A r i s t o n Talk March 13, 2012

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[The following are the speaker's notes]

Introduction

I'm going to talk about two language families, one that is to some extent familiar, one that is very likely not. The examples in the familiar context, that of the Indo-European family of languages, may help make the examples in the Algonquian family a bit clearer. My focus in within the second family will be local indian languages. I'm not sure what I should title the talk - since I'm going to start with Sanskrit and end with Pequot/Mohegan, I thought "Indian Languages", with deliberate ambiguity, might fit.

I decided to start with Indo-European because it's interesting in its own right, and the material will be to some extent familiar. My purpose is really to lay the foundation for discussion of the Algonquian languages, by showing the sorts of analysis that may be done on a language family, and what may be learned, so I'm going to be relatively brief when it comes to Indo-European. It will be easier to see patterns and understand how holes may be filled in when discussing more familiar languages.

Most people are aware that Latin is the root of the Romance languages (French, Spanish, Romanian, Italian, etc.), which evolved in geographically separate areas after the fall of the Roman Empire. Similarly, Indo-European is a common root to a much wider array of languages, including Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and German – indeed most European, Indian, and Iranian languages are rooted in it. It was discovered by a British official in India in the latter part of the 18th century.

Indo-European

Discovery

Sir William Jones was born in London in 1746, the son of a mathematician (of the same name), who incidentally chose the symbol "π" for 3.1415…. As a young man, Jones learned Greek, Latin, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, and some Chinese. He went to Oxford, graduated in 1768. He became known as something of an orientalist, doing translations of Persian and other texts. He studied law; was a circuit judge in Wales, and was involved in negotiations with Benjamin Franklin to end the American Revolution via the Treaty of Paris. In a move fortuitous for this topic, he was appointed a junior judge on the Supreme Court of Bengal.

He became fascinated with Indian culture, and wrote much about it, on topics as diverse as law, botany, literature, geography, and linguistics. Specifically, he noticed certain features about the vocabulary and grammar of Sanskrit (the ancient classical language of India) that were shared with Latin, Greek, and modern European languages.

Vocabulary is perhaps the easier area to find parallels, specifically 'cognates', which are words that share the same linguistic roots; I'll say a bit more about these further on. One is the Sanskrit word "raj", which is cognate to the Latin "rex", German "reich", and Celtic "rix", all generally meaning king or ruler (and, incidentally, the source of our word "rich".) Here's another:

English	mother
German	mutter
Norwegian	mor
Lithuanian	mater
Celtic	mathair
Latin	mater
Sanskrit	matar
Greek	meter

Verb forms for the verb "to be" also seemed quite similar.

IE	***es-** "to be", ***es-ti** "is"
English	**is**
Gothic	**ist**
Latin	**est**
Ancient Greek	**estí**
Sanskrit	**ásti**
Iranian	**Asti, hast**
Slavic	**jestŭ**
Baltic	**ẽsti**
Celtic	**is**
Armenian	**ē**
Albanian	**është**
Tocharian	**ste**
Hittite	**ēszi**

Below is a table of the numbers from one to 10. Across the top are the reconstructed Indo-European words, and in each column are the forms of that word in different languages. (scan down to see similarities):

IE:	**oynos/sem**	**duwo**	**treyes**	**kwetwores**	**penkwe**	**sweks**	**septm**	**okto**	**newn**	**dekm**
English	one	two	three	four	five	six	seven	eight	nine	ten
Dutch	een	twee	drie	vier	vijf	zes	zeven	acht	negen	tien
Old Norse	einn	tveir	thrír	fjórir	fimm	sex	sjau	átta	níu	tíu
Sanskrit	éka	dvá	trí	catúr	páñca	s.as.	saptá	as.tá	náva	dáça
Spanish	uno	dos	tres	cuatro	cinco	seis	siete	ocho	nueve	diez
Celtic	oinos	dvai	treis	qetveres	qenqe	svex	septn	octô	nevn	decn
Cl. Greek	hei:s	dúo:	trei:s	téttares	pénte	héx	heptá	októ:	ennéa	déka
Russian	odín	dva	tri	chety're	pyat'	shest'	sem'	vósem'	dévyat'	désyat'

Pashto	yaw	dwa	dre	tsalór	pindzé	shpag	owé	até	ne	les
Farsi	yak	do	se	chaha:r	panj	shesh	haft	hasht	noh	dah
Kashmiri	akh	zi	tr'i	co:r	pa:nc	shah	sat	e:th	naw	da

Jones hypothesized an original, shared tongue. In a paper he delivered in February of 1786 he said:

> The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists; there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothic* and the *Celtic*, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the *Sanscrit*; and the old *Persian* might be added to the same family.

This common source is now called Proto-Indo-European, which I'm referring to as "Indo-European". The 'Proto' prefix implies something important, that this is a hypothetical language, known from the traces it has left. It's of course very likely that something very much like it was actually spoken, but the features it contains may have evolved over time, so it is at least possible that no individual actually spoke this language as it has been reconstructed. As long as you keep that in mind I won't have to repeat "Proto" every time I mention the name.

A note about pronunciation – I recall watching a documentary on King Tut a number of years ago, and the narrator spoke his full name (Tutankhamun) with a strong, deep accent, quite impressively, and I started to think about it – how does anyone know how the hieroglyphs were pronounced? The Rosetta Stone wasn't a multimedia device. One may make intelligent guesses based on known loan-words, etc., but it seems to me impossible to deduce from that how syllables would be stressed, or what an accent would sound like. It made for a more dramatic presentation, but might have been mostly fabrication, which seems like something of a disservice. So I'm not going to try to imitate ancient phonetics and accent; who, after all, knows what Hittite sounded like? Even when I get to the Algonquian languages I will read quite literally – I think it better that you understand what was recorded in source material clearly than hear my guess as to how it might have sounded. There is quite a lot that may be learned about and from pronunciations, and I'll talk about that, but only try to duplicate it when it's well-defined. I think this is fairer all around.

There are two major groups of IE: Eastern and Western branches:

> Western languages: "centum" languages, for Latin word for 100
> Eastern languages: "satem" languages, for Persian word for 100.

When I talk about the migrations that underlie this division it will be a little clearer why it came about. In both branches may be found evidence of the nature of Indo-European:

- IE was highly inflected, with 8 noun cases;

- Verbs had 6 tenses, each generally signaled with a unique verb ending;
- Nouns had grammatical gender;
- There were root vowel changes in certain words ("sing", "sang", "sung")
- "Strong" verbs changed tense by vowel change; 'weak' verbs changed tense by changing endings.

A major branch in the West was the Germanic branch, which was the root of English. The Grimm brothers, of fairy tale fame, discovered a pattern of changes between the non-Germanic Indo-European pronunciations and those in Germanic languages – this set of changes is known as Grimm's Law (fig 2).

Grimm's Law Examples		
Non-Germanic (~ original IE)	**Germanic**	
b	p	
d	t	Example below
g	k	Example below
bh	b	
dh	d	
ch/gh	g	Example below
p	f	Example below
t	th	Examples below
k	h	Example below

Some examples may help make this a bit clearer – the phonetic results aren't exact, but that is because the pronunciations have continued to change. The similarly-colored segments of each word represent specific changes, e.g., in "pisces" the "p" changes to an "f", and both are red, referencing the rule above (the color of the text "Example below").

Latin "**p**isces" ~ English "**f**ish"

Latin "**d**en**t**is" ~ English "**t**oo**th**"

Latin "**c**entum" (**k**entum) ~ English "**h**undred"

Body parts:

Cardiac ~ **h**eart

Choleric ~ **g**all

Genuflect ~ **k**nee

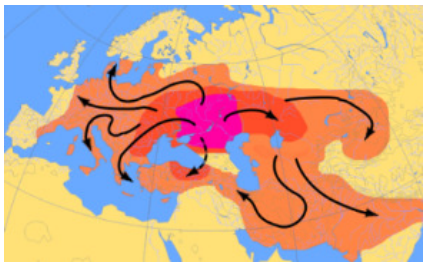
There are a number of other, similar laws relating how pronunciation changed in the different branches of IE.

Comparison of different Indo-European languages can provide evidence of original, shared IE words; it may also be used to find 'lost' words that are no longer present in a language. Let me give a somewhat simplistic, though accurate, example: in nearly all Western Indo-European languages there is a 2nd person singular pronoun – in French and Italian it is "tu", "ti" in Bulgarian and Croatian, "ty" in Czech, "du" in German (Grimm's law again), etc. But we don't have one in English – we use the word "you" for both the singular and plural. But, based on the underlying Indo-European commonality, we may hypothesize one; taking the French "tu" and applying Grimm's Law, we would convert the "t" to a "th", resulting in "thu"; I'll spare the suspense and say that it's spelling ended up parallel to it's 2nd person plural fellow pronoun "you", that is we have the word "thou". While this is now anachronistic, it was at one time used just as commonly as the French "tu" is today.

So you can see that a careful use of linguistic comparison may be able to identify missing words in a language.

Historical & Cultural Implications

Who were the first speakers of Indo-European? From a variety of clues it appears that the initial community lived in the area of the Black Sea between 4000 and 5000 BC. As the map in Figure 1 shows, this population scattered, probably around 4,000 BC into Europe and about 3400 BC into Asia Minor.



There is recent work examining the DNA traces that may provide much new information about how this migration took place.

In 1997 William Ryan and Walter Pitman of Columbia University proposed a "Black Sea deluge theory" that proposed that the Mediterranean Sea broke through at the Bosporus and flooded the Black Sea, around 5600 BC, which until that time had been a much smaller lake. The flow through the Bosporus would have been about 10 cubic miles of water per day. This has been controversial, as one might imagine; however, Mark Siddal of the University of Bern, Switzerland predicted that that flow rate would result in an underwater canyon, which was subsequently found. Manmade structures have been found on the Black Sea bed at a depth of 300 feet, which certainly indicate that *something* happened to the water level. At this point the remaining questions seem to be about how fast it might have occurred.

The dates don't align precisely, but then again the Indo-European homeland was a bit north; such a flood event might have displaced people who in turn displaced people, or caused other effects that would cause the Indo-European population to need to leave. It is nevertheless an interesting 'near' coincidence. If true, this historical event may be the kernel of truth in 'flood' myths.

It may seem surprising that one may learn about a people who left no written literature or archaeological remains, when we have nothing but the linguistic traces that remain in derivative languages – but by examining vocabulary and concepts that exist in most or all derivative languages, we may reasonably conjecture that they were present in this community. For example, all IE languages have shared words for certain plants, topographical formations, and meteorological phenomena, words for "corn" (meaning grain), "snow", and "wolf". There are words for lakes, but not oceans. Let me discuss a few more examples.

There is a common Indo-European paired root "dyeu-pəter": first element is root of Latin "deus", "a god", also of Greek "Zeus". The second word is root of Latin "pater", Greek "pitar", English "father" (via Grimm's law). Combined, these mean "god-father". "dyeu-pəter" becomes in Latin "Jupiter", with similar forms showing up in India and Iran.

Another IE word: "Kred-dha": Heart (kred) & "to put" (dha). The "dh-" root words are generally known to represent giving/placing. By Grimm's Law – Germanic "h" like older "k" sound. So, "to place in the heart" becomes in Latin "cre" & "do", "I believe"; the original word likely related to oath-taking.

IE "Sep-el-yo": the roots imply veneration of the dead. Latin "sepelire" means to bury; this is also the root of our word "Sepulchre". This is one piece of evidence that IE peoples buried their dead.

Law is an important theme, e.g. raj, jus (religious law). "bond", 'net", and 'law" have roots meaning binding together, netting or tying, implying social relationships were like bonds. *(find roots in notes, expand)*.

Exchange and gift giving: root "do" becomes Latin 'donare', to give, but Hittite "do", meaning to take or receive. "Nem" is the root of the Greek god Nemesis, the one who dispenses justice, also German nehmen, meaning to take. Opposite meanings arise around a root describing a relationship between people – one derivative language may look at one side of that, while a different language takes the other view. For example the root "ghosti" has forms for both host and guest – Greek 'xenos', stranger, Latin 'hostis', host; also 'hostile'.

IE had words concerning agriculture: "grano", grain; 'wrughyo', rye; 'bhares', barley.

Domesticated animals: 'gwou', cow; 'su', swine; 'agwhno', sheep; 'kwon', dog (hound); 'ekwo', horse. All IE languages share a word for 'yoke'.

Modern examples, ancient root 'peku', meaning movable goods, wealth in the form of livestock:

Latin 'pecunia', wealth
Sanskrit 'pasu', livestock
Old English, 'feoh', cattle (p -> f Grimm's Law)
Old Norse, 'fe', possessions
Modern English, "fee"

Literary terms:

Poets were taken as seers or prophets: Latin 'vates', seer; Irish 'faith' (meaning **bard**), Old English 'wod', crazy, Old Norse God 'Odin' (in Old English 'Woden'), all share the same IE root, "wat". Poets also likely seen as weavers of words – 'teks' is IE for "to weave". 'teks' gives us 'text' as well as 'textile' – poetry is a textile made of words.

Heroic fame: Greek 'kleos aphthiton', undying fame, is cognate with Sanskrit 'sravas aksitam'. Apparently there were stock literary phrases that lasted quite a long time.

Summary:

From the linguistic evidence in reconstructed Indo-European, we may conclude that the Indo-European society and culture involved:

- Stockbreeding & animal husbandry, including cattle, horses, dogs
- Agriculture and cereal cultivation, including the plow
- Climate that included snow
- Transportation by or across water; no word for ocean
- Use of the wheel, solid not spoked
- Worship of a sky god
- Patrilineal kinship system
- Polytheistic religion, centered on sacrificial rites
- Burial of the dead
- Possible: Warrior class, priest class, others; warrior symbols include wolves/dogs.
- Silver and gold were known, but not silver smelting (missing the word for lead)
- Woven textiles

I think it's kind of neat that one can get this far (and others have taken this analysis much further) just from linguistic evidence, in the absence of any archaeology or indeed any physical trace of a people. My larger point will be that this may also be done with native American languages.

Algonquian

I began looking into local Indian languages when I was about 12, initially because I wanted to understand what the local place names meant. I'd ride my bicycle to one of several libraries (one being the Indian & Colonial Research Center in Old Mystic) and go through early colonial writings to extract any native words that occurred. Over the years I've continued this, off and on.

The Algonquian family are a subfamily of the Algic language family, which includes the Plains, Central, and Eastern Algonquian groups. "Algonquian" is the not the same as "Algonquin", which is

a dialect of the Ojibwe language, just one of many Algonquian languages. All are thought to be descended from Proto-Algonquian, which would have been spoken roughly 3000 years ago.

Eastern Algonquian languages include Mikmac, Abenaki, Massachusett, Natick, Wampanoag, Narragansett, Mohegan-Pequot, Niantic, Montauk, Quiripi (also known as Connecticut), Mahican (also known as Mohican), Lenape, and Powhatan. The precise enumeration isn't possible – some possible languages are known from a few pages of words, and may represent dialectical mixing rather than distinct languages.

The map below shows the regions in which Algonquian languages were spoken. It was not the only language family in Connecticut - the Mohawks would occasionally invade, and Mohawk is an Iroquoian family language. It was not normally their home territory, though, but they weren't that far away.

How do we know about what local Indian languages sound like? They are almost entirely extinct. One source as I mentioned above is that we have colonial writers who wrote about the languages, sometimes extensively. There may be some issues lurking here, however – what you hear is what your ear and brain have been trained to hear. When born, the human child can distinguish all of the 600 or so human lingual sounds. In a monolingual home, by the time they are four years old, they are down to the 50 or 60 used in their language. Just as you might not fully apprehend the phonemes in a Chinese speaker's speech, it's likely that early Europeans in this area didn't (couldn't really) distinguish the finer points of the local languages.

One minor advantage we have in this regard is that the Algonquian speakers had contact with the British, French, and Dutch, so we have evidence about pronunciations from writers (and more importantly, listeners) in those three modestly distinct languages. How much of the differences are due to the differing abilities of the listeners, and how much are due to variation in dialect, we may not be able to determine.

One person I spoke with a number of times about local languages was Gladys Tantaquidgeon, whom I'd met at the small Mohegan Museum in Uncasville. She told me about her great aunt, Fidelia Fielding, who was the last speaker of the Mohegan Pequot language. She'd been born in 1827 and died in 1908. She mentioned that the anthropologist Frank Speck had made recordings of her speech before she died. In my youthful excitement I imagined wax-cylinder recordings; it would be fascinating to hear a now-dead language actually spoken by a native speaker. While it is possible he did make such things, I haven't been able to trace them – what he did do was write down phonetically what Mrs. Fielding said.

Let me read some excerpts; from the Diary of Mrs. Fielding (typography here is for my reading, not what Speck wrote); I believe that the English was also given by Mrs. Fielding:

> December 20, 1902: Yu Yumbo'wi **gi'zack** da'bi na'wa. Tci'wi ba'skwa, **gi'zack** gas u' beta. **Gi'zack** dju'wa'yu, tci' wi da'pku, ka'dji da'pku, **gi'zack** gata'wi.
>
> December 20 – This early morning the sun I can see. Nearly noon, the sun is hot. The sun is warm, nearly night, already it is night, the sun is gone.

Even from this example it's clear that "**gi'zack**" is the word for sun, and that it doesn't change form dramatically between its use as a direct object and in the nominative case.

> December 21, 1902: Gu' pkwad, mici' yun yugi'sk, ka' dji ba' skwa, zu' geyun wa' mi da'pku.
> December 21, 1902: Cloudy day, great rain to-day, already [it is] noon, rain all night.

This entry shares some words with the previous one, e.g., "**ba' skwa**" and "**da'pku**", which from context mean "noon" and "night" respectively. The diary goes on for 20 pages or so, and is a rich mine from which to extract vocabulary. I'm not sure the original full grammatical richness of the language is present – it may be that someone used to, for much of the time, conversing in English might have adopted some of the underlying mental model, e.g., might be dropping noun case endings. But it's a start.

One more excerpt from the diary, from June 19 – the Lord's Prayer in Pequot/Mohegan:

> **Ga'ntci wuc a'p ud ma'ndunag.**
> Great father staying in heaven.
>
> **Mata' wi wi'go gawi'zawang, gama'ndunag bi ya' mo.**
> Very great is your name, May your heaven come
>
> **Oi gi l' wad, ni l' wag you ba'mbugi ag mo'wi oi ma' ndunag,**
> As is your command, so may they say here on earth as it is going in in heaven.

mi'azm yugi'sk ta' ganig, oi a'ngatag gisks.
Give [us] today bread, so, too, for another day.

Wusta nata' wi' gan wa'dji mad nawi'ktam dj' gwanc ma'tci c, su'mi gama'ndunag, gami'ki gwang mata'wi wi'gan, wotci' mi tci' mi.
Make my heart good so that I may not like things evil, because yours is heaven, yours is strength very good; that is forever and ever.

Frank Speck also noted quite a bit about pronunciation, in particular that several Algonquian properties were missing: the short "i" as in "pin", "e" both long and short. The "L" sound is often replaced with "y". There seems to be a muddying of the "R", "L", "N", and "Y" sounds ("L" being nearly absent). There is also a certain fondness for certain consonant clusters, such as "kc", "ks", "t's", "tc". I've just touched on this briefly, but you might imagine that this might be the beginnings of something like Grimm's Law that would allow the mapping of words from other Algonquian dialects into Pequot Mohegan.
Here are some cognates among Algonquian dialects – by the way, "Wabanaki" is a group consisting of the Abenaki, Penobscot, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Mi'kmaq:

English	Mohegan-Pequot	Mass./Natick/Narragansett	Wabanaki
Good	Wi gan	Wunnegen	Uli'gan
Parched corn flour	Yo'kig	Nokik	
Yesterday	Wi' yangu	Wunnunkwi	Wla'ngwe
Rain	Zu' gay an	Sokanon	Zo'glan
I think	Na taiya'tam	Nuttenantamun	Ndela' ldaman
He works	Aiki' kuzu	Anakausu	Alo' kazu

Sources

Before I go further I should just touch on some of the sources I've used –

"A Key Into the Language of America", by Roger Williams, 1643

"The Indian Grammar Begun", by John Eliot, 1666

"Notes On The Mohegan and Niantic Indians", by Frank Speck, 1909. Actually, pretty much everything by Frank Speck.

"The Lenape and Their Legends, with the complete text of the Walam Olum", Daniel Brinton, 1884

"John Edward's Observations on the Mohegan Languages", republished by the Mass. Hist. Soc.

"The Assembly's Shorter Catechism" – a religious text, translated into Stockbridge Mohican by two Indians circa 1780. Copy in the Boston Athenaeum, transcribed by me.

Language Structure

So what is this language family like? What kinds of structures show up?

If you look up the Algonquian language family, you might find that it's known for its complex polysynthetic morphology and sophisticated verb system. The first part of that rather opaque description means that you can get new words by combining lots of other words; for example, in Narragansett, "Comishoonhommis?", given as one word, means "Did you come by boat?"

I'm not sure that I completely agree on this point, though it certainly seems true when reading sources in English. The problem I see is that these languages weren't *written* languages, at it strikes me that the listener may just be running words together. For instance, if you didn't know French and someone said "je t'aime", you might hear and think of it as one word, possibly two, but not likely three. Here's another example – "djeet" (hold up page – example sentence, at noontime, written down phonetically – "djeet yet?", as one might hear when someone rapidly spoke "Did you eat yet?"). And that's in a language you know.

One of the more accessible, though relatively unstructured, books about nearby Indian language is Roger William's "A Key Into the Language of America", originally printed in 1643, reissued in 1973 (and relatively easy to find). It's essentially a kind of phrasebook, mostly focused on Narragansett. He lists pronouns: "Neen" for "I", "Keen" for "you", "Ewo" for "he". Then, later on, he lists a set of phrases – the question is "Tunnock kuttome?", "Where do you go?" Here are some answers:

Wekick nittome.	To the house.
Nekick (nittome)	To my house.
Kekick (nittome)	To your house.

Given "Neen" is "I", "Keen" as "you", I think it makes more sense to think of "Nekick" as two words, "Ne Kick", and similarly for "Kekick". So while it's certainly true that compound nouns appear frequently, the 'compounding' may be done as much by the listener as by the speaker. I think a distinction might be made if the compound noun starts to develop its own connotations, e.g., "treehugger", which has a meaning beyond that of the literal meaning of its components. A compound noun like "schoolteacher" is more of a convenience, with no additional meaning beyond those of its parts.

I'm not sure which is the simpler way to think about it. For prefixes, which usually contain the information we in English associate with pronouns, I tend to think of the prefix as a stand-alone word; I think this makes things conceptually simpler, though of course there has to be agreement in number, etc. Suffixes, on the other hand, may indicate a variety of shades of meaning, such as the locative "uk", loosely meaning "the place of", as well as containing gender information. I don't know that there is a

'right' answer here; either approach works as long as you come up with the right phonetic result. I suppose the question is which is conceptually easier to manipulate.

Nouns, instead of having gender as in the Indo-European sense, the 'gender' is either animate or inanimate. Just as in gender in, say, French, this roughly tracks but is not identical to what you think it might be. Heavenly bodies are animate, while body parts are inanimate.

Some sources argue that the distinction is between things which are powerful and things which are not. All living things, as well as sacred things and things connected to the Earth are considered powerful and belong to the animate class. Still, the assignment is somewhat arbitrary, as "raspberry" is animate, but "strawberry" is inanimate.

Further complicating matters when examining sources is the phenomenon of syncope – letters and even syllables dropped in various places. We also do this in English - Bo'sun, Fo'c'sle, "Symbolology -> Symbology", "fourteen night -> fortnight".

Another aspect of the grammar is sometimes referred to as the "Fourth person", or 'obviative' form, which is used to indicate the relative closeness of an animate noun.

One of the most complete works on verb tenses was John Eliot's "The Indian Grammar Begun" of 1666. He was a minister in Natick, Massachusetts, and worked out a fairly comprehensive grammar. Here are some examples to give you a sense of how things change:

English	**Natick**
I keep it	Noowadchanutumun
I keep him	Noowadchan
Keep it!	Wadchanish
You keep me	Koowadchanimun
I did keep you	Koowadchanunup
Let me keep you	Wanchanunutti
I wish I keep you	Koowaadchanunan-toh

Efforts At Reconstruction

From time to time there have been efforts at reconstructing Mohegan Pequot – I must say I haven't tracked them closely, as it seems as if they start, sputter, and die. Indeed, I just recently found some new grammar and dictionary documents the Mohegan tribe has put together, which look excellent. However, I've never been completely comfortable with the efforts I've seen. I think the main reason is that these efforts are intended to construct (or reconstruct) the language to place it back in use, which is subtly and occasionally (and unfortunately) different from analyzing what it was in the past.

I would think the right thing to do would be to first gather all the extant source material on the original language, and on related nearby Algonquian languages – all of this is likely to fit on one CD-ROM. I think of this as a kind of "Oxford English Dictionary" of material, from which one could extract vocabulary and grammar examples – always being able to reference back to an original source. A second body of material would be the many papers on Algonquian languages, analyzing grammar forms and usages. From this material one could establish the kernel of a vocabulary and grammar of a reconstructed Pequot Mohegan (it may be what the Mohegan's dictionary is, but I could find no references).

It's quite likely there will be holes in what is known; maybe, perhaps, the word for "island" has been lost. But then one might find examples of that word (e.g., perhaps "menahan" from the Delaware and its variants). Then, if one has something like Grimm's Law to estimate how the pronunciation likely would be different here, one might hypothesize a Pequot Mohegan word. This would be defensible, and might change if further evidence comes to light; but it certainly wouldn't be arbitrary, it would be the best educated guess possible, and documented well enough to allow the decision to be revisited. (I just checked the new Mohegan dictionary and they have the word "munhan" for island, so perhaps it survived.)

Why do a reconstruction at all? I can see why the current tribes would like to recover part of their culture that has been lost, but are there other reasons? In many cases when lost languages are recovered, a literature, or at least some set of records, is accessible; think of the hieroglyphics, and what levels of understanding of Egyptian culture that opened up. The Algonquian languages weren't written languages, though, so there are no such opportunities.

As we've seen with Indo-European, even with only a spoken language quite a bit may be learned about the culture, modes of thinking, and worldview of a society solely from linguistic evidence. This may be hard to do if the language has been 'narrowed' though limited recording of original material – that may well have filtered many interesting elements out; but, just as with Indo-European, there may still be a lot to be gained, provided the analysis is based on documented source material. What is left may offer clues about society, culture, trade, and even inter-tribal interactions (e.g., through borrowed words).

Place Names

I'd like to end by discussing some local place names and what they mean.

(Source material available).

Discuss naming approach: after notable features. Kids – "far away zoo" – descriptive names. Works well if your travel radius is small enough such that these things are unique, and are generally described by the people in the area in the same way.

Some tidbits:

-tuk – tidal river

-unk= a standing tree

-sauk=outlet of river or brook

-amaug = fishing place

Quinne- = long

Missi/Massa = great, big

Wunni-, winni- = good, pleasing

Matchi- = unpleasant, bad

Chepi- = separated

Wepu = strait

Massa Wachuset –

Mt. Wachusett, Massa. – remember. Wadchu: hill, mountain.

Mt. Wachusett – redundant.

Ashawog – meaning 'a place between'; root of Ashaway.

Connecticut – "Quinne-; land on the long tidal river

Gungywamp, probably qun'nukq' ompsk, "high rock"

Higganum – (tom) hegan=tomahawk; tom=ax, hegan=instrument (Mohegan).

Manatuck (Waterford) – place of observation. "Montauk" may be named for similar reasons.

Moodus – from mache moodus, bad noises

Mystic – from Mistuckset? Siccanamos on Dutch chart. Large tidal river.

Naiwayonk or Nowayunk, now Noank –

Nameaug, indian name for New London – from Namas, fish, and locative (eag, aug, eak, uk). New London was also known as Towawog; this appears in several deeds. Likely derived from Tataug or Tatau-og, blackfish.

Mashantucket – Masha Yantuck, great rapid roaring stream. Or, from 'mishuntugk', much wood, with the locative "et", meaning place of much wood. Typical confusion, 2nd likely to be right.

Matunuck – mat=nothing; un(ca) = beyond; uck = locative (Narragansett). End of the trail – nothing beyond.

Misquamicut – Narr. M'squamaug, "salmon".

Nayantaquit, or Nianticut – point of land along a tidal river. Or from nayan=corner or angle, tic=tegw=river.

Noank – N=there at, oan=out to sea; k=locative ending

Pachaug – likely from Pachau auke, a turning point, turning aside of the river.

Pawcatuck – likely "Pequot tidal river", or pauqua (clear, open) or pagwa (shallow).

Contrast to Pawtucket, from "pautuck", signifying a falls.

Quiambaug – fishnet place, "quamphunk" = fish net, quomphau = to draw with nets

Quinnebaug – long pond

Quinnipiac, origin similar to Kennebec – long-water land

Similar to Qunne-tuk, long tidal river or estuary; origin of Quanaduck.

Togwonk – a stone mortar for grinding stone.

Wadowanuck. From 'woddo', a loon. Sitting place of the loons.

Weka-paug, at the end of the pond.

Wequetequock – at the end of the tidal river

Pequot Sepos – Pequot (small) River, Sepos diminutive of Sepu. Quiz audience about what "large river" would be – Massa Sepu, => Mississippi.

Wampassok, meaning white land, or land frequented by white birds – also used for the dumplings.