

Third Edition

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and

Tunica-Biloxi Today, **Bill Day** - *Director, Tunica-Biloxi Cultural and
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Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
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Editor's Notes

The publication of *On the Tunica Trail* in 1977 launched the Anthropological Study Series, published by the Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission. The goal of the series is to illuminate for a general audience some of the major episodes in Louisiana's past.

Dr. Jeffery P. Brain, author of *On the Tunica Trail*, is the leading authority on the Tunica Indians. His research has been sponsored by his home institution, the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, and by the National Geographic Society. He has participated in the study of a historic Tunica Indian site on the Angola penal farm in Louisiana and has studied and cataloged the "Tunica Treasure" archaeological collection.

This edition of *On the Tunica Trail* encapsulates his landmark study entitled *Tunica Archaeology*, which is released through the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. This and other of Dr. Brain's publications are recommended to readers who want to learn more about the Tunica. They are listed at the end of this booklet in the section entitled "For Further Reading."

I hope that *On the Tunica Trail* will bring cultural enrichment to the people of Louisiana and will stimulate an interest in preserving our historical and archaeological resources for the enjoyment and study of future generations.

Introduction

The Tunica are a good people...

They have become nearly extinct...

They had come down the Mississippi [to the place] where they lived

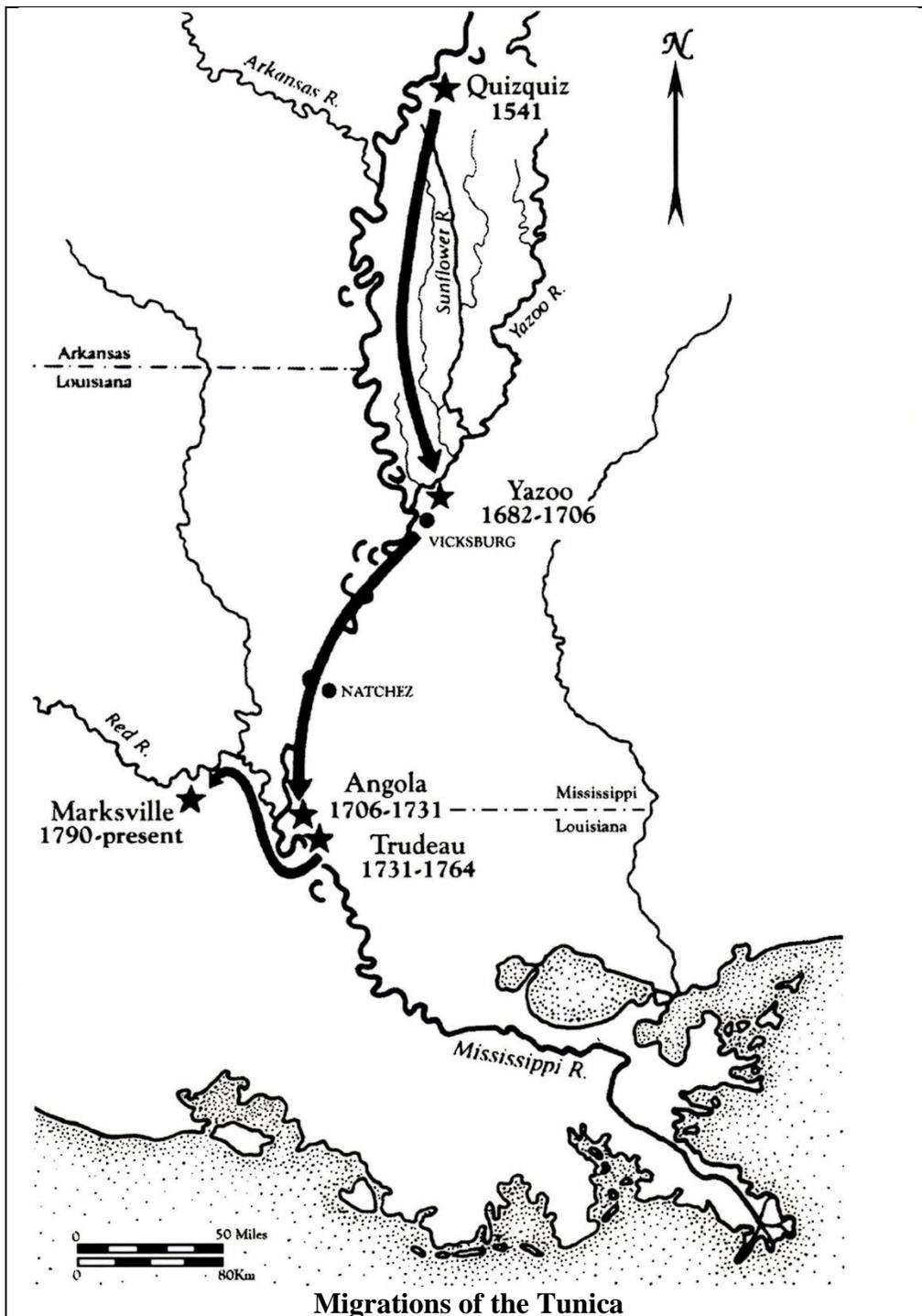
[Youchigant, cited in Haas 1950:143].

In their own folklore, this is a capsule history of an exceptional group of North American Indians. The Tunica (which may be translated as "the people") were one of the small number of Lower Mississippi Valley tribes that played a very important role in late prehistoric and early historic events in the valley.

Similar in cultural heritage to many other Indian groups in the southeastern United States, and especially in the Mississippi Valley, the Tunica nevertheless have a special significance for the native history of the area. Unlike most Lower Mississippi Valley tribes, they are not lost to history but instead are still amongst us on their tribal lands in Marksville, Louisiana.

In northwestern Mississippi, a great center of power was spawned in the late prehistoric period by expansion of the Mississippian cultural tradition from its core area near the confluence of the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri rivers. One of the groups participating in the Mississippian tradition, which represents the zenith of the Native American cultural attainment, was called the Quizquiz. Their capital was a town with the same name that was located close to where De Soto crosses the Mississippi River in 1541. Disease and population density apparently led to a breakdown of social and political structures during the seventeenth century. When the French found the remnants of great Quizquiz on the lower Yazoo River in 1699 they were called the Tunica.

It is in the time and setting outlined above that the Tunica became known to history. Like other Indian groups they were left adrift in a changing native world which was soon to change beyond native recognition as the Europeans began to take control. The history of the Tunica and their ethnic continuity are the twin themes that are to be explored in the following pages. The story starts with the first known identification of the Tunica at the fabled town of Quizquiz.



Migrations of the Tunica

Quizquiz

One mid-day we came upon a town called Quizquiz, and so suddenly to inhabitants, that they were without any notice of us, the men being away at work in the maize-fields. We took more than three hundred women, and the few skins and shawls they had in their houses [Biedma 1904:25].

Off to one side of the town was the dwelling place of the Curaca [chief]. It was situated on a high mound which now served as a fortress. Only by means of two stairways could one ascend to this house. Here many Indians gathered while others sought refuge in a very wild forest lying between the town and the Great River [the Mississippi]. The lord of the province, who like his land was called [Quizquiz], was now old and sick in bed; but on hearing the noise and confusion in his village, he arose and came from his bedchamber. Then beholding the pillage and seizure of his vassals, he grasped a battle-ax and began to descend the stairs with the greatest fury, in the meantime vowing loudly and fiercely to slay anyone who came into his land without permission. Thus this wretched creature threatened when he had neither the person nor the strength to kill a cat, for besides being ill, he was very old and shriveled. Indeed among all the Indians that the Spaniards saw in Florida [as the entire southeastern United States was known to the Spanish], they found none other of such wretched appearance. But the memory of valiant deeds and triumphs of his bellicose youth, and the fact that he held sway over a province so large and good as his, gave him strength to utter those fierce threats and even fiercer ones [Garcilaso 1951:423-424].

These excerpts from the De Soto narratives have not been quoted at such length to emphasize the "bellicose" nature of ancient Quizquiz so much as to demonstrate the character and achievements of the early Tunica. Quizquiz almost certainly represents the first record of the people known to later history as the Tunica. There are several points of interest, then about this "province so large and good," that are pertinent to our story.

The confrontation at Quizquiz was certainly of no little significance. The Spaniards had been severely bloodied in conflicts with other Indian groups just prior to arriving at Quizquiz, and being confronted by the prospect of determined resistance (reportedly reinforced by "almost four thousand armed warriors...within less than three hours after their arrival in town" [Garcilaso 1951:425]), they sued for peace. This was a most novel move for the hitherto arrogant and uncompromising conquistadores. It is significant that it was at Quizquiz they were first brought to humbler attitudes, for it was there that they first encountered a segment of the great

Mississippian cultural development. These were peoples who could raise great armies in a few hours; but these were also peoples whose men tended the agricultural fields, and who built walled towns containing large mounds upon which their chiefs were accustomed to reside. These peoples were ancestors of the Tunica.

Quizquiz was located in northwestern Mississippi near the town of Friars Point and a short distance above the confluence of the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers. It is an interesting historical footnote that this point was the southern frontier of the Mississippian thrust in the mid-sixteenth century. It is a coincidence of even greater significance for the history of the tribe that the area can be linked with the Tunica. The place offered a strategic riverine position which was a primary consideration in the location of Tunica settlements. It also provided a rich natural environment that supported the large population.

Here a break in the historical record must be recognized before the story can be continued. There was a gap of more than a century and a half before European contact next was made with the Tunica and at that time they were a modest tribe who numbered only a few hundred warriors, a pale reflection of great Quizquiz (even discounting the customary exaggerations of the De Soto narratives). While the Spanish entrada had little immediate political, cultural, or economic effect upon the Indians, its biological effect must have been enormous. Unaccustomed diseases were introduced which ravaged the native population. The Quizquiz and their neighbors must have suffered horribly. The Quizquiz-Tunica responded to the resulting epidemics, famine, warfare, and population shifts by moving south sometime between 1541 and 1699.

Yazoo

We arrived at the Tonicas [Tunica] about sixty leagues below the Ankanseas [the Arkansas Indians near the mouth of the river that still bear their name]. The first village is four leagues from the Micissippi inland on the bank of a quite pretty river; they are dispersed in little villages; they cover in all four leagues of country; they are about 260 cabins.... They are very peaceable people, well disposed, much attached to the French, living entirely on Indian corn, they are employed solely on their fields; they do not hunt like the other Indians [La Source 1861:80-81].

In 1699, as described above, the French found the Tunica on the Yazoo River near its confluence with the Mississippi. La Source was with an intrepid group of missionaries from Quebec who were looking for "new souls to save," and in the process were to serve the imperial aspirations of France as she strove for control of the Mississippi

Valley. The first contact returned the Tunica to history, and the fact that they were of such good nature and well disposed to the French brought them the attentions of the French missionary effort.

A certain Father Antoine Davion was a member of La Source's group, and he elected to establish a mission among the Tunica. He was already elderly when he established his post, and he apparently had great difficulty learning the native languages. Nevertheless, he was remarkable among the early French missionaries in sticking to his post for some 20 years even though his labors produced few converts.

Although Father Davion's service to his God was with little reward - and he eventually returned to France to die in disappointment and disgrace - he had helped establish strong ties between the French and the Tunica. Davion saw himself as an instrument of God, but the Tunica apparently viewed him as the means to direct and continuing access to European material culture. They rejected his religion, but avidly accept his worldly goods. This response to European contact was not unusual among native groups, but in this special case of the Tunica it has more than usual significance, for it is a key to their distinctive lifeway and to their subsequent history.

That the Tunica were the heirs to ancient Quizquiz is indicated by their apparent emphasis upon agriculture, as cited above, and the suggestion that such activities were the responsibility of the men, an unusual development among native North Americans. Further support is provided by Father Gravier, a contemporary of Davion's. Who specifically notes that unlike other tribes, "the men do here what peasants do in France; they cultivate and dig the earth, plant and harvest the crops... The women do only indoor work, make the earthen pots and their clothes" (Gravier 1861:134-135). Additional indication of the identification of the Tunica with Quizquiz is provided by the fact that when the Tunica left the vicinity of the mouth of the Arkansas, they settled at the next major riverine confluence to the south: that of the Yazoo and the Mississippi.

The two facts cited above - the Tunica taste for European goods and their choice for settlement at prime commercial crossroads - are significant observations. The Tunica not only recognized the value of the newly introduced items, but they were able to "capitalize" upon them in the classic economic sense of the word. Their success is dramatically demonstrated by the extraordinary wealth of European material that has been recovered from the Trudeau site, to be discussed below.



Kettles, hoes, axes, plates, and mugs are just a few of the types of European manufactured goods that the Tunica acquired. (These artifacts from Trudeau were conserved by, and photographs were provided by, the Tunica-Biloxi Indians.)

As already mentioned, the desirability of European technology and its artifacts was recognized by all native groups. What makes the Tunica case exceptional is that they were able to accumulate unusual quantities, in fact unprecedented quantities, of these goods. They did so making themselves indispensable to the French in two ways. First, as overtly stated in the contemporary records, the Tunica were important allies in the political and military schemes of the French (and to a lesser extent other colonial powers) during the initial contact period. A secondary importance, hitherto given little recognition, was their less obvious but more enduring economic ability. The Tunica were traders and entrepreneurs of the first order, as is most clearly manifested by their control of such major communication points as river confluences. They were not mere toll collectors, however; for there is evidence that they controlled a vital element of

trade. They were a major factor in the manufacture and distribution of salt, an indispensable commodity to native and European alike. As observed by the great historian, John R. Swanton:

The Tunica were much engaged in the boiling down and selling of salt [1946:819].

When the French entered the country, trade in salt was still active but most salt seems to have been extracted in northern Louisiana. The Tunica Indians are particularly mentioned in connection with it... [1946:738].

By 1682, the Tunica had concentrated upon the Yazoo River a few miles above its mouth, though parties were scattered through the forests of northeastern Louisiana to boil salt with which they were in the habit of trading... [1946:197-198].

The trade in salt was clearly a prehistoric development that the Tunica were able to turn to their advantage with the Europeans as well. To the credit of the Tunica, however, and to their ultimate advantage, they were not committed to this one final resource, as we shall see.

Angola Farm

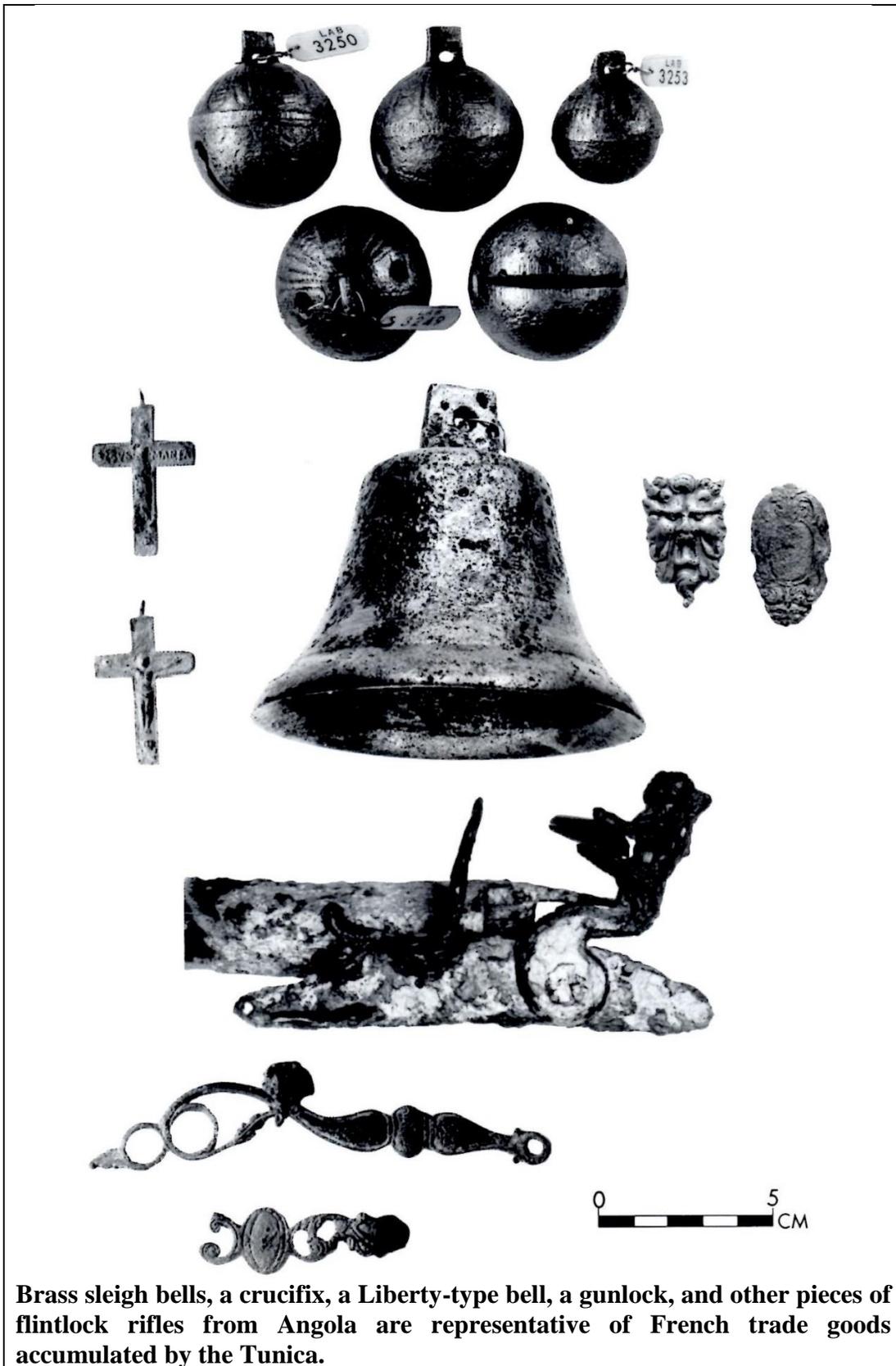
Then they went down the Mississippi again. [Their] big boats were tied together. They went [on] down until the rope broke. One [of] the boats went on down [the river]. Then the other [boat] came to a stop on the shore. They settled again near that place. They did not see the other boat. It went on down the Mississippi. The Tunica settled there [Youchigant, cited in Haas 1950:133].

According to contemporary French accounts, the Tunica were driven from the Yazoo in 1706 by Chickasaw raids instigated by the English. Whether or not it was that simple, there certainly was unrest in the Yazoo region and the Tunica again removed themselves from a theater which disrupted their accustomed activities. Because the Natchez, their age-old rivals, were immediately to the south, the Tunica had to move past them all the way down to the vicinity of the Red River confluence, again the next major riverine junction. This move did not seriously affect their control of the salt trade, for the Red River was an alternate route to that resource. Furthermore, it provided them with the opportunity to take control of a new resource of even greater value which was to lead to even more accumulated wealth for the Tunica.

First, however, the conflicts of European and Indian interaction were to intrude once again:

One night they [the Tunica] gave a ball. Once more some Indians [the Natchez] came. They were dancing. At midnight they stopped. Unaware [of danger] they [the Tunica] went to bed and slept. The Indians fought them again. Nevertheless, the Tunica repulsed them [Youchigant, cited in Haas 1950:133].

A considerable party of Natchez carried the pipe of peace to the Grand Chief of the Tonicas, under pretense of concluding a peace with him and all the French. The Chief sent to M. Perrier to know his pleasure: but the Natchez in the mean time assassinated the Tonicas, beginning with their Grand Chief; and few of them escaped his treachery [Le Page du Pratz 1774:93].



Brass sleigh bells, a crucifix, a Liberty-type bell, a gunlock, and other pieces of flintlock rifles from Angola are representative of French trade goods accumulated by the Tunica.



Remains of the village area at Angola Farm were carefully excavated and recorded.

Thus occurred one of the greatest disasters in recorded Tunica history. The event was an immediate sequel to the Natchez tragedy. The French had defeated and scattered the Natchez on the field of battle, but had not destroyed them. Apparently, the remaining Natchez harbored deep resentment against their old enemies, the Tunica, for the role they had played in the ruin of the Natchez order. A refugee group of Natchez contacted the

Tunica in April 1731 with dark designs in mind. A fuller account of this sad story is given by Charlevoix, historian of New France:

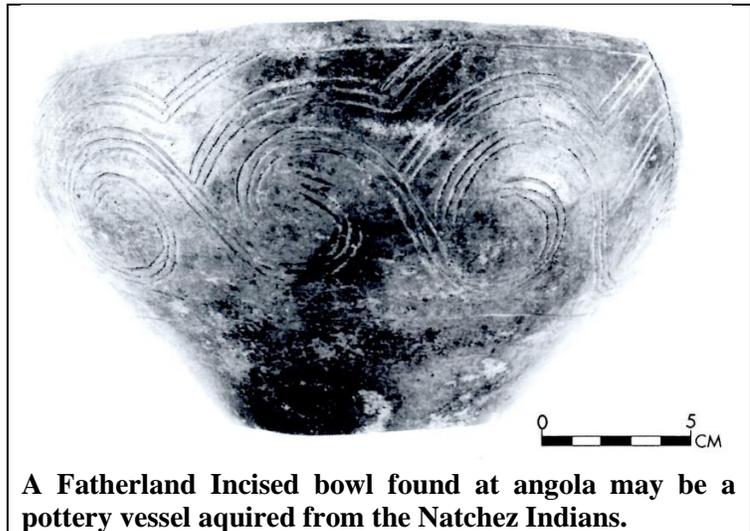
In the month of April, the Head Chief of the Tonicas [Cahura-Joligo] descended to New Orleans, and told [Governor] Perrier that while he was hunting four Natchez had come to him to beg him to make terms for them with the French, adding that all, including those who had taken refuge among the Chickasaws, asked to be received and pardoned; that they would reside wherever it was wished, but that they should be glad to be near the Tonicas, and that he came to ascertain his intentions.

Perrier replied that he consented to their settling two leagues from his village, but not nearer, to avoid all occasion of quarrel between the two nations; but that above all things, he exacted that they should come unarmed. The Tunica promised to conform to this order; yet as soon as he reached home, he received thirty Natchez into his village, after taking the precaution to disarm them.... A few days after, the Flour Chief [the last great existing chief of the Natchez] arrived among the Tonicas with a hundred men, their women and children, having concealed Chickasaws and Corrois [allied tribes] in the canebrake around the village.

The head chief informed them that he was forbidden to receive them unless they gave up their arms; they replied that this was indeed their intention, but they begged him to consent to let them keep them sometime longer, lest their women, seeing them disarmed, should think themselves prisoners condemned to death. He consented; then food was distributed to their new guests, and they danced

till after midnight, after which the Tonicas retired to their cabins, thinking that of course the Natchez would also go to rest. But soon after that was the 14th day of June, the Natchez, and apparently the Chicasaws and Corrois, although Perrier's letter says nothing on the point, fell upon all the cabins, and slaughtered all whom they surprised asleep. The Head Chief ran up at the noise, and at first killed four Natchez; but, overborne by numbers, he was slain with some twelve of his warriors. His war-chief [Bride les Boeufs], undismayed by this loss or the flight of most of his braves, rallied a dozen, with whom he regained the Head Chief's cabin; he even succeeded in recalling the rest, and after fighting for five days and nights almost without intermission, remained master of his village. The Tonicas on this occasion had twenty men killed and as many wounded. They killed of the Natchez thirty-three men, and took three prisoners, whom they burned [Charlevoix 1872:116-117].

Ghosts walked the land, and the land was unfriendly. After the destruction of their village, the surviving Tunica elected to move yet once again. The Tunica traditions and French records are silent about this event. Perhaps the reason was that the move itself was of such a minor nature, being only a few miles to the south, to the site we know as Trudeau. According to contemporary cartographic evidence, this move must have occurred within a few months of disaster.



A Fatherland Incised bowl found at angola may be a pottery vessel aquired from the Natchez Indians.

Trudeau

At Trudeau, the Tunica still maintained control of the Portage of the Cross, and the important Red River confluence. Their continuing success in controlling trade and other economic pursuits at this vital crossroads is amply testified to by the so-called "Tunica Treasure." It was this extraordinary collection of European and native artifacts that stimulated renewed interest in Tunica history. The artifacts had been in a mortuary context, that is to say that they had been deposited with the dead as grave offerings. Along with approximately a hundred burials were dozens of firearms, scores of European ceramic vessels, hundreds of metal kettles, hundreds of thousands of glass beads, a vast assortment of tools, ornaments, and other miscellany, as well as a goodly representation of native artifacts. The sheer quantity and variety of European

items is unparalleled at any other known contemporary native site of the mid-eighteenth century in the Southeast.

How had the Tunica come to such "riches," material wealth so vast, moreover, that they could dispose of it in such quantity? The true answers are lost forever, of course, but their proven qualities of entrepreneurship coupled with the strategic move even closer to the northern limits of the permanent French settlements at Pointe Coupee only another few miles south must provide the major solution. In addition to their continuing military role of fending off surviving bands of Natchez and other native renegades, they had assumed an even larger entrepreneurial role. What did they have of such exceptional value to the French that would occasion this accumulation of material wealth, aside from advantageous position and the already flourishing salt trade?

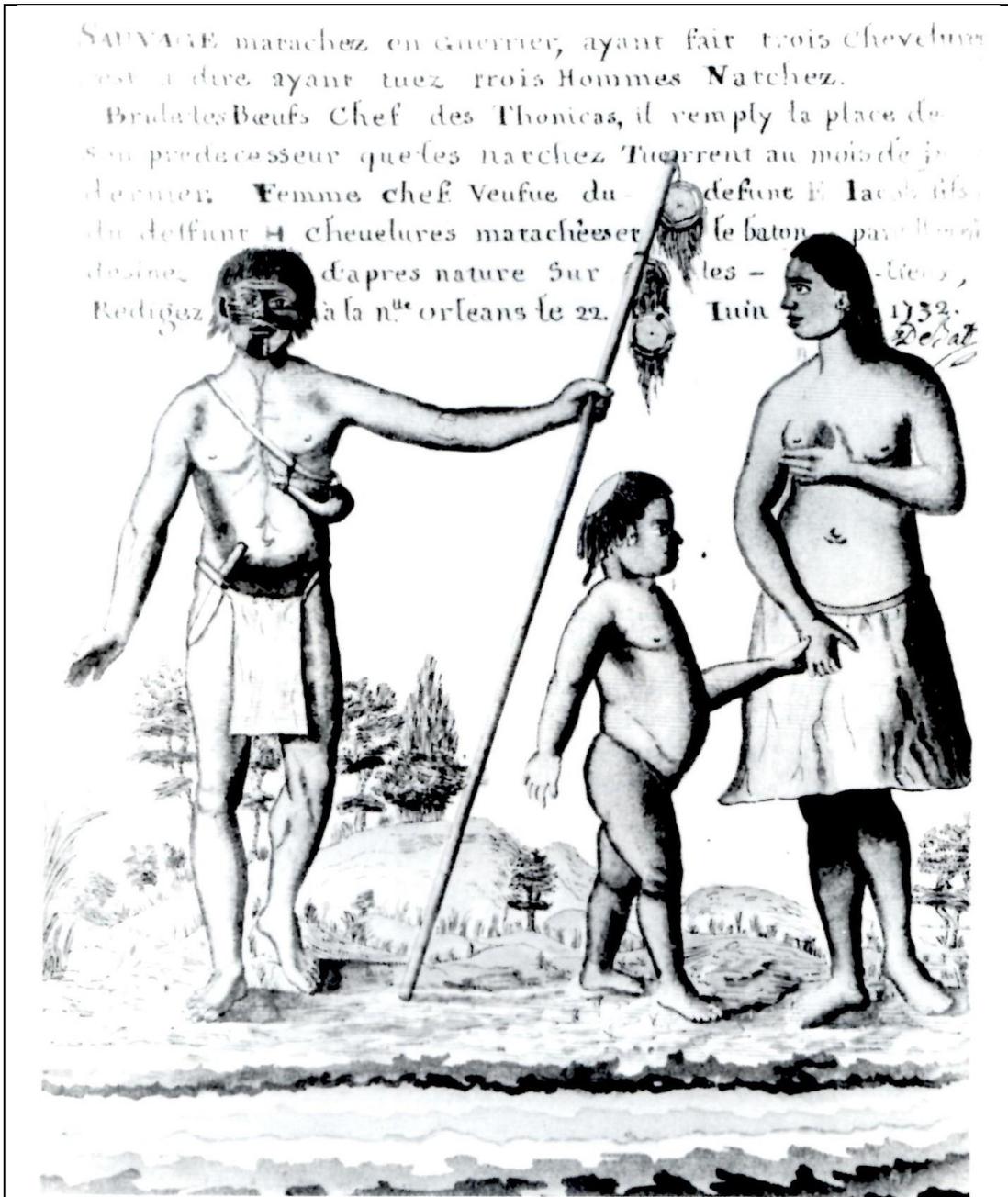
In a word: horses. It was the ability of the Tunica to control the horse trade that made them indispensable to the French. Curiously, this necessity to the European way of life depended upon native supply in the eighteenth century. Even though the colonists were provisioned by sea directly from Europe, horses seem to have been brought in only rarely. The reason was economic: put quite simply, horses were cheaper to procure locally through trade established among many diverse Indians groups drawing upon the vast resources of the Spanish Southwest. As noted by the historian Antoine Le Page du Pratz:, the horses were

brought from New Mexico for the service of the French in Louisiana. I am ignorant of what view the Indians may have had in that commerce: but I well know, that notwithstanding the fatigues of the journey, these cattle, one with another did not come, after deducting all expenses, and even from the second hand, but to about two pistoles a head; whence I ought to presume, that they have them cheap in New Mexico. By means of this nation we have in Louisiana very beautiful horses, of the species of those of Old Spain, which, if managed or trained, people of the first rank might ride [Le Page du Pratz 1774:166].

That the Tunica were leaders in this horse trade is explicitly stated by the official historian of New France, Father Charlevoix, who visited the great chief of the Tunica, Cahura-Joligo, in December 1721:

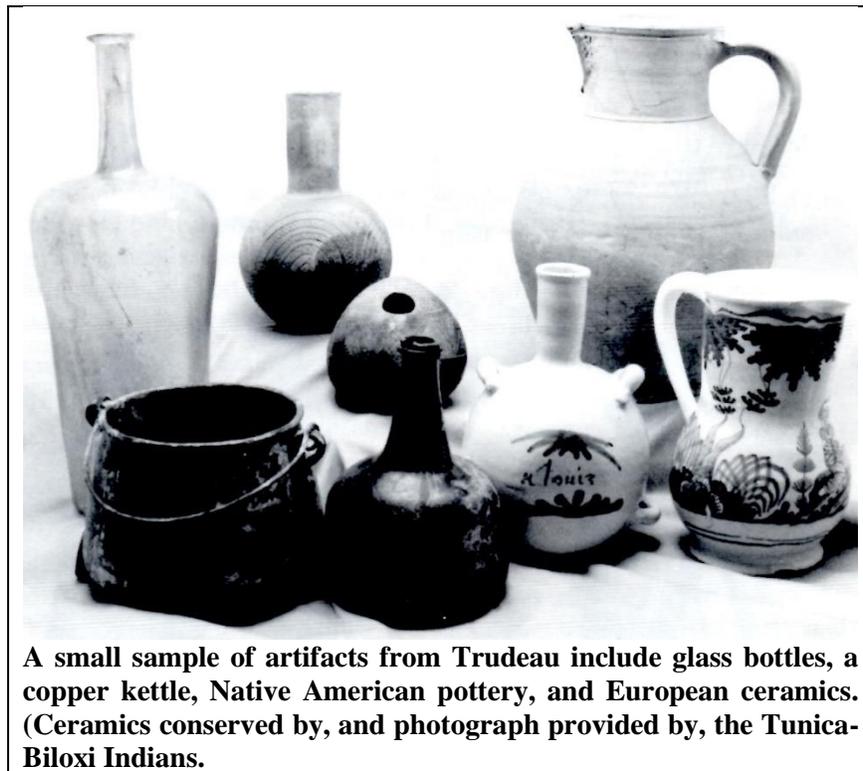
The chief received us very politely; he was dressed in the French fashion, and seemed to be not at all uneasy in that habit. Of all the savages of Canada [i.e., New France] there is none so depended on by our commandants as this chief. He loves our nation, and has no cause to repent of the services he has rendered it. He trades with the French, whom he supplies with horses and fowls, and he

understands his trade very well. He has learned of us to hoard up money, and he reckoned very rich [Swanton 1911:312-313].



The DeBatz drawing (1732) depicts Bride les Boeufs, a Tunica chief during the Trudeau years. He holds a staff to which three Natchez scalps were attached. Also shown are the wife and son of the Tunica's great chief, Cahura-Joligo, who was killed the previous spring during the Natchez raid at Angola. (Photograph courtesy of Peabody Museum, Harvard University)

By their move even closer to the French settlements 10 years later, the Tunica consolidated and strengthened their position. Their shrewdness at horsetrading ("...he understands his trade very well") and value as military auxiliaries earned them the rewards of European contact and friendship. The material wealth of the Tunica increased as they once again successfully adapted to a new situation. In the process, they became ever more changed by, and dependent upon, the European lifeway. Nevertheless, it was this adaptability of the Tunica that was their greatest asset through out the long story already told, and is undoubtedly the reason they are still with us today while most other aboriginal groups of the Mississippi Valley have long since disappeared.



A small sample of artifacts from Trudeau include glass bottles, a copper kettle, Native American pottery, and European ceramics. (Ceramics conserved by, and photograph provided by, the Tunica-Biloxi Indians.)

Marksville

One day the Tunica chief was sitting on the bank. As he sat watching, some buzzards crossed the [river]. He spoke to his people. "Land [for the Tunica] lies to the west," he said. Then he sent his people. "If you get in the boat and go straight over there, you will find land," he said [Youchigant, cited in Haas 1950:139].

After the French surrendered sovereignty in 1763, few narratives about the Tunica were included in the later eighteenth century official records. It is known that they remained generally in the vicinity of Pointe Coupee for a number of years, but before

the end of the century they left the Mississippi Valley and settled near Marksville, Louisiana, on the Red River. The reasons for this move are lost to history, but may have been in response to the increasing numbers of Euro-American settlers.



Traditional Tunica pottery, pottery from other Indian groups, and pottery influenced by European styles are included in the so-called "Tunica Treasure." (Artifacts reconstructed and conserved by, and photograph courtesy of, the Tunica-Biloxi Indians).

During the last two centuries, the Tunica have remained at Marksville, on the very lands they were first granted by Spanish authorities before the assumption of American control. There are records that many did move farther west to Texas and

Oklahoma where they were absorbed by other Indian groups, but a hard core elected to stay in Marksville. There they intermarried with first the Ofo and Avoyel Indians and then the Biloxi. Today, the Tunica are participating in the prevailing Euro-American lifeway, including material culture and language. However, they have preserved their ethnic identity and still maintain a tribal government. In 1980, the federal government formally recognized the existence of the Tunica in the combined Tunica-Biloxi Tribe. The recognition attests to the continuity of a people. This remarkable continuity, in the light of the fate of most other Lower Mississippi Valley tribes, is a key to the history of the Tunica. Their ability to adapt to new situations, and thus preserve themselves, is what this story has been all about

Summary

The Tunica are a good people. They did not commit any crime. They have always helped their white brothers. . . . They have become nearly extinct [Youchigant, cited in Haas 1950:143].

So ends this history of the Tunica, but not their story. The story is unusual and important. We have more than the documentation of the location and movements of a particular tribal group and their importance at each location. We have here an intimate glimpse of a people as they participated in the great events of the late prehistoric and

early historic periods. As such, the Tunica provide an incomparable key to those events.

Tunica-Biloxi Today

By: Bill Day, Director

Tunica-Biloxi Cultural and Historic Preservation

History is a continuum, and this applies to the Tunica-Biloxi. The struggle for federal "recognition" began in the 1930s when tribesmen led by Chief Eli Barbry made their way to Washington, D.C., in a Model T Ford. Fifty years and many efforts later, under the leadership of Eli's grandson, Earl J. Barbry, Sr., the U.S. Congress formally declared the Tunica-Biloxi to be a sovereign nation. This recognition placed the Tribe on equal footing with the fifty states and into a special relationship with the federal government.

It was with this status that the Tribe began legal effort which was to lead to recovery of the objects which had been pilfered from the graves of their ancestors, the so-called "Tunica Treasure." As with the quest for "recognition," litigation was a slow and agonizing process. This time, however, there was welcome assistance; the State of Louisiana joined the tribe in its lawsuit for the title to the artifacts. More than a decade was to pass in the courts, but the ruling finally rendered became a landmark in American Indian history. Upheld by the highest court, that decision, simply stated, said, "Grave goods belong to descendants." This rule of law not only triggered the largest return of American Indian grave goods ever, the "Tunica Treasure," but laid the foundation for a new federal law. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, in essence, declares that grave goods, and other objects which are held by museums, federal and state agencies, and which are identifiable as to a particular tribe, must be returned to that tribe.

Prior to actual receipt of the "Tunica Treasure," the Tribe decided to build a museum to house it. Since the graves from which the objects had been taken were destroyed in the looting, it was deemed impossible to rebury these funerary offerings with the persons to whom they belonged. The museum then would take the form of an ancient Tunica temple mound, and honor the memory of all the ancestors. The "Tunica Treasure" objects would be symbolically interred in the building, its earthen sides providing that missing element of the original burials.

However, when the "Tunica Treasure" was returned to the Tribe for placement in the new museum, it was discovered that the artifacts were seriously deteriorated. This

condition resulted not only from their long stay in the ground but from that which followed: exposure to unstable air, humidity, and repeated handling while the ownership of the artifacts was being decided in the courts.

The Tribe had received not only the world's largest collection of Indian and European artifacts from the colonial period of the Mississippi Valley, but also the world's largest such collection most in need of preservation.

Professional artifact conservators brought in to survey the damage estimated a cost of over two million dollars for restoration. This was far beyond the financial resources of the Tunica-Biloxi but, undaunted by this newest turn of events, the Tribe responded. An environmentally-correct storage facility was fabricated from a salvaged highway refrigerated trailer. With the aid of private funding and donated equipment, a second highway trailer was converted into a highly sophisticated laboratory. A Historic Preservation Grant from the National Park Service was used to bring a team of professional conservators to the reservation to teach two tribal members how to save the "Tunica Treasure."



Conservators Earl J. Barbry, Jr. and Brent Barbry work on the restoration of tribal artifacts. (Photograph courtesy of the Tunica-Biloxi Indians.)

It was from this humble beginning that the Tunica-Biloxi established the very first full-scale artifact conservation facility on an American Indian Reservation. Major funding from the Administration for Native Americans allowed expansion of the laboratory and acceleration of the training. The artifacts are now being restored to professional

standards by descendants of the ancestor Tunica. Other tribes faced with similar consequences of repatriation are now requesting training and assistance from the Tunica-Biloxi. This program has generated national and international acclaim for both its innovation and the excellence of its results. Earl J. Barbry, Jr., and his cousin Brent Barbry, are mastering the art and science of artifact conservation and have become the full-time tribal conservators. Because of the volume of artifacts, other tribal members are being apprenticed to the program.



The Tunica-Biloxi museum houses the "Tunica Treasure" and serves as a shrine to the tribal ancestors. (Photograph courtesy of the Tunica-Biloxi Indians.)

The museum is now able to fulfill its intended function as a shrine to the ancestors. The concept of symbolic re-interment allows the "Tunica Treasure" to be seen and understood as proof-positive of the Tribe's all-important role in the formative years of Louisiana. In order to place the artifacts in their proper context, the museum features

a life size diorama which demonstrates the beginning of French-Tunica affairs of commerce and diplomacy, a mutual interdependence which lasted nearly a hundred years and is well reflected in the population of Louisiana today. French-Indian bloodlines flow in the veins of many. Bienville, known to history as the Father of Louisiana, is shown in the diorama on his first visit to the Tunica town of Chief Cahura-Joligo. The few human remains recovered with the artifacts are buried in the earth beneath the floor of the museum.

The Tunica-Biloxi history by no means stops with repatriation and restoration of the "Tunica Treasure." Earl J. Barbry, Sr., descendant of hereditary chiefs, has guided the Tribe's destiny since his election in 1978. Chairman Barbry has used the benefits of federal recognition to secure a high standard



Diorama in the Tunica-Biloxi museum depicts the first visit of Bienville and Chief Cahura-Joligo. Other aspects of the diorama show horse and salt trade. (Photograph courtesy of the Tunica-Biloxi Indians.)

of living for his people. Where once there were shacks with no indoor plumbing and drinking water carried from the creek, there are modern, air conditioned homes, dirt roads have been paved, and the school bus, which used to not carry Indian children, now stops on the reservations. A lake and other recreational facilities are in daily use.

Health Care and Social Services, which have been housed in the Tribal Community Center and Office Complex, will soon be located in a new building of their own. Per capita income of the some five hundred tribal members has, for a very long time, been well below the norm. But that will now change with the advent of perhaps the most obvious element of the "new" history of the Tunica-Biloxi.

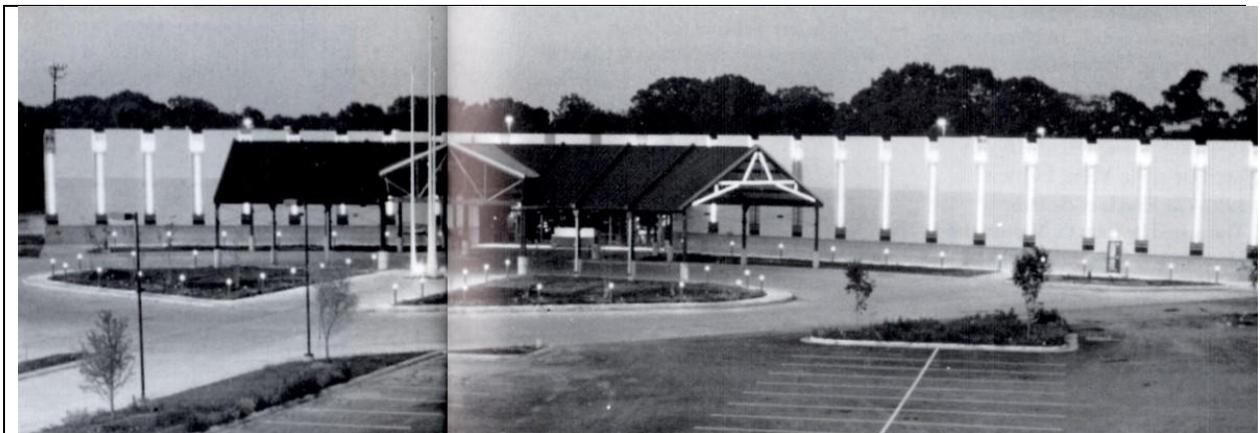


Earl J. Barbry, Sr., Chairman of the Tunica-Biloxi. (Photograph courtesy of the Tunica-Biloxi Indians.

Grand Casino Avoyelles is now open. The sixty-acre complex is the first full-scale Indian-owned casino in the south and the first land-based casino in Louisiana. Located on the Tunica-Biloxi Reservation, the casino is the largest private employer in Avoyelles Parish. Its monthly payroll is over a million dollars. Income from the gaming, restaurants, and hotel is dedicated to furthering the economic independence of the Sovereign Tunica-Biloxi Nation, and its people.

At the dedication and ribbon ceremonies, Louisiana's Commissioner of Administration paid tribute to the determination and perseverance of Chairman Barbry, calling him, "the strongest Indian leader of the century."

In 1730, a French colonial governor wrote that "the Tunica Chief was the greatest entrepreneur in the Mississippi Valley." Perhaps it is true that history is not only a continuum, but that it also repeats itself.



The Grand Casino Avoyelles in Marksville, Louisiana, the first land-based casino in Louisiana.

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