

**The Ofo Language of Louisiana:
Philological Recovery of Grammar and Typology.**

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The noted Smithsonian ethnographer, John R. Swanton, while visiting the remnant of the Tunica tribe in Marksville, LA in 1908, encountered a single speaker of the Ofo language, a language earlier thought to have been Muskogean because of the presence of the consonant *f* in the tribal name. Upon eliciting some basic vocabulary, Swanton quickly discovered that Ofo was actually Siouan, and ultimately related to Dakota Sioux and other languages of the northern plains. He collected and published a vocabulary of about 600 items and a few phrases, and these represent all that we have of the Ofo language.

1. Summary of Ofo phonology. The Ofo phonological inventory is the following:

Consonants:	labial	dental	palatal	velar	glottal
Aspirated stops	ph	th	čh	kh	
Plain stops	p	t	č	k	
Aspirated fricatives	fh	sh			
Plain fricatives	f	s	š	x	h
Sonorants	w	l	y		
	b	d			
Nasals	m	n			

Vowels:	front	central	back
high	i		u
mid	e	ə	o
low		a	

Nasal vowels:

high	ĩ		ũ
low		ã	

All vowels except *a* may occur either long or short, and all vowels without exception may occur accented or unaccented.

2. Symbols that require explanation are:

c /š/.
 dj /č/, unaspirated.
 tc /č/.

3. **Typology.** Siouan languages are primarily head-marking, active-stative, SOV languages of moderate morphological complexity. Sapir (1921:142) characterized Dakota Sioux as “complex pure-relational” in basic type with derivational concepts signaled by agglutinating elements and pure relational concepts somewhat fused. Dakota’s overall morphological technique he characterized as “agglutinative-fusional” and degree of synthesis he characterized as “synthetic (mildly polysynthetic)”. Siouan languages are among those considered by many linguists to be *pronominal argument* languages, i.e., the pronominal prefixes on the verb are considered to be the arguments of that verb, not just agreement markers for external arguments. If they are considered agreement markers, then Siouan languages are double or triple agreement languages, with agreement pronominals for subject, object and indirect object, or, alternatively, actor, patient, recipient – and perhaps additional semantic roles. Ofo appears to possess the vast majority of these characteristics, minus, perhaps, noun incorporation and an active-stative split. Ofo lexical classes include *nouns, verbs, pronouns, postpositions, particles* and probably *adverbs*. *Adjectives* and simple coordinating *conjunctions* are not normally a feature of Siouan languages.

4. **Ofo noun possession.** There are two basic, lexically determined, sets of prefixes, both with phonological variants:

	I		V-initial	II	
	<u>alienable?</u>		<u>both</u>	<u>inalienable?</u>	
1sg	<i>ba-</i>	<i>aba-</i>	<i>b-</i>		<i>mi-</i>
2sg	<i>ča-</i>	<i>ača-</i>	<i>č-</i>		<i>či-</i>
3sg					<i>i-</i>
1du	<i>a-</i>				<i>a-</i> (Swanton’s <i>q-</i>)

5. Examples of apparent alienable nouns include:

	<u>mind</u>	<u>calf of leg</u>	<u>blood</u>	<u>dress</u>
	phá•mihi	čšfhəhe	ahí•hi	a•thé
1sg	baphámihi	batcafhahi	abáhihi	abáthě
2sg	tcaphámihi	tcatcafhahi		
1du		o ⁿ tcafhahi		
2pl		tcatcafhahi-tu	atcahihi-tu	

6. Vowel-initial stems obscure any underlying prefix vowel:

	<u>skin</u>	<u>father</u>	<u>grandfather</u>	<u>liver</u>	<u>hand, finger</u>
	alá•hi	athí	etikáso	(i-?)čá•su	ičá•ki
1sg	baláhi	bathí	bětikó ⁿ so	bitcásu	bidjáki
2sg	tcaláhi	tcathí	tcětikó ⁿ so	tcitcásu	

7. The fourth column is found used with a very few nouns. There is quite a bit of exceptionality. All seem to be nuclear family terms.

	<u>child</u>	<u>brother</u>	<u>mother</u>	<u>husband</u>
	hó•ška	tok	ani, oni	thjto
1sg	hócka mítha	tok mítha	móoni	míthinto
2sg		tok tci ⁿ txa	tcóoni	
1du		tok ó ⁿ txa		

8. Possession of a noun by another noun involves juxtaposition, with the usual *bi-*, *či-*, *i-* prefixes if the possessed noun is inalienable:

bi-txoⁿfka i-txíⁿto 'my sister's husband'
my.sister her.husband

áñkwa i-tcáki 'someone's hand'
person his.hand

Alienable nouns are simply juxtaposed, although the examples, 'flour' and 'rice', may actually be noun-noun compounds rather than true possessive constructions.

akó•fa anaphó•si 'white man's flour'
whiteman flour

akó•fa čéki 'rice, white man's corn'
whiteman corn

9. Ofo deictics. Local and temporal deictics are poorly represented in the corpus. It is possible to see reflexes of Proto-Siouan **re* ~ **Re* 'this, now, here'; **?e* 'general demonstrative'.

lemáti 'here, this' e.g. *lemóⁿti anóñki* 'I live here', *lěmóⁿti tcákiu* 'you come here!', *lěmóⁿti téska* 'this bird', *lěmóⁿti boftháhi* 'I arrive here'.

lékhə•ti, *lékhati*, *lékhati* 'now, right now, just now', *lokačhá* 'this morning, forenoon', *lókobathi*, *ló•kobati* 'tomorrow'. These are probably combining forms with stem-initial *o-* 'in'. *lekháti atěkna* 'I am going right now'.

máka not glossed (Cf. the same word under WH-questions.) *mónka tcinóñki* 'you live here'.

támua ‘that’ *támua téska* ‘that bird’ [*šetá, cetá*, crossed off preceding *támua* on card. Common Siouan *še-*? ‘that’ RLR].

čámua, čámwa, čá•muwa ‘way off yonder, on the other side, beyond, away off’.

éčqsa ‘then? after while’, *étcaⁿsa atékna* ‘I will go by and by’, cf. *lekháti atékna* ‘I am going right now’.

10. Independent pronouns listed by Swanton are those that are used with a contrastive or predicative function in other Siouan languages.

mí•ti, mí•te ‘I, me’
čí•ti ‘you’
í•ti ‘he’
áti, á•ti ‘we’

“Reflexive” pronouns.

mihįsa ‘myself’ [‘by myself’ RLR]
***čihįsa** ‘yourself’ (not attested)
mihįsa ečįti ‘ourselves’ [‘by ourselves’? RLR]
ihįsa ‘himself.’ [‘by himself’ RLR]

11. Ofo conjugations. The regular and productive actor pronominal set found used with Ofo verbs is:

	Ofo	Swanton	Correspondences
1sg actor	<i>ba-</i>	<ba>	(Dakota <i>wa-</i>)
2sg actor	<i>ča-</i>	<tca>	(Dakota <i>ya-</i>)
3sg actor	∅		(Dakota ∅)
1du actor	<i>q-</i>	<o ⁿ >	(Dakota <i>u(k)-</i>)
1pl actor	<i>q-... -tu</i>	<o ⁿ ... tu>	(Dakota <i>u(k)- ... -pi</i>)
2pl actor	<i>ča-... -tu</i>	<tca ... tu>	(Dakota <i>ya- ... -pi</i>)
3pl actor	∅ ... <i>-tu</i>	< ... tu>	(Dakota ∅ ... <i>-pi</i>)

The pluralizing suffix *-tu* corresponds in usage to Dakotan *-pi*.

	<u>break</u>	<u>jump</u>	<u>paddle</u>
	<i>kášhoki</i>	<i>lá•škə</i>	<i>má•hi</i>
1sg	<i>ba-kášhoki</i>	<i>ba-lácka</i>	<i>bá-mahi</i>
2sg	<i>tca-kášhoki</i>	<i>tca-lácka</i>	<i>tčá-mahi</i>

B. Vowel initial verb stems show consonantal pronominal variants.

1sg actor	<i>b-</i>	
2sg actor	<i>č-</i>	<tc>
3gs actor	∅	
1du actor	<i>q-</i>	<o ⁿ >

	<u>be drowned</u>	<u>be stingy</u>	<u>say</u>	<u>split</u>	<u>sleep</u>	<u>be cold</u>	<u>stink</u>
	alúthe	á•kuičŭ	éhe	ófpaki	i•wá	ačehí	ishú•hi
1sg	b-alúthě	bákuitcu ⁿ	béhe	bófpaki	bīwā	bo ⁿ tcehí	bīshúhi
2sg	tc-alúthe	tcákuitcu ⁿ	tcéhe	tcófpaki	tcīwā		tcīshúhi
1du	o ⁿ -lúthě		o ⁿ ehé	o ⁿ fpaki			
3pl			ehe-tú				

C. If the verb stem begins with a locative prefix, *a-* 'at, on', *o-* 'in, into' or *i-* 'toward' or 'with', the derivational locative normally precedes the inflectional pronominal.

	<u>be satisfied</u>	<u>know</u>	<u>make fun of</u>	<u>cut across</u>
	a- khí•pi	í- fpe	ító•nisi	ofhípi
1sg	abakhípi	ibáfpě	abi ⁿ tónisi	bofhípi
2sg	atcakhípi	tcáfpě	tcí ⁿ tónisi	tcofhípi

D. **Irregular stem types.** Stems that are phonologically irregular in other Siouan languages include those beginning with *h*, *p*, *t*, *k*, *ʔ* and *r*. Some of these are also irregular in Ofo. The actor prefixes for these verbs are:

1sg	<i>a-</i>
2sg	<i>š- ~ č-</i>
3sg	<i>∅-</i>
1du	<i>a-</i>
1pl	<i>a- ... -tu</i>
2pl	<i>š- ... -tu</i>
3pl	<i>∅- ... -tu</i>

	<u>see</u>	<u>come</u>	<u>cross</u>	<u>run</u>	<u>kill</u>
	atáhi	kiu•kna	któ•pe	á•- thahi	kthé
1sg	a-tó ⁿ hi	a-kiúkna	a-któpe	a-ba-tho ⁿ hi	a-ktě
2sg	c-tó ⁿ hi	tca-kiúkna	tca-któpe	a-c- tho ⁿ hi	tca-ktě
1du	o ⁿ -tó ⁿ hi	o ⁿ -kiúkna			oñ-ktě
1pl		o ⁿ -kiúknátu			
2pl		tc-kiúknatú			tca-ktětu
3pl		kiúknatú			ktětu

	<u>go/lead</u>	<u>buy</u>	<u>eat</u>
	té•knə	tu•fi	a- tuti
1sg	a-tékna	a-túfi	a-ba-túti
2sg	c-tékna	tca-túfi	a-tca-túti
		~ c-túfi	~ a-c-tuti
1du	o ⁿ -tékna		
1pl	o ⁿ -tékna-tu		
2pl	c-tékna-tu		

E. Extraordinarily, some Ofo verbs appear in the Swanton dictionary conjugated without pronominal prefixes, solely with independent pronouns.

	<u>make</u>	<u>fight</u>
	čayu	ákīthě
1sg	mí ⁿ ti tcáyu	ákīthě mí ⁿ ti
2sg	tcí ⁿ ti tcáyu	ákīthě tcí ⁿ ti
1du	ó ⁿ ti tcáyu	

12. **Plural verb forms.** The pluralizer, *-tu* creates the same sort of ambiguities in Ofo as in Mississippi Valley Siouan languages like Dakota. *-Tu* may pluralize either subject or object, or both.

<i>b-óktaki-tu</i>	'I tell them' or 'they tell me'
<i>tc-óktaki-tu</i>	'you tell them' or 'they tell you'
<i>tcúpi tc-óktaki-tu</i>	'they tell you all' or 'you all tell them'

13. There are few examples of patient pronominals in the data. They typically precede actor pronominal prefixes.

1sg	<i>bi-</i> , <i>i-</i> (or <i>a-</i> ?)
2sg	<i>či-</i> or <i>čĭ-</i>
3sg	<i>θ-</i>
1du	<i>q-</i>

tcíⁿ-kmánaki 'he meets me [you? JRS]' ['he meets you'. RLR]
y-etóⁿhi 'he sees me'.

14. **Ofo reflexives and reciprocals.** The ordinary Siouan **hki-* reflexive and reciprocal is found in a few examples.

<i>ahíti</i>	'to kick'
<i>abahíti</i>	'I kick'
<i>atahíti</i>	'you kick'
<i>itca-kí-ti</i>	'we kick each other' ['you kick each other'. RLR]

ki-kthé-ha-we, *a-kí-kthe* 'they killed each other, one another; themselves'

Rosa Pierrette seems to have "created" reciprocals by placing inflected 1st and 2nd person forms in serial constructions.

<i>a-tc-atafthe a-b-áafthe</i> LOC-you-burn LOC-I-burn	'they burnt each other'
<i>mihíⁿsa e-tcíⁿti b-alúthě</i> <i>mihísa e-čĭti b-ala-o-the</i> myself ?yourself I-water-in-die	'we drown each other'

15. Ofo causative. The Ofo causative enclitic/auxiliary is *-we*, inflected for both subject and object (agent and patient). However, in certain verbs, like *know/teach*, the causative appears to be fossilized and the entire construct is usually conjugated.

<i>ʃpe</i>	‘to know’
<i>ifphé•-we</i>	‘to teach’
<i>b-ifphé•-we</i>	‘I teach’
<i>tc-ifpé•-we</i>	‘you teach’

But:

ifphe-tcí-we ‘you teach me’. [‘s/he teaches you’. RLR]
know-you-CAUSATIVE

16. The active-stative distinction is not obvious in Ofo, if it exists at all.

17. Dative. There are few examples of dative (or benefactive) constructions. Normally the Siouan dative has the form *ki-*, and the person marker is prefixed to it. *Ki-* is entirely lacking in Ofo.

tcítcaki antckú ‘give me your hand!’ (imperative?)
čí-čaki q-č-kú
your-hand me-you-give

tcilétcí ɖⁿtcíku ‘hold your tongue!’ (imperative?)
your.tongue me.you.give

tcūpi tcilétcí ɖⁿtcíku ‘hold your tongues!’ (imperative?)
all your.tongue me.you.give

athé aⁿtcókpe ‘you help me dress’ (benefactive? Raised possessor?)
dress me.you.put on

18. Ofo instrumental prefixes. Most of the instrumentals found across Siouan are attested in Ofo.

atə- ‘by extreme temperature’, as in *atə-čháwa* ‘warm something’.

tu- ~ *du-* ‘by pulling/hand’, as in *tu-sháhi* ~ *du-shá•hi* ‘to pull’.

ta- ‘by mouth’, as in *ta-shkóki* ‘to chew’.

pa- ‘by pushing’, as in *pa-čhé* ‘to wipe’.

la- ‘by foot’, as in *lá-škə*. ‘to jump’ (may have long vowel).

ka- ‘by striking’, as in *ka-lalu*, *ka-lala* ‘to make a ringing sound by striking’.

pú- ‘by pressure’ *pú-suhi* ‘to blow’.

po- ‘by blowing/shooting’, as in *po-phúti* ‘to swell or puff out’.

19. Ofo negation. The negative enclitic is *-ni* postposed to the element being negated, normally the predicate:

afpé-ni ‘forget, not to know’, *bafpéni* ‘I forget, or do not know’, *tcafépéni* ‘you forget, or do not know’, *oⁿafpéni* ‘we forget’. Cf. *afpe* ‘to know’.

míⁿti ni ‘It is not I.’ *Ni*, or the entire pronominal, functions as a predicate.

tcíⁿti ni ‘It is not you.’

In a few instances a preposed particle *ki* seems to be associated with the negative, as with French *ne* and *pas*.

ab-atxá-ki-b-áfpe-ni ‘I can not run’.
I-run-NEG1-I-know-NEG2

até-ki b-áfpe-ni até-ha-w-abĩ ‘I cannot go, but I will send someone.’
go-NEG1 I-know-NEG2 go-I.CAUSATIVE-IRREALIS

até b-áfpe-ni até-hawa-be ‘I cannot go, but I will send someone.’
go I-know-NEG go-I.CAUSATIVE-IRREALIS

A lexical negative, *tiniki*, *niki* ‘not to have, to be missing’, the reflex of the Proto-Siouan stative verb **rike* ‘not to be, to be none’, seems to be used as a general negator on occasion:

abáthě tñĩnĩki ‘I have no dress’.
my.dress ?-be none

tánqani nĩki ‘widower’.
(his).wife be.none

nĩki nató-ni ‘It is not at all far.’ Cf. *náto* ‘far’.
be.none far-NEG

óⁿphi nĩki ‘dull, not sharp’ p. 328. Cf. *áphi* ‘sharp’.

20. Ofo tense, aspect and mode.

A. Tense is not an inflectional category in Siouan. But just with the verb ‘go’:

a-tě-kna-tani ‘I went’
I-go-motion “PAST”
c-tě-kna-tani ‘you went’
c-tě-kna-tani-tu ‘you (plural) went’

The same enclitic is also used in what Swanton translates as *conditional mode* in a single example:

dé-toⁿni á-kiu-bě 'if he goes, I will come'
 go-"COND" I-come-IRREALIS

B. Irrealis mode. Ofo verbs with a suffix, *-abe* are translated as *future* by Swanton.

oⁿ-tcī-khū-be 'you will give (it) to me'
détoⁿni ákiu-bě 'if he goes I will come'
atickhé-be 'I will kill you' ['you will kill me' RLR]
óktat-abe 'he will work'; cf. *oktati* 'he is working'
tcóktat-ábě 'you will work'
b-aphúška a-tci-tp-ábe 'I will hit you with my fist'
atéki bāfpeni atéhaw-ábī 'I cannot go, but I will send someone.'

C. Continuative aspect.

b-áshě nóñki 'I am sitting down'
 I-sit CONTIN
tc-áshě nóñki 'you are sitting down'
 you-sit CONTIN
oⁿ-shě nóñki 'we (dual) are sitting down'
 we2-sit CONTIN

Contrast this usage with the inflected form of the same verb when it means 'dwell', the main verb in the clause.

efhahi lemóⁿti a-nóñki 'I have lived here a long time.'
 long.time here I-sit

D. Iterative aspect seems to be inflected by reduplication.

é-te-te 'sick, keep on suffering'. Iterative aspect.
šni-šni-we 'itch', iterative.
up-lé-le-hi 'swing', presumably iterative.
tu-fə-fha-hi 'tear' (as cloth or paper) presumably iterative.
tó-fku-fku-pi 'wink, blink' presumably iterative.
abá-pa-pa-tópi ~ ibápatópi 'I shoot'.
ta-sí-shi-hi 'whine'
tə-tá-hi 'shake, tremble'
pa-nə-ná-hi 'sift'
əpak-lí-li-hi 'roll, roll it!'
fát-fət-e 'whistle'
á-tu-tu-e 'be cooking'

ka-la-la 'make a ringing sound by striking'

21. Ofo verb template.

Orders:

		1 ST , 2 ND PERS					
DUAL LOCA-		PATIENT AND	VERT.	INSTRU-	VERB ASPECT & MODE	PLURAL	
INCL TIVES		ACTOR PRO-	REFLX	MENTALS	ROOT ENCLITICS		
		NOMINALS		RECIP			

Affixes:

1	2	3	4	5	6		
ʔ-	í-	bi-	ba-	ki-	pa-	-abe	-tu
	á-	či-	ča-	ki-	tu-	-we	
	ó-	∅	∅	ki-	la-	-nʔki	
	i-				ta-	-ni	
					ka-	-t-ʔni	
					pu-		
					ate-		

Glosses:

we2	with	me	I	back	pushing	irrealis	plural
	at/on	you	you	self	hand	causative	
	in	him/	s/he	each/	foot	continuative	
	toward	her		other	mouth	negative	
					striking	perfective?	
					pressure		
					heat/cold		

22. Interrogatives. There is no overt difference between statements and polar questions in Ofo. Nor does there seem to be any evidence for the clause-final gender-sensitive particles found in so many Siouan languages.

tcí-ʔsxe kiáwe-he 'Do you hear what I say?'
you-hear what/that-I.say

dokfáhi c-tóⁿhe c-tékna 'Are you going to see the old man?'
old.man you-see you-go

nátâ c-tékna 'Are you going far?'
far you-go

tcobishíki-ní 'Are you not ashamed?' cf. *tcobishíki* 'you are ashamed', *-ni* is the negative enclitic here.

A few Ofo WH words and questions are found. The particle *-kʔ* is segmentable but not identifiable.

báka ‘whence, whither’ e.g. *báka tcakiú* ‘whence do you come?’ p. 323.

máka not glossed e.g. *máⁿka tcákana* ‘where are you?’ p. 326. e.g. *báka ctékna* ‘where is (are) you going?’ e.g. *báka atékna* ‘where am I going?’ There may be a distinction between ‘where’, ‘where to’ and ‘where from’.

békq ‘who? who is it?’ e.g. *békoⁿ tciⁿti* ‘Who are you?’ p. 323. < **pe* ‘who’.

yá•škikq ‘how come?’ e.g. *yáčkikoⁿ tcotkábídjí* ‘how comes it that you cut your hand?’ p. 328.

kiáwe ‘what, something’ e.g. *kiáwe tce* ‘what do you say?’ e.g. *kiáwe tcoptékna* ‘what are you going to get?’ p. 325. e.g. *kiáwe iñkóhi* ‘What do you call?’ (n.b. form of 2nd person here, cf., *tcakóhi* ‘you shout, you are calling’.) e.g. *míⁿte kiáwe ibákohi* ‘What am I calling?’ p. 320; cf. p. 325. e.g. *kiáwe tcopté-kna* ‘what are you going to get?’

čéka which? p. 329.

23. Ofo word order. The corpus contains rather little in the way of real syntactic information. What little that can be pieced together reveals Ofo to have consistent *dependent-head* orderings.

A. Verbs are pretty consistently clause-final; there are numerous examples.

b-aphúska a-tci-tp-ábe ‘I will hit you with my fist’
my-fist I-you-hit-IRREALIS

B. Like other Siouan languages, Ofo has at least a few postpositions and no prepositions.

iⁿtuf-ati atitcóⁿ ‘to the town’
town toward

C. Auxiliary verbs follow main verbs.

b-áshě nóñki ‘I am sitting down’
I-sit sitting.CONTINUATIVE

ifphe-tcí-we ‘you teach me’
know-you/(me?)-CAUSATIVE

D. Deictics and possessives precede the nouns they modify, and deictics seem to be one of the very few kinds of noun modifiers.

lěmónti téska ‘this bird’
this bird

E. Other *apparent* noun modifiers are, in fact, stative verbs and follow the noun.

akfú atchúti 'red bead' (JRS) [or 'a/the bead is red' RLR]
bead red

akhísi sxúpka 'soft-shelled turtle'
turtle soft.shelled

F. Adverbs precede their verbs and deictics used as adverbials precede the verb.

nátá c-tékna 'Are you going far?'
far you-go

lěmóⁿti b-oftháhi 'I arrive here'
here I-arrive

G. WH-words do not necessarily come in sentence-initial position.

míⁿte kíáwe ibākohi 'What am I calling?'
I what I.call

H. Subordinate clauses apparently precede main clauses.

détoⁿni a-kiu-bě 'if he goes, I will come'
(he),go.COND I-come-IRREALIS

I. Co-subordination in the form of serial verbs occurs in one or two instances.

dokfáhi c-tóhe c-tékna 'Are you going to see the old man?'
old.man you-see you-go

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