

1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Tunica-Biloxi, Tunica spoke Tunica while the Biloxi spoke Biloxi, but both languages are now extinct. Biloxi was from the Siouan family.
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): TUN
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Tunica-Biloxi Reservation, Marksville, Louisiana
- 1.4 Brief history: The Tunica tribe was first contacted in 1699 by Canadian missionary priests, named Davion, De Montigny, and La Source. There were earlier references by other explorers who heard about them through neighboring tribes. After initial contact their population was reduced substantially from thousands to only a few hundred. The Tunica first lived in the lower Yazoo region of Mississippi, but were forced to move southward to Louisiana after interactions with the English in 1706. Due to disease and battles, their numbers dwindled even further over the next two centuries. They became influenced by the French and started to adopt many of their lifestyles. Since the 1800s the Tunica and Biloxi started to intermarry with each other and form a new tribe. Not much is known about the traditional culture of the Biloxi, because after contact their numbers were greatly decimated and the remaining people intermarried with other tribes, particularly the Tunica. Both of their native languages have been extinct since the mid 1900s, and the people speak English, and some older members speak French. The federal government officially recognized them in 1981 as the Tunica-Biloxi tribe. Much of their traditional culture is lost due to severe population reduction, early influences of the French, and the tribe's reservation to talk about their culture to early historians. Today many tribal members live on their reservation and the tribe operates the Paragon Casino Resort, which opened in 1994.
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Greatly influenced by original French settlers and missionaries. Both the Biloxi and the Tunica formed alliances with the French. Today they have assimilated into the American lifestyle.
- 1.6 Ecology: They live along the Lower Mississippi River Valley, a very fertile area for crops, which composed a majority of their diet. The area was also home to many different forms of wildlife.
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: 648 in 2000 (3).

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Indian corn, squash, persimmons, berries, wild fruits and roots. They were mainly agriculturalists and had a vegetarian based diet (4).
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Deer, bear, turkey, fish, and other marine life (4).
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Used bows and arrows, arrow heads, and spears (4).
- 2.4 Food storage: N/A
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Men and women had separate chores. Men had to hunt, fish, fell trees and make objects from them, wage war, build cabins, care for the crops, and perform other physical tasks. Women made flour out of corn, cooked, made pots, baskets, mats, clothes, performed household chores, and took care of children (1).
- 2.6 Land tenure: Both men and women tended the fields (4).
- 2.7 Ceramics: Made clay pottery and woven baskets. The pottery was well made, and had different forms and designs and had crushed mussel shell in it (4).
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: N/A
- 2.9 Food taboos: N/A
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Dugout canoes (2).

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): N/A
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): N/A

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): N/A
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): N/A
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): N/A
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): N/A
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): N/A
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: No percent, but divorce was very rare, in the eight years Antoine-Simon Du Pratz was there, he only heard of one divorce case (2).
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: No percent mentioned, but polygamy was rare (2).
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: A man would have to give a present to the woman's mother (1)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Generally matrilineal. But chieftainship was passed to the son of the chief's sister (1)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Biological fathers acted more as an older brother to his children than a parent. The wife's brother was primarily responsible for disciplining and upbringing his nieces and nephews (1).
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: There was a class of homosexuals. They performed menial womanly tasks and were seen as "social women." (1).
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Exogamous matrilineal (1).
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? N/A
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") N/A
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? N/A
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: N/A

- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) N/A
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Before marriage females enjoyed some sexual freedom before marriage, but after she was married she was expected to remain faithful to her husband (1).
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: N/A
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? The mother's brother (1).
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females N/A
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades N/A
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) N/A
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? N/A
- 4.24 Joking relationships? N/A
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations? Matrilineal (1).
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules? Men could not marry their female cousins (1).
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes (1).
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Both men and women were given names as infants, but as the man grew his childhood name would be replaced with a new one, which would reflect his warlike deeds. Women kept their names throughout their lifetimes (1).
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Outside communities (1).
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriages were generally arranged, but not forced upon (1).
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: N/A

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: N/A
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: N/A
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: N/A
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Tunica originally had some influence over neighboring tribes, due to their control of the salt springs. Eventually the Tunica and Biloxi tribes intermarried and consolidated into one (4).
- 4.18 Cannibalism? No indications of cannibalism (1).

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Sedentary. They maintained a permanent village and fields (4).
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Not much is known, except there were two grand chiefs, one was called the head civil chief and the other was the head war chief (2).
- 5.4 Post marital residence: With the wife's family (1).
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): N/A
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): N/A
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: N/A
- 5.8 Village and house organization: N/A
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): There was a temple for worship, it was built up on an artificial mound. People would only enter it going to or returning from war. (2). Inside there were paintings of frogs and women (1).
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Built four post beds raised three feet off the ground (1).
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Used the ranked clan system (1).
- 5.12 Trade: From the earliest contact there was evidence that the Tunica were in a salt trade with the salt mines from the upper Ouachita River in Arkansas. The Tunica maintained control over the salt and traded with other local tribes. They initially traded only with the French and refused to trade with the English settlers (4).
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Yes. Some families became higher up and more respected than others (1).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6 Time allocation to RCR:
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Indications that there were shamans, but the knowledge of the shamans is now lost. Later herbalists became popular (2).
- 6.2 Stimulants: N/A
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):
- Death- After death the body was kept for a day, and then interred, during this time many people would make speeches. The body would be buried with the head facing east (the reason for this is forgotten). A fire is kept for four nights over the head to keep away the bad spirits. During the nights those who watched over the grave fasted. At the very end of the last night everyone would go to the water and submerge four times. Afterwards the soul was satisfied and went up. Then everyone gathered at the house of the deceased and had a breakfast consisting of white dumplings and fresh geese. After Christianity a mourning period would occur, anywhere from six months for close relations, and up to a year for the parents of the deceased. When people mourned they abstained from food and drink every day until noon (2).
- 6.4 Other rituals:

- After some infants were born their heads would be compressed and flattened. But the practice quickly disappeared after contact with the Europeans (4).
- The Tunica-Biloxi had a ceremony that took place before each harvest. A medicine man would call people together at the new corn harvest, to a ceremony called *posketa* or *bosketa*. During this ceremony they would have to drink the Black Drink in large amounts. After drinking large quantities of the Black Drink they would vomit, which would clean their bodies and mind and allow them to enjoy the fresh corn. Men and older sons also had a special role in the harvest, they would have to go to the sacred water hole with the chief, face the rising sun and dive naked into the water. Once they cleansed the chief would mark their foreheads with a cross, which represented the four cardinal directions, and then give them a kernel of corn to consume. Afterwards they men would return home where the wives had prepared a feast of many different corn dishes (1).
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): The Tunica emerged from the mountain, with red and blue alligators laid side by side. When the red alligator would roll over, it would get very hot. And then it would become very cold when the blue alligator would roll over. When the Tunica people assembled, they would go and look at the alligators every year, but if anyone would not have fasted, the alligators would swallow them (5).
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Dancing was very popular and the Tunica-Biloxi shared their dancing with settlers. They danced to secular songs, and was either preformed for fun, courtship, trade, or political reasons. The Tunica liked snake dancing, where dancers would form a line, hold hands, and spiral together, and then quickly spun out. The Tunica-Biloxi made drums out of skin-covered cypress knees. They also filled up gourds with gravel or garfish scales to make rattles (1).
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:
- 6.8 Missionary effect: They were affected by Christian beliefs, but, until recently their ceremonies were almost unchanged from older times. But after he left the Tunica slowly started converting to Christianity (4).
- 6.9 RCR revival:
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Cemeteries were located in the country on a hill, because spirits were believed to dwell around them, and each cemetery was protected by one man. A few days a year fresh corn and beans were thrown into the cemetery for four days so that the dead would have something to eat. On the fourth day the people fasted until noon, then met at the house of the cemetery's protector and submerged themselves in the water four times, and a dinner followed (2).
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? N/A
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy? N/A
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Not much is know because they were very reserved about talking about their religion to missionaries. It is know that they had nine gods; the sun, thunder, fire, god of the east, south, north, and west, of heaven, and of earth. Much of their traditional knowledge is lost, but it is known that the Tunica-Biloxi dreaded witchcraft (2). They had a temple which contained effigies of a woman, who most likely represented the sun, and a frog, which probably represented the underworld (4).

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: Both men and women were tattooed, and women blackened their teeth (4).
- 7.2 Piercings: Women exclusively wore earrings (4).
- 7.3 Haircut: Both men and women wore their hair long, women would plait it down the back to the waist, or coil it in a crown around the head. Their hair was not treated with oil or greased (4). They removed their body hair with tweezers made out of clamshell (1).
- 7.4 Scarification: N/A
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Sometimes men and women would have mantels of turkey feathers or muskrat skin caps (2). Other ornaments included marine shells, beads, and gorgets (4).
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: When corn was to be harvested men and their older sons were marked with the sign of the cross, which represented the four cardinal directions, on their foreheads by the chief (1).
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Married women were covered from the waist to the knees, girls were naked until age 12. The women's skirt was made from mulberry cloth, and has a fringe. Men went naked, except for the occasional wretched deerskin. (2).
- 7.8 Missionary effect: The first recorded contact was with several missionary priests. Father Davion tried to teach the Tunica about Christianity, and while some initially converted, many did not and kept their original religion (4). The Tunica-Biloxi have adopted a typical American form of dress today.
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: N/A

8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system: N/A
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: N/A
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): N/A

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

1. Kniffen, Fred Bowerman, Hiram F. Gregory, and George A. Stokes. *The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana: From 1542 to the Present*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1987. Print.
2. Swanton, John Reed. *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico*. Washington: G.P.O., 1911. Print.
3. <http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/phc-t18/tab001.pdf>

4. Brain, Jeffrey P., T. M. Hamilton, and Arthur E. Spiess. *Tunica Archaeology*. Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1988. Print
5. Haas, Mary R. *Tunica Texts*. Berkeley: University of California, 1950. Print.