



**The Present State of Our Knowledge Concerning the Three Linguistic Stocks  
of the Region of Tierra Del Fuego, South America**

Alexander F. Chamberlain

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THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR KNOWLEDGE CONCERN-  
ING THE THREE LINGUISTIC STOCKS OF THE  
REGION OF TIERRA DEL FUEGO,  
SOUTH AMERICA

By ALEXANDER F. CHAMBERLAIN

I N so far as the distribution of human languages is concerned, there is a marked contrast between the southern extremity of the American continent and the long fringe of Arctic coast, from Labrador to the Pacific. The latter is or has been occupied, together with parts of Greenland and the Arctic islands, by the Eskimo, a people speaking one language, with no serious differentiations such as occur in many other linguistic families,—over this area extends but one stock. Tierra del Fuego, on the other hand, has still within its borders representatives of three independent linguistic stocks, the *Alikulufan*, the *Onan*, and the *Yahganan*; and it is even possible that one or two others may have formerly existed in this same area. The Arctic archipelago and the long narrow fringe of coast count but one family of speech, the Fuegian region three such stocks. This conclusion has not been disturbed by the most recent investigations; efforts to make out the Onan to be a Tsonekan (Tehuelchean) dialect have not been successful, nor has any real relationship between Alikulufan, Onan, and Yahganan been proved to exist. Distribution maps of the Fuegian stocks will be found in Bove, Hyades and Deniker, and Furlong.

I. ALIKULUFAN

The territory of the *Alikulufan* (or *Alikalufan*) stock includes the northwestern section of the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego: Brunswick peninsula and King William Land (with part of the coast to the northeast), Desolation Land, the islands of Santa Inez, Clarence, Dawson, etc.; also part of the island of Tierra del Fuego proper, from Admiralty sound west. The Alikuluf probably

occupied also the west coast of the island of Tierra del Fuego, north from their present location to the Straits of Magellan, and likewise a strip of coast on the Punta Arenas side of the straits. The Alikuluf, who number but a few hundred at most, are the *Alik-hoolip* of Fitz-Roy, the *Alakaluf*, *Alacaluf*, etc., of English missionaries, the *Alakalouf* of certain French writers, etc.

The chief literature relating to Alikulufan linguistics is contained in the following titles:

1. BEAUVOT, J. M. Pequeño diccionario del idioma Fueguino-Ona, Buenos Aires, 1901, pp. 60. See further under *Onan*.
2. BOVE, G. Expedición austral argentina. Informes preliminares presentados á los ministros del interior y de guerra y marina de la República Argentina, Buenos Aires, 1883, pp. xxvi, 217.
3. BRINTON, D. G. The American Race, N. Y., 1891, pp. xvi, 392.
4. ——. The Hongote Language and the Patagonian Dialects. At pages 45-52 of his *Studies in South American Native Languages* (Phila., 1892).
5. ——. Further Notes on Fuegian Languages. Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc., vol. xxx, 1892, pp. 249-254.
6. FENTON, T. Vocabulary. In Hyades and Deniker (q. v.).
7. FITZ-ROY, R. Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships *Adventure* and *Beagle*, between the Years 1826 and 1836, describing their Examination of the Southern Shores of South America and the *Beagle's* Circumnavigation of the Globe, 3 vols., with Append. and Addend., London, 1839.
8. DE LA GUILBAUDIÈRE, J. Vocabulary. See Brinton (No. 5), Marcel, M. G.
9. HYADES, P. et DENIKER, J. Mission scientifique du Cap Horn, 1882-1883, tome vi, Anthropologie, Ethnographie, Paris, 1891, pp. vii, 422.
10. MARCEL, M. G. Les Fuégiens à la fin du XVIIe siècle d'après des documents inédits, Paris, 1892, pp. 20.
11. MITRE, B. Catálogo razonado de la sección lenguas Americanas. Con una introducción de Luis María Torres, tomo i. Buenos Aires, 1909, pp. xliii, 411.
12. SPEGAZZINI, G. Apuntes filológicas sobre las lenguas de la Tierra del Fuego. Anales de la Soc. Científ. Argent. (Buenos Aires), vol. xviii, 1888, pp. 33ff.
13. ——. Vocabularios Ona, Yaghan y Alacaluf. Ms. See Mitre, *Catálogo*, p. 176.
14. *The Voice of Pity for South America* (London), vols. i-xiii, 1854-1866.
15. WEDDELL, J. A Voyage towards the South Pole in the Years 1822-1824, containing an Examination of the Antarctic Sea to the Seventy-Fourth Degree of Latitude, and a Visit to Tierra del Fuego, with a particular Account of the Inhabitants, London, 1827, pp. iv, 432.
16. WILSON, J. Vocabulary. See Fitz-Roy, R.; Hyades, P. et Deniker, J.

The Alikulufan linguistic material in Fitz-Roy consists of a vocabulary of 208 words (compared with Tekenika, i. e., Yahgan), obtained by Dr J. Wilson, but no grammatical data. The Wilson vocabulary is reprinted by Hyades and Deniker, together with the equivalents (pp. 272-277) of the same taken down from an Alikuluf woman of Orange bay. Also 46 words, obtained in 1883 from Dr Thomas Fenton, who had taken them down, in 1876, from three young Alikuluf women at Crooked Reach, and verified by Hyades and Deniker at Punta Arenas by an Alikuluf boy, nine years old, who likewise gave 13 other words. The Fenton vocabulary differs notably from the Alikulufan proper, indicating great dialectical variation, if not, indeed, the presence of another linguistic stock altogether. Of the Alikulufan vocabulary in Fitz-Roy, Hyades and Deniker observe (p. 270) that it seems to be much more accurate than the corresponding Yahganian one.

Of the four Fuegians—the source of most of the linguistic material in Fitz-Roy—who had been taken to England by the *Beagle* on the first voyage in 1830, York Minster (26 years old), Boat Memory (20 years), and Fuegia Basket (9 years) were Alikuluf, while Jemmy Button (14 years) was a Yahgan. Boat Memory died of small-pox in England, but the other three were on board the vessel, when the famous Charles Darwin began his voyage round the globe, so significant for the development of biological and anthropological science. In his *Journal*, Darwin has left us his impressions of these aborigines, who were restored to their native land, when the *Beagle* reached Tierra del Fuego again in 1832. On the voyage over, Jemmy Button is said to have learned the Alikulufan language and to have forgotten, largely, if not entirely, his mother-tongue, by the time of his return. He soon learned it again, however. This accounts for certain contradictions and discrepancies in the linguistic data ascribed to him (e. g., in *The Voice of Pity*, vol. VI, 1859, p. 21), as Hyades and Deniker point out.

Weddell gives (p. 273) four "Fuegian" words, of which the exact affinities have not yet been made out; one, at least, and possibly two, may be Alikulufan. Weddell's words, which were ob-

tained in 1823, are reprinted in Hyades and Deniker (p. 263) and Mitre (p. 159). The material in Brinton's *American Race* (p. 364) consists of 16 words with the numerals 1-4, and appears to have been derived from Fitz-Roy. It is repeated in his paper of 1892 (No. 3).

Marcel publishes (pp. 17-20) a vocabulary of "Fuegian" words, compiled in 1698 by Jean de la Guilbaudière (or Guibaldière), a filibuster, who lived for some time on the Straits of Magellan. This vocabulary, of some 300 words and phrases, seems to be more or less Alikulufan, which would make it the earliest Ms., but not printed, record of the language. Mitre (p. 158) considers it "at base Alikuluf." Brinton (*Further Notes on Fueg. Lang.*, p. 250) publishes 22 words from De la Guilbaudière's vocabulary with comparisons with the "Alikoulip" of Fitz-Roy. The Ms. vocabulary of Spegazzini, according to Mitre (p. 177), has only a brief list of Alikulufan words, those of Yahganan and Onan being much longer; he spent but a few days among the Alikuluf. His *Apuntes filológicos* likewise contains little concerning the Alikulufan, being chiefly concerned with Onan and Yahganan. The Onan *Dictionary* of Father Beauvoir contains a comparative vocabulary of 41 words including Alikulufan. The etymology of the name *Alikuluf*, *Alacaluf*, *Alikoulip*, etc., is unknown. It is doubtless of aboriginal provenance, but may not be Alikulufan in origin.

## II. ONAN

The territory of the *Onan* stock includes, or included, the northern and eastern portions of the large island of Tierra del Fuego, the south of which belongs to the Yahganan, and a part of the west to the Alikulufan. Mitre (p. 167) states that "they extend in Tierra del Fuego from the north coast on the Straits of Magellan to Cape San Pablo eastward on the Atlantic; and on the west to Inutil bay and the center of the archipelago. The map given by Furlong (p. 225) shows the Ona occupying both sides of Admiralty sound and all the southeastern coast of the island of Tierra del Fuego, with former extension over all the northern portion. These Indians are known to various writers by a considerable diversity of names

(Aona, Aonik, Ona, Onas, Oensmen, Yacana, Yacanas, Yacanacunni, etc.), some of which, wholly or in part, are probably of Tsonekan (Tehuelchean) origin. According to Lehmann-Nitsche, the Ona, whom he prefers to term Tshon, of northern Tierra del Fuego are called Shilk'nam, and those of the south, now extinct, Manekenkn (the dialects of both have been studied by Bridges). The Ona country has been recently traversed by Furlong, who made special investigations of their life and customs. In his opinion (p. 447) the Ona in the last 30 years have decreased in numbers "from 3,000 to 300."

The chief sources of information concerning the linguistics of the Onan stock will be found in the following list:

1. BEAUVOIR, J. M. *Pequeño diccionario del idioma Fuegino-Ona con su correspondiente castellano*. 1a y 2a partes. Por un misionero Salesiano de la Tierra del Fuego, Buenos Aires, 1901, pp. 60.
2. BOVE, G. *Op. cit.*
3. BRIDGES, L. *Vocabulary and Phrases of the Language of the Onas*. Ms. (pp. 32), in the library of the Museo Mitre of Buenos Aires. See Mitre, *Catálogo*, p. 164.
4. BRINTON, D. G. *The American Race*, N. Y., 1891, pp. xvi, 392.
5. ——. *Further Notes on Fuegian Languages*. *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.*, vol. XXX, 1892, pp. 249-254.
6. FURLONG, C. W. *Into the Unknown Land of the Onas*. *Harper's Mo. Mag.*, vol. CXIX, 1909, pp. 442-455.
7. ——. *The Vanishing People of the Land of Fire*. *Ibid.*, vol. CXX, 1910, pp. 217-229.
8. ——. See forthcoming book of the author on Tierra del Fuego, etc.
9. DE LA GRASSERIE, R. *De la langue Tehuelche*. *Verb. d. xvi. Intern. Amerik.-Kongr.* (1904), Stuttgart, 1906, pp. 610-647.
10. HYADES, P. *et* DENIKER, J. *Op. cit.*
11. LEHMANN-NITSCHKE, R. *El grupo Tshon de los países magellánicos*. *Resumen No. 47*. XVII Congr. Intern. de los Americanistas, Sesión de Buenos Aires 16 al 21 de mayo de 1910.
12. LISTA, R. *Viájes al país de los Onas*. Tierra del Fuego, Buenos Aires, 1887, pp. 146.
13. MITRE, B. *Op. cit.*
14. POPPER, D. J. *Exploración de la Tierra del Fuego*. *Bol. Inst. Geogr. Argent.* (Buenos Aires), vol. VIII, pp. 75 ff.
15. SEGERS, P. A. *Hábitos y costumbres de los indios Aonas*. *Ibid.*, vol. XII, 1885, pp. 41-82. See Brinton, D. G.

16. SPEGAZZINI, C. Apuntes filológicos (No. 11 under *Alikulufan*).

17. —. Vocabularios (No. 12 under *Alikulufan*).

Of the Ona Ms. vocabulary in the collection of the Museo Mitre in Buenos Aires we are told by Mitre (p. 164) that the author, who is the son of the Anglican missionary, Rev. Thomas Bridges, "was born at the Mission of Ushuaia, founded by his father, and learned the Ona language from childhood, which makes this the most accurate vocabulary of Ona in existence." This, however, is probably an exaggeration. Hyades and Deniker indicate the extension of the Onan stock on their map, but give no vocabulary. Lista gives a vocabulary of 85 words of the southern and one of 27 words of the northern Ona; he also compares Onan with Tsonekan (Tehuelchean), but without proving relationship. Brinton, in his *American Race*, gives no Onan vocabulary, but, while recognizing (p. 331) an "Ona linguistic stock," he observes also (p. 329) "the tongue of the Onas . . . is apparently connected with the Tsoneca or Patagonian." In his paper *Further Notes on the Fuegian Languages*, he discusses the alleged relationship of Onan and Tsonekan, using particularly the material of Seger,—also Popper's brief vocabulary, which he reprints (pp. 252-253). Seger, who lived for three years in Tierra del Fuego, had composed a dictionary of the Ona language, which was lost in shipwreck; hence his article contains besides the vocabulary only a few notes on word-composition, etc.

Spegazzini's *Apuntes filológicos* contains a comparative grammatical sketch of Onan and Yahganan, with some references to Alikulufan, while his Ms. in the Mitre Museum gives extensive Onan and Yahganan vocabularies, and a few Alikulufan data. The *Dictionary* of Father José M. Beauvoir, besides a comparative vocabulary of 41 words in many tongues, including Onan, Alikulufan, and Yahganan, contains 1876 words, 132 proper names of persons and places, 76 phrases, etc. The Onan text of the Pater Noster is also given. The dialect represented is that of the Indians frequenting the missions of Rio Grande de la Tierra del Fuego and San Rafael de Dawson, and the author had as efficient interpreter and collaborator Kalapakta, or José Calafate, a youth of 13 years, at the mission of Candelaria, Rio Grande.

There is considerable doubt as to the origin of the name *Ona*, or *Aona*, by which these Indians have come to be generally known. It is said to signify "people" and to have been the ethnic appellation of at least a portion of the stock. It may be of Yahganan provenance, as some believe. Furlong and others have also suggested that it is a corruption of *Tsoneka*, or *Tso'na'ca*, the name of the Patagonian Indians. Dr Lehmann-Nitsche, who affiliates the Onan with the Tsonekan or Tehuelchean, proposes to style the combined group *Tshon* (cf. the Hispanicized geographical name *Chones*, etc.). He thinks that *Ona* "is a corruption of *Tsh'n*, due to the Yamanas (Yahgan), who transmitted it to the European missionaries."

### III. YAHGANAN

The territory of the *Yahganan* stock includes, or included, the southern coast of the large island of Tierra del Fuego, from end to end, and the entire archipelago of the south: Navarin and adjacent isles, Cape Horn is., Host, Gordon, Londonderry, Basket, etc. In 1884 a number of Indians were settled at Ushuaia, the mission founded by Rev. Thomas Bridges, the Anglican missionary (d. 1898), to whose labors so much of the Yahganan linguistic material now in existence is due. In 1884 the total number of these Indians was stated by Mr Bridges to be 949; but, by 1890, as the result of epidemics of disease, etc., their number had been reduced to less than 300, according to Hyades and Deniker (p. 391). Of these 100 were on the Wollaston is., 60 at Downeast (a settlement of Bridges), 40 around Ushuaia, and the remainder canoe-nomads. Furlong states their number to be at present "perhaps 175." Denucé (p. 652) cites Lehmann-Nitsche as giving their number as "less than 80," as compared with some 3,000 in 1862.

The chief linguistic material on record for the Yahganan stock will be found in the following list:

1. ADAM, L. Grammaire de la langue Yágane, Paris, 1885, pp. 60. See also *Revue de Linguistique*, vols. xvii-xviii, 1884-1885.
2. BEAUVOIR, J. M. Op. cit.
3. BOVE, G. Op. cit.
4. —. Patagonía, Tierra del Fuoco, Mari Australi. Parte I., Genova, 1883.



5. BRIDGES, T. Dictionary of the Yahgan Language, Mss., 2 vols., 1869-1879. Brought to Brussels by the Belgica Antarctic Expedition in 1897-1899. See Denucé, J.
6. —. *Gospł Lyc Ecamanaci*. The Gospel of S. Luke translated into the Yahgan Language, London, 1881.
7. —. See Ellis, A. J.
8. BRINTON, D. G. *The American Race*, N. Y., 1891, pp. xvi, 392.
9. —. On the Hongote Language and the Patagonian Dialects. At pages 45-52 of *Studies in South American Native Languages* (Phila., 1892).
10. —. Further Notes on Fuegian Languages. *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.*, vol. XXX, 1892, pp. 249-254.
11. DARAPSKY, L. Estudios lingüísticos americanos. Fueginos. *Bol. Inst. Geogr. Argent.*, vol. x, 1889, pp. 276-289.
12. DENUCÉ, J. Note sur un vocabulaire complet de la langue Yahgane. *Verb. d. XVI. Intern. Amerik.-Kongr.*, 1908, Wien, 1910, pp. 651-654.
13. EIZAGUIRRE, J. M. *Tierra del Fuego. Recuerdos e impresiones de un viáje al extremo austral de la República Argentina. Precedido de un introducción por el ingeniero Julio Popper, Cordoba, 1897*, pp. xv, 279, 6.
14. ELLIS, A. J. Address of President. *Proc. Philol. Soc. (London)*, 1882.
15. FITZ-ROY, R. *Op. cit.*
16. FURLONG, C. W. Amid the Islands of the Land of Fire. *Harper's Mo. Mag.*, vol. CXVIII, 1909, pp. 33-347.
17. —. Southernmost People of the World. *Ibid.*, vol. CXCIX, pp. 126-137.
18. —. See forthcoming book of author on Tierra del Fuego, etc.
19. GARBE, R. Eine vollständige Grammatik des Yágan und ein Vocabular von ca. 30,000 Wörtern. *Götting. Gelehrte Anz.*, 1883, vol. 1, pp. 336-376.
20. HYADES, P. et DENIKER, J. *Op. cit.*
21. DE LUCY-FOSSARIEU, P. *Ethnographie de l'Amérique antarctique: Patagonsiens, Araucaniens, Fuégiens*, Paris, 1884.
22. MITRE, B. *Op. cit.*
23. MÜLLER, F. Die Sprache der Feuerländer (Jágan). In *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft*, IV. Bd., 1, Abt., Wien, 1888, pp. 207-221.
24. PLATZMANN, J. *Glossar der feuerländischen Sprache*, Leipzig, 1882, pp. lviii, 266.
25. *South American Missionary Magazine* (London), Vols. 1- (1867-).
26. SPEGAZZINI, C. Vocabularios Ona, Yaghan y Alcaluf. Ms. (in Italian) in Museo Mitre. See Mitre, B.
27. —. Elementi di grammatica Iaghan, sistema Ollendorf. At pages 179-189 of Mitre's *Catálogo* (1909).
28. —. Apuntes filológicos. *Op. cit.* (No. 12 under *Alikulufan*).

The Yahganan linguistic material in Fitz-Roy consists of a vocabulary of 208 words, with corresponding terms in Alikoulip

(Alikulufan). This is reprinted by Hyades and Deniker (pp. 265-270) and compared with the equivalents of the same words as obtained by them. Of the Tekenika (Yahgan) vocabulary in Fitz-Roy, Hyades and Deniker observe (p. 270), that at least 120 words "are entirely wrong," while the numerals 4-9 "do not exist in Yahgan." The work of Hyades and Deniker contains also an extensive French-Yahgan vocabulary, classified according as the words relate to earth, air, water; place-names; names of plants, etc.; names of animals, birds, fishes, insects, mollusks, etc.; names of the body, its parts, members, organs, etc.; words relating to movements, emotions, physiological states and actions, etc.; words relating to the family; words relating to the house, utensils tools, arms, ornaments; words relating to the actions of material life; words relating to the feelings; affixes; adjectives; pronouns; adverbs; interjections; made-up words and loan-words from English, etc. In addition to this classified and annotated vocabulary, which occupies pages 280-321, there is given (pp. 321-334) a brief sketch of Yahgan grammar, including (pp. 322-332) conjugations of the verbs "to love," "to give," and a number of phrases. At pages 335-337 the alphabet adopted by the English missionary for transcribing Yahgan is discussed.

The Yahgan version of the *Gospel of S. Luke* by Rev. T. Bridges was published anonymously by the British and Foreign Bible Society. It has been the basis of a number of studies of the Yahgan language by various writers: The grammatical sketch of F. Müller, the grammar of Adam, the monograph of Garbe, the glossary of Platzmann, etc. Brinton's brief Yahgan vocabulary in his *American Race* (p. 364) is from Bridges, as is also his material of 1892. Mitre (pp. 160-161) gives a brief letter of Bridges, dating from 1898, on the Fuegian tongues in general. In Ellis' Presidential Address are included an outline of Yahgan grammar by Bridges and the native text of a letter from a Yahgan to that missionary. In his *Glossary*, Platzmann gives, besides the vocabulary, notes on the missionary alphabet, the proper names in the texts, the English loan-words, etc.; likewise the Yahgan texts of the Parable of the Sower, the Pater Noster, and some plant-names, etc. The mono-

graph of Garbe is more scientific than the work of Platzmann, which he criticizes. It contains a somewhat detailed exposition of the Yahgan tongue. The Ms. "Dictionary of ca. 30,000 words" is the same as the one frequently referred to by ethnologists as indicating the extent of the vocabulary of primitive peoples. The final editing of this work was begun by Mr Bridges in 1877, and the Ms. completed in July 1879. Bridges' *Dictionary* was brought to Europe by the Belgica Antarctic Expedition of 1897-1899. His Mss. were also placed earlier at the disposition of Bove, etc. According to Denucé, Bridges' *Dictionary* was in process of publication in 1908 but its appearance had been delayed by various obstacles. When the matter was discussed at the Congress of Americanists in Vienna, Dr F. Boas expressed the hope that the work of Bridges might appear as "an etymological dictionary" and not in such a form as that of the Riggs *Dakota Dictionary*, which really "ought to be republished in the form of an etymological dictionary."

L. Adam's *Yahgan Grammar* of 1885, which is based on Bridges' *Gospel of S. Luke* and Garbe's monograph, is résumé by Mitre (pp. 168-172). The Yahgan material in Darapsky is chiefly a grammatical sketch, with comparisons with other American aboriginal tongues. Bove gives an extensive vocabulary, likewise a distribution map. In Eizaguirre are two brief Yahgan vocabularies. Mitre (pp. 179-189) prints Spegazzini's *Elements of Yahgan*, consisting of seven Ollendorffian "lessons" in Italian and Yahgan. Spegazzini's *Apuntes filológicos* contains an extended grammatical discussion of the Yahgan language, and his Ms. vocabulary is quite large.

CLARK UNIVERSITY,  
WORCESTER, MASS.