

## A SURVEY OF ETHNOHISTORIC SOURCES

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Ethnohistoric material offers one of the richest sources of information on native North America available to anthropologists, yet one which remains relatively unexploited. Such material is commonly used to supplement ethnographic and archeological data, but only a few Americanists have utilized it intensively and the ethnohistoric approach, as method, has received little specific attention. This paper is intended primarily as a brief survey of the sources of ethnohistoric data, and of those guides to such sources which constitute the keys to research in the field.

The ethnohistoric method can be defined as the utilization of historic data in the solution of anthropological problems. For the present purpose the term "historic data" will be considered to apply only to recorded information, published or unpublished. It is true that tribal histories or traditions which cannot be corroborated by documents are sometimes strengthened by archeological and other evidence and should therefore be considered in the reconstructions toward which ethnohistory contributes; but they do not furnish material for ethnohistory per se.

Although there have been instances, in which information on Indians was recorded for its own sake, before the era of professional anthropology, most such data was included only incidentally in records intended for other purposes. Many documents have been sought out and validated or discredited with cause, and the results of this work have been made available, in published form, under the discipline of history. Undoubtedly many more remain to be brought to light. However, unless a published document is reproduced in its entirety, the student may wish to consult the original, since he cannot always be sure that evidence was not edited out. The fact that a document has been published in whole or in part, or that a document has been often cited in the literature does not mean that a student with a special problem could not find in it material important to him, which has been neglected by other specialists. Published material, moreover, often has the advantage of having been critically evaluated, whereas a student presenting previously unexploited documents in support of a thesis is responsible for their validation, and for indicating his methods of establishing validity in his finished work.

Types of sources can be classified as written records (published and unpublished), maps, and pictorial material. Written records constitute the most valuable and most numerous sources of ethnohistoric data. Such records, including diaries, letters, journals, and official reports have been made by travelers, explorers, missionaries, traders, military men and settlers, as well as by individuals less easily categorized. Most of the records richest in information have probably

been published, although in many instances original or early editions are so rare as to be available in only a few libraries and later editions have not been issued.

Some of the outstanding sources on North America have been made available through the work of Reuben Gold Thwaites, perhaps the most noteworthy compiler and editor of his type. His two monumental works are Early Western Travels and the Jesuit Relations. The Early Western Travels (Thwaites, 1904-1907) consists of thirty volumes of text plus two volumes of index, and includes journals, narratives, and accounts of about thirty travelers and explorers, such as S.H. Long, Bradbury, Brackenridge, Maximilian, and DeSmet. The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents (Thwaites, 1896-1901) comprises seventy-one volumes plus two volumes of index, and contains reports of the Jesuit Missionaries. It is strongest for the northeastern United States and eastern Canada. The organization of the work is approximately chronological by area or tribe. Specifically ethnographic data from the Jesuit Relations is to be found in Kenton (1927). Thwaites has also edited other works, including the journals of Lewis and Clark (1904).

Bandelier's Outline of the Documentary History of the Zuni Tribe (Bandelier, 1892) is exclusively derived from Spanish documents, portions of which are translated in footnotes. Thomas (1935, 1940) offers translations of more substantial excerpts from Spanish accounts dealing with the northern periphery of the Southwest, and a perusal of his bibliographies leads one to major sources of published accounts on the Southwest proper, as well as to sources of known archival material.

In the same manner, the bibliographies in the following publications serve as a guide to the most valuable of the published original accounts for the areas indicated, and in some cases to pertinent archival material. The Handbook of American Indians (Hodge, 1907, 1910) is an obvious general source which contains references to much obscure material. Swanton (1946) gives excellent bibliographical coverage for the Southeast. Strong (1935) lists most of the important published sources for the Plains Area. The bibliography in Kinitz (1940) has been critically selected to cover the ethnography of the Western Great Lakes Region.

Among the volumes of bibliography, that of Rouse and Goggin (1947) is devoted to the Eastern Seaboard and contains a separate section on history. Murdock (1941) covers all of North America and refers to some of the published ethnohistoric sources which are rich in ethnographic data. Wickersham (1927) has compiled a bibliography of literature on Alaska.

The lure which the Arctic has held for so many in the recent past is reflected in a vast literature which ranges from reports of scientific investigation to travel-adventures.

Bibliographies in American History, (Beers, 1942) lists over 7,000 bibliographies and furnishes leads for ethnohistoric research

on many parts of North America and on special problems. It scarcely seems necessary to mention such standard reference tools as the Guide to Reference Books (Winchell, 1951), for the most part an annotated bibliography of bibliographies presented by subject and in some cases by type of publication, (such as those issued by governments). Poore (1885) and Ames (1905) have compiled lists of United States Government publications.

As Tucker (1946) has pointed out, wherever literate man contacted natives, there is the possibility that they left some record of that contact. Further, the creation and disposal of such records tends to follow consistent patterns, which the student may figure out once he has decided what sort of information he needs.

The letters and diaries of citizens without official capacity as well as the private correspondence of officials have often been preserved by families, whence they have sometimes found their way into the collections of learned societies.

The reports of missionaries should be available in the archives of the organization they represented. The Jesuit Relations is certainly the most outstanding example of missionary reports, but there are others which have been utilized to only a limited extent, such as the Moravian Records, which are most pertinent to the study of the Delaware and Mohicans. They are housed in the Archives Building at Moravian College, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (Wallace, 1951).

Business concerns have often kept records for a long time. Those of the Hudson Bay Company are still maintained by the company, while those of the old American Fur Company are in the collections of the New York Historical Society. The records of both companies would yield information on the Indian fur trade.

Ship logs are another possible source of information, and the Peabody Museum at Salem has a fine collection.

The governments which have at one time or another claimed parts of North America have material of interest in their national archives and a great deal of work has been done to acquaint students with what is available. Among published guides to archival material of interest to the historian are the twenty-three volumes issued by the Carnegie Institution of Washington (1906-1943); Surrey (1926-1928); and Chapman (1919).

A source of documentary material which has been little used is the National Archives where, to facilitate storage, the archives of various divisions of the United States Government have been combined, except for those in current use. A joint committee from the Social Science Research Council surveyed the available data pertinent to Sociology, Economics, and Anthropology. Sara Tucker, who represented Anthropology, has outlined the possibilities for research in her field,

and has listed several of the government-issued bibliographies of archival material (Tucker, 1941).

Most of the State Department's archival records are of an international nature, but they also include material relating to Indian treaties, to territorial administration (Carter, 1934- ), and to the Russian-American Fur Company's Alaskan operations. The archives of the Departments of the Interior and of War, which were combined at one time, are perhaps the richest division for American ethnography. The Department of the Interior contains the archives of the Office of Indian Affairs, while the War Department archives document Indian contact with the military posts on our early frontiers. Other divisions of the archives which might also contain pertinent data are those of the Legislative, Navy, Commerce, Agriculture, and Labor Departments, and the Division of Independent Agencies archives. There are three other divisions dealing with special types of material. These include the division of motion pictures and sound recordings, the division of maps and charts, and the division of photographic archives and research.

Documentary evidence must always be evaluated in terms of the author, his mission in the area and his reason for writing. A missionary would probably describe some aspects of a culture differently than would a trader or military man. If the observer had an axe to grind, his accounts may be slanted toward his own ends. Often an observer's comments are acceptable for one phase of a culture but not for others. Problems encountered in the use of early travelers' accounts are often semantic in nature. Individual tribes have usually been called by several different names, and these are sometimes hard to equate. There are many groups mentioned in ethnohistoric sources who have not yet been identified with historic groups for this reason. Descriptions of material culture are sometimes in terms of objects no longer familiar. Beyond the usual problems of translation is the possibility that in two or three hundred years the meaning of key words has changed in the original language.

Distances can be a source of confusion. They are often stated in terms of days' marches, which would vary with the type of transportation, climate, terrain, and the nature of the expedition. Even statements of distance in leagues have little meaning in accounts from the 1700's since the league was not standard at that time.

Another important source of ethnohistoric data is early maps. These are difficult to use, but the process is fascinating and the results often rewarding. As with documentary material, one encounters both printed and manuscript maps. Fortunately, maps have been popular collector's items so that there are a number of excellent collections. Karpinski (1931) has briefly described the outstanding collections in America. Several of these have been listed in publications, greatly facilitating their location and use.

The most outstanding collection of maps dealing with North America, that in the Library of Congress, has become world-famous through the catalogue of Phillips (1901), who has also compiled a list of atlases in the collection (Phillips, 1909-1920). Smaller lists of subsequent additions have been published, but the entire collection is not covered. Two special collections of maps in the Library of Congress have also been described: the Kohl collection (Winsor, 1904) and the Lowery collection (Lowery, 1912). The Library of Congress will supply photostatic or photographic copies of maps in its collection at a reasonable price.

The second largest collection is probably at the New York Public Library, its special emphasis being on the New York area. The Edward E. Ayer collection in the Newberry Library in Chicago is important and a list of its manuscript maps has been published by Smith (1927). The American Geographical Society has an outstanding map collection, those on Hispanic America having been described (American Geographical Society, 1930). Volume one is devoted to Mexico. The Huntington Library and Art Gallery at San Marino, California, has an excellent collection, at least part of which has been described (Museum Book Store, 1927). Other repositories of important collections are the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, the Yale University Library, the Harvard College Library, Chicago University Library, and the Clements Library at the University of Michigan. Collections are also to be found at various State Historical Societies and in the Canadian Archives at Ottawa.

Among publications listing maps, several are worthy of mention. A catalogue of rare maps of America was published by the Museum Book Store (1928). The collection of the British Museum (1884-) contains many maps of America. There are several bibliographies of maps of particular areas of America. Wagner (1937) lists maps of the northwest coast of America to the year 1800. Karpinski (1937) lists and describes early maps of Carolina and the adjoining regions. One of the best of such bibliographies is the one by Karpinski (1931) of printed maps of Michigan and the Great Lakes Region. Many of the maps included show more than Michigan, of course. One especially useful feature of this work is that it tells where the maps are available. Further, it includes information on cartography based on much research, and reproductions of 100 maps.

There are a few specially published collections of important maps. Here again Karpinski (no date) has made an outstanding contribution with a collection of photographs of 986 manuscript maps relating to America obtained in France, Spain, and Portugal. The assemblage includes many maps from the Bibliothèque National which contains the D'Anville collection. There are only six complete sets of these photographs: at the Clements Library, Library of Congress, Harvard Library, New York Public Library, the Ayer Collection, and the Huntington Library, although there are partial sets at several other places. Halbert (1909) published 50 sets of photographs of the Crow

Collection of 246 manuscript maps from the British Museum. Recently a folio of 78 early Spanish maps of North and South America has been published (Alba, 1951).

The best preparation for dealing with early maps would seem to be long contact with and study of such items, but a number of specific precautions can be enumerated. Most maps carry dates, but these should be viewed with caution. The same maps were frequently issued again and again for long periods, perhaps even a century, although changes were made as new information became available. Without a long series of maps for comparison, it is often impossible to distinguish the older from the more recent. Until the advent of copyright laws in recent years, plagiarism was the rule, rather than the exception, among map makers. Therefore a cartouche, which too often gives no information, may actually give misinformation. Copied maps may also carry dates earlier than the original if for some reason it would have been to someone's advantage. Also, one should try to determine the source of the cartographer's information before relying upon his map. One way to check for plagiarizations or copies is to watch for the occurrence and recurrence of errors or fictitious features such as a large lake in Brazil and another in the Carolinas, imaginary islands in Lake Superior, or the "ladder" form of the lower Missouri River.

Frequently much data for maps was obtained by hearsay from traders or Indians, who might say that a river rose far to the north and that such and such a tribe lived along it. As with other documents, the problem of plural names for tribes is confusing. Most distances on early maps are little better than guesses, even where a dependable informant had covered the area. Since most travel was along rivers, distances along rivers are more dependable than distances between rivers. The first map showing proper longitude for points in the New World did not appear until about 1689. DeLisle, from about 1700, was the first really scientific cartographer of the New World, accepting astronomically determined longitudes (Karpinski, 1931). After defects are allowed for, however, information is still to be gained. Frequently, number and size of Indian villages are indicated, and also, at times, items of ethnographic data appear. Perhaps the greatest contribution of early maps is to the knowledge of population movements.

Pictorial data should not be overlooked as a source of ethnohistory. Photographs, paintings, sketches, etc., while limited in the type of data contained, often include details of dress, dwellings, ornaments, and other aspects of material culture not mentioned in the literature. Photographs would, of course, be most reliable, but they cover only a limited time span. The most famous early Indian photographs are those by Jackson (1877). Peabody Museum at Harvard has a set of these and copies are presumably still available from the Bureau of American Ethnology.

There have been several notable collections of Indian portraits. Unfortunately, many of these were destroyed in the 1865 fire at the Smithsonian Institution, the greatest losses being the King and Stanley

collections (Donaldson, 1887: 794-799). Some of these had been previously copied and the copies are now in the Peabody Museum, Harvard University. Some of the portraits from this "Indian Gallery" have been reproduced and published (McKinney and Hall, 1836). Another famous artist who painted Indians was George Catlin (Catlin, 1841; Donaldson, 1887). In addition to his paintings and sketches, Catlin (1841) includes written data. Still other artists who should be mentioned are Bodmer (Maximilian's artist), Kurz (Hewitt, 1937), and Lewis (Donaldson, 1887: 800-802). Lorant (1946) has published a collection of drawings of Indians from near the Huguenot settlement in Florida (1562-1565) and the Virginia Colony (1585-1590).

Another source of data which has been only slightly exploited is documented museum material, both native artifacts and European trade material. Some collections were made when there was little systematic recording of ethnographic data. Where there is detailed information concerning an object in the catalogue of the museum, so much the better, but even the date of collection and the tribe name provides the basis for considerable ethnographic reconstruction.

While these brief comments on sources should indicate that they are abundant, it must be remembered that the search for new data is hard work, since the valuable material is often thinly scattered through a vast number of non-pertinent documents, especially in the archives and newspapers.

As the aboriginal cultures of North America continue to disintegrate, ethnohistoric data will become even more important as a means of corroborating and supplementing the results of field work, for the findings of library and archival research will undoubtedly be as rich as those from broken cultures. In spite of the trend away from historically oriented anthropology earlier in the century, studies drawing on historical material have continued and are becoming more popular. Perhaps the best indication of what can be done with ethnohistoric material is to be found in a consideration of what has been done.

Thus far there is probably only one example of ethnography based entirely upon ethnohistoric data: Kinetz, The Indians of the Western Great Lakes, 1615-1760. Tucker (1942) set out to summarize the ethnohistory of the Illinois country; her atlas of maps appeared in 1942. Such works, although they make no appreciable contribution to anthropology from a theoretical point of view, contribute to the store of critically evaluated data and make it readily available.

There is little doubt that Swanton has made the most extensive use of historical documents. In his works on the Southeast (Swanton, 1911, 1942, 1946) he has skillfully employed ethnohistoric data in conjunction with ethnographic data, much of which he gathered himself. As Fenton has pointed out, Swanton's capabilities for historically oriented research did much to influence the work of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Fenton, 1952: 334).

There are a number of other instances in which ethnohistoric data has been used, in conjunction with the results of ethnological field work, with outstanding results. In the Northeast, Cooper (1946), and Fenton (1949, 1951) should be cited. Cooper has drawn heavily on ethnohistoric data in his reconstructive interpretation of the culture of the northeastern Indian hunters. Fenton commanded the ethnohistoric as well as the ethnographic data of the groups with whom he worked. He has outlined the status of Iroquois studies which are drawing both on current field work and on library research.

Fenton is one of the few users of ethnohistoric data who has discussed his methodology. In a method which he calls "upstreaming" and which is comparable to, if not the same as, the direct historical approach, he uses ethnohistoric data to give greater historic depth to studies based mainly upon current ethnographic investigations. His method rests on three premises:

"1) major patterns of culture tend to be stable over long periods of time, so that one should watch out lest he commit the fallacy of assumed acculturation; 2) 'upstreaming' proceeds from the known to the unknown, concentrating on recent sources first because they contain familiar things, and thence going to earlier sources; 3) a preference for those sources in which the descriptions of the society ring true at both ends of the time scale." (Fenton, 1952: 335).

Ethnohistory can indicate problems as well as help to solve them. For example, there has been a great deal of discussion as to the identity of the "Padouca", a tribal name which occurred frequently in the accounts of travelers in the Plains, and on maps. The name has at various times been equated with both the Comanche and the Plains Apache groups. Champe (1949: 289-292) reviewed documentary evidence including early maps, which substantiates the idea that the name "Padouca" was applied to both the Comanche and Apache groups by the French, but to only the Comanche by the Spanish.

Ethnohistory can bridge the gap between ethnography and archeology, and furnish a basis for the application of the direct historical approach to archeology. This approach begins with the location of villages described while they were occupied. On the basis of archeological comparisons, still earlier sites can be attributed to ancestors of the people who lived at the documented sites. Nelson is probably the first archeologist to use such a method in this country. He has equated sites in the Galisteo Basin with villages visited by Coronado and subsequent Spanish explorers (Nelson, 1914). This particular problem, however, had been considered previously by earlier writers, especially Bandelier (1892).

A second example is an interesting illustration of both the use and misuse of ethnohistoric data. A site was found in northern Kansas which enthusiasts decided must be the Pawnee village visited by Pike in 1806, though it did not match Pike's description. They had a monument erected. Several years later, Hill found a site in southern Nebraska which matched



the description given by Pike. There is no doubt now that the Hill identification is correct (Wedel, 1936: 35). The direct historical approach to Pawnee archeology was greatly facilitated by this identification and subsequent work has been reported by Wedel (1936, 1938).

Other works which have drawn on both written and cartographic data, in an attempt to identify archeological manifestations with ethnic groups, include those of Strong, Mott and Griffin. Strong (1935: 12-13) has handled cartographic data in tabular form, showing the position recorded for various tribes in the Plains at different times. Mott (1938) has reviewed the ethnohistory of Iowa, giving special attention to the Iowa tribe. Griffin (1943) made an intensive study of an area centering around Cincinnati, Ohio.

Although ethnohistoric data has been most often exploited in work such as that already mentioned, it can also contribute to the study of cultural stability and culture change including problems of diffusion, acculturation, and elaboration or florescence and disintegration.

Physical anthropologists might find information of value in collections of portraits and photographs, and in the masses of statistical data in the National Archives.

Ethnohistoric sources sometimes contain material of use to linguists. Missionaries, for example, often recorded vocabularies. Many sources include incidental words such as tribal and place names. In using such data one must take into consideration the phonetic values of the letters of the language in which the words were recorded.

In summary, this paper has indicated the types of material, published and unpublished, available for ethnohistoric research. The data are of three principal classes: written records, maps, and pictorial material. A large portion of the material is readily available to any scholar with access to a large library. An even greater mass of data is available in archives in this country and abroad.

Ethnohistoric data can contribute to the solution of many types of anthropological problems, but are probably of most value to the ethnologist and archeologist. Such data must be used with sophistication since personal and/or political bias, factual inaccuracy, and semantic problems frequently occur.

Although a few men such as Swanton and Fenton have mastered the ethnohistoric approach, and many others have used it incidentally, there are unlimited opportunities for further work. The renewed interest in historical problems and the continuing breakdown of aboriginal American cultures make this source of data more and more important.

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