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TRIBAL MIGRATIONS EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

(WITH FOUR MAPS)

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The map entitled "Linguistic Families of American Indians North of Mexico", by J. W. Powell, issued by the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, some years ago and several times revised and reprinted, indicates the position of the various groups of tribes when they first became known to Europeans. The map, as its title implies, includes the entire North American continent north of Mexico, but in the present paper, only that portion bordering on the lower Mississippi, and eastward to the Atlantic coast, will be considered.

The principal stocks indicated on the map as having been encountered within this region during historic times, those with whom the early Spanish and French explorers came in contact during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as others who entered the country or subsequently changed their position, are the Caddoan, Siouan, and Algonquian, west of the Mississippi, and the Muskhogean, Algonquian, Iroquoian, Timuquanan, and Siouan, together with a small group of Uchean, east of the river.

Although some of the native tribes may have been long established in the localities in which they were discovered, it is evident that movements of various separated groups had taken place during the generations immediately preceding their first contact with Europeans. It is likewise believed that sufficient evidence is now available, as a result of the investigation of many ancient sites, and a comparative study of the languages, customs, and traditions of the scattered tribes, to make it possible to trace, with a degree of certainty, the routes followed by the tribes during their migrations, and to discover some of the causes that may have impelled their removal into the regions which they continued to occupy in historic times.

Four maps have been prepared to indicate the country occupied or traversed by the several groups during their migrations. The maps are presented not only in the endeavor to trace the possible routes followed by the tribes, but also in the attempt to ascertain the prob-

able points of contact of the various groups and to reveal how the movement of one must necessarily have affected the position of others.

In tracing the movements of the native peoples away from their earlier habitat, and later after they had become more widely dispersed, the linguistic families have been treated as units, with few specific references to any of the numerous tribes, often detached, of which each group was composed.

In determining the section of country claimed or occupied by the groups centuries ago, the conclusions have been reached by tracing back from the present to the distant past, but in presenting the evidence, the opposite method has been adopted, and consequently the first map shows the probable position of the tribes during the earliest period now being considered. No attempt has been made to indicate, nor will it ever be possible to determine, the exact bounds of the regions dominated by the groups at a given time. The areas as shown on the maps are only approximated and consequently must not be considered as definite or positive, although their relative positions, based on such information as is now available, are assumed to be very nearly correct.

The migratory movements of the tribes resulted in the crossing and recrossing of some parts of the country by peoples who differed greatly in manners and customs, whose characteristic forms of burial, varied types of pottery vessels, and stone implements and weapons are now discovered intermingled on the same sites. However, tribes belonging to the same group often differed as greatly from one another as they did from tribes of other stocks. Thus, the material recovered from the numerous sites is often difficult or impossible to identify, but in the future, when additional mounds, burial places, and camp sites have been examined and the objects discovered have been studied and compared, new light will be shed on the early movements of the tribes, which will result in either the verification or refutation of certain theories about to be presented.

Obviously, many of the conclusions expressed in this brief sketch are hypothetical, but nevertheless it is believed that they are based on sufficient evidence to justify their presentation in this form in order to provide a basis for future research in the endeavor to determine, more clearly, the tribal movements east of the Mississippi in prehistoric times.

EARLY TRIBES EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

The Algonquian tribes are believed to have come from the far northwest and to have skirted the shores of the Great Lakes before reaching the country farther south. At their first coming, long before

the Iroquoian peoples had arrived in the regions south of the St. Lawrence, some tribes of the Algonquian stock appear to have penetrated far south along the mountains into Tennessee or beyond, while others pushed onward into the piedmont sections of the present Virginia and of the Carolinas. Certain stone implements or weapons found in these regions reveal great age and are readily distinguished from others that were undoubtedly made and used by the later historic tribes of the same regions. These older specimens were evidently made during the early period of occupancy, during which time the numerous soapstone quarries were probably opened and worked.

The explorations conducted by M. R. Harrington in Loudon County, Tenn., during the summer and autumn of 1919, resulted in the discovery of evidence of very early tribes in the upper valley of the Tennessee. Traces of three distinct periods of occupancy were recognized. The earliest was termed that of the "Round Grave people" by reason of the characteristic form of burial encountered. The objects of stone and types of pottery vessels attributed to this early period resemble similar material found from New England southward to Virginia. The extensive use of soapstone in the same localities is another important similarity. "It thus seems logical to state that our 'Round Grave people' were either Algonkians closely related to those of the Middle Atlantic slope, or had at least been profoundly influenced by them."¹ Possibly one or more of the proto-Muskogean tribes followed the "Round Grave people", and these in turn may have been succeeded by the Cherokee, who continued to occupy the region in historic times.

The earlier wave of Algonquian tribes into the south probably receded before the approach of the Siouan and other peoples coming from the west or southwest. The connection between these early tribes and the inhabitants of tidewater Virginia at the beginning of the seventeenth century may have been very slight.

Although the Algonquian tribes came from the northwest, all other native peoples encountered east of the Mississippi are generally thought to have migrated from the west or southwest. These coming from their earlier habitat arrived on the right bank of the Mississippi, probably southward from the vicinity of the mouth of the Arkansas River; thence, having crossed to the eastern side, they became widely dispersed throughout the river valleys, pinelands, and mountain ranges.

The first movements of the native peoples into the country eastward from the Mississippi, those from whom some of the historic

¹Harrington, M. R., Cherokee and earlier remains on Upper Tennessee River, p. 167. Museum of the American Indian, New York, 1922.

tribes have descended, probably occurred at an earlier time than has been usually conceded. They may have been the true aborigines of the southeastern country, for as yet no indisputable evidence of Pleistocene man has been discovered in any locality between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic coast.

The languages of all the peoples of the southeastern section, with the exception of the Iroquoian and the smaller Algonquian groups, show structural similarities that suggest a very early contact or association of the various tribes, obviously in a region west of the Mississippi before their removal eastward. The numerous tribes appear to have entered the trans-Mississippi country in successive waves, the movements continuing through centuries.

The Uchean and Siouan groups were probably among the earliest to arrive on the left bank of the Mississippi and, belonging to the same early period, may have been the ancestors of the Natchez, who did not move far eastward, and also of the Timucua tribes and of the little known Calusa, who at the beginning of the historic era occupied many villages on the peninsula of Florida. Undoubtedly, others joined in the early movements, but their identity will never be revealed. The various tribes just mentioned will be considered and referred to in this sketch as the proto-Muskhogeian groups; however, the Uchean and Siouan peoples will be traced separately on the maps.

It is evident that the Siouan tribes, and others who may have been allied with them, after crossing to the left bank of the Mississippi, continued their advance into the valley of the Ohio. The majority are believed to have settled north of the river and to have developed the remarkable cultures that have been revealed in recent years. All did not cross the Ohio; some remained south of the stream and continued eastward into the mountainous country, and these probably constituted the southeastern group of Swanton's classification, as mentioned later in this article.

The Uchean² peoples, centuries ago, were probably a numerous, powerful group, some of whom, together with other proto-Muskhogeian tribes, are believed by the writer to have extended northward to the vicinity of the junction of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. It is likewise believed that during this early period of occupancy the great earthworks of southern Ohio were erected by the Siouan peoples, and that the massive mounds of the Cahokia and related groups not far from the mouth of the Missouri, and others as far distant as

²Historical references to the Yuchi and related tribes have been brought together by Swanton in his work: *Early history of the Creek Indians and their neighbors*. Bull. 73, Bur. Amer. Ethnol., 1922.

Etowah in Georgia, were raised by the proto-Muskhogeian tribes. Some of the ancient mounds, especially the larger ones, reveal evidence of having been enlarged at a subsequent time. This may represent the work of later Muskhogeian tribes, or possibly in some instances that of the Cherokee (Iroquoian).

DESCRIPTION OF MAPS

MAP I

The first map is intended to visualize the position of the linguistic groups after the proto-Muskhogeian tribes, including the Uchean and Siouan, had crossed the Mississippi, and while the Iroquoian and Muskhogeian peoples were still on the right bank of the river with the Caddoan adjoining them to the westward.

The reasons for so placing the Iroquoian group may be briefly stated: First, the languages of the Iroquois and Pawnee (Caddoan) show certain similarities that suggest the possibility of early contact of the two groups; second, a strong resemblance between early historic Pawnee (Caddoan) archeological remains in Nebraska and those of the Iroquois in New York is indicated by the recent discoveries made by W. R. Wedel, whose account of the work in Nebraska is awaiting publication by the Bureau of American Ethnology; third, the Ozark region, extending eastward from the country occupied by Caddoan tribes when they first appeared in history, reveals evidence of a very early and extensive occupancy during a long period, preceding the coming of the Siouan peoples from the valley of the Ohio, after which time the Osages dominated a large part of the country of hills and valleys.

Algonquian tribes may, at that time, have extended much farther south in the region east of the mountains, in the present States of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, than is indicated on the map, but others of the same stock had evidently already abandoned the country westward from the mountains.

MAP 2

The fertile valleys of Tennessee and Kentucky present more convincing evidence of having been occupied by a great number of tribes, at different times, than does any other section of the southeastern United States. Many of the tribes differed in manners and customs, as indicated by the great variety of archeological material recovered from the innumerable sites.

During the migratory movements, as theoretically expressed on the maps, the present States of Tennessee and Kentucky were crossed and recrossed by many tribes, representing the historic Siouan, Uchean, Iroquoian, and Muskogean stocks, while probably at an early time, and certainly at a later day, Algonquian tribes frequented the same region. The archeologist of the future may be able to differentiate the material recovered from the scattered sites, and thereby determine the sequence of the tribal movements.

If the theory that the Iroquoian tribes formerly occupied the Ozark region and later crossed to the left bank of the Mississippi is accepted, it is assumed that some traversed the western and central portions of the present State of Tennessee before pushing northward. By so doing they would have displaced the earlier inhabitants of the country, undoubtedly proto-Muskogean tribes.

Many Muskogean migration legends refer to the coming of the people from the west, and it is possible that the removal of some of the tribes into the trans-Mississippi region was contemporaneous with the movement of the Iroquoian peoples into the same country farther north, nearer the Ohio. Possibly some of the earlier tribes became absorbed by the Muskogean peoples, while others moved eastward to the mountains or beyond. The Timucua group, preceded by the Calusa, of whom so little is known, may at this time have reached the peninsula of Florida. The last two are now considered with the proto-Muskogean peoples.

MAP 3

Fortified camp or village sites have been traced northward from central Tennessee and Kentucky and across the Ohio in the eastern counties of Indiana to the northern part of the State, thence eastward through the ancient home of the Eries to the historic sites of the Iroquois. The embankments differ in form and style of construction, a condition influenced by the nature of the locality in which they occur.

Many of the protected sites may have been constructed and occupied by the Iroquoian tribes during the movement northward, and consequently a comparative study of the archeological material recovered from them should prove to be of the greatest interest. If this hypothesis is correct, it is probable that before the Iroquoian tribes had reached the left bank of the Ohio the Siouan peoples were living in security in the upper valley of the stream. The great majority were north of the river, but others, including the Catawba, may have been south of the Ohio in the mountains to the eastward. The region

northward from the Siouan territories, extending to the shores of the Great Lakes, was probably at that time occupied by Algonquian tribes.

The relative position of the Siouan tribes when they occupied the Ohio valley, claiming the southern section of the present State of Ohio, has been suggested by Swanton,³ who wrote in conclusion: "The occupancy of the territory of our Middle West between the Great Lakes and the Ohio by Siouan tribes seems therefore to rest on grounds almost historical. With the strong indications now at hand there seems to be reason to think that a close comparative study of the Siouan dialects would enable us to reconstruct the general outlines of their ancient geographical positions with considerable accuracy. If present indications are not deceptive, when that is done we shall find that they fell into four major linguistic groups; a northeastern, consisting of the ancestors of the later Siouan tribes of Virginia, the Hidatsa, Dakota, Biloxi, and Ofo; a southeastern, including most of the later Siouan peoples of the two Carolinas; a southwestern composed of the five tribes of Dorsey's Dhegiha group; and a northwestern, Dorsey's Tciwere.

"Admittedly there is much of speculation in all this, but I have considered that the facts are of sufficient importance to both the ethnologist and the archaeologist of the Ohio region to present them in usable form."

The five tribes included in Dorsey's Dhegiha group are the Omaha, Ponca, Quapaw, Osage, and Kansa. The Tciwere group consists of the Iowa, Oto, and Missouri.

There is historical proof that one or more Siouan villages remained in southern Ohio until late in the seventeenth century, and tribal traditions place the ancient settlements of the Quapaw and Osage near the junction of the Ohio and Wabash Rivers.

The line of contact between the Algonquian and Siouan tribes appears to have been to the north and east of the area occupied by the latter peoples.

Michelson⁴ in a recent article discussed certain phases of the Algonquian languages, and in closing wrote: "Summing up, we may say that Powhatan clearly belongs with the Cree group of Central Algonquian languages, that it is closer to Cree than to any other member of that group, but that it can not be classified as a Cree dialect. A prehistoric migration is thereby shown." "Powhatan" in this

³ Swanton, John R., New light on the early history of the Siouan peoples. Journ. Washington Acad. Sci., vol. 13, no. 3, Feb. 4, 1923.

⁴ Michelson, Truman, The linguistic classification of Powhatan. Amer. Anthropol., vol. 35, no. 3, July-Sept., 1933.

quotation refers to the language spoken by the Algonquian tribes of tidewater Virginia in the early seventeenth century.

From the two quotations just made it is evident that some centuries ago the Siouan tribes who later reached the mountainous country of Virginia were living in close contact with others who moved westward beyond the Mississippi; also that the Algonquian tribes encountered in Virginia by the first colonists had been separated from some related tribes with whom they had formerly been closely associated.

The northern thrust of the Iroquoian peoples, when they crossed the Ohio from the south, is now suggested as the cause of the separation of tribes that belonged to the Siouan and Algonquian groups, some going eastward and south, others seeking new homes toward the west.

Where the Iroquoian tribes may have crossed the Ohio is not known; however, if the line of fortified camps, already mentioned, prove to have been associated with the movement of the tribes, the approximate locality of their crossing will be suggested. But it is not within reason to suppose that all reached the right bank of the Ohio at the same time or at the same place, and some may have followed up the valley of the stream from its mouth.

The Cherokee were at that time a part of the Iroquoian group and as such would have participated in the movement from west of the Mississippi; however, they may have continued eastward to the mountains without having crossed the Ohio, thus approaching the country where they were first encountered by Europeans. Probably the Catawba and other Siouan tribes who occupied parts of Carolina in historic times then moved away from the Ohio valley and advanced farther southward into the mountains.

MAP 4

The groups of tribes continued to move, and by the beginning of the sixteenth century they were located approximately as indicated on the last map.

The Iroquoian tribes had moved far eastward, and some occupied the country south of the St. Lawrence. The Hurons had settled north of Niagara, and the Eries remained south of the lake that bears their name. The Cherokee had become established far south in the Alleghenies, with Uchean tribes to the west of them.

The Siouan peoples had scattered far from their ancient homes in the valley of the Ohio. Some had traversed the mountainous sections

of Virginia and Carolina and reached the coast ; others moving more slowly, and undoubtedly reluctant to abandon the rich hunting grounds west of the Wabash, had probably arrived on the banks of the Mississippi and the shores of Lake Michigan. The Algonquian tribes had likewise moved farther away from their earlier habitat and some had already pushed southward on the Atlantic coast.

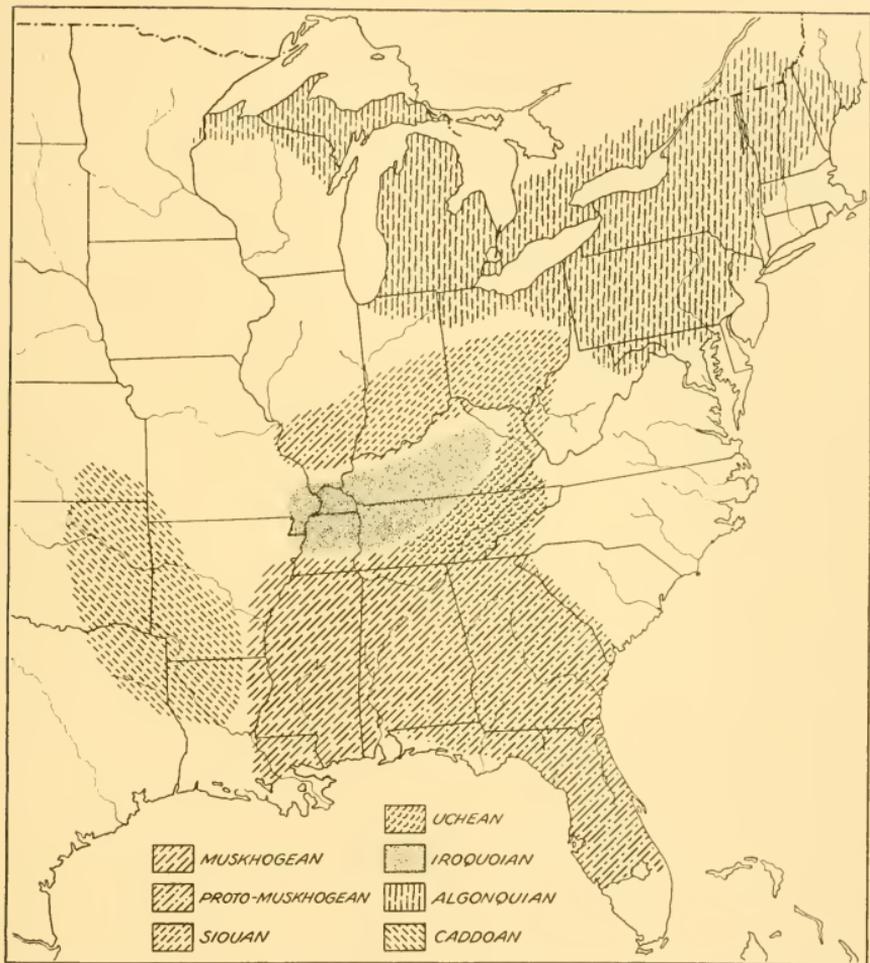
Muskogean tribes occupied the greater part of the southeastern United States, and some of their villages, already old when visited by the Spanish invaders in 1540, may have been the sites of much earlier proto-Muskogean settlements. The villages of the Calusa and Timucua tribes dominated the peninsula of Florida.

This was the distribution of the linguistic groups at the beginning of the historic era, when Europeans were soon to enter and traverse the vast, unknown region that lay between the Atlantic coast and the Mississippi.



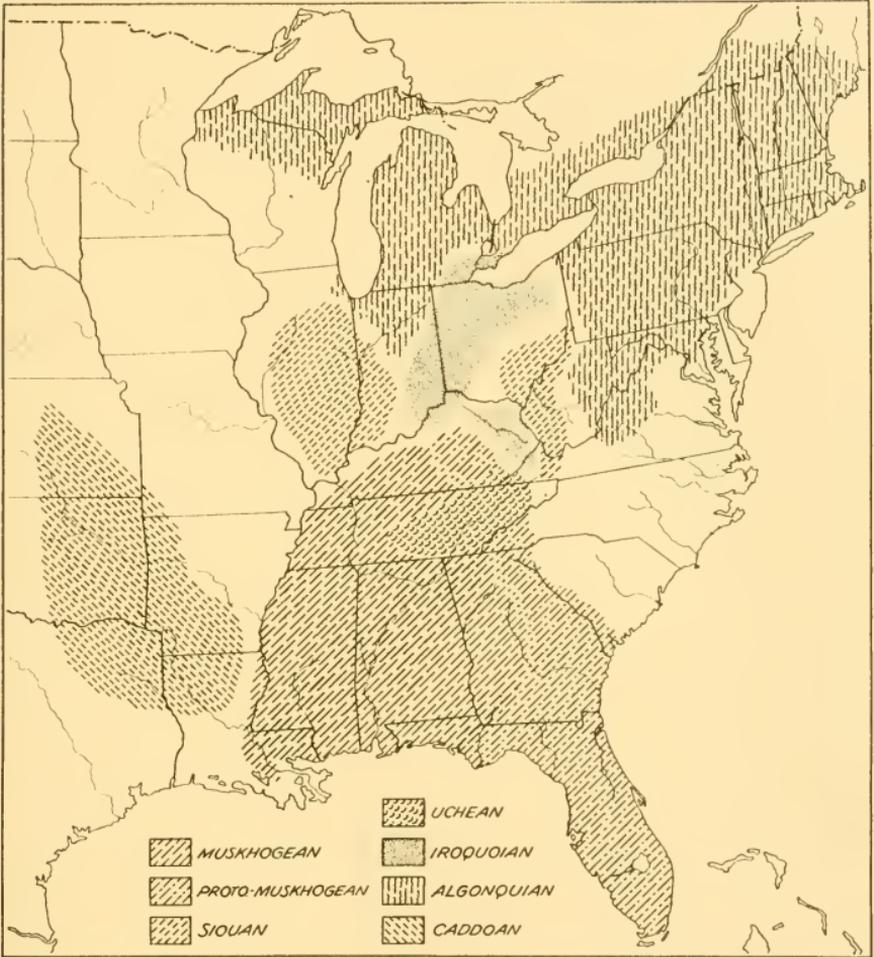
MAP INTENDED TO VISUALIZE THE POSITION OF THE SEVERAL LINGUISTIC STOCKS DURING THE EARLIEST PERIOD CONSIDERED IN THIS PAPER

(For explanation, see p. 5.)

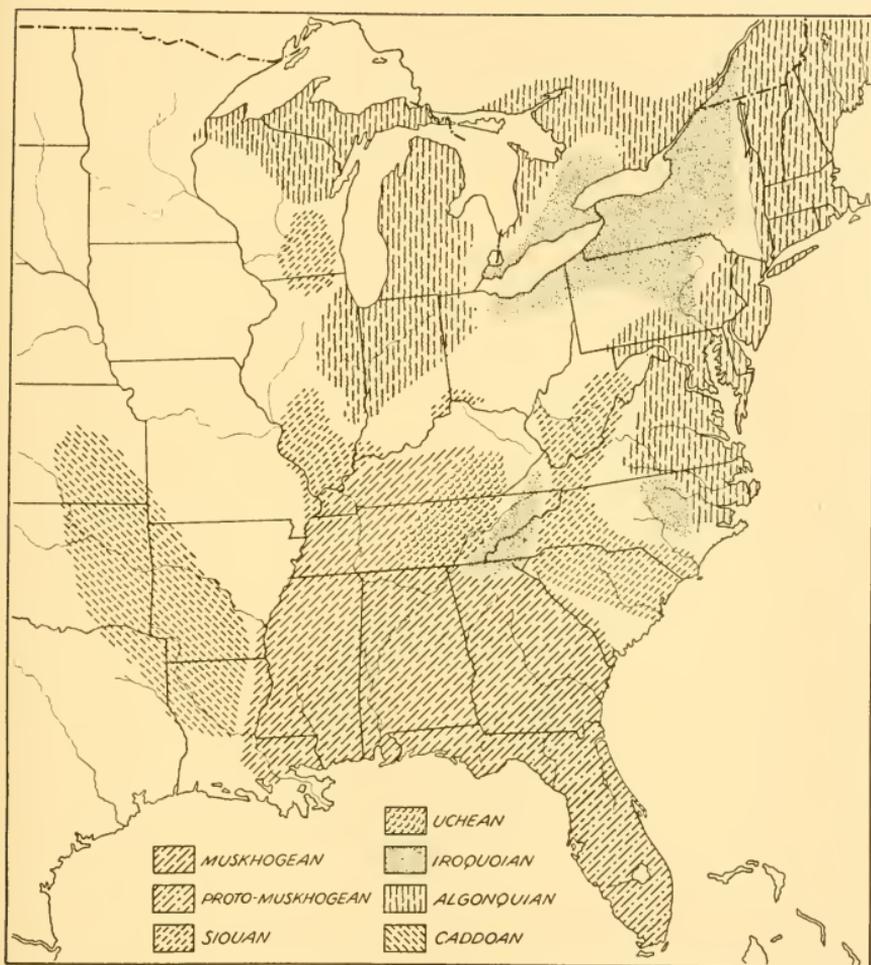


AFTER THE IROQUOIAN AND MUSKOGEAN TRIBES HAD ARRIVED EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

(For explanation, see p. 5.)



THE NORTHERN THRUST OF THE IROQUOIAN PEOPLES RESULTED IN THE SEPARATION OF THE SIOUAN AND ALGONQUIAN TRIBES
(For explanation, see p. 6.)



THE RELATIVE POSITION OF THE LINGUISTIC GROUPS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

(For explanation, see p. 8.)