UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Linguistic Studies Presented to John L. Finlay. Edited by H. C. Wolfart.

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0cc651wp

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 16(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Cowan, William

Publication Date

1992

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Any new work done by non-Native Americans should be emphatic in allowing Native Americans to speak for themselves from their own cultural perspectives. In a work like Tate's, this could be accomplished in the preface. In addition, although Tate includes many entries that deal with contemporary Omaha history and culture, and the preface does indicate that contemporary Omaha are still victimized by ever-changing and problematic federal and state policies, it would be useful to emphasize the continued vitality of contemporary Omaha culture and the contributions made to the Omaha and others. This would, early on, offset the attitude of many people that Native American cultures are museum pieces from the past rather than living, dynamic entities.

In conclusion, *The Upstream People: An Annotated Research Bibliography of the Omaha Tribe* is a "gold mine" for researchers in particular but also for others interested in becoming better informed concerning Omaha history and culture. As the author and the general editor suggest, this book can be valuable not only to academicians and the public but to the Omaha themselves. Perhaps more Omaha will be stimulated to tell their own story, so that we all can appreciate and benefit from their history and the richness of their culture, past and present.

Stephen G. Cobb Messiah College

Linguistic Studies Presented to John L. Finlay. Edited by H. C. Wolfart. Winnipeg: Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics, Memoir 8, 1991. 190 pages. \$24.00 (CAN) paper.

Of the eleven essays in this excellent volume, six deal with four North American Indian languages—Cree, Ojibwa, Mandan, and Beaver—representing the Algonquian, Siouan, and Athabascan languages of what was once called Rupert's Land, that vast expanse of territory extending from Hudson Bay to the Rockies that today constitutes much of the Canadian North. The other essays touch upon language planning in Israeli Hebrew, clauses in Tauya (a Papuan language of New Guinea), women in linguistics, the bureaucratization of language, and the part that sex has played in the evolutionary development of language.

Four of these six articles on Indian languages deal with textual

Reviews 195

material, reflecting an increasing dependence in Amerindian language studies on texts as a basis for primary data. Texts have always been an integral part of the linguistic investigation of North American Indian languages, as exemplified in the works of Boas, Sapir, Bloomfield, and others, and have always been used as a source for analysis and illustration, but recently the texts have become even more widely used and exploited for the data they contain. Two of the essays deal with narrative texts. Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart present a transcription and translation of a personal narrative in Plains Cree originally told by the central figure to another storyteller and by the second storyteller to Ahenakew. The four-and-a-half pages of Cree text, and the English translation thereof, are on facing pages, organized into twenty-two paragraphs, each containing from one to several sentences. Because the present storyteller is basically quoting the original storyteller, the single most used vocabulary item is the word itwew "so he said." The narrative is about a family's move across the Plains when the narrator was a child and about the family's encounters with other Indians, with a Métis, and with a Catholic priest. It is very low-keyed material, a brief personal memoir, in which the eternal verities of life, death, doubt, and redemption are lightly touched upon.

The second narrative text is a trickster tale in Mandan, originally collected in 1934 by Edward Kennard, edited and translated by Richard Carter, and published here in this version for the first time. Mandan is a Siouan language spoken in North Dakota, which has, or had in 1986, four fluent speakers and two semifluent speakers. Carter has retranscribed the original into a phonetic rendering, working with a revision of Kennard's work undertaken in the 1970s by Robert Hollow and with native speakers. The text consists of seventy-four sentences, each presented in a phonetic rendering, a morphemic representation, a morpheme-bymorpheme translation into English with grammatical labeling of each morpheme, and, finally, by a free translation into English. This is followed by comments on the grammatical, lexical, and stylistic elements of the Mandan text. These comments and the grammatical labeling in the text itself by no means constitute a complete grammatical analysis but are merely a guide for further study. The trickster tale itself is an earthy and humorous account of Coyote's encounter with a potato and his subsequent problems with a flatulation so powerful that he has to hold himself down by grasping trees.

John Nichols also deals with a text, this time in Ojibwa, but it is a short, three-line song text collected and published first in 1845 by Henry Schoolcraft. The item is a children's song to the firefly, asking it to light the way to bed. It is quite charming, and Nichols traces its transmogrifications in later versions in Schoolcraft and in Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. He also establishes what was probably the original form in Ojibwa and gives a new translation into English. All this is done with a deft hand, displaying Nichols's familiarity with both the Ojibwa language and the philological tradition of analysis of Native American language texts.

The Cree text analyzed by David Pentland is of a greatly different order. It is a three-line note in the diary of Henry Kelsey, the first European to view the Plains of North America, scribbled down three days after Christmas, 1696. Kelsey was an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, stationed at this time at York Factory, on the west coast of Hudson Bay. He was probably fairly fluent in Cree and in 1709 published a dictionary of the language. The note jotted down here was for his private notice and dealt with drunkenness and lust, two aspects of life in the remote outposts of the Hudson's Bay Company that were egregious in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The spelling is, in the inimitable seventeenth-century manner among speakers of English, seemingly chaotic and practically impenetrable. Pentland, however, smoothly interprets the transcription with reference to the dictionary published by Kelsey and, for example, interprets Kelsey's "Cakiththa keeshquebbauj" as Cree kahkiaaw ktskwepew "everybody is drunk" with no difficulty. The remainder of the note is equally well interpreted by Pentland, who is baffled only by the last three syllables—-nuzaa—which make no sense in Cree and were probably a mistake by Kelsey himself. In all, a small gem of analysis on Pentland's part.

The remaining two articles on Indian languages deal with synchronic linguistics. Tiina Randoja analyzes the syllable structure of verb prefixes in "Halfway River Beaver" within the framework of modern metrical phonology and comes to the conclusion that this approach makes more sense out of the phonological and morphophonemic complexities presented by these prefixes than any other approach, especially an approach that uses a linear model of phonology. In the other essay, H. C. Wolfart analyzes passive and passive-like constructions in Cree and other Algonquian languages and concludes that, although these languages do not have a passive in the same sense that Indo-European languages do, there still are grammatical structures that have a passive-like effect, in terms of agent and patient, that allow us to speak of a passive aspect. Wolfart displays a sure-handed grasp of fine grammatical detail in both the Algonquian languages and a wide array of Indo-European languages, and even in Arabic. He includes a diachronic aspect and makes some speculations as to the source and direction of syntactic change in the Algonquian languages in respect to passive-like structures.

In sum, the essays contained in this volume show a broad, scholarly expertise on the part of the contributors and add to the store of linguistic analysis of a number of North American Indian languages. The volume is well printed. I have found only three misprints: On page 189, in the list of references to Wolfart's article, Joseph Howses's grammar of Cree is mistakenly listed as having been published in 1944 instead of 1844. On page 133, Pentland quotes a form from Kelsey's dictionary that is supposed to have an "l" substituted for a "t," but the quote "Miss sitt" has two "t"s and no "l." And on page 61, John Haiman, in his article on bureaucratization of language, quotes an Arabic form for "big," heŭaaŭim that is a garbled version of the correct caŭiim.

William Cowan
Carleton University

King Philip: Wampanoag Rebel. By Joseph Roman. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992. 111 pages. \$18.95 cloth.

This well-written and beautifully illustrated book is a concise statement on the tragic life and career of this seventeenth-century New England Indian leader. The book, obviously aimed at the young reader, reads like a fascinating novel. (The author spells King Philip's Indian name as Metacom, while this reviewer's research has it as Pometacom.)

There is a long-standing joke among Indian people to the effect that the Puritans landed and fell on their knees to give thanks. Then they fell on the Indians. What actually happened, however, was no joke.

The author and this reviewer agree that, contrary to what Americans have been taught down through the years, most of the blame for the so-called King Philip's War of 1675–76 must necessarily be placed on the highly venerated Puritans rather than on the Indians themselves. Therefore, the very name of this war is a misnomer.