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Source: *American Anthropologist*, Jul. - Sep., 1909, New Series, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1909), pp. 426-433

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association

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THE LANGUAGE OF THE PIRO

By JOHN RUSSELL BARTLETT

INTRODUCTION BY F. W. HODGE

ALTHOUGH known to history since the year 1540, few of our Indian tribes of which representatives yet remain are less known at the present time than the Piro of the Rio Grande below El Paso, Texas.

In the early part of the seventeenth century the Piro, who have been classed as belonging to the Tanoan linguistic family, consisted of two divisions, one inhabiting the Rio Grande valley from the present town of San Marcial in Socorro county, New Mexico, northward to within about fifty miles of Albuquerque, where the Tigua settlements began ; the other division, sometimes called Tompiros and Salineros, occupying the desert stretch east of the river in the vicinity of the salt lagoons, or salinas, where it bordered the eastern group of Tigua settlements on the south. The western or Rio Grande branch of the Piro was visited in 1540 by members of Coronado's expedition, in 1580 by Chamuscado, in 1583 by Espejo (who found them occupying ten villages along the river and in others near by), in 1598 by Oñate, and in 1621-1630 by Fray Alonso Benavides who relates that they were settled in fourteen pueblos along the river.

The establishment of missions among the Piro began in 1626. In that year the most southerly church and monastery in New Mexico were built at Senecú by Arteaga and Zúñiga (to whom are attributed the planting of the first vines and the manufacture of wine in this region), and during the same year missions at Sevilleta, Socorro, and probably also at Alamillo were founded. It is not improbable that the Piro of the Rio Grande, although said to number 6,000 in 1630, had been already seriously harrassed by the Apache, for Sevilleta had been depopulated and burned in consequence of intertribal wars prior to the founding of the missions, and

was not resettled until the missionaries arrived. Moreover, the fourteen villages along the Rio Grande occupied by the Piro in 1630 were reduced to four half a century later. "This was due not only to the efforts of the missionaries to gather their flock into larger pueblos," says Bandelier, "but also to the danger to which these Indians were exposed from the Apaches of the 'Perrillo' and the 'Gila,' as the southern bands of that restless tribe were called."¹

The area occupied by the Piro of the Salinas extended from the pueblo of Abo southeastward to and including the pueblo of Tabirá, commonly but improperly called "Gran Quivira," a distance of about 25 miles. The habitat of the eastern Piro was even more desert in character than that of the eastern Tigua, which bounded it on the north, for the Arroyo de Abo, on which Abo pueblo was situated, is the only perennial stream in the region, the inhabitants of Tabirá and Tenabó depending entirely on the storage of rainwater for their supply. In addition to the three pueblos named, Bandelier has concluded that the now ruined villages known by the Spanish names Pueblo Blanco, Pueblo Colorado, and Pueblo de la Parida were probably among the eleven inhabited settlements of the Salinas seen by Chamuscado in 1580, but at least three of this number were occupied by the Tigua. Juan de Oñate, in 1598, also visited the pueblos of the Salinas, and to Fray Francisco de San Miguel, a chaplain of Oñate's force, was assigned the Piro country as part of his mission district. The headquarters of this priest being at Pecos, many miles to the northward, it is not likely that much active mission work was done among the Piro during his incumbency, which covered only about three years. The first actual missions among the Piro pueblos of the Salinas were established in 1629 by Francisco de Acevedo at Abo and Tabirá, and probably also at Tenabó; but before the massive-walled churches and monasteries were completed, the village dwellers of both the Salinas and the Rio Grande suffered so seriously from the depredations of the Apache, that Senecú on the Rio Grande, as well as every pueblo of the Salinas, was deserted before the great Pueblo insurrection of 1680. Prior to the raid on Senecú by the Apache in 1675, six of the inhabitants of that village were executed

¹ See Bandelier in *Papers of the Archaeological Institute of America*, American Series, IV, 1892, pp. 236-253, 268-292.

for the murder of the alcalde-mayor and four other Spaniards. Probably on account of the fear with which the Spaniards were known to be regarded by the Piro after this occurrence, they were not invited by the northern Pueblos to participate in the revolt against the Spaniards in 1680; consequently when Otermin, the governor, retreated from Santa Fé to El Paso in that year, he was joined by nearly all the inhabitants of Socorro, Sevilleta, and Alamillo. These, with the former occupants of Senecú, who since the destruction of their village by the Apache had resided at Socorro, were afterward established in the new villages of Socorro, Texas, and Senecú del Sur ("Senecú of the South") in Chihuahua, on the Rio Grande below El Paso, where their remnant still survives. In attempting to reconquer New Mexico in the following year, Otermin caused Alamillo to be burned, because the few remaining inhabitants fled at his approach. Only three families remained at Sevilleta when the Spaniards retreated, but these had departed and the pueblo was almost in ruins on their return in 1681.

The entire Piro division of the Tanoan family probably numbered about 9,000 early in the seventeenth century. Now only about sixty individuals are known to survive, and although these still retain a shadow of their aboriginal customs, they are "Mexicans" to all intents and purposes, and perhaps only one or two have any remembrance of their native language.¹

In October, 1852, John Russell Bartlett, of the international commission to determine the boundary between the United States and Mexico, visited the Piro and recorded a vocabulary of their language, from the original of which, preserved in the archives of the Bureau of American Ethnology at Washington, the accompanying copy is reproduced. The vocabulary has not hitherto been published; indeed the only specimen of the Piro language previously printed consists of the Lord's Prayer, which appears in the *Colección Polidíomica Mexicana que contiene la Oración Dominical* (Mexico, 1860, page 36), reprinted, with some errors, in Bancroft, *Native Races*, III, 714, 1886.² The Prayer follows:

¹ See Fewkes, The Pueblo Settlements near El Paso, Texas, *American Anthropologist*, IV, 57-75, Jan.-Mar., 1902.

² A new edition of the *Colección*, "en 68 idiomas y dialectos," was published by the Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, Mexico, 1888 (31 pages).

Quitatác nasaul e yapolhua tol húy quiamgiana mi quiamnarinú Jaquié mu gilley nasamagui hikiey quiamsamaé, mukiataxám, hikiey, hiquiqui-amo quia inaé, huskilley nafoleguey, gimoréy, y apol y ahuleý, qualiey, nasan e pomo llekeý, quiale mahimnague yo sé mahi kaná rrohoý, se teman quiennatehui mu killey, nani, emolley quinaroy zetasi, na san quianatehueý pemcihipompo y, qui solakuey quifollohipuca. Kuey maihua atellan, folliquitey. Amen.

Bartlett's vocabulary is prefaced with a note on the language of the Piro that is not without interest. It is here printed verbatim, together with the vocabulary, since this material is almost all we have pertaining to the linguistics of a tribe that played such an important part in the early history of our Southwest.

LANGUAGE OF THE PIROS

This vocabulary was taken down as given by two Indians, the principal of the tribe residing in the pueblo or town of Sinecu [Senecú], a few miles below El Paso del Norte, on the western bank of the Rio Grande. Their names were Hieronymo Peraza and Marcos Alejo;¹ the latter having received sufficient education to read in Spanish. The former was an intelligent man, though uneducated. Both were christianized Indians as all are who live in the Pueblos or towns.

These men manifested much interest in our enquiries and readily answered all my questions, relative to their history, manners and customs; and particularly to their language. In every instance, each pronounced the word as I gave it to them in Spanish. This was repeated several times I (*sic*) order that I might get the true sound, which I pronounced and repeated until the Indians were satisfied and could detect no variation in my pronunciation and theirs. The word was then entered in the vocabulary, and again pronounced according to my orthography. In many instances I sounded each syllable separately that no portion of it should be lost. When the list was completed, I began and pronounced each Indian word, to see if they could recognize it, which in most cases they were able

¹ Fewkes mentions Augustin Allegro (cacique), Pablo Allegro (governor), Victoriana Pedraza (war-chief), Casimera Pedraza, and Dolores Allejo among the survivors of Senecú in 1901.

to do, by giving the corresponding word in Spanish. Frequently they would exclaim, "*claro, muy claro,*" clear, very clear, when I enunciated a word to their satisfaction, and on the whole they seemed much pleased in having their language recorded. They observed that with this vocabulary we might discover some of their tribe in other parts of the country, of whose existence they knew nothing; and one of them said, that, if he could only read, he would take down the English language as we had theirs, and so learn it.

Believing that many of the long words were compounds, I endeavoured to analyse them, by asking the meaning of separate syllables, or portions of certain words, but they could give no definition to the parts. Nevertheless, I entertain the belief that many of the long words are compounded of several, as in the word for mosquito, *quen-lo-a-tu-ya-é*; which if I (*sic*) could be analysed would probably express the idea of *the insect that bites*. The names of colours white, black, yellow, blue etc., begin with *na*, which probably may denote colour; but on making the enquiry what it meant, or what was the word for colour, I could get no information.

A peculiarity which characterises the Indian languages of North America seemed to prevail in that of the Piros, vizt that the women pronounced words different from the men, or that there was what is known as the women's language. In several instances when questioning the two Indians alluded to, they spoke of the 'women's language,' and gave the word required in both the men's and women's language. In these examples, however, the only difference seemed to be that one was more strongly aspirated than the other, or a slight difference was perceptible in the accent. It was no greater than the pronunciation of the English language by educated and uneducated people.

The aspirated sounds in the Piro language are very slight, so much so that they are scarcely perceptible in the enunciation of one of the men. The same may be said of the nasals, which are not only few in number, but very slight in utterance. No 152 — three, *môn-tu*; — and 168, to drink, *ta-sôn-yau*, are examples, and the only ones in the vocabulary of two hundred [one hundred and seventy-five] words. The sound in these is precisely that of the French, *mon*, and *son*. In gutturals, which abound in most of the

Indian languages, the Piro seems deficient as far as can be judged from the vocabulary before us.

Notwithstanding these deficiencies which so strongly characterize the whole family of Indian languages, I am inclined to believe that in former times, when the language was exclusively spoken by the tribe, it possessed more aspirated, nasal and guttural sounds, and that they were more strongly marked than at present. But as it is now limited to a very small number, who use the Spanish as freely as their own, these sounds have become softened and more allied to that language.

The almost universal termination of *é*, is peculiar. When this appears, it is strongly accented, like the full French accented *é*. *b* does not appear, and *v* but once in the vocabulary, vizt, in the 60th word, *wa-i-vo-na-é* (morning); and in this it was difficult to say, whether the sound was nearer the *v*, or *w*. *R* appears but twice in our vocabulary i. e., in the 42d word, *hron-na-é* (house), and the 56th, *hron-é* [*sic*] (day). In both of these the sound was distinct. Nos. 56, *pipa-hem*, pipe (Span.); 81, *na-isla-é* (Span. isla, island); 108, *pa-lo-ma-é* (Span. paloma, pigeon); 31, *el-en-cuerpo-é*, (Span. cuerpo, body), are derived from the Spanish. In several instances an apostrophe follows a letter. In these examples it was difficult to distinguish to which syllable the apostrophized letter belonged, and as it seemed midway between them, the sound seemed better expressed by the manner in which it has been given.

PIRO VOCABULARY

1. Man	<i>o-ye</i>	14. Indian ;	
2. Woman	<i>su-n' é</i>	people	<i>a-tsi-hem</i>
3. Boy	<i>at-sam-é</i>	15. Head	<i>pi-nèm</i>
4. Girl	<i>yool-é</i>	16. Hair	<i>sa-na-é</i>
5. Infant, child	<i>yu-wa-né</i>	17. Face	<i>tso-hèm</i>
6. Father, my	<i>el-em-ta-ta-é</i>	18. Forehead	<i>tsi-kia-nèm</i>
7. Mother, my	<i>et-em-kia-é</i>	19. Ear	<i>tah-so-hèm</i>
8. Husband, my	<i>el-a-man-tsal-a-é</i>	20. Eye	<i>tsi-hio-né-que</i>
9. Wife, my	<i>el-a-a-m' sun-é</i>	21. Nose	<i>fu-é</i>
10. Son, my	<i>el-a-m' eu-i-é</i>	22. Mouth	<i>sa-na-é</i>
11. Daughter, my	<i>el-a-m' eu-i-sun-é</i>	23. Tongue	<i>mi-n' é</i>
12. Brother, my	<i>el-a-m' pu-pu-é</i>	24. Teeth	<i>we-yé</i>
13. Sister, my	<i>el-a-m' qu-qu-é</i>	25. Beard	<i>tsa-ja-hé</i>

26. Neck	<i>youl-wa-hem</i>	69. Rain	<i>na-a-wâan</i>
27. Arm	<i>hiâ-hem</i>	70. Snow	<i>pan-wâan</i>
28. Hand	<i>ma-nem</i>	71. Hail	<i>an-y'le-sol-é</i>
29. Fingers	<i>man-hio-né</i>	72. Fire	<i>fa-yé</i>
30. Nails	<i>man-sa-si-hé</i>	73. Water	<i>â-é</i>
31. Body	<i>el-en-cuerpo-é</i> [Sp.]	74. Ice	<i>a-tsé-é</i>
32. Leg	<i>pe-sa-hém</i>	75. Earth, land	<i>na-f'ol-é</i>
33. Foot	<i>a-nêm</i>	76. Sea	- - -
34. Toes	<i>an-hio-né</i>	77. River	<i>a-sa-é</i>
35. Bone	<i>ou-an-ém</i>	78. Lake	<i>a-tsi-é</i>
36. Heart	<i>pe-n'è</i>	79. Valley	<i>ki-a-yo-nâ-é</i>
37. Blood	<i>u-hém</i>	80. Hill,	
38. Town, village	<i>tai-hone-a-é</i>	mountain	<i>he-hem</i>
39. Chief	<i>tai-k'hem-tsa-é</i>	81. Island	<i>na-isla-é</i> [Sp.]
40. Warrior	<i>ah-te-hém</i>	82. Stone	<i>ia-wé</i>
41. Friend	<i>pi-ye-é</i>	83. Salt	<i>so-an'-é</i>
42. House	<i>hron-na-é</i>	84. Iron	<i>po-ya-o-nâ-e</i>
43. Kettle	<i>si-la-yem</i>	85. Tree	<i>i-sa-ké</i>
44. Bow	<i>hui-lé</i>	86. Wood	<i>sa-hé</i>
45. Arrow	<i>sa-wém</i>	87. Leaf	<i>a-o-lé</i>
46. Axe, hatchet	<i>ha-tsa-é</i> [Sp.]	88. Bark	<i>hia-yem</i>
47. Knife	<i>tse-é</i>	89. Grass	<i>son-é</i>
48. Canoe, boat	<i>kia-noa-hem</i> [Sp.]	90. Pine	<i>huan-ém</i>
49. Shoes	<i>kiu-pi-é</i>	91. Flesh, meat	<i>ta-we</i>
50. Pipe	<i>pipa-hem</i> [Sp.]	92. Dog	<i>tsu-é</i>
51. Tobacco	<i>sa-yé</i>	93. Buffalo	<i>yo-tson-lé</i>
52. Sky, heaven	<i>ya-pol-ya-wé</i>	94. Bear	<i>kio-é</i>
53. Sun	<i>pu-é</i>	95. Wolf	<i>kia-lé</i>
54. Moon	<i>a-é</i>	96. Deer	<i>pi-ye</i>
55. Star	<i>a-hio-sa-é</i>	97. Elk	<i>a-hoom-é</i>
56. Day	<i>hrom-é</i>	98. Beaver	<i>a-ya-é</i>
57. Night	<i>no-é</i>	99. Tortoise	<i>a-tzal-i-é</i>
58. Light	<i>na-moe-é</i>	100. Fly	<i>a-fu-ya-é</i>
59. Darkness	<i>na-mo-hiôn-é</i>	101. Mosquito	<i>quen-lo-a-tu-ya-é</i>
60. Morning	<i>wa-i-vo-na-é</i>	102. Snake	<i>pe-tsun-to-yan-é</i>
61. Evening	<i>que-na-é</i>	103. Bird	<i>tsi-ki-é</i>
62. Spring	<i>ha-le-pu-na-é</i>	104. Egg	<i>a-we-y'è</i>
63. Summer	<i>ha-leep-é</i>	105. Feathers	<i>yo-né</i>
64. Autumn	<i>tu-la-é</i>	106. Wings	<i>yo-na-hé</i>
65. Winter	<i>tu-la'-hel-ki-é</i>	107. Duck	<i>a-pém'è</i>
66. Wind	<i>hua-é</i>	108. Pigeon	<i>pa-lo-ma-é</i> [Sp.]
67. Thunder	<i>kuen-sil-u-é</i>	109. Fish	<i>pu-é</i>
68. Lightning	<i>kien-lo-é</i>	110. Salmon	— — —

111. Sturgeon	— — —	147. To-morrow	<i>huc-i-dè</i>
112. Name	<i>a-hia</i>	148. Yes	<i>hoi-y'è</i>
113. Affection	<i>ma-kia-pe-tòw</i>	149. No	<i>hen-kio-yé</i>
114. White	<i>na-a-tzay-é</i>	150. One	<i>eu-i-yú</i>
115. Black	<i>na-se-en-é</i>	151. Two	<i>wi-yu</i>
116. Red	<i>na-u-é</i>	152. Three	<i>môn-tu</i> ³
117. Blue	<i>na-tzeu-é</i>	153. Four	<i>wen-no</i>
118. Yellow	<i>na-sa-wa-é</i>	154. Five	<i>an-tao</i>
119. Green	<i>na-tzeu-se-é</i>	155. Six	<i>ma-seu</i>
120. Great	<i>ma-wé</i>	156. Seven	<i>tsu-wuh</i>
121. Small	<i>hia-wé</i>	157. Eight	<i>hui-li-yú</i>
122. Strong	<i>ma-tze-é</i>	158. Nine	<i>hua-weh</i>
123. Young	<i>a-tsem-é</i>	159. Ten	<i>tên-yo</i>
124. Old	<i>o-i-sa-é</i>	160. Eleven	<i>tên-u-i</i>
125. Good	<i>ma-na-su-o-é</i>	161. Twelve	<i>tên-wi-yu</i>
126. Bad	<i>ma-na-foi-yé</i>	162. Twenty	<i>tên-te-yo</i>
127. Handsome	<i>ma-wé</i>	163. Forty	<i>wen-na-te-leo</i>
128. Ugly	<i>ma-fo-yé</i>	164. One hundred	<i>tên-na-te-leo</i>
129. Alive	<i>wa-é</i>	165. Four	
130. Dead	<i>pi-wé</i>	hundred	<i>wen-tên-na-ta-leo</i>
131. Cold	<i>ma-na-ya-é</i> ¹	166. One	
132. Warm	<i>ma-na-si-lé</i> ²	thousand	<i>tên-yo-tên-na-ta-leo</i>
133. I	<i>na-o-é</i>	167. To eat	- - -
134. Thou	<i>e-ki-é</i>	168. To drink	<i>ta-sôn-yáu</i>
135. He	<i>wa-é</i>	169. To run	<i>ha-me-wé</i>
136. We	<i>na-saâm</i>	170. To dance	<i>hi-we-ê</i>
137. Ye	<i>na-sa-i</i>	171. To sing	<i>ha-ya-ta-hói</i>
138. They	<i>wa-quay</i>	172. To sleep	<i>ha-ya-tu-móo</i>
139. This }		173. To speak	<i>ha-tze-sa-yoi</i>
140. That }	<i>ia-hêm</i>	174. To see	<i>hin-mo-oi</i>
141. All	<i>ho-le-mé</i>	175. To love	<i>ta-pe-tao</i>
142. Many,		176. To kill	<i>kie-hu-nao</i>
much	<i>ma-o-wé</i>	177. To sit	<i>hel-en-é</i>
143. Who	<i>ta-ou</i>	178. To stand	<i>hel-wi-ên</i>
144. Near	<i>he-o-pé</i>	179. To go	<i>hel-o-fo-yé</i>
145. To-day	<i>hio-sé</i>	180. To come	<i>na-hel-e-yao</i>
146. Yesterday	<i>tse-mé</i>		

¹ much cold. ² very warm. ³ *môn-tu*. The *n* with a dash under it is meant to denote a slightly nasal sound, as the same syllable would be pronounced in French.