

DENVER ART MUSEUM

1300 LOGAN STREET, DENVER, COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN ART

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TRIBAL NAMES: PART 2

LEAFLET 85

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1. INTRODUCTORY. The names by which most Indian tribes are commonly known today are not usually those applied by the tribes to themselves. The names given to them come from various sources, of which the main ones are the following: corruptions of native names by French, Spanish and Americans; nicknames applied by one tribe to another; corruptions of these in non-Indian languages; translations into English, often incorrect, of native names and nicknames; names in non-Indian languages which have no connection with the native name. The tribes do not use these common names themselves except in dealing with the Whites. The native name is usually the word for "people," "men," or the like.

2. ACCURATE INFORMATION about these matters is difficult to obtain. Many of the books which discuss them were written before the study of native languages had advanced as far as it has now, with numerous resulting mistakes about the origins and meanings of tribal names. In several cases the information given in this leaflet has been obtained from modern authorities on the various language groups. Thanks are due to them for their assistance.

3. PLAN OF THE LEAFLET. This is the second of several numbers in this series which are to be devoted to tribal names. In each the names are divided according to main geographical areas.

PLAINS

4. ARIKARA (Ah-ríh-kah-rah). There is some disagreement about this name. Reference 5, the latest and a purely linguistic one, states that the name is quite possibly that used by the tribe for itself. It means "elk." References 4 and 13 state that the name is that applied to the tribe by their neighbors the Mandan; and that the tribe's own name is "Sah-nish," meaning "people." The nickname Ree was often applied to the tribe. It is an abbreviation of Arikaree, a misspelling of Arikara.

5. GROS VENTRES (Grow Vawnter). This name is a source of much confusion because it has been applied to two entirely distinct tribes, the Atsina and the Hidatsa. By scientists it is applied to the Atsina; and by the United States Indian Office to the Hidatsa. In this leaflet it is being considered in relation to the Atsina.

The name is a French nickname and means "Big Belly." It does not refer to the anatomy of the Indians but to the fact that they lived on the river of that name. The word "Atsina" (Aht-sée-nah) is the Blackfoot name for the tribe, being a translation of the French name—or perhaps it is the other way (?). The tribe's own name for itself is A-a-nin-en-a (Ah-ah-noon-ayn-ah), meaning either "White clay people" or "Mounds to turn running buffalo." To distinguish them from the Hidatsa this tribe was sometimes called Gros Ventres of the Prairies, or Fall Indians. For the name Gros Ventres in relation to the Hidatsa see section 6 of this leaflet.

6. HIDATSA (Hih-dát-sah). This name appears to be a corruption by themselves of the Hidatsa name for one of their villages on the Knife River, Midahatsiatish (Mee-dah-hat-see-ah-tee-ush), meaning "Willow Village." They formerly called themselves Midhokats (Meed-ho-kats). Two other names have commonly been applied to them, Minitari, and Gros Ventres of the Missouri. Minitari (Mee-nee-táh-ree) is a corruption of the Mandan name for them, Minitahdi (Mee-nee-tah-dee), meaning "cross the water." For Gros Ventres see the discussion in section 5 of this leaflet.

7. MANDAN (Man-dan). This name appears to be a corruption of the Sioux name for the tribe, Matani (Mah-táh-nee) or Mawatani (Mah-wah-táh-nee).

Long ago the tribe called itself Numakaki (Noo-mah-kah-kee), meaning "people." Later the name Nuneta (Noo-ne-tah), also meaning "we, people, ourselves" came to be used.

8. OMAHA (Ó-mah-hah). A corruption of the native name "Oo-mon-hon" (with the "n" nasalized as in French), meaning "against the current, that is, upstream." The name refers to a migration of the tribe up the Mississippi after a split with the related Quapaw who went downstream.

9. OSAGE (Ó-sayj). The American pronunciation of the French corruption of the native name for the tribe, "Wah-zha-zhe," of which the meaning is unknown.

10. PAWNEE (Paw-nee). According to the most recent linguistic investigations this name appears to be an American corruption of the native word "Pah-ree-soo," meaning "a hunter." In the Pawnee language the letters "r" and "n" are very hard to distinguish in speech. Hence the word was thought to be "Pah-nee-soo." The people we call the Pawnee did not think of themselves as a tribe, but as a group of four related tribes. Hence there is no native name for the whole body of associated peoples.

11. QUAPAW (Kwáw-paw). A corruption of the native name "Oo-gach-pah," meaning "with the current, that is, downstream." See section 8 of this leaflet for further information.

NORTHEAST

12. CHIPPEWA (Tchíp-pe-way). See section 17 of this leaflet.

13. DELAWARE (Déh-lah-ware). The tribe, river and state of this name were all named for Thomas West, Lord de la Warre, an early colonial governor of Virginia. The tribe in question lived along the central section of the river and was given its name by the English. The native name is "Leni-Lenape" (Láy-nee Lay-náh-pee), meaning "real men." Sometimes they were called "Lenape" only.

14. FOX. A translation of the native name for one clan of the tribe, Wagoagi (Wah-go-ah-gee). The native name for the whole tribe is Meshkwakiagi (Meshk-wah-kee-ah-gee), meaning "Red Earths." The name "Outagami" (Oo-tah-gah-mee) was sometimes used. It is a corruption of the Ojibwa name for the tribe "Utagamig" (Oo-tah-gah-mig), meaning "they of the other shore."

15. HURON (Héw-ron). A French word meaning "bristled, or rough haired." The native name was Wendat (Wen-dat), meaning possibly "the islanders" or "dwellers on a peninsula." The modern survivors of the tribe are called Wyandot (Wy-an-dot), a corruption of Wendat.

16. MENOMINI (Men-áh-mih-nee). This name is a corruption of the tribe's own name for itself, Manomanewuk (Mah-no-mah-ne-wuk), meaning "wild rice men."

17. OJIBWA (O-jíb-way). A corruption of an expression in the tribe's own language, "o-jib-i-weg," meaning "those who make pictographs." "Ojibiweg" is in turn derived from "nind-o-jib-i-wa," meaning "I mark or write on some object." An earlier explanation of the name, now considered incorrect, derived the name from "o-jib-ub-way," meaning "to roast till puckered up," referring to the tribal style of moccasins which has a puckered seam on the instep. Chippewa is another way of spelling Ojibwa and refers to the same tribe. The native name is anicinabe (ah-nee-cih-nah-be), "first man."

18. SAUK (Sawk). There is some uncertainty here, but the name is most probably a corruption of the native name "Asagiwa" (Ah-sah-ge-wah), meaning

"those who came forth." Sac is another corruption of the native name and is the official U. S. Indian Service spelling.

19. **WINNEBAGO** (Win-ne-báy-go). A corruption of the Ojibwa nickname, in their Algonkin language, for this Siouan tribe. The native name is "Hochtchang-ga-rah," meaning "big fish people."

SOUTHWEST

20. **APACHE** (Ah-pah-tchee). A Spanish corruption of the name for the tribe in the language of Zuni pueblo, "Apachu" (Ah-pah-choo), meaning "enemy." This explanation is not absolutely proven, but is both possible and probable. The various Apache bands call themselves by variations of "Dine" (Din-neh), meaning "people."

21. **HAVASUPAI** (Hah-vah-sóo-pie). A corruption of the tribe's own name for itself, Havasuwaipaa (Hah-vah-soo-wy-pah-ah), which means "blue green water people." The native name is sometimes further shortened to Supai. The tribe is also sometimes referred to by the name given it by the neighboring Hopi, Coconino (Ko-ko-née-no).

22. **WALAPAI** (Wáh-lah-pie). A corruption of the native name, Hawáya-paya (Hah-wah-le-ah-pah-yah), which means "pine people." The name is sometimes spelled Hualapai, pronounced like Walapai.

23. **MOHAVE** (Mo-háh-ve). A corruption of the native name Hamakhava (Hah-mak-hah-vah), of which the meaning is unknown. The early Spanish sometimes spelled the word Jamajab (Hah-mah-hav).

24. **YUMA** (Yóu-mah). This name appears to be a corruption of the name given the tribe by the Pima, "Ium" (youm), of which the meaning is unknown. But the name may have been introduced by the Spanish, who were using it in the 17th century. The tribe's own name is Kwitchiana (Kwih-tchee-ah-nah), of unknown meaning.

Compiled by F. H. Douglas from the following sources:

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