

AMERICAN LANGUAGE
REPRINTS

VOL. 7

A
VOCABULARY
OF
WOCCON

compiled by
John Lawson



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Preface to the 1998 Edition

In 1709 the explorer and surveyor John Lawson published vocabularies of three languages he found spoken among the natives of what is now the east coast of North Carolina. One of these languages was called Woccon or Wacon, after a tribe which lived in two villages named Yupwauremau and Tootatmeer between the Neuse and the Tar rivers. The Woccon were estimated at the time to have a population of 120 warriors; from which Mooney (1894) has extrapolated a total population of between 500 and 600 persons.

It was already clear to Lawson that the language of the Woccon was quite different from the Algonquian and Iroquoian languages of the area, but the relating and systematic classifying of the various native American languages did not begin in earnest until the nineteenth century, at which time it became evident that Woccon was most closely related to Catawba, spoken along the Catawba River in the area of modern-day Charlotte. Both Woccon and Catawba were subsequently placed within the Siouan linguistic family.

Exactly how Catawba and Woccon relate to the better known languages of the Siouan group is still somewhat unclear. Carter (1980), following the widely accepted Voegelin classification, has divided the Siouan family into two main branches: an Eastern Siouan branch composed of Catawba and Woccon, and a Western Siouan branch composed of all the other known languages such as Da-

kota. Note however that the other Siouan languages east of the Mississippi such as Tutelo, Ofo and Biloxi, though geographically “eastern”, belong linguistically to the Western Siouan branch. (See the classification table on page 33.)

The vocabulary of Woccon reprinted in this volume, totaling a mere 144 words, is the only sample that remains of the language today. It was collected during Lawson’s surveys along with vocabularies of two nearby but unrelated languages, Tuscarora and Pamlico. All three were arranged in columns with the English translation on the left, though not all of the English words have Woccon or Pamlico equivalents, with the result that all three vocabularies are of uneven length. The total number of Woccon words includes one, *tsaure*, which is not in the vocabulary itself but in the text immediately following, as reproduced on page 10.

Despite Lawson’s poor understanding of the complexity of American languages, he does recognize the remarkable linguistic diversity of coastal North Carolina. The three languages he includes in his vocabulary belong to three completely different language families. Woccon, as has already been mentioned, is Siouan; Tuscarora is Iroquoian and Pamlico is Algonquian. It was certainly true that in Lawson’s time the tribes would not be able to understand one another without interpreters.

But it is at odds with everything we now know to assume, as Lawson does, that difficulties in communicating arose because the native tongues themselves were gram-

matically impoverished. Most likely, Lawson's ear simply could not distinguish the grammatical intricacies of the languages he heard. We also cannot discount the possibility that some tribes made use of a simple traders' jargon to facilitate cross-linguistic communication; such jargons developed between natives and European settlers at various times in American history. If such a traders' jargon existed, Lawson could easily have mistaken it for an actual language.

The orthography used by Lawson to transcribe Woccon needs little comment since it is based on English spelling conventions: there are no foreign or invented characters. The only difficulty in interpretation, as Richard Carter (1980) has noted, lies in recognizing some of the letters of the original printing, which are occasionally indistinct due to ink bleeds. The italic characters *a*, *e* and *o* are particularly subject to misinterpretation; every effort has been made in this edition to restore the proper transcriptions, and indistinct letter forms have been carefully scrutinized and compared with cleaner examples to achieve this end.

The accuracy of Lawson's recording is difficult to gauge, because there are no other recordings to compare it with. But based on careful internal analysis and comparison with other Siouan languages, Carter has presented evidence for at least a few errors, particularly in the numerals, some of whose translations appear confused. For instance, the word listed for twelve *soone namme* actually seems to mean 'thirteen' given that it contains the root for three *nam-mee* rather than that for two, *num-perre*. Without Lawson's original manuscript, it is not possible to know

whether apparent errors like these stemmed from Lawson's imperfect knowledge of the language or a mistake on the part of the printer.

As a unique example of the Woccon language, Lawson's vocabulary has been reprinted and excerpted several times, including in two of the most important American Indian linguistic compendia of the nineteenth century: Albert Gallatin's "Synopsis of the Indian Tribes" (1836) and Henry Schoolcraft's "Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes" (1855; vol. 5, pp. 552-558). Neither of these sources have, however, reproduced the vocabulary completely or accurately. The vocabulary in the 1967 edition of Lawson's "New Voyage" has also been shown to contain a few minor transcriptional errors (Carter 1980); but fortunately a facsimile of the 1709 edition is also available (Lawson 1966).

Concerning the Woccon people themselves, Lawson is virtually the only primary source, and even he does not provide much information. The window of time in which they appear in the historical record is extremely brief, comprising about five years from 1709 to 1713. It is known from contemporary documents that the Woccon joined a group of Tuscarora in a war against the North Carolina English: the so-called Tuscarora War of 1711-1713 (Mooney 1894). The North Carolina governor appealed to neighboring colonies for assistance, and a coalition made up mostly of Yamasee Indians and a handful of English inflicted heavy losses upon the hostile Tuscarora and dispersing their population.

Following what must have been a crippling defeat, remnants of the Woccon were most likely incorporated into bands of the more numerous Tuscarora or possibly other tribes such as the Catawba. In any case as a separate nation the Woccon are not heard from again. Using a bit of imagination it seems reasonable to speculate that scattered refugees kept the language alive at least into the mid-1700's and perhaps as late as 1800, until intermarriage and cultural assimilation gradually ushered the Woccon language into extinction.

— Claudio R. Salvucci, series ed.

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Excerpt from: An Account of the Indians Of North Carolina

The difference of languages, that is found amongst these Heathens, seems altogether strange. For it often appears, that every dozen Miles, you meet with an Indian Town, that is quite different from the others you last parted withal; and what a little supplies this defect is, that the most powerful nation of these Savages scorns to treat or trade with any others (of fewer Numbers and less Power) in any other Tongue but their own, which serves for the *Lingua* of the Country, with which we travel and deal; as for Example, we see that the Tuskeruro's are most numerous in North-Carolina, therefore their Tongue is understood by some in every Town of all the Indians near us. And here I shall insert a small Dictionary of every tongue, though not Alphabetically digested...

To repeat more of this Indian jargon, would be to trouble the Reader, and as an Account how imperfect they are in their Moods and Tenses, has been given by several already, I shall only add, that their Languages or Tongues are so deficient, that you cannot suppose the *Indians* ever could express themselves in such a Flight of Stile, as Authors would have you believe. They are so far from it, that they are but just able to make one another understand readily what they talk about. As for the two Consonants *L* and *F*, I never knew them in any Indian Speech I have met withal; yet I must tell you, that they have such a Way of

abbreviating their Speech, when in their great Councils and Debates, that the young Men do not understand what they treat about, when they hear them argue. It is wonderful, what has occasion'd so many different Speeches as the Savages have. The three Nations I now mention'd, do not live above ten leagues distant, and two of them, viz. the *Tuskeruro's* and the *Woccon*, are not two Leagues asunder; yet their Speech differs in every Word thereof, except one, which is *Tsaure*, cockles, which is in both tongues the same, and nothing else. Now this Difference of Speech causes Jealousies and Fears amongst them, which bring Wars, wherein they destroy one another; otherwise the Christians had not (in all Probability) settled *America* so easily, at they have done, had these Tribes of Savages united themselves into one People or general Interest, or were they so but every hundred Miles. In short, they are an odd sort of People under the Circumstances they are at present, and have some such uncouth Ways in their Management and Course of Living, that it seems a Miracle to us, how they bring about their Designs, as they do, when their Ways are commonly quite contrary to ours. I believe, they are (as to this Life) a very happy People, and were it not for the Feuds amongst themselves, they would enjoy the happiest State (in this World) of all Mankind. They met with Enemies when we came amongst them; for they are no nearer Christianity now, than they were at the first Discovery, to all Appearance. They have learned several Vices of the *Europeans*, but not one Vertue, as I know of. Drunkenness was a Stranger, when we found them out, and Swearing their Speech cannot express; yet those that

speak *English*, learn to swear the first thing they talk of. It's true, they have some Vertues and some Vices; but how the Christians can bring these People into the Bosom of the Church, is a Proposal that ought to be form'd and follow'd by the wisest Heads and best Christians. After I have given one Remark or two farther, of some of their strange Practices and Notions, I will give my Opinion, how I think, in probability, it may be (if possible) effected, and so shall conclude this Treatise of *Carolina*.

John Lawson, 1709.

WOCCON — ENGLISH

Atter, *a swan.*

Aucummato, *I remember it.*

Auhaun, *a goose.*

Auher, *raccoon-skin.*

Caure, *dead.*

Coosauk, *peas.*

Cose, *corn.*

Cotsau, *a spoon.*

Cotsoo, *a bowl.*

Cuttaune, *that's all.*

Ejau, *water.*

Ekocromon, *a bag.*

Eppesyau, *a louse.*

Erroco, *peak* [i.e. wampum(peak), —ed.]

Hannatockore, *fox-skin.*

Hooheh, *a pine tree.*

Ikettau, *bread.*

Intom, *a tobacco-pipe.*

Intome-posswa, *hat.*

Ishewounaup, *a cubit length.*

Is-sto, *six.*

Itte teraugh, *hard or heavy.*

Itto, *moss.*

Kittape, *tomorrow.*

Matt-teer, *flints.*

Miyau, *a pestle.*

Monwittetau, *alligator.*

Mothei, *give it to me.*

Nam-mee, *three.*

Nappinjure, *a cow.*

Nau hou hoore-ene, *I will sell you goods very cheap.*

Nimmia, *hickory nuts.*

Noccoo eraute, *have you got anything to eat.*

Nommewarraupau, *swine.*

Nommis-sau, *seven.*

Nonnupper, *all the Indians are drunk.*

Noonkosso, *gun-lock.*

Num-perre, *two.*

Nupsau, *eight.*

Ouke, *house.*

Ourka, *bear-skin.*

Pautyau, *a fart.*

Poppe, *a head.*

Pulawa, *a turd.*

Punnum-punne, *four.*

Quauke, *will you go along with me?*

Rauhau, *dressed skin.*
Reheshiwau, *afraid.*
Rhooyau, *a flap.*
Roamore, *a king.*
Rockcumne, *mad.*
Roocauwa, *hominy.*
Roocheha, *angry.*
Rooe-pau, *a hoe.*
Roesoo possoo, *stockings.*
Rooyam, *gunpowder.*
Rooyaukitte, *breeches.*
Roo-iune, *blankets.*
Rookau, *buckskin.*
Rookeppa, *basket.*
Roosomme, *acorns.*
Roosomme, *soft.*
Rummaer, *ronoak* [i.e. wampum(peak), —ed.]
Rummissau, *coat.*
Rummissauwoune, *a button.*

Sacketoome posswa, *a comb.*
Sauhau, *let it alone.*
Sek, *lightwood.*
Soccon, *mink.*
Soone nomme, *twelve.*
Soone noponne, *ten.*
Soppe, *feathers.*
Soppepepor, *a mat.*

Tacca pitteneer, *shirt*.
Tauh-he, *a dog*.
Tau-unta winnik, *axe*.
Teep, *raw skin undressed*.
Tire kiro, *wolf*.
Toc-koor, *scissors, tobacco-tongues*.
Tonne, *one*.
Tonne hauk pea, *eleven*.
Tontarinte, *how many*.
Tontaunete, *a lazy fellow*.
Tooseawau, *a kettle*.
Too-she, *smoke*.
Trauhe, *a rope*.
Tsaure, *cockles*.
Tumme, *hair*.

Uu-coone, *tobacco*.

Watt, *a canoe*.
Wattape, *a gourd or bottle*.
Wattapi untakeer, *a star*.
Wattau, *panther-skin*.
Wauk, *potatoes*.
Waukhaway, *day*.
Waurepa, *I am sick*.
Waurraupa, *white*.
Wawawa, *snow*.
Webtau, *five*.

Wee, *knife.*
Week, *shot.*
Wee-kau, *belt.*
Wee-kessoo, *shoes.*
Weekwonne, *a reed.*
Weetipsa, *fishgig.*
Weihere, *nine.*
Welka, *a duck.*
Wetkes, *otter.*
Whooyeonne, *paint.*
Winnop, *twenty.*
Wintsohore, *Englishman.*
Wisto, *fawn-skin.*
Wittapare, *sun, moon.*
Wittape, *gun.*
Wittau, *a rat.*
Wonsh-shee, *awl, needle.*
Wottiyau, *a jew's harp.*
Wunneau, *a crab.*

Yacunne, *fish.*
Yah-testea, *black, blue.*
Yantoha, *night.*
Yau, *fire.*
Yauh, *a path.*
Yau-hauk, *a snake.*
Yauh-he, *Indians.*
Yauka, *a little while ago.*

Yauta, *red*.
Yauta, *turkey*.
Yawowa, *rain*.
Yecauau, *wife*.
Yehau, *squirrel-skin*.
Yendare, *fat*.
Yenrauhe, *brother*.
Yenwetoa, *a horse*.
Yicau, *old woman*.
Ynpyupseunne, *a rundlet*.
Yonne, *wood*.
Yonne, *peaches*.
Yopoonitsa, *a box*.
Yossoo, *a mortar*.
Yottoha, *yesterday*.
Yuncor, *wind*.
Yuppa me, *go you*.
Yup-se, *rum*.

ENGLISH — WOCCON

Acorns, *roosomme*.
Afraid, *reheshiwau*.
Ago; a little while ago, *yauka*.
All; that's all, *cuttaune*.
Alligator, *monwittetau*.
Alone; let it alone, *sauhau*.
Angry, *roocheha*.
Awl, *wonsh-shee*.
Axe, *tau-unta winnik*.

Bag, *ekoocromon*.
Basket, *rookeppa*.
Bear-skin, *ourka*.
Belt, *wee-kau*.
Black, *yah-testea*.
Blankets, *roo-iune*.
Blue, *yah-testea*.
Bottle, *wattape*.
Box, *yopoonitsa*.
Bowl, *cotsoo*.
Bread, *ikettau*.
Breeches, *rooeyaukitte*.
Brother, *yenrauhe*.
Buckskin, *rookau*.
Button, *rummissauwoune*.

Canoe, *watt*.
Coat, *rummissau*.

Cockles, *tsaure*.
Comb, *sacketoome posswa*.
Corn, *cose*.
Cow, *nappinjure*.
Crab, *wunneau*.
Cubit, *ishewounaup*.

Day, *waukhaway*.
Dead, *caure*.
Dog, *tauh-he*.
Duck, *welka*.

Eight, *nupsau*.
Eleven, *tonne hauk pea*.
Englishman, *wintsohore*.

Fart, *pautyau*.
Fat, *yendare*.
Fawn-skin, *wisto*.
Feathers, *soppe*.
Fire, *yau*.
Fish, *yacunne*.
Fishgig, *weetipsa*.
Five, *webtau*.
Flap, *rhooyau*.
Flints, *matt-teer*.
Four, *punnum-punne*.
Fox-skin, *hannatockore*.

Give it to me, *mothei*.
Go you, *yuppa me*.
Goose, *auhaun*.
Gourd, *wattape*.
Gun, *wittape*.
Gun-lock, *noonkosso*.
Gunpowder, *rooeyam*.

Hair, *tumme*.
Hard, *itte teraugh*.
Hat, *intome-posswa*.
Head, *poppe*.
Heavy, *itte teraugh*.
Hickory nuts, *nimmia*.
Hoe, *rooe-pau*.
Hominy, *roocauwa*.
Horse, *yenwetoa*.
House, *ouke*.
How many, *tontarinte*.

Indians, *yauh-he*.

Jew's harp, *wottiyau*.

Kettle, *tooseawau*.
King, *roamore*.
Knife, *wee*.

Lazy; a lazy fellow, *tontaunete*.

Lightwood, *sek*.

Louse, *eppesyau*.

Mad, *rockcumne*.

Mat, *soppepepor*.

Mink, *soccon*.

Moon, *wittapare*.

Mortar, *yossoo*.

Moss, *itto*.

Needle, *wonsh-shee*.

Night, *yantoha*.

Nine, *weihere*.

One, *tonne*.

Otter, *wetkes*.

Paint, *whooyeonne*.

Panther-skin, *wattau*.

Path, *yauh*.

Peaches, *yonne*.

Peak, *erroco*. (see **wampum**).

Peas, *coosauk*.

Pestle, *miyau*.

Pine-tree, *hooheh*.

Potatoes, *wauk*.

Raccoon-skin, *auher*.

Rain, *yawowa*.

Rat, *wittau*.

Red, *yauta*.

Reed, *weekwonne*.

Remember; I remember it, *aucummato*.

Ronoak, *rummaer*. (see **wampum**).

Rope, *trauhe*.

Rum, *yup-se*.

Runlet, *ynpyupseunne*.

Scissors, *toc-koor*.

Seven, *nomis-sau*.

Shirt, *tacca pitteneer*.

Shoes, *wee-kessoo*.

Shot, *week*.

Sick, I am, *waurepa*.

Six, *is-sto*.

Skin; raw undressed, *teep*. **Dressed skin**, *rauhau*.

Bear-skin, *ourka*. **Buckskin**, *rookau*. **Fawn-skin**,

wisto. **Fox-skin**, *hannatockore*. **Panther-skin**, *wattau*.

Raccoon-skin, *auher*. **Squirrel-skin**, *yehau*.

Smoke, *too-she*.

Snake, *yau-hauk*.

Snow, *wawawa*.

Soft, *roosomme*.

Spoon, *cotsau*.

Squirrel-skin, *yehau*.

Star, *wattapi untakeer*.

Stockings, *rooesoo possoo*.

Sun, *wittapare*.

Swan, *atter*.

Swine, *nommewarraupau*.

Ten, *soone noponne*.

Three, *nam-mee*.

Tobacco, *uu-coone*.

Tobacco-pipe, *intom*.

Tobacco-tongues, *toc-koor*.

Tomorrow, *kittape*.

Turd, *pulawa*.

Turkey, *yauta*.

Twelve, *soone nomme*.

Twenty, *winnop*.

Two, *num-perre*.

Wampum, *ronoak, rummaer*. (**wampum-**) **peak**, *erroco*.

Water, *ejau*.

White, *waurraupa*.

Wife, *yecauau*.

Wind, *yuncor*.

Wolf, *tire kiro*.

Woman, old, *yicau*.

Wood, *yonne*.

Yesterday, *yottoha*.

Phrases

Will you go along with me? *Quauke?*

I will sell you goods very cheap. *Nau hou hoore-ene.*

All the Indians are drunk. *Nonnupper.*

Have you got anything to eat? *Noccoo eraute.*

Numerical Table

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Tonne | 8. Nupsau |
| 2. Num-perre | 9. Weihere |
| 3. Nam-mee | 10. Soone noponne |
| 4. Punnum-punne | 11. Tonne hauk pea |
| 5. Webtau | 12. Soone nomme |
| 6. Is-sto | 20. Winnop |
| 7. Nommis-sau | |

CLASSIFICATION OF THE SIOUAN LANGUAGES

EASTERN SIOUAN

Catawba

Woccon

WESTERN SIOUAN

Missouri River

Hidatsa

Crow

Mandan

Mississippi Valley

Dakotan

Sioux

Assiniboine

Stoney

Dhegiha

Omaha-Ponca

Osage

Kansa

Quapaw

Chiwere-Winnebago

Chiwere (Otoe, Missouri, Iowa)

Winnebago

Southeastern

Ofo

Biloxi

Tutelo

Sources: Carter 1980; Foster 1996; Goddard 1996.