

Atakapa Language Book One in a Series

\$7.25 set of 4

Language of the Atakapas-Ishak Indians



A Primer Step One

First of four booklets devoted to the language of
The Atakapas - Ishak
of
Southwest Louisiana and Southeast Texas

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Page 1 A T A K A P A N P R I M E R

This is a beginner's booklet, a primer, of the extinct Atakapan Language. That is the prehistorical language of the Atakapa-Ishak Indians. The Atakapas (a-TAK-a-paws), as they are commonly called, are the Indians of S.W. LA and S.E. TX. They are not extinct, and number in thousands.

The homeland of the Atakapa-Ishak is all the land from the Houston-Galveston area in Texas to Vermilion Bay in Louisiana, on the coast, and above 150 miles inland, taking in Louisiana's prairie parishes. Anyone whose family's ancestral roots lie in that homeland, and whose family has Indian traditions, and Indian features, including a wide range of complexions, is probably of the Atakapa-Ishak Tribe, fully or partially. This is a brief study of his\her language.--Author

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To speak Atakapan words, say the words with sounds like those of English words. The Atakapan vowels (a, e, i, o, u) sound as in the English words bad, bed, bid, bod, bud. If a dash mark (-) appears above any vowel, sound the vowel like a long English vowel, as in English words ace, eve, ice, ode, huge. Accent marks are placed to show which part of the Atakapan word is to be stressed in its pronunciation. (Note that the true Atakapan speech patterns are irretrievably lost. Guidelines given lead but to an approximation of the people's speech.)

a = this, here (the expletive); ya = that, there (the expletive)
an = house, building. The Atakapan Language employs no article; so the word an can mean a house or the house, whichever fits better.

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ak = juice, sap

āk = green

āl = meat

hitét = father

hokét or hukét = mother (o and u often interchange in Atákapa)

tol = good, well, wonderful, holy, etc.

ha = no, not (it comes right after the remark or word to be negated)

wi = I, my

na = you, your

ha = he, she, it, his, hers, its

n = and (this is sounded by just a quick, weak grunt)

a = infinitive, also present tense of verb be. It can mean I am,

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you are; he, she, it is; we are, you all are, they are. *The Atákapan linking verb is put after the words which it links together.*

Reading Exercise

a hitét = this father, or here is the father

a hokét = this mother, or here is a mother

ya ak = that juice, or there is some juice

ya an = that house

ya āl = that meat

ya hukét = that mother

ya hitét = that father

a an = here is the house, or this house

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Ya āl tol a. = That meat is good. (Note that the Atákapan linking verb, a, comes after both āl and tol, which it links.)

Ya āl tol a ha. = That meat is not good.

Lesson 2

Reading Exercise

A wi hokét a. = This is my mother. or, Here is my mother.

Wi hukét a. = I am a mother. or, I am the mother.

Wi an na an a. = My house is your house.

Ya an na an a ha. = That house is not yours.

Ha an āk a ha. = His (or her) house is not green.

Wi an tol a. = My house is fine (good, wonderful, o.k., nice, etc.)

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Reading Exercise (continued)

Na tol a. = You are good. You are well.

Wi hitét tol a ha. = My father is not well.

A ak āk a. = This juice is green. This is green juice.

Āl āk tol a ha! = Green meat is not good!

Ya an na an a ha. = That house is not yours.

A ha hokét a. = This (or here) is his (her, its) mother.

A āl n ak tol a. = This meat and juice are good.

Wi hukét n hitét tol a. = My mother and father are wonderful.

Na n ha wi hitét a ha. = You and he are not my father.

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kishíł = daughter

íol = son

shakiól = man, male

kish = woman, female (shēsh and keshēsh = women)

nomsh = child

hets = big, large, tall (*Adjectives, words that describe, usually come right after the word they describe, but not always. Emphasis or special effect can put adjective (and adverb) before the affected word.*)

shilín = pretty, handsome, good-looking

Wi hokét kish tol n shilín a. = My mother is a good woman, and pretty.

Wi hitét shilín a. = My father is handsome.

Wi nomsh hets a ha. = I am not a tall child.

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Reading Exercise

Wi nomsh shakiól a. = I am a little boy.

Na an hets a ha. = Your house is low (not tall).

Ha hitét hets a. = Her (his) father is tall. (*Note: The choice of her or his, like all choices of equally fit words, depends on context-sense.*)

Ya nomsh kish wi a. = That little girl is mine.

A shēsh; a keshēsh = these women

Ya keshēsh (ya shēsh) hitét a ha. = Those women are not mothers. (*Note: hitét is plural because it is linked with keshēsh (shēsh), a plural.*)

Hokét kish a; hitét shakiól a; íol shakiól a; kishíł kish a. = A mother is female; a father is male; a son is male; a daughter is female.

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hilet = sister (used for each other by females of nearly equal age)

wēt = sister (used by a female for her older sister)

ishhilet (ish hilet) = sister (used by a female for a younger sister,
and used by a male for any sister)

ntset (pronounced untSET) = brother

-kin = in, on, into (is tacked onto the end of the affected word; all
prepositions in Atákapa come after the word which they affect, not
before; so, they can more correctly be considered postpositions, not
prepositions)

hu = to see (húo or húu = I see; you see, he or she or it sees; húsēl =
we see; hútem = you(plural) see; húul = they see. (These are the
present tense, personal, formal endings for almost all active verbs.)

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Just like the linking verb, the active verb is generally put at the
end of a remark. The typical sentence is structured: a) subject + pre-
dicate noun\adjective (if any) + linking verb b) subject + object (if
any) + active verb. Modifiers generally follow their affected word.

Reading Exercise

Ha wi hilet a. = She is my sister. (two girls of about equal age)

Ha wi wēt a. = She is my (older) sister. (a girl is talking)

Wi shakiól a, n ha wi ishilet a. = I am a man, and she is my sister.

Wi ak húo (or húu). = I see the juice.

Na wi hitét húo (or húu). = You do see my father.

Ha na hitét húo (or húu) ha. = She (he, it) does not see your father.

Reading Exercise (continued)

Na ak āk ákin a. = Your green juice is in the house.

Na ak ankin āk a. = Your juice is in the green house.

a hilét = this sister (of about equal age with speaker, her sister)

ya wi wēt = that (older) sister of mine (a female is speaking)

ya ishhlét = that younger sister (older sister or a male is speaking)

Wi hitét n hukét n ntsét ákin a. = My father and mother and brother
are in the house.

Na āl húc (or húc) ha. = You do not see the meat.

Nomsh shakiól nomsh kish húc ha. = The little boy does not see the
little girl.

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sídsi or sīsh = baby N.B. shesh = babies; shēsh = women

sídsi (or sīsh) kish = girl baby

sídsi (or sīsh) shakiól = boy baby

léta = female cousin

pēn = male cousin

Reading Exercise

Wi hitét n hokét sídsi húc. = My father and mother are looking at
the baby.

A sídsi kish a. = This baby is a girl. or Here is a baby girl.

Ya sídsi shakiól a. = That baby is a boy. or There is a baby boy.

Sīsh ha hukét húc ha. = The baby does not see its mother.

Reading Exercise (continued)

Wi léta n wi ishhlét an hóul. = My cousin and my sister (they) are looking at the house.

Na n keshesh sish hútem. = You and the women (you) see the baby.

Na wi pēn a. = You are my (male) cousin.

Wi léta n wi sídsi shakiól hútsel. = My cousin and I (we) see the baby boy.

Na wi léta a. = You are my (female) cousin.

Na ya kish húu. A sídsi kish ha kishíl a. = You see that woman. This baby girl is her daughter.

Ya sídsi (or sīsh) kish wi léta a. = That baby girl is my cousin.

A sídsi (or sīsh) tol a. = This is a well baby.

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VOCABULARY LISTING

a = this, here; a = am, is, are; ak = juice; āk = green; āl = meat; an = house; hha = no, not; ha = he, she, its, his, hers, its; hets = big, large, tall; hilét = sister (spoken by girl of about same age); hitét = father; hokét = mother; hu = to see; I iól = son; ishhlét = sister (spoken by older for younger, and by all males); K keshesh = women; -kin = in, on, into; kish = woman, female; kishíl = daughter; L léta = female cousin; N n = and; na = you, your; nomsh = child; ntsét (untSET) = brother; p pēn = male cousin; q shakiól = man, male; shesh = women; shilín = pretty, handsome, good-looking; sīsh = baby; --kish = baby girl; --shakiól = baby boy; sídsi = baby; --kish = baby girl; --shakiól = baby boy; I tol = good, well, wonderful, holy, etc.; W wēt = sister (spoken by younger for older); wi = I, my; (Y) ya = that, there

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