

## St. Lawrence Iroquoians among the Wendat: Linguistic Evidence

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*Recollect Brother Gabriel Sagard wrote Dictionnaire de la langue huronne based on material gathered during his stay with the Wendat in 1623–1624. In his introduction he wrote that the “huronne” language had several dialects. It turns out that his dictionary represents samples not only of two Wendat dialects, but also of the separate language of St. Lawrence Iroquoian. This variation can be seen in the sounds represented in several words and in the names given to particular First Nations, demonstrating that at least one of his linguistic informants belonged to a nation then thought to have disappeared.*

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### Introduction

The St. Lawrence Iroquoians were people who lived along the St. Lawrence River up as far as Montreal when Jacques Cartier made his three voyages to that territory (1534, 1535–1536, and 1541–1542). During his time there, he or someone with him collected terms in the language of the people related to the languages of the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat. When the French returned to what would become New France early in the seventeenth century, they could perceive no evidence that these people still existed in the area. Ignorance of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians' existence after the sixteenth century continued through the writings of historians of the period until recently.

In 2004, Claude Chapdelaine pointed out that based on ceramic archaeological evidence, we know that a good number of St. Lawrence Iroquoian women (the pot makers) were living with the Wendat in southern Ontario prior to Wendat contact with the French (Chapdelaine 2004:63-75).

I propose to add to this evidence linguistic material that reveals the presence of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians among the Wendat in the 1620s. I hope that this insight will lead to further investigation into that presence using other research methods.

### The Source of Linguistic Evidence

When Recollect Brother Gabriel Sagard was gathering information for his *Dictionnaire de la langue huronne* in 1623–1624, he was collecting data on three languages, not just one. In his introduction he pointed out that he was aware that the languages or dialects he was hearing were different:

[...] as we see in France many different accents and words, so we see the same thing in the provinces [...] towns, and villages where the Huron language is in use. It is why one must not be astonished if, in travelling in the country, one finds this difficulty, and that the same thing is said a little differently, or totally otherwise in one place as opposed to another, in the same village, and also in the same house [Steckley 2010a:66; my translation from the original French].

Whereas he thought they were three dialects of Wendat, I would argue that he was recording two dialects of Wendat as well as St. Lawrence Iroquoian, the language recorded in a word list by Jacques Cartier almost a century before.

### Wendat Nations and Dialects

At the time of first contact with the French, the Wendat (called Huron by the French) were an Iroquoian-speaking alliance of four tribes or nations speaking dialects of the same language. They were named the Hatindia8enten (“they [masculine or mixed masculine and feminine] are of bear country”), or Bear; the Hatingeen-nonniahak (“they [masculine or mixed] used to make cord for nets”), or Cord; the Arendaenronnon (“people of the lying rock”), or Rock; and the Atahonta,erнат (“it has two white ears”), or Deer<sup>1</sup> (see Steckley 2007b:28-35).

There is evidence that they spoke several dialects, including what I have termed Southern Bear (which was one of the dialects recorded by Sagard); Northern Bear (recorded in the early writings of Father Jean de Brébeuf and others Jesuits; Cord; Rock (which I believe to be the other Wendat dialect recorded by Sagard); and Deer. The Wendat’s neighbours to the immediate west, called the Petun by the French because they were a trading source of tobacco grown farther south, were the Etionnontateronnon, which translates as “people of where there is a hill or mountain” (a reference to their home being by Blue Mountain, part of the Niagara Escarpment) (Steckley 2007a:207 and 253). They spoke at least one dialect of Wendat as well, one that was formative in the development of the Wyandot, or Wyandotte, a descendant group that went on to live in Michigan, Kansas, and Oklahoma (see Steckley 2007b:35-46).

### The Importance of Linking the St. Lawrence Iroquoians with the Wendat

It is important to link the St. Lawrence Iroquoians with the Wendat for two reasons. The first is simply that for a long time the writing of the

history of these people began and ended with the sixteenth century, when Cartier and his fellow travellers encountered them along the St. Lawrence. Establishing a link with the Wendat shows that they survived longer than earlier supposed, that they lived on with the Wendat, and that they made a more substantial contribution to Canadian history than was previously thought. The second reason is that the Wendat feel a distinct connection with the St. Lawrence Iroquoians, one that has only recently been recognized by academics as being historically valid.

### Sounds and Sound Sequences that Distinguish St. Lawrence Iroquoian from Wendat

There are some clearly marked differences between St. Lawrence Iroquoian and Wendat that can be seen if you compare the examples of St. Lawrence Iroquoian found in the *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (Cook and Biggar 1993) with the examples of Wendat presented in the dictionaries that the Jesuits wrote (here referenced through Steckley 2010a).

There are several sound sequences that differentiate Wendat from St. Lawrence Iroquoian. Five of these distinctions are shown below.

The first involves St. Lawrence Iroquoian having either an -n- or a nasal vowel (marked with an -n- after the vowel in the writings of Sagard and the Jesuits) followed directly by an oral vowel, a feature shared with most other Iroquoian languages (see Steckley 2010a:6-15). In Wendat, however, a -d- has to come between the -n- and the oral vowel or between the nasal vowel and the oral vowel. A classic indicator of this is the following contrast (with the contrasts indicated in boldface):

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	English
<b>canada</b>	<b>yandata</b> <sup>2</sup>	village, community
(Cook and Biggar 1993:164)	(Steckley 2010a:145)	

<sup>1</sup> There is a mysterious fifth grouping, known as the Ataronchronnon (which translates as “people of the clay or mud in water”), whose name appears twice in the Jesuit Relations, in 1637 (Thwaites 1959:13:61) and in 1640 (Thwaites 1959:19:125). Little is known of them—either of their prior history or of what became of them.

<sup>2</sup> In the forms presented in this paper, the -,- is transposed to -y- and the -8- is transposed to -w-.

In another example, in Sagard's dictionary we have the noun for eyeball and, metaphorically, for bead appearing in the following ways (the point here is to show that at least one of the linguistic variations found in Sagard differs from the expected Wendat form):

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	French	English
<b>acoïna</b>	oyahkwenda	les yeux	eyes
(Steckley 2010a:276)	(Steckley 2007a:105)		
<b>acoïna</b>	oyahkwenda	rassade	beads
(Steckley 2010a:173)	(Steckley 2007a:105)		

The second distinction between the two languages is that in cognates found in both languages, a St. Lawrence Iroquoian -l- corresponds with a Wendat -r-, as shown below:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	English
<b>aiagla</b>	ayra	It is night
(Cook and Biggar 1993:32)	(Steckley 2007a:19)	
<b>madellon</b>	entron	nine
(Cook and Biggar 1993:46)	(Potier 1920:106)	

In Sagard's and Potier's dictionaries, we find the following example of the same distinction:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	French	English
Asson téscalle	ason te skar	Il n'y a point encore de Lune	It is not still night.
(Steckley 2010a:97)	(Potier 1920:324)		

The third distinction is the contrast between the -m- in St. Lawrence Iroquoian and a -w- or an -nw- in Wendat:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	English
<b>amé</b>	awen	water
(Cook and Biggar 1993:47)	(FH1697:58)	

In Sagard the use of two different but related terms for awl shows the same contrast (awls, like beads, were a trade item Thwaites 1959, volume 12: 119 and 121):

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	English
<b>assimenta</b>	yachiwenta	awl
(Steckley 2010a:173)	(FH1697:11)	
<b>chomata</b>	ochionwata	awl
(Steckley 2010a:289)	(FH1697:11)	

The fourth distinction is that there exists in St. Lawrence Iroquoian a -tn- sequence that does not exist in Wendat. Unfortunately, there is no precise pairing of a St. Lawrence Iroquoian word with a Wendat cognate that would help illustrate this difference. Note that with the second word, I have removed the -scon ending, which I believe could be a verb form, as it appears with two different body part names (see below):

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	English
<b>hetnenda<sup>3</sup></b>	armpit
(Cook and Biggar 1993:90)	
<b>hetnegoada<sup>4</sup></b>	thighs
(Cook and Biggar 1993:90)	

Similarly, in Sagard, we find:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	English
<b>etneinchia</b>	ennenchia	shoulder
(Steckley 2010a:279)	(Steckley 2007a:274)	

Lastly, forming the fifth distinction, we have a -tk- in St. Lawrence Iroquoian (represented in the original writing as -tg-) where there is just a -k- in Wendat:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	English
<b>quatgathoma</b>	tayakaten	Look at me.
(Cook and Biggar 1993:92)	(Potier 1920:240)	
<b>hatguenya<sup>5</sup></b>		forehead
(Cook and Biggar 1993:92)		

<sup>3</sup> This appears to be cognate with the Onondaga root -nhd-, for armpit (Woodbury 2003:948). See also the Cayuga cognate (Froman et al. 2002:14).

<sup>4</sup> This word may contain the Wendat noun root -nnhechi-, meaning thighs (Steckley 2007a:189).

<sup>5</sup> The Onondaga cognate is -gejy- (Woodbury 2003:1128), and the Tuscarora cognate is -ke<sup>?</sup>h- (Rudes 1999:586). There may be a Wendat cognate with -yeh-, referring to hair that falls down over the forehead (Steckley 2007a:115).

Again, Sagard’s dictionary contains similar examples:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	English
ahetque	yeheken	I am lazy.
(Steckley 2010a:316)	[my construction, based on Potier (1920:259)] <sup>6</sup>	

These five examples clearly demonstrate that at least one of Sagard’s linguistic informants was speaking words that came from a language spoken by the St. Lawrence Iroquoians, for no dialect of Wendat exhibits these features, whereas St. Lawrence Iroquoian does. The next kind of linguistic evidence shows that the person or persons who presented these words were St. Lawrence Iroquoian in how they saw the political landscape.

**The Nations Presented in Sagard’s Dictionary**

In Sagard’s dictionary is a series of entries under the heading “Natiōs, de quelle nation.” The distinction between the Wendat -nd- and the St. Lawrence Iroquoian -n- can help us identify whether a Wendat or a St. Lawrence Iroquoian was supplying the word to Sagard.

There are two different terms in Northern Iroquoian languages that refer to people who speak Algonquian languages. Although they literally translate as “speaking badly,” there is also a geographic association for each term: east and west. Both come from the same verb root, expressed as -,annen- (i.e., -yannen-) in Wendat, with noun roots added to distinguish the two terms.

*Algonquians to the East: Add -(t)s-*

In *A Thousand Words of Mohawk*, Gunther Michelson writes that a verb root used for nations that spoke Algonquian languages was -akan-, “to speak a foreign language.” The word Atshakânha refers to Eastern Algonquians (Michelson 1973:25). In other Iroquoian languages, this word refers to Algonquians living to the east of the group in question. Examples are the Abenaki, Delaware, and Mohican. When the same combination, as *asa,annen*, is used in Wendat, it refers to speaking “a language strange to those to

whom one is speaking and who do not understand” (Potier 1920:174). In the Wendat dictionaries it refers to the following (keep in mind that the word *mohican* means wolf):

Wendat	English
hondasa,a ‘nnen.	They (masculine) speak a strange language.
les Loups	the Wolves
(FHO c. 1656:154)	
Asa,annen... hondasa,annens certains Algonq[uiens]. proche les Angl[ais].	They (masculine) speak a strange language. certain Algonquins’ near the English
(HF62:17)	(Toupin 1996:231)
les abnaquis a,osa,annen	
(Toupin 1996:263)	
a,osa,annens v hondasa,annons abnaquis—loups <sup>8</sup>	
(Toupin 1996:231)	

In Sagard’s dictionary (entry 94.22), we have the following entry, a St. Lawrence Iroquoian term:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	French	English
Anasaquanan	Canadiens	Canadians
[h]onasakannen		They (masculine) speak an unintelligible language.

In Wendat, the -na- would be -nda-, as in the last example above, and the -k- would be a -y-. There would be an -h- at the beginning, making it a masculine or mixed group. This pronominal form was used when designating a people.

So we have two forms of evidence that the informant was speaking St. Lawrence Iroquoian and not Wendat. The phonology or sound system is wrong, and the people referred to, despite the fact that they were Algonquian speakers, were not

<sup>6</sup> In Potier’s presentation of the verb root -heken-, he includes the word haheken for “he is lazy.” What I have done here is changed the -ha- masculine singular agent form to -ye- the first person singular agent form.

<sup>7</sup> I suspect that here the word Algonquins really means Algonquians.

<sup>8</sup> In this case the word Loups is used to refer to the Delaware.

Abenaki or Mohican, neither of whom to my knowledge were ever referred to “Canadiens” in the historical literature.

As we have seen, the Wendat referred to the Abenaki with this term, not the Innu. The significant distance from their land to Wendat territory and the fact that the term took a non-Wendat form both suggest that this term was a St. Lawrence Iroquoian one.

*Western Algonquians: Add -kw- or -tw-*

For the other form using the same verb root (i.e., written in Jesuit Wendat as -yannen-), again the translation of the Mohawk presented by Michelson is useful:

Mohawk	English
tewakánha	Western Algonkians
(Michelson 1973:25)	

In the Jesuit Relations, the word Ontwagannha was used in a Haudenosaunee language to refer to the Algonquian-speaking Mascoutens, who lived to the west of the Haudenosaunee.

In Oneida, the term for the Anishinaabe people, who live mainly to the west of them, was a cognate term:

Oneida	English
twa <sup>9</sup> kánha...	Chippewa; non-Oneida Indian
(Michelson and Doxtator 2002:1323)	

The Cayuga of the Six Nations reserve use the term for the Algonquians that live not far to the west of them there:

Cayuga	English
De-wá <sup>9</sup> gan-ha	Delaware; Algonquians living near Six Nations
(Froman et al. 2002:607)	

In Tuscarora, spoken by a people who historically lived farther to the east (near the coast) and south than the other Northern Iroquoians, we have:

Tuscarora	English
nwákan <sup>9</sup>	enemy, barbarian; Penobscot, any Algonquian [...] Ojibwe, Mississaugas
(Rudes 1999:375)	

The oldest surviving Jesuit Wendat dictionary presents the verb form as follows. I suspect that the composition of the verb stem includes the noun root -wa-, meaning voice (Steckley 2007:212):

Wendat	French	English (my translation)
ak8a,annen (Steckley 2010b:61)	baragouiner item parler langue estrangere	to speak gibberish also to speak a strange language

Unfortunately, it does not say to which nation such a name would be applied.

There is a rather confused and complicated picture with references to the Ottawa. Two different verb roots from two different language families were used by the Wendat in referring to them, while the Wyandot used one of those roots to refer to the Ottawa and the other to refer to another Algonquian nation. One of these terms is based on the Iroquoian verb we have been discussing, while another is based on an Algonquian verb -ata:we:- (the Anishinaabe form; Hewson 1993:23) meaning to trade (from which the term Ottawa is derived), with Wendat pronominal prefixes added (see Steckley 1990; Thwaites 1959:23:226, 38:180, 41:76, 42:108).

Both the Iroquoian and the Algonquian verbs first appear in Sagard’s dictionary (entry 95.4), but with reference to two different peoples. The Algonquian verb was used to refer to the Ottawa, and then was found in the Jesuit Relations with the same reference:

Algonquian	French	English (my translation)
Andatahoüät (Steckley2010a:305)	Les Cheueux releuez	The Raised Hairs [i.e., the Ottawa]

Iroquoian	Year
Ondataouat (Thwaites 1959:23:226)	1648
Ondata8a8ak (Thwaites 1959:38:180)	1653
Ondatauauat (Thwaites 1959:41:76)	1654
Ondataouauat (Thwaites 1959:42:108)	1656

<sup>9</sup> In Tuscarora there is usually an -n- where other Northern Iroquoian languages have a -t-.

Almost a century later, during the 1700s, we find it used by the Wyandot of the Detroit/Windsor area to refer to the Illinois, who lived to the west of them:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	English
Ndata8a8act (Potier 1920:154)	Il[l]inois

The pronominal prefix employed here is hond- (the initial -h- not being “heard” well by the first generation of French-speaking Jesuits working with the Wendat). It is a pronominal prefix used with verb roots that begin with -a-, to mean “they (masculine or mixed).”

The Iroquoian verb appears in the Potier dictionary of the 1740s. This dictionary was a copy of the Jesuit Wendat–French dictionaries that had preceded it based on Wendat, with Potier adding, typically in superscript, what he had heard among the Wyandot. In the entry we have the Wendat form with Wyandot superscript -ct-, with the slightly raised -c- representing an -h- like sound before the -t-. The second and third parts of the entry show the last letters of the verb as it takes the habitual and punctual aspect suffixes, respectively. They represent what comes after ak8a-:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	Wendat	Wyandot	French
ak8a,annenn ok8a,atat	,ann, and	,act, act	parler une langue mal, avoir l’accent etranger
8ta8ois (Potier1920:168)			

However, this form was used in Sagard’s dictionary (entry 95.1; see “aquanaque” in entry 138.11) to refer not to the Ottawa but to the Algonquin, who lived to the west of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians:

St. Lawrence Iroquoian	French
Aquanaque (Steckley 2010a:305)	Algoumequins

The -k- sound at the end of the word might reflect the Ottawa plural suffix for things animate, another mixing of forms used by two language groups.

### The Wendat Name for the Algonquin

What, then, did the Wendat call the Algonquin if they did not call them in essence “Algonquians to the east”? This term, based on what appears to be a root -cha8ata- is quite significant, in part because it was unique to the Wendat, and in part because it is not found in Sagard’s dictionary. It appears as *hoticha8ata* (see FH1697:248), with hoti- (a masculine plural patient pronominal pronoun); as *Aticha8ata* in 1646 (Thwaites 1959:28:148) (with the masculine plural agent and with the initial -h- missing), or as a,ocha8aθa in a late seventeenth-century dictionary (FH1693:260) (using the indefinite patient pronominal form). I believe this word to be a borrowing from St. Lawrence Iroquoian, as it does not appear as either a verb or a noun root in any Wendat dictionary, and it does not appear as a term for the Algonquin (or anyone else) in the dictionaries of the other Iroquoian languages. I believe that is so because it came from the St. Lawrence Iroquoian term *agojuda*, discussed by Jacques Cartier in the following passage in describing the enemy of those people:

And they showed us furthermore that along the mountains to the north, there is a large river [the Ottawa], which comes from the west.... [A]nd without our asking any questions or making any sign, they seized the chain of the Captain’s whistle, which was made of silver, and a dagger-handle or yellow copper-gilt like gold, that hung at the side of one of the sailors and gave us to understand that these came from up that river [Ottawa], where lived *Agojuda*, which means bad people, who were armed to the teeth, showing us the style of their armour, which is made with cords and wood, laced and plaited together. They also seem to say that these *Agojuda* waged war continually, one people against the other [Cook and Biggar 1993:65-66].

The Agojuda, then, lived up the Ottawa River from the St. Lawrence Iroquoians, which could make them the Algonquin, the Nipissing, or the Wendat. But there were terms already for those

people. The Nipissing, for example, were called Skequaneronon (Steckley 2010a:305) in Sagard's dictionary, a name that persisted into the Jesuit Relations (Thwaites 1959:21:239). In addition, the wooden armour described as being worn by the Agojuda was identical to that of the Wendat (Sagard 1939:154; Steckley 1987).

The initial -ago- appears to me to correspond to the -a,o- ("they [indefinite] patient") pronominal prefix. When comparing Wendat with other Iroquoian languages, a Wendat sound represented by the Jesuit -,- often corresponds in another Iroquoian language to -g-. For example, in the verb root meaning to marry uses -,- in -ndia,i-, where Cayuga uses -g- in -nyag- (Steckley 2007a:156). Further, Wendat words written with a -g- in Champlain's and Sagard's writings often have a -,- in the works of the Jesuits (see Steckley 2010a:56-59).

The St. Lawrence Iroquoian -j- (pronounced as in the French name Jean and written by linguists as *ž-*) corresponds with the Wendat -ts- in cognates or related words. Two examples are the following. The number six in St. Lawrence Iroquoian is *judaié* (Cook and Biggar 1993:90), while in Wendat it is *ts8tare* (Potier 1920:106). And the word for fish in St. Lawrence Iroquoian is *quejon* (Cook and Biggar 1993:91), while in Wendat it is *entson* (Steckley 2007a:288).

Now that is the situation with cognates, but what if Wendat borrows a term bearing a -j- or *ž-* from St. Lawrence Iroquoian, which would be a different process than sharing a term with a common ancestor? It is important to know which of the two scenarios pertains, because the Wendat word for Algonquin has no etymology or meaning (other than with the -a,o-) in Wendat, so it is likely a borrowing. When the Wendat borrowed the word Jean in French, as in Father Brébeuf's first name, they transposed the -j- into the near equivalent of -ch- (as in Chicago) or *š-* as it would be written by linguists, part of the construction of Brébeuf's Wendat name, which was Hechon (Steckley 2007b:236). This same process, likewise, happened with the word Joseph from Father Le Mercier's first name. The borrowed Wendat form was Chauose (Steckley 2007b:237).

The rest would be fairly straightforward, -uda-, and -8ata- being close, the -8- representing an -u- sound before a consonant in Wendat. I believe, then, that the term for Algonquin in Wendat was borrowed from the St. Lawrence Iroquoian word. And it does not appear in the Sagard dictionary because the person whom Sagard asked for the term for the Algonquin was a speaker of St. Lawrence Iroquoian.

### Naming the St. Lawrence Iroquoian Informant

I believe that we can know the name of at least one of Sagard's St. Lawrence Iroquoian informants. It is Amantacha, or Louis Sainte Foy. I can say this in part because he is the linguistically logical choice. There is an -m- in his name, which, we have seen, was a sound which existed in St. Lawrence Iroquoian, but not in Wendat. His father was Cord nation Shorenhes ("He is very tall treetops"), who made contact with Recollect Father Nicholas Viel, who stayed with the Cord people from 1623 to 1625. Amantacha's mother probably was St. Lawrence Iroquoian, as names were passed down on the mother's side. Iroquoian societies were matrilineal, determining clan membership on the mother's side. And clans owned names. Amantacha travelled to France in 1626 and was baptized there. He served as a middleman between the Jesuits and the Wendat during the 1630s. He was an important young man in Wendat society.

The fact that, although he was living with the Wendat and was probably raised among them, he still was capable of speaking St. Lawrence Iroquoian (at least in part) suggests that there was a speech community within the Wendat of speakers of that language, not just his mother. The fact that he had a St. Lawrence Iroquoian name and that he does not appear to have been renamed in Wendat seems to me to support that suggestion. Sagard may even have chosen him as an informant in part because his speech represented what he believed to have been one of the dialects of Wendat, a dialect he had heard others speak.

### Summary

Two forms of linguistic evidence have been used here to demonstrate that there were St. Lawrence Iroquoian speakers living with the Wendat at the time (1623–1624) when Recollect Brother Gabriel Sagard was staying with them and gathering information on what he believed to be different dialects of Wendat for his dictionary. The first form of evidence is that there were at least five sounds or sound sequences found in St. Lawrence Iroquoian, but not in Wendat, that can be clearly seen in Sagard's dictionary. The second is that Iroquoian terms referring to Algonquian speakers to the west and to the east of them were used with the perspective of someone who spoke St. Lawrence Iroquoian, not Wendat as a first language, and therefore came from the country of that people.

It is important to note that St. Lawrence Iroquoians were a part of Wendat society in the early seventeenth century, that they were a constituent element among the people, and not just a footnote from the mid-sixteenth century.

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*Le frère récollet franciscain Gabriel Sagard a écrit Dictionnaire de la langue huronne en se basant sur des informations recueillies pendant son séjour au sein des Wendats en 1623-1624. Dans son introduction, il a écrit que la langue « huronne » avait plusieurs dialectes. Dans son dictionnaire, il s'avère qu'il y avait non seulement des échantillons de deux dialectes wendats, mais aussi de la langue séparée de l'iroquoien du Saint-Laurent. Ceci peut être identifié dans les sons de plusieurs mots et dans les noms donnés à certaines Premières Nations, démontrant ainsi qu'au moins un de ses informateurs linguistiques appartenait à une nation que l'on croyait complètement disparue à cette époque.*

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