Waccamaw Legacy

Contemporary Indians Fight for Survival

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Preface

When someone asks an Indian a question like "What tribe do you belong to?" the answer makes a statement about the past and a relationship with other people. The answer also centers on self-identity and group affiliation. For the answer to be acceptable, both parties must share a common understanding of the past and present (Barth 1998; Clifton 1989). Our sense of self and identity, then, is always relational; "we draw on models of identity provided by the cultures we inhabit" (Eakin 1999:46). A "working consensus" forged in relation to others is reached (Braroe 1975). Most people are surprised that Indians survive in the southeastern United States at all and very few know how hard they have struggled to preserve their Indian identity. Creating a working consensus with others has often been a long and difficult process.

Part of the working consensus on Indian identity throughout the United States includes policies of the federal government like the Bureau of Indian Affairs Federal Acknowledgment Process of 1978. I first learned of this policy in 1981 at a meeting attended by representatives of the state-recognized Waccamaw Siouan Indians of North Carolina. Their similarity to the Lumbee Indians, described by Karen Blu (1980) in *The Lumbee Problem,* made an initial impression on me. Their story of struggle, of forging a working consensus, intrigued me.

Two questions came up in our conversations about federal acknowledgment. The first, readily answered by the Indians, was "What tribe do you belong to?" They answered they were Waccamaw Siouan. Checking the standard references on Indians of the Southeast, I noted the location and brief historical summaries provided on the Waccamaw. The second question, "Who qualifies as an Indian of federal status?" was answered in relation to what non-Indians, particularly the federal government, have to say on the matter. For example, George Roth, a staff anthropologist with the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, says,

"Federally recognized status means that the federal government recognizes a 'government to government' relationship with the United States and the existence of a trust responsibility for the tribe. This recognition gives such tribes a unique legal status within the United States as partially sovereign entities" (Roth 1992:184). As Roth explains, "this definition is derived from case law that forms the basis of the unique legal status of federally recognized tribes in the United States. As such, it reflects non-Indian concepts about the nature of 'tribes,' although it is influenced by ethnological considerations as well" (Roth 1992:184).

Before the 1978 Federal Acknowledgment Process, it was common for Congress to establish the federal status of tribes. For example, in 1950, the Waccamaw Siouan asked Congress to pass the "Waccamaw Bill," making them wards of the government and giving them federal tribal status. When they asked for this status in 1950, they wanted to be included in the group of tribes over which the "federal government had accepted or asserted a fairly broad jurisdiction" and "a fairly broad responsibility for services and protection, within the context of the policies of the times" (Roth 2001). At that time, the federal government imposed two conditions on federal recognition. First, it had to determine whether the tribe existed as a "distinct political community," that is, whether it was a "community that governed itself and was socially and politically separate and distinct from non-Indians." Second, it had to see whether the "federal government had taken an action which acknowledged that it had both a political relationship with the specific tribe and a responsibility for it." In this case, qualifying "actions" included "treaties, laws, presidential orders, and other acts that specifically affected the tribe in question" (Roth 2001:50). In 1950, the Waccamaw Siouan tribe was one of many American Indian tribes that had never been recognized by the federal government. Such tribes had "come under colonial control before the United States became independent and had never established a relationship with the federal government by treaty or otherwise" (Roth 2001:50). So unless the federal government took some special action in their favor, it did not assume jurisdiction or responsibility for them. In the eyes of the federal government, such "unrecognized" Indians were citizens of the United States, with all the rights of any other citizens.

The federal government recognized tribes or groups of people. The people claiming membership in the tribe had to qualify as Indian by some acceptable federal standard. Over time, scholars have recognized three essential dimensions of Indian identity in that federal standard. These are blood and descent, relations to the land, and a sense of community. Within these, individuals must negotiate their identity in "interaction with another

person or group" (Fogelson 1998:41). Critics of federal policy argue that too much stress is placed on "blood" and not enough on other factors like community and social participation in Indian life (Blu 2001). Qualities like self-identification and tribal membership must be added to blood quantum for a broader understanding of Indian identity (Snipp 1997:678–680). Billy L. Cypress (2001:225), a Seminole Indian, sees the emphasis on blood as "a necessary evil." Some balance between culture, society, and blood is essential (Hudson 1976:478–501; Paredes 1995:343). Few would deny that all three of these factors are part of any definition of Indianness, yet how and when they come into play may be dependent on historical factors and power relations (Churchill 2004). Among Cherokee, the mixed-blood and full-blood divisions within the tribe have translated into differences of opinion on issues like allotment and adherence to traditional behavior, language, and assimilation for most of the twentieth century (Finger 1991; Gulick 1960; Kupferer 1968; Neely 1991; Thomas 1961). In 1950 when the Waccamaw Bill was considered by Congress, Levine (1972:11) observed, "Real 'Indianness' . . . [was] not necessarily measured on racial lines." It was widely known that the weight given "blood" in determining tribal membership varied from tribe to tribe.

Sometimes questions about a tribal name and tribal origin have disguised a probe into racial history and racial purity defined according to the white racial categories of the time. There are many remnant Indian groups in the East and Southeast whose ancestors have mixed with whites, Hispanics, and African Americans. Some of these groups faced an uphill battle in their struggle for recognition as Indian in part because whites preferred to define them as anomalous, as mixed bloods or "tri-racial isolates," regardless of how they defined themselves (Beale 1957; Berry 1945, 1963, 1978; Dane and Griessman 1972; Frazier 1966; Gilbert 1945, 1946a, 1946b, 1948; Griessman 1972; Thompson 1972). In recent research, scholars recognize the increasing number of American Indians with mixed heritage, and concepts like "multi heritage" and "mixed ancestry" occur as often as "mixed blood" in discussions of these populations (Krouse 1999:73; Mihesuah 1998:196; Snipp 1997:678).

Colonialism is a key experience for American Indians (Thornton 1998: 4). As foreign ideas and lifestyle were imposed on American Indians, dominating concepts of race redefined American Indians in relation to European Americans and African Americans. Nineteenth-century racial concepts put American Indians above African Americans but below European Americans in their evolutionary schemes. Concepts like "primitive" and "savage" described American Indians in opposition to the "civilized" European Ameri-

cans. European Americans "searched for the primitive" in American Indians and defined themselves as civilized and modern by comparison (Biolsi 1997:135).

American Indians have experienced racism differently than African Americans. When white people placed American Indians in "colored status," American Indians resisted and fought against these categories. American Indians and African Americans viewed the Civil Rights Movement differently. African Americans sought social inclusion and equal rights whereas American Indians struggled to prevent social inclusion on any other terms besides their own. They preferred to separate themselves and articulate with the dominant society rather than assimilate (Levine 1972:12, 28–29; Lurie 1972:300–302; Thornton 1998). In rejecting white peoples' attempt to lump Indians into the same social category as African Americans, American Indians in the East and Southeast avoided close identification with African American institutions and actions. This distancing behavior was a necessary step in maintaining articulation with the dominant society (Lerch 1988; Lurie 1972). In the contemporary Indian scene, as Lurie described it, Indians faced a choice between "economic marginality as Indian communities and prosperity through individual assimilation." To succeed and survive, Indians chose to articulate with the dominant society, forming successful "interactive relationships" Lurie (1971:419). Basic to that successful articulation was self-definition as Indian as a starting point in forming those interactive relationships.

Federal recognition did not solve all Indian problems, but without it people like the Waccamaw Siouan had to struggle locally for recognition as Indians. Walter L. Williams (1979) brought attention to these struggles in his book *Southeastern Indians since the Removal Era.* White attitudes, ideas, and statements about Indians formed a central place in reconstructing these histories because "the way of life of these Indian remnants (often in ways that the people themselves did not recognize) was to a great extent determined by the non-Indian majority" (Williams 1979:xv). Williams wrote, "*The* major problem for all southern Indians of the last century and a third has been to define their ethnic status as a third group within a bi-racial society." Until the twentieth century, the history of these groups was determined more by local situations and interactions than by federal Indian policy. Living in the South brought Indian groups into contact with large numbers of African Americans. By the nineteenth century, a rigid biracial system with a castelike character defined social relations with "tragic effect" for American Indians (Williams 1979:23). The Indians' struggle for recognition is a persistent theme in their history as whites lumped them into the

same social race category as "coloreds" (Williams 1979:194).[1] Whites resisted any attempt by American Indians to break out of this castelike system, fearing the biracial society would not survive such a change. Throughout the South and Southeast, American Indians chose isolation and social distance from African Americans in order to survive (Williams 1979:198).

Many of these same themes appeared in J. Anthony Paredes's (1992) recent work entitled *Indians of the Southeastern United States in the Late Twentieth Century.* In most cases, the Indians had to struggle against assimilation in order to survive into the twentieth century. After reviewing the recent history of these groups, Paredes (1995) proposed an interpretive framework that takes a comprehensive look at "the interplay of political, economic, and social forces" currently determining the contemporary variation found among Southeastern Indians. Central to their survival is "modernism" and specific structures that have molded, shaped, reinforced, reinterpreted, and strengthened Indian institutions and identity. Despite the common belief that Southeastern Indians have become extinct, a view aided by the "ethnographic present fallacy" and the equation of timeless and unchanging cultures with "real Indians," scholars are calling for an inclusion of Southeastern Indians in the historical narratives of the South (Paredes 1995; Perdue 1998). Historians and anthropologists have documented their resilience (chronologically: Swanton 1946; Sturtevant 1954; Gulick 1960; Fogelson 1961; Kupferer 1968; Evans 1971; Roundtree 1979, 1990, 1992; Blu 1980; Perdue 1985; Kidwell 1986; Porter 1986; Merrell 1989; Finger 1991; Neely 1991; Gregory 1992; Kersey 1992; Peterson 1992; Taukchiray and Kasakoff 1992; Sider 1993). The twentieth century brought many adjustments to modern life that strengthened Indian society. Pan-Indianism and the powwow infused new energy into many Southeastern tribes (Paredes 1995:345; Williams 1979:206).

The question of federal recognition remains essentially a legal issue. But the struggle for recognition starts locally as Indians take a stand and assert their identity. The Waccamaw Siouan story has been preserved in the written word and the oral traditions handed down through the generations. As I read these documents and heard these stories, it seemed to me that the Waccamaw Siouan had been engaged in a long conversation or dialogue with non-Indians about their identity. These dialogues did not all take place in face-to-face interactions, although they sometimes did. The Waccamaw Siouan, whether present or not, have been shaped and molded by these dia-

1. Social race is used following Wagley (1975:174) to describe categories of people that are "socially, not biologically, defined."

logues. The standard historical summaries and ethnographic accounts of Indians became part of the conversation because these were used as voices of authority, consulted for guidance, and depended upon for answers. This book begins with the Waccamaw Siouan assertion of Indianness and tribal identity in 1950. Their struggle for recognition raises questions about Indian identity and how it relates to the opinion and authority of non-Indians. Who were the Waccamaw? Who were the Siouan Indians? How and why did the modern Waccamaw come to refer to themselves as Croatan, Cherokee, Wide Awake Indians, and finally Waccamaw Siouan? A "working consensus" had to be forged based on the strongly held belief the Waccamaw had in their own heritage as Indians. Thus, this book is not a point-by-point case for federal recognition as it is defined by the 1978 federal acknowledgment guidelines. It is a look into the dialogue about Waccamaw Siouan Indians stimulated by their struggle to preserve and forge their Indian identity. Who are the Siouan Indians and the Waccamaw Indians? Where did they come from? What do we know of them before 1950? This is the subject of this book. The Waccamaw used different names for themselves throughout their struggle for recognition. When historical overviews or ethnological summaries describe Indians as having become extinct or assimilated, they overlook the strength of Indian identity in the region. Likewise if we ignore the historical and cultural contexts of tribal names and of name changing as it occurred for groups like the Waccamaw Siouan, then we are in danger of representing them as just another people whose story is not part of the standard history and cultural summaries of the region.

I want to thank the Waccamaw Siouan for including me in their conversations about Indian identity. They raised questions that made me aware of how answers are shaped and molded in different historical and cultural contexts. Tribal chief Pricilla Freeman Jacobs has always made me feel welcome. I am grateful to a kindly older generation of leaders who have talked with me over the years. The staff at the tribal office works hard every year to present the powwow. They alerted me very early to the importance of this annual event. I want to thank them all. I apologize for any errors of interpretation that I may have made and take full responsibility for them ahead of time.

A special thanks goes to my husband, Alfred, and my children—Jessica and Al—for patience and understanding during the long periods of writing that took me to libraries and archives and away from them.

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I

The Eastern Siouans

"We Was Always Indians"

> We was always Indians. Like Mary [a girl friend] was asked one time. Man come through and ask her something or "nother" about what she was. Said she was Indian. What tribe? [he asked.] She says, "I don't know what tribe, but I know one thing, I'm Indian." One of my girl friends. [She laughs.] So we always called the Indians, even so we didn't know what tribe . . . I guess the old folks did.
>
> —August 1983

> We, the Council of Wide Awake Indians, Waccamaw Tribe of the Siouan Nation, submit the attached information as evidences to support our plea for recognition and acceptance as Wards of the Government of the United States.
>
> —Freeman et al. 1949

Forty years ago the old woman quoted in the epigraph above was in her thirties and her father, mother, and cousins and kin backed an effort to become a federally recognized tribe of the United States. On February 6, 1950, a Californian named Norris Poulson described the Waccamaw as "a lost tribe of Indians" with a tragic story. The congressmen listening to him asked, Who were the Siouan Indians? Where did they come from? Who were/are the "Waccamaw tribe"? In this chapter, I trace the meaning of "Waccamaw" and "Siouan," relating these words to the language, culture, and history of peoples of the Southeast. Anthropologists, historians, archaeologists, and linguists play important roles in defining and giving meaning to these terms.

In 1950 as the Waccamaw Bill was before Congress, the standard ethnological and linguistic references identified Siouan as an important language spoken by American Indians. An early authoritative work on the subject entitled *The Siouan Tribes of the East* by anthropologist James Mooney established Siouan as one of several major language stocks in the East (Mooney 1894:6–8). Later, anthropologist John R. Swanton expanded Mooney's work into a comprehensive study, which he published in 1946 as *The Indians of*

the Southeastern United States. In addition to the Siouan stock, Algonquian, Iroquoian, Muskhogean, Tunican, and Caddoan were also present in the Southeast (Swanton 1946:10).

Linguists use word lists to determine to which group a tribe belongs. Sadly, for most of the so-called Siouan tribes, such vocabularies were never collected (Mooney 1894:6). Yet Mooney (1894:9) was convinced that the western Dakota or Siouan language stock originated in the East. This explained the presence of Siouan speakers like the Catawba, Woccon, and Tutelo in the Carolinas (Gatschet 1900, cited in Swanton 1923:33; Gallatin cited in Hudson 1970:6). Mooney classified all the other Siouan tribes on the basis of their association with the Catawba. Later, Frank G. Speck (1935:203), an expert on the Catawba, agreed that Siouan speakers once inhabited more of eastern Virginia and Carolina before being driven out into the piedmont. Speck (1935:201), who studied the last remaining speakers of Catawba, lamented, "the hope entertained since 1893 among students of native history and institutions, that the confusion of tribal names mentioned in the early narratives of the Carolinas would sooner or later be cleared up has not as yet been realized." Meticulous research with the last two people speaking Catawba did not promise to improve the picture either. While Speck agreed with Mooney's early classification of the Tutelo, Woccon, and Catawba as Siouan, he hesitated about the inclusion of twenty-two "other" tribes, determined to be Siouan only through the inference of their political relations with the Catawba. Before their decline, there may have been 24,000 speakers of Siouan in the southeastern United States, making Siouan the third-largest language grouping in the region (Swanton 1946:12). Yet, there was much to learn about the elusive Siouan. A hiatus in knowledge remained (Hudson 1970:6, 1976).

The 24,000 Siouan speakers represented a wide array of tribes. Some of these were known only from their tribal names mentioned briefly by Europeans. Nevertheless, Mooney's Siouan classification extended to many tribes in the central Carolinas. He included the Catawba, Tutelo, Woccon, Monacan, Saponi, Occaneechi, Sara, Keyauwee, Eno, Waxhaw, Sugaree, Peedee, Sewee, Santee, Wateree, Congaree, Mahoc, Nuntaneuck, Mohetan, Meipontsky, Shoccoree, Adshusheer, Sissipahaw, Cape Fear, Warrennuncock, Waccamaw, Winyaw, Hooks, and Backhooks.[1] Linguistic classification remained uncertain yet scholars continue to regard most of these tribes as Siouan.

The Siouan tribes lived within the Southeastern Culture Area, where they shared certain basic features that distinguished them from their neigh-

1. Tribal names appear in various forms and spellings in original sources. I am following Mooney's spellings whenever appropriate.

bors (Driver 1969:17). Swanton's generation of anthropologists defined "culture areas" primarily by listing traits believed typical of the people within these areas. At least by 1950, this was a common anthropological approach and influenced the understanding of the word *Siouan*. Some of the widespread aboriginal cultural patterns were intensive cultivation, the building of earthen mounds in the center of towns, social and political stratification, elaborate art forms, and a complex ideology. Other common traits were "the use of fish poisons; distinctive, though diverse, methods of processing acorns; the 'black drink'; a rectangular, gabled house, thatched and with walls of mud wattle or other earth covering; the practice of going barefoot most of the time" (Spencer and Jennings 1977:411). Other features usually found were "houselike storage structures; gourd ladles; hewing, eating, drinking, or licking of tobacco; the litter for nobility; carved wooden stools with legs; the blowgun with unpoisoned dart" (Spencer and Jennings 1977:410). Charles Hudson's (1976) *The Southeastern Indians* listed matrilineal descent, gender stratification, concepts of purity and pollution, orderliness, community-wide rituals, and a social ethic of harmony as some additional common patterns throughout the region after contact. These broad patterns most likely characterized the late prehistoric cultures of the region. Studies of the Cherokee by James Mooney revealed details of a complex belief system probably typical of the region (Hudson 1985:xiv–xvii). Sun worship or the belief in a sun deity was associated with temple fires that symbolized the earthly representation of the Sun. The Cherokee characterized fire and water as opposites, with fire representing the order of the Upper World and water standing for the disorder of the Under World. Each year annual renewal rites known as "going to water" prepared the Cherokee for a new year, purifying them of the sins of the past as they faced daily life in This World. The Green Corn ceremony, emphasizing the importance of corn in the diet of the region, celebrated the harvest and the renewal of the society. Rituals of purification and cleansing prepared individuals for the next year. Another important pattern was the ball game, an early form of lacrosse. These patterns were widely shared during the late prehistoric time and likely characterized many of the cultures of the region. Contact altered the later societies following significant declines in aboriginal population as a result of disease (Crosby 1972; Dobyns 1983).

The Waccamaw and the Eastern Siouans begin to have a story of their own in the literature when Europeans write about their interactions with specific Southeastern tribes. The story of the Eastern Siouans, to use James Mooney's (1894) description, is preserved in the colonial records of European interests in trade, peace, or war with the Indians. We turn now to the colonial relations that involved the Waccamaw and other Eastern Siouans

during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Some of this history is well known, but presenting it from a "Waccamaw-centric" perspective shifts attention to the modern Waccamaw Siouan story.

The Waccamaw formed a large tribe whose territory ranged from Winyah Bay along the Waccamaw River up toward the Cape Fear River and beyond to the Neuse River in the piedmont. They may have been known to Europeans under three different names: Waccamaw, Cape Fear Indians, and Woccon. Douglas Rights (1957:39) suspected there was a link between the Woccon and the Waccamaw. Wondering how the Woccon, a large and important tribe, could escape mention in the colonial record, he proposed that they were a part of the tribe known as the Waccamaw. John R. Swanton of the Bureau of American Ethnology agreed with this theory (Swanton 1946:100). Thus, the Waccamaw name was used primarily in South Carolina and the Woccon name in northern North Carolina. Both tribes may have been glossed over as the Cape Fear Indians, a label the early European explorers of the Cape Fear region attached to the indigenous peoples they encountered there. The Cape Fear Indians were very likely the Waccamaw-Woccon Indians (Swanton 1946:75).

The Spanish left a clue to the identity of the Indians living in the Cape Fear region in 1513 (Lee 1965:9–10). The entire Cape Fear region, which includes the coastal plain of the southeastern United States lying north and south of the mouth of the Cape Fear River, received the enchanting name "Chicora," as one of the provinces of "Pascua de Flores" (Florida), when Ponce de Leon claimed the eastern United States from Florida to the north for Spain. In 1521, the Spanish subdivided Chicora, naming one part "Guacaya," which may be Spanish for Waccamaw (Milling 1969:205; Swanton 1946:203). The Waccamaw Indians lived near the southern end of the Cape Fear region, on "St. John the Baptist" River, identified later as either the Pee Dee or the Waccamaw River, at Winyah Bay (Milling 1969:204; Quattlebaum 1956:11–12; South 1972:32; Trinkley and Hogue 1979:3). The Waccamaw River reaches up into the Cape Fear region, touching Lake Waccamaw. If these Guacaya were the same people as the Waccamaw, then this is their earliest recorded encounter with Europeans. However, the indigenous peoples of the region were simply referred to as the Cape Fear Indians in subsequent encounters.

In 1524, Giovanni de Verrazzano, an Italian explorer for the French crown, sailed along the "continental coast west of Cape Fear, near the place where today's boundary line between the Carolinas reaches the sea" (Wroth 1970:79). Verrazzano does not name the Indians along the Cape Fear, but it is a strong possibility that they were Waccamaw. The natives watched Verrazzano's vessel, the *Dalphine,* approach the shore, then turned and fled into

the interior. Only after Verrazzano and his men made "various signs" to reassure them did they return. He says, "some of them came up, showing great delight at seeing us and marveling at our clothes, appearance, and our whiteness; they showed us by various signs where we could most easily secure the boat, and offered us some food" (Wroth 1970:134). Verrazzano left a description of their general appearance, commenting on their nakedness, feathered garlands, dark color "like Ethiopians," and "thick black hair." Time prevented him from learning the "details of the life and customs," although he noted similarities with other Indians he had come upon along the coast (Wroth 1970:134).

Their environment was filled with "an abundance of animals, stags, deer, hares; and also of lakes and pools of running water with various types of birds, perfect for all the delights and pleasures of the hunt" (Wroth 1970:135). Moving along the coast, which "veered east," Verrazzano saw "great fires because of the numerous inhabitants" (Wroth 1970:135). Needing water, Verrazzano anchored offshore and sent twenty-five men to locate a new supply. The natives appeared friendly: "We saw many people on the beach making various friendly signs, and beckoning us ashore" (Wroth 1970:135). One of the sailors who swam toward shore with some "trinkets" for the natives nearly drowned in the rough surf. Much to Verrazzano's surprise, the natives rescued him and proceeded to examine him on shore before letting him return to his ship. Continuing north, along the coast, Verrazzano never again found natives as open and congenial as those along the Cape Fear coastline. Perhaps those tribes located farther north had met Europeans prior to Verrazzano's visit, since he reported that they fled in terror when they sighted the *Dalphine* (Wroth 1970:136).

Europeans did not disturb the Indians living along the Cape Fear coast again until the 1660s, but when they did they gave them the name "Cape Fear Indians." On March 24, 1663, King Charles of England granted eight Lords Proprietors rights to "Carolina" (Lee 1965:27–28). But a few years earlier, plans to settle the area had already gotten under way in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where William Hilton received a commission to explore the area (Lee 1965:31). On October 4, 1662, he entered the "stream called Charles River . . . which is now known as Cape Fear" and proceeded upriver (Lee 1965:31). Hilton explored the Northeast Branch, where the land and resources impressed him. He arranged a purchase of the area from the one hundred or so natives (Lee 1965:32).

Hilton's good impression of the region motivated the "Adventurers about the Cape Fayre" to settle the area in February 1663. After a short stay, they left in April 1663, abandoning their livestock and posting a warning notice at the point of the Cape Fear River that made no mention of the