

Ioway, Otoe-Missouria Language

Compiled by Jimm G. Goodtracks

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Introductory Remarks

The Ioway, Otoe-Missouria Language (Báxoje, Jiwére-Ñútʔachi) is a Siouan Language designated as the Chiwere subgroup of Mississippi Valley Siouan. It is similar in many ways to the Winnebago (Hotúŋe) subgroup, and usually it is classified with it as a Chiwere-Winnebago subgroup of Mississippi Valley.

The last fluent speakers of Ioway, Otoe-Missouria language passed away in the winter of 1996, both in their 90s. Arthur Lightfoot (Húŋa: Beloved Pipe Dance Son), Ioway Bear Clan, 6/24/1904~11/15/1996, was born on the Iowa Reservation by White Cloud, KS. Truman Dailey (SunéHka: White Horse), Otoe-Missouria Eagle Clan, 10/19/1898~ 12/16/1996, was born near Red Rock in Oklahoma Territory. There are approximately a half dozen semi-fluent speakers that remain, all born during or prior to WWII. The existing tribal entities are usually called Otoe, or Otoe-Missouria, and Ioway. The Missouri took refuge with the Otoe in 1798 after a series of small pox epidemics and intertribal warfare. By 1850s the Missouri were absorbed by the Otoe and ceased to be autonomous. The Otoe-Missouria have their tribal offices at Red Rock, Oklahoma (Noble County). The Iowa of Oklahoma offices are located several miles south of Perkins, Oklahoma (Payne County), while the Iowa of Kansas & Nebraska have their tribal complex several miles west of White Cloud, Kansas (Doniphan County).

Whatever dialectal differences existed for the Missouri were for practical purposes lost by the 1900s. Only Ioway and Otoe continue to support dialect-based variation. Mostly these differences are certain phonological oppositions, with only a few vocabulary items being unique to either dialect. All such variation is presently insignificant as far as mutual understanding. Comprehension diminishes between Ioway, Otoe-Missouria and Winnebago. Frequent intermarriage among the Ioway and Otoe communities has effected a dialect mixture in the speech of many households, although each community's dialect tends to persevere in its own setting.

Documentation of the language began with missionary efforts in the 1830s, with the resulting publications being the first books printed in present day Kansas. Since this early start there have been few publications of any sort on the Ioway, Otoe-Missouria or their language. There are some ethnological studies from the early 1900s, mostly in government and museum series, and a number of manuscript collections that have remained undeveloped and unpublished.

The Compiler's Research

This web site represents the present status of the research and fieldwork of the compiler of the present bibliography and the whole involvement with the Ioway and Otoe tribal elders in Kansas

and Oklahoma during the past thirty two years, undertaken in 1966 in order to document their native language and its dialects. It covers Ioway, Otoe-Missouria, the original indigenous language in Northeast Kansas and the bordering Nebraska-Iowa-Missouri region prior to European settlement in the 1850s. The language continued to be spoken prior to WWI in Kansas, and persisted into the 1960s in Oklahoma.

During Phase I, data files were made of elder's interviews, traditional songs and hymns, traditional stories and narratives, herbal medications as well as personal cultural knowledge of participation and procurement of ceremonial knowledge and practice. In 1992, Goodtracks completed for publication a first edition Dictionary Lexicon on the Báxoje-Jiwére-Ñút'achi language (see below [Essential Materials for Immediate Study](#)) with over 9000 entries. This was published by the Center for the Study of the Native Languages of the Plains and Southwest, Department of Linguistics, Campus Box 295, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309-0295. David S. Rood, Director.

In Phase II, the data files will be organized and edited for publication, the cassettes will be transferred to CDs and the bilingual texts prepared for publication. The first edition Dictionary Lexicon will be placed on an internet web site for effortless access. Eventually, the first edition of the Dictionary Lexicon will be expanded into an encyclopedic unabridged dictionary.

Essential Materials for Immediate Study

Goodtracks, Jimm G. 1992. *Iowa, Otoe-Missouria Language Dictionary: English/ Báxoje-Jiwére-Ñút'achi -- Ma'ú'ke*. (First Edition). Center for the Study of the Languages of the Plains and Southwest, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, 287 pp. A comprehensive glossary-style dictionary providing over 9000 words, phrases and sentences as rendered by elders, who spoke it as their first language.

Whitman, William. 1947. *A Descriptive Grammar of Ioway*. International Journal of American Linguistics, Vol.13, No.4.