

The selection of this rather than more conventional and practical materials may have been for magical reasons with the idea of adding strength to the pottery.

There seems to have been an intensive and widespread use of fossil bones in China from ancient times to the present. The bones are sold by druggists under the name "dragon bones." The teeth which are considered more desirable and bring a higher price are known as "dragon teeth." Creel⁹ says that such bones are prescribed by "old fashioned" physicians. A bit of the bone is said to be pounded in a mortar and fed to the ailing; a dose is thought to be especially good for nervous disorders. Andersson¹⁰ gives a long list of diseases which are treated by the Chinese with "dragon bones" and cites a 5th century reference concerning their early use. He also (pp. 81-82) gives an idea of the magnitude of the industry of mining these bones and of the extent of the commerce built around them. It is beside the point but of some interest perhaps to note that the tracing of such bones from apothecaries' shops to the field led to highly important paleontological and archaeological discoveries in China.¹¹ The finding of the famous Peking man was in the course of paleontological work at a site discovered through a tip from a native concerning a deposit of "dragon bones."¹² In view of the ancient and extensive use of fossil bones as medicine in China, the question naturally arises as to a possible historical connection between this trait among the Chinese and the American Indian. It remains for future research to throw additional light on the answer to this question.

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COMMENTS ON THE NAME "WICHITA"

In a recent issue of the ANTHROPOLOGIST, Mrs. Zoe A. Tilghman has advanced the theory that the name of the Wichita Indians is derived from the Creek or Muskogee language and that the first appearance of the name occurs in 1835.¹

Perhaps the most serious objection to be raised against this supposition is to be found in the fact that the name was in use long before 1835, indeed well over a century before that date. In the *Handbook of American Indians* a list of the various names applied to the Wichita is appended to the discussion devoted to this tribe.² A study of this list reveals the fact that the earliest use of the name under discussion occurs in the writings of La Harpe and is attributed to the year 1719. In one place he spells it as *Ositas*³ and in another as *Ousita*.⁴ In the year 1723 we find a Spanish

⁹ H. G. Creel, *The Birth of China* (New York, 1937), p. 22.

¹⁰ J. G. Andersson, *Children of the Yellow Earth* (New York, 1934), pp. 74-76.

¹¹ See Creel, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-26 and Andersson, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-93.

¹² Andersson, *op. cit.*, p. 97 and following.

¹ Zoe A. Tilghman, *Origin of the Name Wichita* (*American Anthropologist*, vol. 43, 1941), pp. 488-489.

² Frederick W. Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians* (Bulletin, Bureau of American Ethnology, 30; Washington, 1910), Part II, pp. 947-950.

³ La Harpe (1719) in French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, III (1851), p. 74. This and the following five references are taken from the *Handbook of American Indians*, *loc. cit.*

⁴ La Harpe (1719) (*Margry, Déc.*, VI, 1886), p. 289.

spelling *Ovagilas*⁵ and in 1771-72 another Spanish spelling *Ovedsita*.⁶ A third Spanish spelling, *Guichita*,⁷ occurs in 1785. A third French spelling, *Ouitcitas*,⁸ occurs in 1807. It will be noted that all of these occurrences are found before the date 1835 given by Mrs. Tilghman as the first appearance of the word.⁹

At the time of the earliest recorded use of this name (1719) it is extremely doubtful that the Creeks had any knowledge of the Wichita tribe and this fact alone renders it most unlikely that the origin of the name can be traced to them.

On the linguistic level Mrs. Tilghman wishes to derive the name from the Creek word for Red River, which in phonemic orthography is *oycá'ti* meaning "red water."¹⁰ However, so far as I have been able to discover, the Creeks have never designated the Wichita as the "Red River people." Another objection to the proposed etymology is found in the fact that at the present time the Creek term for the Wichita is *wicita*. While it is impossible to ascertain definitely at what time this word was adopted by the Creeks, it was probably not before they had been removed to Indian Territory in 1836-40. Moreover, had they already possessed a name for the Wichita, it is extremely unlikely that they would have found it necessary to adopt a new name.

Therefore, in view of the historical and linguistic facts presented here, we are forced to the conclusion that any attempts to derive the name Wichita from the Creek language are invalid.

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⁵ Barcia, *Ensayo* (1723), p. 288.

⁶ Document of 1771-72 quoted by Bolton (Texas Historical Association Quarterly, IX, 1905), p. 91. ⁷ Texas State Archives, Nov. 15, 1785.

⁸ Robin, *Voy. a la Louisiane*, III (1807), p. 3.

⁹ Many occurrences subsequent to this date are also listed in the *Handbook* but these need not concern us here.

¹⁰ For an explanation of the phonemic system of orthography employed in writing the Creek or Muskogee language, see my article, *Ablaut and its Function in Muskogee* (Language, vol. 16, 1940), pp. 141-150. Note that the consonant *c* represents a palatal affricative similar to English *ch*.