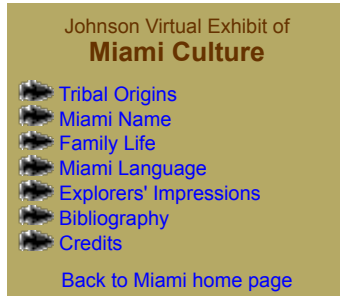


French and English Impressions of the Miami

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Miami traded heavily with the French and English. Many goods such as pots, shirts, and beads were traded for Miami animal furs and wampum belts.



The French were the first to make contact with the Miami in 1654. At that time the French called the Miami "Oumamik" which is similar to the Ojibwa name for the Miami, *omamik*. Omamik is close to what the Miami call themselves. The English on the other hand, constantly referred to the Miami as the *twaatwaa*

Below are parts of books and letters from French and English settlers discussing their impressions of the Miami language

Passage 1

...The Savages named Oumamis are here only in very small numbers, their main body having not yet come in from their hunting; therefore I say almost nothing about them in detail. Their language is in harmony with their disposition: they are gentle, affable, sedate; they also speak slowly. This whole Nation was to arrive in sixteen days: but, obedience calling me to the Sault, I was not at liberty to wait for them. These people are settled in a very attractive place, where beautiful Plains and Fields meet the eye as far as one can see. Their River leads by a six days' Voyage to the great River named Messi-Sipi,....

Passage 2

...from the diversity of accents; for often two words composed of the same letters have totally different significations. Father Chaumont, who lived fifty years among the Hurons, composed a Grammar of that language which is very helpful to those who come without experience to that Mission. Nevertheless a Missionary is fortunate if he can, even with this aid, express himself elegantly in that language after ten years of constant study. Each Savage Tribe has its own special tongue; thus the Abnakis, the Hurons, the Iroquois, the Algonkins, the Iliinois, the Miamis, and others, have each their own language. There are no books to teach these languages, and even though

we had them, they would be quite useless; practice is the only master that is able to teach us...