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Texas Indians -- Report of Messrs. Butler and Lewis. Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a report of Messrs. Butler and Lewis relative to the Indians of Texas and the southwestern prairies.

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TEXAS INDIANS—REPORT OF MESSRS. BUTLER AND LEWIS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

*A report of Messrs. Butler and Lewis relative to the Indians of Texas  
and the southwestern prairies.*

FEBRUARY 8, 1847.

Read, and laid upon the table.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *February 3, 1847.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in answer to resolutions of the House of Representatives of the 10th of August and 13th of January, 1846, requiring a copy of the report of Messrs. Butler and Lewis, late commissioners to the Indians of Texas and the southwestern prairies, and information in relation to those of Texas.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. L. MARCY,  
*Secretary of War.*

HON. JOHN W. DAVIS,  
*Speaker House of Representatives.*

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Office Indian Affairs, February 3, 1847.*

SIR: A resolution of the House of Representatives of the 10th of August last requires a copy of the report of Messrs. Butler and Lewis, late commissioners to the wild tribes of Indians of Texas and the southwestern prairies, and a statement of their expenditures and the sums allowed and paid to them. A copy of the report has not sooner been submitted to you because of the accounts of the commissioners not having been finally acted on and settled by the accounting officers. As it is now probable that this will not be done in season to furnish the information during the present session, I have the honor to lay the report before you for transmission to the House. This report contains the best information which it has been in the power of this office to procure in relation to the Indian tribes

of Texas, a report respecting whom is required by a resolution of that body dated January 13th, 1846.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
W. MEDILL.

Hon. Wm. L. MARCY,  
*Secretary of War.*

WASHINGTON CITY, D. C., August 8, 1846.

SIR: Under instructions from your department of the 12th September, 1845, we proceeded to the duties assigned to us, and have the honor to submit the following report:

In point of time, the first-named commissioner preceded his colleague. He arrived at New Orleans on the 22d October; there purchased a small outfit for the mission, with some suitable articles as presents, to be used in conciliating the Indians. He proceeded up Red river by land as far as Shreveport, and then across the country to Fort Gibson, where he applied, in the joint name of the commissioners, for a company of dragoons. The commanding general of the department declined, for satisfactory reasons, to yield to the request. The first-named commissioner then wrote to his colleague, apprizing him of his want of success in obtaining the dragoons as they had expected, (as on two former occasions a similar requisition had been complied with.) Thus thrown on our own resources, and being unable to obtain aid by way of guard, the commissioners proceeded, as well as they could, to make other arrangements. It would have been imprudent and hazardous for them to venture alone among the Indians without assistants. The government had an important object in view, and we were without the ordinary and anticipated means of effecting it. The experience of one of the commissioners on former occasions had satisfied him of the necessity of availing ourselves of the sympathy and confidence existing everywhere between the Indian races. Let them meet together at any time, not as hostile adversaries, and this mystical affinity of blood exhibits itself in a way calculated to touch the feelings of the most indifferent. In selecting their guard, and other agents of their mission, they had more than common advantages in availing themselves of the services of influential persons connected with tribes living under friendly treaties with the United States. Some of these Indians were gentlemen of intelligence, and were capable of appreciating, in its largest sense, the true objects of the mission. Under such circumstances, they did not hesitate as to the propriety and policy of employing the friendly delegations that accompanied them. And their influence was very great,—perhaps more than any other that was exerted; not only from the cause alluded to, but these friendly representatives seemed to overcome the unfortunate influence of secret emissaries, who were in the habit of going in advance, and, with the discontent of renegadoes, would spread alarm, and sow the seeds of jealousy against the purposes of the white men who might be sent to induce the wild tribes to enter into friendly treaties. In the sequel, these friendly representatives, consisting of two Cherokees, three Chickasaws, two Creeks, and two Seminoles, with their interpreters, cooks, &c., were our best and most efficient agents to counteract such secret and unfavorable influences.

At Coffee's station, where the commissioners met, we became more fully satisfied of the hazard of attempting to penetrate the Indian country without an adequate force for our protection. The Indians, from many accidental causes, had become suspicious and discontented. We thought it prudent and proper again to address an application to General Arbuckle for a guard of dragoons. The application being refused, we set about forming our plans, and succeeded in organizing a force to enable us to proceed. It should be remarked, that before this time (which was January) we had taken preliminary measures towards our ultimate purposes.

As early as November we reached the Indian country, and had sent out runners ahead of us to invite the different tribes of wild Indians to meet us at the Camanche Peak, on the Brazos. Contrary to our calculations, these runners became deterred from going among the wild tribes, who were represented as having been greatly exasperated, and hostile to the authorities of the United States. These rumors were no doubt put in circulation by the refugees and renegades from other more civilized tribes, for the purpose of giving themselves all the advantages of their selfish intention. They value very much the incidental advantages of their irresponsible position, and are disposed to resort to any means to maintain it.

Although they are not acceptable to those on whom they have obtruded themselves, still they are able to do great mischief. Some measures should be taken to remove them. Having been disappointed, from the causes alluded to, of meeting the chiefs at the time first appointed, which was the full moon in January, we again sent forward two sets of runners with small presents for the Indians, with assurances that our purpose was peace. One set of runners swept the country on both sides of the Colorado; the other the country on the Brazos and the head of the Trinity. The commissioners, with their party, took a more direct route for the Camanche Peak, hoping to get there before the second appointment for the assembling of the Indians, which was the full moon in February, to have every thing in the greatest possible state of forwardness, in order that all unnecessary delay and expense might be avoided in concluding our council with the Indians. Our Indian guide, however, proved entirely ignorant of the country, led us across the Brazos fifty miles above, and one hundred beyond the Camanche Peak, near the waters of the Colorado, before we discovered our mistake. Our guide was discharged, and we took the most direct route, according to our judgment, to the "Peak." While lost between the Brazos and Colorado, we encountered a party of Wacoos and Keechies, who had been on a marauding expedition to the frontier of Texas. Supposing us to be Texans, and that we came to make war on them, they stole twelve of our horses and mules, and gave evident demonstrations of hostility. As soon, however, as they ascertained who we were, and what our purpose was, they not only restored our horses, but expressed great regret for what they had done. In this we believed them sincere. After travelling about two hundred miles down the waters of Little river—a tributary of the Brazos in a direction south of east—we met, about the 10th of February, with a Boluxie camp, the headmen of which informed us that we were below the Camanche Peak, and about two days ride from the Brazos. We went immediately to the Brazos, where we saw several hunting parties of Indians, from whom we learned, for the first time, that our second set of runners, seeing the impossibility,

on account of constant rains and swollen streams, of the Indians getting to the "Peak" by the full moon in February, had very wisely and properly postponed the meeting until the full moon in March. We then pitched our camp on the Brazos, for the purpose of recruiting our horses and getting a supply of provisions for our men. This was absolutely necessary; as our horses and men were worn out and exhausted, from excessive fatigue and short allowance, the horses having subsisted for several weeks on nothing but the short dry grass of the prairie; and our men had depended the same time upon such game as our hunters had chanced to kill, which afforded but a bare subsistence.

While encamped here, several parties of Ionies, Onadaicas, Caddoes, Tonkaways, and Lippans, on their way to the "Peak," joined us. They were hungry and without provisions, and they claimed the fulfilment of our promises, made through our runners, that they should be fed after they joined us, until the council closed. We could not refuse, and procured such provisions as were to be had from the nearest settlements, until we reached the Peak, where we were to meet a supply of beef by contract. As soon as our horses were able to travel we started for the Peak; arrived there, and found a number of Indians had already assembled, amounting, together with those we carried with us, to several hundred. Here the treaty might have been concluded, but for the disinclination of the chiefs or headman to enter into any permanent treaty arrangement before consulting their people, and without having their leading war captains, and as many of their people as possible, to hear what was said and done. They represented that treaties had been concluded before, and promises made to the chiefs in council; that they had reported these things to their people; and for the violation of faith in the fulfilment of any stipulation or promises on the part of the white men (and they had been frequent) they were held responsible. They were therefore unwilling to do any thing definitely until they had consulted their people, and brought as many to the council as would come. They also suggested the "Council Springs" as a more suitable place for the adjourned meeting, as affording more abundant subsistence for their horses, and greater facilities for procuring provisions for themselves. In all these things we had to indulge them. Accordingly a portion of the Indians, with five or six of our men with each party as security of our good faith, started to scour the whole Indian country, for the purpose of notifying the Indians of the time, place, and purpose of our next meeting, which was appointed for the full moon in April; but long continued and unprecedented rains, high waters, and the ungovernable aversion of the Indians to travel in the rain, or to cross water-courses when much swollen, so retarded their movements that delay was unavoidable. Other untoward events were the cause of much delay. Some of the hunting parties of the Camanches, without knowing any thing of our visit or purpose, or of the new relation of Texas to the United States, had committed depredations on the Texas frontier; and when their chiefs heard of it they became alarmed, and would not come into council until runners had been sent several hundred miles, and peace offerings exchanged as a pledge for their security and kind treatment while in council. The interested and selfish purposes of unprincipled men upon the borders, and evil reports of renegade Indians, had to be met and counteracted. All these things produced delay, and our meeting did not take place until about the middle of May. The bulk of the Indians that were

at the Peak accompanied us to the Council Springs, and remained until the close of the council. There were acquisitions to their numbers almost daily from the various tribes, which swelled our subsistence account to an amount greatly beyond our calculations at the outset. It must not be supposed that while we were at Council Springs we were unemployed indeed, from the time of our arrival there, until the conclusion of the treaty, hereafter to be noticed, was a period of our greatest troubles and difficulties. Daily communications and constant attention had to be maintained with the Indians; and one of the commissioners was at this time ill. During an excursion in the month of March, in which he had to be very much exposed, he contracted a disorder, which continued to increase in violence until he was compelled to take his bed about the 1st of April; and from that time he could give little more than the aid of his advice and counsel on all the essential matters involved in pending negotiations.

Both he and his colleague saw the importance of their peculiar situation, and they were under every obligation to make the most of it. The solicitude and apprehension which were entertained at a very critical period for the army under General Taylor's command cannot be forgotten.

It was generally understood that his small force was surrounded by an overwhelming body of Mexicans. His situation, in any point of view, was certainly full of imminent peril. The Indians, looking at the mere demonstration of numbers, were manifestly excited by such a state of things. The constituted authorities of Texas saw the importance of guarding against the outbreak of savage violence; and, under a resolution of their legislature, the governor of Texas despatched two special messengers to apprise us of the necessity of maintaining a control over the savages by every practical means in our power. General Taylor, with a becoming vigilance, seeing the great danger of the savages taking a part in the war at such a juncture, either by murdering their white neighbors from a supposed impunity from danger, or by joining the Mexican forces, also sent a despatch to the executive of Texas, of which we were apprized by express immediately.

We were then so far distant from any thing like efficient aid that could have been afforded us, should an occasion have called for it, that we were bound to resort to the most obvious means of security and safety. Under such circumstances, what could the commissioners do?—leave the camp, and thereby abandon the Indians to their own wild and ferocious course of policy? This could not have been done in the discharge of their duty, with honor as patriotic citizens, or as official agents of the government.

They felt bound to retain their post, and make the most of their influence in conciliating the friendship and overcoming any hostile indication on the part of the Indians which they had reason to fear might be exhibited. To do this they had to resort to more than ordinary exertions. They held a highly important position that required them to use all the discretion vested in them by their instructions from the government.

They had not only to make many promises, but were at once compelled to make profuse presents, and resort to unusual expenditures of money, to secure themselves and divert and detain the Indians. If they had not taken the course they did, what would have been the consequences cannot now be conjectured. It must not be supposed that the savages would have remained entirely passive and neutral. We had many reasons to

think otherwise; and it was fortunate at this particular time that many of the influential chiefs were separated from their people. Under such circumstances their aversion to the conterminous white population could be appeased and thwarted, if not entirely overcome.

The tribes with whom we were in negotiation at the Camanche Peak, and with whom we concluded a treaty at Council Springs on the 16th May, a copy of which has been sent to the department, are as follows:

1st. The Camanches, who are regarded as the master spirits of the prairie, acquired by their numbers and general daring of character. They are an athletic and fine looking race of people, living entirely by the chase, and principally upon buffalo and wild horses. They make no corn and have no permanent places of abode. They are predatory in their habits, ranging as far south as the Rio Grande, and the headwaters of Red river and the Canadian; wintering principally upon the Brazos and Trinity rivers, where they find abundance of green grass all winter for the subsistence of their horses. They make frequent incursions into the northern provinces of Mexico, from whence they derive their best horses. They likewise capture women and children, and make slaves of them. It is believed that they have as many as one thousand Mexican children at this time. These Camanches are known upon the prairies under the general appellation of Pah-to-cahs, and are subdivided into six distinct bands. The separate organization and internal regulations, such as head chiefs, councillors, war chiefs, and captains, are as follows:

1st. Yam-pe-uc-coes, or "Root Diggers." They number about five hundred lodges, averaging about seven souls to the lodge, making in all about thirty-five hundred souls. They range generally on the headwaters of the Canadian and Red rivers.

2d. The Hoo-ish, or "Honey Eaters," who number about four hundred lodges, averaging about seven to the lodge, making in all about twenty-eight hundred souls. They inhabit the southernmost part of the Camanche country bordering the settlements of Texas. Their principal chief, Pah-hah-u-cah, is an excellent man, and quite friendly with the whites.

3d. The Co-che-ta-cah, or "Buffalo Eaters." They have something upwards of three hundred lodges, and number about two thousand souls, and are located principally upon the headwaters of the Brazos.

4th. The Noonah, or "People of the Desert." They have about two hundred lodges, and number about fifteen hundred souls. They live upon the open plain or prairie between the Colorado and Brazos rivers.

5th. The No-coo-nees, or "People in a Circle." They number about two hundred and fifty lodges, in all about seventeen hundred and fifty souls; are located between the Colorado and Rio Grande.

6th. The Le-nay-wosh, or "People in the Timber." They have about four hundred lodges, and number about twenty-eight hundred souls; making in all fourteen thousand three hundred souls. These people command the prairies, and are the principal ones to be treated with and conciliated. In this place it is proper to remark that there has recently been formed an alliance and acquisition to this band from two bands of Indians heretofore inhabiting the northern provinces of Mexico, known as the Es-ree-que-tees and Mus-ca-lar-oes; the first numbering about thirty-five hundred souls, and the latter about five hundred. They have heretofore

been at war with the Camanches, but recently become their allies, and are now at war with Mexico. We did not see any of the former tribe, but received messages from their chiefs of their friendly disposition, and their wish to come under our protection.

The chiefs of the latter tribe were in attendance, and are now planting corn on the St. Saba, a tributary of the Colorado. Both of these tribes are the same people in language, manners, habits, &c., as the Lippans of Texas.

The other little bands, viz: Witch-a-taws, Tow-zash, To-noc-o-nies, Keechies, and Wacoos, are inconsiderable in number and degenerate in character. They do not exceed one hundred and fifty souls each. They plant corn and pumpkins for their own use, and raise some for trade. They live in villages, and have temporary huts, made of skins and straw.

The Witch-a-taws and Tow-zash live on the north side of Red river, in the Witch-a-taw mountains. The other three tribes reside upon the Brazos, about one hundred miles above the Camanche Peak. They informed us they had lost their numbers by the small pox and repeated wars with the Texans. They have the reputation of being the best horse thieves in the prairie.

Next are the Ionies, An-no-dar-coes, and Caddoes. They live upon the Brazos, about forty miles below the "Peak;" reside in villages, and their houses are made of straw, and are comfortable. They plant corn, pumpkins, &c. The aggregate of the three tribes is about fifteen hundred souls. They have intermarried with each other, and become identified as one people, controlled by one chief.

Next are the Ton-que-was and Lippans: the first number about seven hundred souls, the latter about one hundred and twenty-five. They reside near San Antonio, in Texas, and have been uniformly the friends and allies of Texans. They rely upon game alone for subsistence; they do not cultivate the soil, or have any stationary place of abode. They are extremely depraved in their habits; great drunkards, and fond of gambling. Most of them speak the Spanish language with great fluency. The vice of drinking ardent spirits is common only to those two tribes and the Ionies, An no dar coes, and Caddoes. The rest of the tribes do not indulge in the vice of intemperance; but the vice of gambling is prevalent among all the other tribes to an alarming extent. These tribes all speak or understand the Spanish language, and seem to have imbibed from them the habit of gaming.

In their religion or superstitious ceremonies they are observant to a painful extent. They all recognise an overruling or controlling Spirit, but have limited or no knowledge of the worship of the living and true God. They use their women as serfs or slaves, compelling them to perform all the drudgery of life. Like all savages, they have three or four wives; the women providing for the men, and the men living in comparative indolence.

We will here recapitulate the number and names of all the different tribes, and give the aggregate of the whole, which will stand thus:

Camanches	14,300
Esse qua-ties and Mu-ca-la-moes	4,000
Witch-a-taws and Tow-zash	300
Wacoos, Keechies, and Li-woch-o-nies	450

Ionies, An-né-dar-coes, and Caddoes	-	-	-	-	-	1,500
Ton-que-was and Lippans	-	-	-	-	-	850
Numbering in all	-	-	-	-	-	<u>21,400</u>

It is believed, that all of the above tribes could not muster more than four thousand warriors. They do not act in large numbers; rarely above one or two hundred men engage in the same enterprise. Besides the tribes enumerated above, there is one other tribe in friendly intercourse with the United States and her friendly Indians—the Ki-o-ways, numbering about four thousand souls. They reside high up on the Canadian river, between that and the Arkansas, extending their rambles to the Rio Grande, towards Mexico. Through our runners we received friendly messages from these people, with a request to meet next fall in council, to hold a friendly talk and smoke the pipe. They are to some extent in intercourse with the Camanches, and form a link in the great chain of the prairie Indians.

As to the ransom of white children who have been seized and detained in captivity, we have to remark, that we succeeded in rescuing one white child and three Mexicans. We heard of but three other children of white parents, but it is said that there is a large number of Mexican children. One of the whites is a young man by the name of Lyons, who expressed an unwillingness to our runners to withdraw from his association. Of the other two, one is a girl about seventeen years old, and her brother, of the age of ten, known as the Parker children. They have been in captivity of the Yam-pi-ric-coes, and were on the head of the Washita, where our runners saw them last. The young woman is claimed by one of the Camanches as his wife. From the influence of her alleged husband, or from her own inclination, she is unwilling to leave the people with whom she associates. The headmen seemed to acquiesce in the propriety of her being surrendered, on an adequate sum in the way of ransom being paid. A large amount of goods and four or five hundred dollars were offered, but the offer was unavailing, as she would run off and hide herself to avoid those who went to ransom her. Measures, however, have been taken to secure both herself and brother. We were assured by the chief that he would take measures to have her delivered up to the authorities of the United States upon the next "fall of the leaves;" and if he would not yield to the inducements of the ransom money, he would exert forcible coercion.

In their negotiations and treaties the commissioners have been sensible to the instructions of the government to employ all the means in their power to effect the emancipation of such persons, and to urge upon the Indians the necessity of abstaining in future from the capture of white persons. By the treaty we have concluded, we feel that we have acquired important advantages. Many of the most influential chiefs seemed to place confidence in our promises; but had only a vague conception of the power and resources of our government. It was important, for the reasons assigned, not only to retain a practicable control over them at this juncture, but to impress them with the greatness of the American government. Hence the propriety of prevailing on them to accompany the commissioners to the seat of government. Two objects were to be effected by so doing. By having them at a distance from their homes, and under

our immediate charge, they were as hostages for the good behavior of all that were left behind. We were satisfied that by coming among us a favorable impression has been made on their minds. They will go back impressed with our strength, and their own weakness. A fatal delusion has been dispelled, calculated to do much good in giving security to the frontier settlements. They will no longer judge of the numbers of the white men by their estimate of their Texan neighbors. They have heretofore supposed that the prairies and buffalo were made exclusively for the red man, on account of his numbers. These constitute the great sources of their thanks to the Great Spirit for his special bounties to their race. Many matters that may appear as trifles in review were vastly important at the time events were transpiring. "The looker on can sometimes see more than the gamester;" and in the same way, in taking a retrospective view of matters connected with our mission, some may be disposed to place a different judgment upon them from what we found, when emergency forced them on our determination.

We can see nothing to change our judgment on the more essential objects and purposes which it was our joint design to effect. In some matters, subordinate and to be regarded as the means of carrying out our plans, we entertained different views—such as must always be expected to be incident to the agency of two persons acting under a joint commission.

Unless we are mistaken, the successful accomplishment of the mission will in its results, and not distant results, do credit to the enlightened policy and benevolent humanity that dictated it. Other great and more important measures may reflect higher renown and more splendid brilliancy on the government; but if the treaty should be preserved and carried out in all its essential provisions, very few other measures will rebound more to the real cause of humanity, and the security of the frontier settlements. We have done nothing in matters connected with the treaty but what we felt ourselves authorized to do, under ample instructions from the government; and, let others think as they may, we had to act under great embarrassments, and with comparatively limited means; and that, too, at a juncture both critical and inauspicious.

An exhibit of our accounts, vouchers, &c., and a roll of the persons in our employment, only require to be copied to be presented to the department. All of which is respectfully submitted.

P. M. BUTLER,  
*Indian Commissioner.*  
M. G. LEWIS,  
*Indian Commissioner.*

Hon. W. MEDILL,  
*Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington city, D. C.*