

Correction

In my recent article on the placename Missouri (*Names* 51.2 (June 2003, 111-125), there is an error that I would like to correct. This concerns the meaning of “Miss-,” the first segment of this placename. “Miss-” represents the term *mihs-* in the Illinois language. This term can be an allomorph, i.e., a possible form of the word for “big.” It occurs in such words as *mihsisiipiiwi* ‘big river’ (i.e., Mississippi) and *mihsihkinaahkwa* ‘painted terrapin’ (literally “big turtle”). And in the article I translated *mihs-* as “big.” However, there is better evidence showing that the first segment of this placename is in fact the homophonous Illinois term *mihs-* meaning “wood.” In this light, the ethnonym that Father Jacques Marquette was the first to write down, in the form <8EMESS8RIT>, which in time gave rise to the modern placename “Missouri,” can be parsed in this way:

| wi-mihs-oor-i-t-a | ‘third-person possessive prefix-
‘wood’-‘watercraft’-inanimate noun suffix-third person
animate intransitive participle marker-third person
animate intransitive participle ending.

As explained in the article, this Illinois language name for a member of the Siouan-speaking Missouri Indians can be pronounced *weemihsoorita* or *weemeehsoorita*. It means “one who has a wood boat” and designated the Missouri Indians as being especially noteworthy to the Illinois for their dugout canoes. The placename “Missouri” itself literally means “wood boat,” i.e., dugout canoe. For the latest reconstruction of “wooden watercraft” in Proto-Algonquian, see Ives Goddard, “Heckewelder’s 1792 Vocabulary from Ohio: A Possible Attestation of Mascouten,” in H.C. Wolfhart, ed., *Proceedings of the 34th Algonquian Conference*, 2003. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

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