louisiane, II, 197-198.

^c Ibid., 200 (190).

^d Ibid., 195 (196).

^e Dumont, Mém. Hist. sur La Louisiane, I, 94-95.

men, large enough to pass an egg through, which the size and weight of what they put there from infancy greatly enlarges.^a

The beads spoken of by French writers seem to have been imported, but the imported article probably replaced something similar made of shell or stone. Of the beads in use in his time Du Pratz remarks: (1758)

When they have beads (*rassade*) they make necklaces composed of one or many rows. They make them long enough for the head to pass through. The *rassade* is a bead of the size of the end of the finger of a small infant. Its length is greater than its diameter. Its substance is similar to porcelain. There is a smaller one, ordinarily round and white. They value it more than the other. There is a blue one and one of another style which is banded (*bardelee*) with blue and white. The medium sized and the smallest are strung to ornament skins, garters, etc.^b

To this list of ornaments must be added the pearls referred to by several writers among both Natchez and Taënsa. Pénicaut says of these:

They have similarly a necklace of fine pearls which they have received from their ancestors, but they are all spoiled because they have pierced them with the aid of a hot fire. Two or three are placed around the necks of the infant nobles when they come into the world; they wear them to the age of 10 and then they are replaced in the temple.^c

TATTOOING

The greater part have fantastic marks imprinted on the face, the arms, the legs, and the thighs; so far as the body is concerned, this is a right which belongs only to the warriors, and one must be noted on account of the death of some enemy in order to merit this distinction. They imprint on the stomachs of their heroes an infinity of black, red, and blue lines; which is not done without pain. They begin by tracing the design on the skin, then with a needle or a little bone well sharpened they prick until the blood comes, following the design, after which they rub the punctures with a powder of the color that the one who has himself marked demands. These colors having penetrated between the skin and flesh are never effaced. * * *^d

But the greatest ornament of all these savages of both sexes consists in certain figures of suns, serpents, or other things, which they carry pictured on their bodies in the manner of the ancient Britons, of whom Caesar tells us in his Commentaries. The warriors, as well as the wives of the chiefs and the Honored men,^e have these figures pictured on the face, arms, shoulders, thighs, legs, but principally on the belly and stomach. It is for them not only an ornament, but also a mark of honor and distinction, which is only acquired after many brave deeds, and here is how these pictures are made: First, in accordance with the color that is desired, a man makes either a black mixture of pine charcoal or, indeed, of gunpowder dissolved in water, or a red of cinnabar or vermilion. After this five medium-sized sewing needles are taken, which are arranged on a little flat, smooth piece of wood and fastened to the same depth, so that one

^a Mémoire sur La Louisiane, 133.

^b Du Pratz, Hist. de La Louisiane, II, 195 (196).

^c Margry, Découvertes, v, 452.

^d Mémoire sur La Louisiane, 134-135.

^e The term adopted by the writer for the French *Considéré*.