<table>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>A STUDY OF THE LEXICAL VARIANTS OF &quot;CORN BREAD&quot; IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Chinen, Hirozane</td>
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<td>Citation</td>
<td>冲大論叢 = OKIDAI RONSO, 1(2): 11-32</td>
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ASTUDY OF
THE LEXICAL VARIANTS OF "CORN BREAD"
IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

Hirozane Chinen

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Ch. 2 CORN BREAD
Ch. 3 JOHNNY CAKE
Ch. 4 CORN PONE
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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This is an attempt to investigate the terms used in the Great Lakes region to signify the bread (in large cakes) which is commonly known as "corn bread."

The specific purposes of the investigation are:

(1) To find and determine the variants of "corn bread."

(2) To investigate the distributions of variants in the Great Lakes region.

(3) To account for the distributions of variants.

Scope

The region investigated is limited to the portion of the Great Lakes region covered by the data\(^1\) for the Atlas of the Great Lakes Region in the files of English Department, University of Michigan.

This region includes Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and Ontario.

Materials, Method, and Procedure

1. The materials of this paper primarily come from two sources:

   (a) Data sheets for the Atlas of the Great Lakes Region. These were the primary source.

   (b) Information obtained from other books. The Bibliography at the end of this paper will show those reference books.

2. (a) All the data sheets in the University of Michigan recording responses for "corn bread" in the Great Lakes area were examined. These responses were sorted out and listed for the present study. When an informant gave more than one response, his

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\(^1\) "The Linguistic Atlas of the North-Central States began in 1938 under the direction of Albert H. Marckwardt of the University of Michigan. However only Wisconsin was completed before World War II by Frederic G. Cassidy. Field work was resumed in 1948, and with support from various local institutions it was completed by 1956, chiefly by McDavid, Cassidy, and A. L. Davis. The collections have been assembled at the University of Michigan where pre-editing has begun."

several responses were listed as First, Second, Third, and Fourth responses.

(b) All responses were marked on a map. A different color or figure was used to indicate each variant. Four responses (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th) are so marked.¹

(c) Two charts were made of the responses for each term. One lists the number of informants in each area and the number of responses for the term in each area. The other lists the percentage of informants giving a particular variant response.

3. The data of the Great Lakes region have five most common variants for which more than twenty responses were found.

   In the order of the frequency of their occurrence, the terms are “corn bread”, “johnny cake”, “corn pone”, “hoe cake”, and “pone”.

   They are each discussed in a chapter, except “hoe cake” and “pone”, both of which are discussed in the same chapter.

   Each chapter is divided into three parts: the origin of the term, its distribution, and a comment concerning distribution correlated with settlement history.

   The maps representing the distributions of the five most common variants are placed at the ends of their appropriate chapters and the map representing five most common variants is placed at the end of Chapter 6.²

   Conclusions are stated in Chapter 6.

4. The variants, which have responses more than 10 (but less than 20) are: “corn cakes”, “corn dodger”, “corn muffins”, “ash cake”, “cracklin’ bread”, “corn sticks”, and “hobbies” are not discussed here because of their essentially same pattern of distribution (except one variant “corn cakes” which scatters widely in the Great Lakes region). That is, they are mainly distributed in and around Kentucky.

¹ Four responses of five most common variants were marked. Five most common variants of the Great Lakes region are “corn bread”, “johnny cake”, “corn pone”, “hoe cake”, and pone.

² The maps have been omitted because of the technical difficulty in printing.
I interpret that this suggests two possibilities, that (1) a field
worker (or field workers) in and around Kentucky was probably
very careful in collecting the data, more so than field workers in
other regions; or (2) that Kentucky really has such a variety of
variants. I am afraid I can't prove the above two possibilities by the
departmental files or other materials at this time. Probably more
substantial and more accurate materials will be needed to prove
them.

5. Other variants exist but since their frequency is so low (less than
10) they are negligible. Variants, which occurred less than 10 times,
are “Indian bread”, “Shortenig bread”, “Hobby bread”, “Corn meal
muffins”, “sweet pone”, “dog corn bread”, “corn butter cakes”,
“lunch pone”, “sour bread”, “fatty bread”, “corn sweet bread”,
“spoon bread”, “corn light bread”, “pone bread”, “muffins”,
dodgers”, “corn meal cake”, “Indian cake”, “fried corn meal”,
cold water-corn dodger”, “corn meal”, “cold water corn bread”,
and “corn meal bread.”

Chapter 2  CORN BREAD

Origin

“Corn bread”, in the sense intended, seems to be an American coinage
and it is the term found to be most common in the Great Lakes region.
The term is listed as an Americanism in O. E. D. Supplement, A
Dictionary of Americanisms, A Dictionary of American English, Webster’s
New International Dictionary, unabridged. Generally it is defined as
“bread made of corn meal.”

As Mencken1 says, “corn bread” was first recorded by A Dictionary of
American English.

“Indian corn bread ... is a coarse, strong kind of bread, which has

York, 1945, P. 203.
something of the taste of that made from oats.” I. Weld Travels (1796)¹

In consequence, the coinage probably took place relatively early, since early citations are not uncommon.

“Corn bread, when new is very palatable, and, I believe, wholesome.” E. P. Fordham Narr (1817)²

It is the term defined in all of the dictionary sources checked in the writings of this project; therefore it seems to be regarded as the base term of which others are variants.

**Distribution**

The term “corn bread” appears to be widely spread both in the eastern part of the United States and the Great Lakes region.

According to Kurath,³ “corn bread” is a national term; and it predominates in the urbanized areas and is widely used by the better educated people in most rural areas, too.

Kurath adds that, even though several regional expressions (e.g., pone, corn pone, pone bread) are still strongly established in the speech of the people, “corn bread” is gaining ground in the valley of the Susquehanna, in all of Pennsylvania lying to the west of it, and in all the Atlantic states south of Pennsylvania.

Of the 379 informants checked in the data sheets for the Atlas of the Great Lakes Region, 255 people (or 67%) gave “corn bread” as their responses. In consequence we understand that the term “corn bread” is used by more than half of the people in the Great Lakes region.

The distribution of the term gives us an interesting picture. It finds its highest in Illinois, while in Ontario only two people (or 14%) out of fourteen informants gave “corn bread” as their responses. (This is the most sparsely distributed region.)

¹ Listed in A Dictionary of American English.
The number of the responses is much greater in Kentucky than in Ontario: 37 people (or 49%) out of 70 informants.

In the three states north of Kentucky, that is, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, the response is much higher than in Kentucky. It was given by 63 (or 91%) of the 69 Illinois informants, 73 (or 87%) of the 51 Indiana informants, and 52 (or 81%) of the 69 Ohio informants.

The number of responses becomes much less in Wisconsin and Michigan. In Wisconsin it is given by 25 (or 52%) of the 48 Wisconsin informants, and in Michigan by 36 (or 53%) of the 63 Michigan informants.

As I have already explained, in southern Ontario the number of responses drops sharply. It is given by only 2 (or 14%) of the 14 Ontario informants. This is the only area where "corn bread" is not used as the most frequent term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number of Informants</th>
<th>Total &quot;Corn Bread&quot; Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Corn Bread&quot; Responses As First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1 Number of "Corn Bread" Responses by Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td>91</td>
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<td>Indiana</td>
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<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional Percentage 67

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Comment

It may be presumed that "corn bread" was an early American coinage. The term must have spread early, and its spread must have been substantial. For the term dominates not only in the eastern part of the United States, but in the Great Lakes region.

It may be all right to call "corn bread" a national term, but we must notice there is a certain pattern of distribution in the Great Lakes region.¹ Since this region was originally settled by various groups of people (e.g., New Englanders, New Yorkers, Pennsylvania people, people of Midland speech area and the Coastal South; and foreign immigrants, we have to consider these elements of settlement history in order to analyze the distribution of "corn bread."

The sharp lessening of the response in Ontario is probably due to the fact that Canada has remained a part of the British Commonwealth.

¹ High frequency of the responses in the three states in a row--Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio--and sharp decreases in the regions north and south of these states.
Chapter 3 JOHNNY CAKE

Origin

"Johnny cake" appears to be another American coinage\(^1\) and it seems to be the term used by the settlers of the United States before the coinage of "corn bread." Citations of *A Dictionary of Americanisms* and *A Dictionary of American English* for this term predate the earliest "corn bread" citations by fifty-seven years.

"New Iron plates to cook Johnny cakes or gridel bread on." S. C. Gazette (1739)\(^2\)


Concerning the etymology of "johnny cake", there are a few different views. *Oxford English Dictionary*, saying the origin is uncertain, suggests a wafer-like bread.

"Notwithstanding it (rice) is ... only fit for puddings, ... or to make the wafer-like bread called journey cakes in Carolina." Romans Florida ((1775) in *Oxford English Dictionary*.

According to Mencken,\(^3\) "johnny cake" had acquired the variant form of journey cake by 1754, and consequently Noah Webster presumed that this may have been the original term, and that it meant a hard loaf baked for use on a journey.

The *Dictionary of American English* suggests that both "journey cake" and "journey-cake" may have been corruptions of "jonokin", traced to 1675. However, no real evidence for this is available.

*An American Glossary* says the "johnny cake" is originally "Journey-cake", referring to a citation from Monette, *History of the Mississippi* (1849).

Finally, Mencken suggests an etymology explained by Mr. Loudermilk as being much more plausible to accept.\(^4\) "A favorite article of diet amongst

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1 *O E D* Suggests that the cake (johnny cake) is of negro origin.
2 Listed in *A Dictionary of American English* and *A Dictionary of Americanisms*.
4 Mencken. Supplement Vol. II, p. 204
these (Shawnee) Indians was a cake made of maize beaten as fine as the means at command would permit. This was mixed with water, and baked upon a flat stone which had been previously heated in the fire.

The trappers followed the Indians example in the baking of 'Shawnee-cakes', as they called them, and the lapse of a few years was sufficient to corrupt the term into that of 'Johnny-cake', so familiar throughout the South, and in common use at this day."

After all, there is no established or widely accepted etymology of "Johnny cake."

Distribution

The term "Johnny cake" appears to be widely spread throughout the northern part of the Eastern United States. Kurath says, "Johnny cake" is the characteristic Northern term for corn bread. In New England, except for Rhode Island, and in the entire New England settlement area "Johnny cake" appears to be dominating, and "There are relics of it in Metropolitan New York and in most parts of New Jersey."

The term "Johnny cake" is the second most common response in the Great Lakes region. It is given by 155 (or 41%) of 379 informants.

The distribution of "Johnny cake" gives us an interesting picture. That is, in Ontario the number of the responses is 14 (or 100%) of the 14 informants. It is the most common term in Southern Ontario.

Then, as we go southward the number of responses decreases. It occurs less frequently in Wisconsin and in Michigan than in Ontario, though it is still widely spread throughout these two states. It was given by 39 (or 81%) of the 48 Wisconsin informants, and 59 (or 94%) of the 63 Michigan informants.

The number of responses drops sharply in Illinois (14 of 69 informants or 20%), and in Ohio (14 of 64 informants or 22%).

In Kentucky only 10 (or 14%) of 70 informants gave "Johnny cake" as their response.

1 Kurath: Word Geography, p. 67.
2 Ibid.
### Fig. 3 Number of “Johnny Cake” Responses by Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number of Informants</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>&quot;Johnny Cake&quot; Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As First As Second As Third As Fourth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Response Response Response Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24 15</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 1 2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9 4 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>83 60 8 4</td>
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### Fig. 4 Percentage of Informants Giving “Johnny Cake” Responses in Each Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>100</td>
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Regional Percentage 41