

OFAIÉ-XAVANTE, A JÊ LANGUAGE

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1. Introduction

It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate genetic relationship between the language Ofaié-Xavante¹ and the group of languages commonly classified as belonging to the Jê family. An earlier version of this paper, read at the fourth biennial meeting of the Brazilian Anthropological Association at Curitiba (1959), gave the first tentative evidence for such a relationship. Since then, my Ofaié notes have been analysed and prepared for publication (Gudschinsky 1966), further descriptive work has been done on many of the Jê languages, and a preliminary reconstruction of Proto-Jê has been prepared (Davis 1966). This revised version tentatively reconstructs Ofaié-Jê from a comparison of the Ofaié material with the reconstructed Proto-Jê.

Previous classifications of Ofaié were based on a list of some 300 items recorded by Nimuendaju in 1909 (Ihering 1912, Nimuendaju 1932).² It was classified as Jê by Rondon and Faria (1948), but Baldus, in listing this work in his Bibliography (1954), objects to the classification. Loukotka referred to it as an isolated language with Jê intrusions. Mason (Steward 1950) considered the resemblance of Ofaié to any Jê language to be so slight that it should be classified as an independent language.

The Ofaié material on which this study is based was collected in late 1958 and early 1959. The informant, José, is the last living adult of the tiny group contacted by Ribeiro a decade earlier (Ribeiro 1951). He is probably the last speaker of Ofaié, since his three surviving children use only Portuguese. The material includes a complete phonemic analysis, notes on noun and verb morphology, and a vocabulary of 237 items (Gudschinsky 1966).

The Ofaié phonemes are as follows:

| Consonants | | | | Oral Vowels | | | Nasalized Vowels | | |
|------------|---|---|---|-------------|---|---|------------------|---|---|
| p | t | k | q | i | y | | ĩ | ỹ | |
| | | š | h | e | | o | | | õ |
| | n | | | ɛ | a | | | ã | |
| w | r | j | g | | | | | | |

p, t and k are voiceless stops. The allophones of p include labialized and fricative variants, and glottal spirant h^w. q is a glottal stop. Both k and q have labialized and palatalized variants conditioned by preceding vowel. š is an alveopalatal fricative, varying to affricate in some environments. w, j and g are labial, alveopalatal, and velar semivowels which vary from fricatives to syllabics. r is an alveolar flap. w, r and j have nasalized allophones contiguous to nasalized vowels; nasalized w and j may be nasal continuants. n is an alveolar nasal continuant. The vowel system includes front vowels i, e, and ɛ; central to back unrounded vowels y and a, and back rounded o. Four of the six vowels have nasalized counterparts: ĩ, ỹ, õ, and ã. All of the vowels, both oral and nasal, have contrastive length. Long vowels were written in Gudschinsky 1966 as V: They are written here as VV.

Proto-Jê is reconstructed by Davis (1966) from five languages representative of the diverse branches of the family: Apinaye (representing the Northern Kayapó dialects), Canela (representing the Eastern Timbira), Suyá, Xavante, and Kaingáng. The comparative vocabulary includes 112 reconstructed items with the cognates used in the reconstruction.

Davis' reconstructed phonemes are as follows:

| Consonants | | | | Oral Vowels | | | Nasalized Vowels | | |
|------------|---|---|---|-------------|---|---|------------------|----|---|
| p | t | c | k | i | ɿ | u | ĩ | ĩ̃ | ũ |
| m | n | ñ | ŋ | e | ə | o | ẽ | ã | õ |
| w | r | z | | ɛ | a | o | | | |

The evidence for genetic connection between Ofaié and Jê rests on a reconstructed phonemic system of twelve consonants and eight vowels, and fifty five reconstructed vocabulary items.³ The small number of cognate sets is due in part to the brevity of the lists from which they are drawn. It would seem, however, that Ofaié is less closely related to Jê proper than the traditionally Jê languages are to each other. The comparative evidence itself indicates that Ofaié-Jê represents an older layer than Proto-Jê as reconstructed by Davis: a) Ofaié does not share any

specific innovation with any of the Jê groups represented in Davis' study, b) Ofaié alone retains the full forms of the disyllabic morphemes which have contracted to monosyllabic CrV in the Jê languages (sets 30, 33, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 49). c) Ofaié retains š as a reflex of Ofaié-Jê *c where the Jê languages uniformly have r in cluster with a preceding consonant (24, 25, 26, 27).

The exact position of Ofaié within the larger group of languages which constitute the Jé stock will remain uncertain until a detailed reconstruction is made of this earlier layer, making use of data from the full range of languages which belong to it.

The Ofaié-Jê phonemic system is reconstructed as follows:

| Consonants: | | | | | Vowels: | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|----|---------|---|---|
| p | t | c | k | kw | i | ɨ | u |
| m | n | ñ | ŋ | ŋW | e | ə | o |
| | r | | | hw | ɛ | a | |

Stress has not been reconstructed. Vowel length is reconstructed where it occurs in Ofaié; in sets 11 and 16, length in the Canela cognate may also indicate a reflex of old long vowel.

In the reconstruction of vowel quality, nasalization has been ignored. Where a nasal consonant can be reconstructed, nasalization is assumed to be conditioned. In the cases in which nasalized vowel occurs in either Ofaié or Jê and no nasal consonant can be postulated, nasalization is included in the reconstruction: 29, 45, 53.

1.1 Consonants

With the possible exception of *h^w, the oral and nasal consonants at each point of articulation appear to have been in morphophonemic alternation. For each point of articulation, the material is presented in the following order: a) evidence for the oral consonant; b) evidence for the nasal; c) evidence for oral-nasal alternation. In each case, the Ofaié reflex precedes the colon; the Jê reflex follows.

Labials:

*p is reconstructed from p : p (1, 3) and p : w (2).

*m is reconstructed from w : m in a single set (4), and even in that set Kaingang pẽŋ suggests an old alternation with *p.

*m alternating with *p is reconstructed from p : m (5, 6).

Final **m* seems to have been lost in J  but retained in Ofai . It is reconstructed from the correspondence of Ofai  *w* with J  nasalized vowel (48). It is also postulated in sets 17 and 44 where Ofai  has *w*, but the J  cognate is not nasalized.

Alveolars:

**t* is reconstructed from *t* : *t* (7, 8, 10, 47, 52), and those instances of *t* : *r* which resulted from the contraction of **CVtV* to *CrV* in J  (30, 33, 40, 43, 49).

**r* is reconstructed from *r* : *r* (2, 9, 11, 38, 41, 42).

The correspondences *r* : *t* (13, 23) and *t* : *r* (12, 17, 39, 45) are ambiguous, and have been reconstructed as alternation of **t* and **r*.

**n* is reconstructed from *n* : *n* (9).

Alternation of **n* and **t* is reconstructed from *t* : *n* (31, 37). In addition, nasal alternants can be seen within J  in sets 1 and 45.

Alveopalatals:

**c* is reconstructed from a variety of correspondences. *š* : *r* occurs as a result of a contraction of **CVSV* to *CrV* in J  (24, 25, 26, 27). The other sets may be conditioned by vowel quality but the details are uncertain. *š* : *c* (18, 19); *š* : *z* (16, 21, 44); *h* : *z* (15, 17, 20); *j* : *z* (14); *j* : *c* (32); *h* : *c* syllable final (34, 49).

**ñ* is reconstructed from *j* \tilde{V} : *ñ* (22, 23).

Alternation of **ñ* and **c* is reconstructed from the sets *j* : *ñ* (51) and *h* : *ñ* (10, 21).

Velars:

**k* is reconstructed from *k* : *k* in initial position (28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37) and *q* : *k* in final position (13, 15, 46).

**ŋ* is reconstructed from intervocalic *n* : *ŋ* (35), and initial \tilde{y} : *ŋ* (38, 42).

Alternation between **k* and **ŋ* is reconstructed from initial *k* : *ŋ* (41, 43) or *y* : *k* (44), or final *q* : \tilde{V} (30, 39, 40).

Labio-velars:

The labio-velar consonants are postulated to account for the correspondence of velar reflexes in Ofaié with labial reflexes in Jê.

*k^w is reconstructed from initial k : p (45) and final ɟ : p (8) .

*ŋ^w is reconstructed from ɣ̃ : m (46, 47).

The alternation of *k^w with *ŋ^w is reconstructed from k : m in initial position (48, 49, 50, 51, 52) and ɟ : m in final position (7, 18).

*h^w does not appear to have any nasal alternate. It is reconstructed from the correspondence h : p (53, 54, 55).

1.2 Vowels

The reconstruction of the vowels is more uncertain than that of the consonants. There is some evidence that the sets of correspondences grouped under each reconstructed vowel are conditioned by contiguous consonants.

*i represents i : i (6, 20, 22, 42, 45).

*ee represents ε ε : e (46).

*e represents ε : ε (25, 31, 32, 43); ε : i (53); ε : a(17); ε : e (17); i : e (4, 12); i : ε (41).

*εε represents ε ε : a (18, 30, 39).

*ε represents ε : a (3, 7, 19, 55); *e : i (50).

*ɪ represents y : ɪ (27,44, 52, 54, 55); o : ɪ (13, 33).

*əə represents aa : ɪ (11, 16); a : ɪ(2).

*ə represents y : a (15,29); a : ə (38); a : ε 26); y : ε (8); y : ∅ where the first vowel of *CVCV has been lost in Jê (30, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 49).

*a represents a : a (1, 5, 14, 24); a : o(23, 49); a : o (48).

*o represents o : o (9, 21, 23, 46); o : a (34, 35).

*u represents $y : u$ (10, 44, 47, 51); $y : o$ (36, 37, 40).

2. Developments in Ofaié and Jê

In this section the consonant systems of Ofaié and Jê are compared with the reconstructed Ofaié-Jê. The vowel system is still too irregular for such comparison to be useful.

2.1 Ofaié

In the following table, the Ofaié-Jê consonants are listed on the vertical axis, and the Ofaié consonants on the horizontal axis, and in the cells. The rows show how the reconstructed consonants have split in Ofaié; the columns show the merging of elements from diverse sources in the Ofaié phonemes.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|---|---|
| O-J | p | t | š | k | q | n | w | r | j | g | h |
| p | p | | | | | | | | | | |
| t | | t | | | | | | | | | |
| c | | | š | | | | | | j | | h |
| k | | | | k | q | | | | | | |
| k ^w | | | | k | q | | | | | | |
| m | | | | | | | w | | | | |
| n | | | | | | n | | | | | |
| ñ | | | | | | | | | j (ñ) | | |
| ŋ | | | | | | n | | | | | ÿ |
| ŋ ^w | | | | | | | | | | | ÿ |
| r | | | | | | | | r | | | |
| h ^w | | | | | | | | | | | h |

The Ofaié developments include loss of the labio-velars and of all the nasals except n, and development of an alveo-palatal semi-vowel, and glottal fricative and stop. *k^w merged with *k, which in turn split into initial k and final q. *n^w merged with *ŋ which in turn split into intervocalic n, and nasalization of the vowel y in unstressed initial position. *c split into j, h and š. *h^w lost its labialization and merged with the h which resulted from the alveopalatal split. *ñ merged with the new j and *m merged with w, becoming nasalized allophones in nasal environments.

2.2 Jê

In the following table, the Ofaié-Jê consonants are again listed on the vertical axis, with the Proto-Jê consonants on the horizontal axis and in the cells. The rows show the split of Ofaié-Jê consonants in Jê. The columns show the merging of these elements in the Proto-Jê phonemes.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P-J | p | t | c | k | m | n | ñ | ŋ | w | r | z |
| O-J | | | | | | | | | | | |
| p | p | | | | | | | | w | | |
| t | | t | | | | | | | | r | |
| c | | | c | | | | | | | r | z |
| k | | | | k | | | | | | | |
| k ^w | p | | | | | | | | | | |
| m | | | | | m | | | | | | ṽ |
| n | | | | | | n | | | | | |
| ñ | | | | | | | ñ | | | | |
| ŋ | | | | | | | | ŋ | | | ṽ |
| ŋ ^w | | | | | m | | | | | | |
| r | | | | | | | | | | r | |
| h ^w | p | | | | | | | | | | |

The Jê developments include the loss of the labiovelars, and the development of the semivowels *w* and *z*. The oral labiovelars *k* and **h^w* merged with *p*; the nasal *n^w* merged with *m*. The allophones of **c* and **t* occurring in cluster with a preceding consonant merged with **r*. Further split of *c* produced an occlusive *c* and a semivowel *z*; split of **p* produced an occlusive *p* and a semivowel *w*. Nasals **ŋ*, and **m* in final position were lost with compensatory nasalization of the vowel.

3. Cognate Sets:³

In this listing of cognate sets, the tentative Ofaié-Jê reconstructions are followed by Ofaié (Gudschinsky 1966) and Proto-Jê (Davis 1966). Individual Jê languages are cited in parentheses when they bear independent witness to consonant alternation or vowel length. Parentheses in the reconstructed forms indicate uncertainties. Parentheses in the cited forms indicate elements not accounted for in the reconstruction. The forms are glossed separately only if they differ substantially in meaning. Glosses are given in Portuguese and English.

1. *par*; O *par*; PJ *par* (Suyá (i) *hwani*, Kaingang *pēn*); 'pé' 'foot'.
2. **pæər*; O ('*hyh*) '*par*'; PJ **(k) wɛr*; 'mandioca' 'manioc'.

3. *pɛ; O 'pɛ; PJ *pa; 'braço' 'arm'.
4. *meñ; O wĩ; PJ *mẽñ, mē (Kaingáng pẽñ); 'atirar em, jogar' 'shoot, throw'.
5. *ma, pa; O 'pa(j); PJ *ma, ma(r) (Canela (k^hẽ)pa, Xavante (waa)pa); 'ouvir' 'hear'.
6. *mi, pi; O 'pi(ky' ty-εq); PJ *mĩ, mĩñ; 'jacare' 'alligator'.
7. *tɛŋ^w, tɛk^w; O 'tɛq; PJ *tam, ta; 'éle' 'he'.
8. *takw; O ('ky)' ty(i)q; PJ *tɛp; 'peixe' 'fish'.
9. *no, nor; O 'no(q), 'noro(q) 'estar sentado' 'sit'; PJ *nõ, nõr 'deitar' 'lie'.
10. *tun, tuc; O ('hyh) 'tyh 'mate' 'mate, Paraguay tea'; PJ *tun, tu 'capim' 'grass'.
11. *rəəj O 'raa; PJ *rɪ (Canela(i)rɪɪ); 'comprido' 'long'
12. *tet, rer; O (hɛ)' t(a)it; PJ *rer, re; 'nadar' 'swim'.
13. *tɪk, rɪk; O '(kõ) rõq; PJ *tɪk; 'prêto' 'black'.
14. *ca; O ja(i)q; PJ *za(rẽ); 'falar' 'talk'.
15. *cək; O hy'(i)q; PJ *zak(o), zak(or); 'soprar' 'blow'.
16. *cəə; O ('ỹ)'šaa(q); PJ *z□ (Canela (i?)hɪɪ); 'semente' 'seed'.
17. *cetem, cerem; O 'hɛ(g)' tɛw; PJ *za-re; 'raiz' 'root'.
18. *cɛɛŋ^w, cɛɛk^w; O 'šɛɛq; PJ *cam, ca; 'estar em pé' 'stand'.
19. *cɛ; O šɛ(q); PJ *c(w)a; 'dente' 'tooth'
20. *ci; O 'hi(h); PJ *zi; 'osso' 'bone'
21. *coñ, coc; O 'šoh; PJ *(ku)zõn, -zõ; 'lavar' 'wash'.
22. *ñi; O 'jĩ(j) 'mão' 'hand'; PJ *ñĩ 'carne' 'flesh'.
23. *ñota, ñora; O 'jõra(h); PJ *ñõtɔ (Kaingáng nũñẽ); 'língua' 'tongue'.
24. *ca; O 'sa(q) 'filho' 'son'; PJ *(k)ra 'criança' *child'.

25. *ce; O 'šɛ(j); PJ *(ñĩ-ñak)rɛ; 'nariz' 'nose'.
26. *cə; O 'ša(h); PJ *(k)rɛ; 'casa' 'house'.
27. *cɛ; O ('ɛɛ)'šy(h); PJ *(k)rɛ; 'frio' 'cold'.
28. *kə; O ('wiɟ)ky('taq); PJ *ka(ñe); 'estrela' 'star'.
29. *kə; O 'kỹ(ɛq); PJ*(za)ka; 'branco' 'white'
30. *kətɛɛŋ, kətɛɛk; O ky'tɛɛq; PJ *krã, krã(ñ); 'cabeça' 'head'.
31. *ken, ket; O 'kɛ't(ɛh); PJ *kɛn; 'pedra' 'stone'.
32. *kɛc; O ('pykɛ)kɛ'j(o); PJ *kɛc, kɛ (Kaingáng kãñ); 'esquerda' 'left'.
33. *kɛtɛ; O 'kɛ'to(q); PJ *krɛ(z); 'papagaio' 'parrot'.
34. *koc; O ('jɟ)'koh; PJ *ka-c(wa); 'sal' 'salt'.
35. *koŋi; O 'ko'ni(q); PJ *kaŋã (Kaingáng kakə(wa)); 'cobra' 'snake'.
36. *ku; O ('wy)ky('hɛg); PJ *ko; 'chifre' 'horn'.
37. *kun, kut; O ('hiɟ)ky't(ɛq); PJ *kõn; 'joelho' 'knee'.
38. *ŋəcəre; O ỹỹ:šara(q); PJ *ŋrə (Suyá ŋrərə); 'sêco' 'dry'.
39. *ŋərəɛŋ, ŋərəɛk; O 'ỹỹ'tɛɛq; PJ *rã (Xavante (ai) rãã(rã)); 'flor' 'flower'.
40. *ŋətuŋ, ŋətuk, O ('šyh)'tyq; PJ *(ka-)ŋrõ; 'quente' 'hot'.
41. *ŋərə, kərə; O ky'ri(h); PJ *ŋrɛ, ŋrɛr (Canela -krɛ); 'cantar, dançar' 'sing, dance'.
42. *ŋəri; O 'ỹỹ'ri(q); PJ*ŋri-(rɛ) (Canela (ĩn)kri(rɛ)); 'pequeno' 'little'.
43. *ŋəte, kəte; O ky'tɛ(q); PJ *ŋrɛ (Canela (in)krɛ, Xavante ?re); 'ôvo' 'egg'.
44. *ŋucɛm, kucɛm; O 'ỹỹ'šỹw; PJ *ku-zɛ; 'fogo' 'fire'.
45. *kwīt, kwīr; O 'k(ỹ)it; PJ *pīr, pī (Kaingáng pin); 'matar' 'kill'.
46. *ŋwəceek; O ỹ'šɛɛq 'sangue' 'blood'; PJ *(ka)mrek (Xavante prɛ) 'vermelho' 'red'.
*ŋwəcow; O 'ỹỹ'šow 'vermelho' 'red'; PJ *(ka)mro 'sangue' 'blood'.

47. *ŋ^wut; O ỹ't(ɔ-yq); PJ *mut; 'pescoço' 'neck'.
48. *ŋ^wam. k^wam; O 'kãw; PJ *mō, mōr; 'ir' 'go'.
49. *ŋ^wətac, k^wətac; O ky'tah; PJ *mrɔc, mrɔ, prə; 'cinza' 'ash'.
50. *ŋ^wε k^wε; O ('ε)kε('jiq); PJ *mɛ (Canela hap)pɛ; 'rabo' 'tail'.
51. *ŋ^wuñ, k^wuñ; O ky'j(i); PJ *muñ, mu (Canela (-hōm)pu); 'ver' 'see'.
52. *ŋ^wɛt, k^wɛt; O ky't(owεq); PJ *mɛt; 'sol' 'sun'.
53. *h^wē; O 'hε(g); PJ *pĩ; 'árvore' 'tree'.
54. *h^wɛc(a:i); O 'hy(g)'ha; PJ *pɛci; 'um' 'one'.
55. *h^wɛkε; O 'hy(gε)q; PJ *pɛk(a), -k(añ); 'terra' 'earth'.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Ofaié is a language of Southern Mato Grosso. It has been reported by travelers since 1900 (Weickhmann 1928, Malan 1929, Manizer 1934). In addition to these passing references to the tribe, a few ethnological notes have been published (Freundt 1947, Lane 1938, Nimuendaju 1932, Ribeiro 1951).

2. Another list has been published more recently by Wanda Hanke (1964).

3. These fifty-five items by no means exhaust the possibility of finding cognates. For this preliminary study only the more obvious pairs were used, and no attempt was made to find cognates with individual languages apart from Davis' reconstructions. The strength of this evidence lies in the near completeness of the reconstructed phonological system, and in the fact that the cognates come almost entirely from the stable core vocabulary that is least subject to borrowing.